

Prose Merlin

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[The Banishment of Bertelak; and King Arthur and King Lot]

Whan the Kynge Leodogan hadde comaunded his stiwarde to bringe his stepdoughter oute of the reame, he and Merlin departed from Ulfin and Bretell and com into the halle hande in hande, where thei fonde the barouns alle redy. And oon hadde ronge to masse, and so thei wente to the mynster; and whan masse was seide, thei com agein into the halle.

And than com the kyn of the deed knyght that Bertelak hadde slain for to make theire complainte to the kynge. And the Kynge Leodogan sente for to seche hym at his hostell, and he com anoon withoute daunger, well armed undir his robes, and brought with hym grete plenté of knyghtes, for he was full of feire courtesie and a feire speker. And anoon the kynge hym asked why he hadde the knyght slain in treason. And he seide that of treason he sholde hym wele diffende agein alle tho that wolde hym apele. “And I sey no nay but that I slough the knyght; but firste I dide hym deffie; and it was not withoute grete cause, for moche peple knowe wele that he slough my cosin germain for his wif that he diffouled. And me semeth that in alle maners that oon may, oweth he to greve his mortall enmye after that he hath hym diffied.”

And the kynge seide that that was not inough. “But yef ye hadde yow complayneth to me and I wolde not have it redressed, than myght ye have take vengaunce; but ye ne spake therof to me never worde.” “Sir,” quod he, “ye sey your volunté. But ageins yow mysdide I never, ne never ne shall, yef God will.”

7 **seche**, seek. 11 **of treason**, concerning treason; **agein**, against. 12 **tho**, those; **apele**, accuse; **sey no nay but**, do not deny; **slough**, slew. 13 **deffie**, challenge; **moche**, many. 14 **cosin germain**, first cousin; **diffouled**, defiled. 14–15 **me semeth**, I believe. 15 **in alle maners that oon may**, in any way one can; **oweth he to greve**, he should injure. 16 **diffied**, formally challenged. 18 **take**, taken. 19–20 **ye sey your volunté**, you may say what you wish. 20 **ageins**, against; **mysdide I never**, I never did wrong; **ne¹**, nor.

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Quod the kynge, “I will that right be hadde.” “Sir,” seide Bertelak le Rous, “I se well that I moste be at youre volunté.” And than comaunded the Kynge Leodogan that judgement sholde be yoven be the rede of his barouns.

At this judgement was the Kynge Arthur and the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Bohors and Sir Gawein and Sir Ewein and Galasshin and Nascien and Adragain and Hervy de Rivel and Guyomar. These ten were at the judgement, and spake togeder of oon thinge and other; and thei acorded in the ende that he sholde be disherited and voyde the londe of the Kynge Leodogan forever more. And the Kynge Ban, that was of feire eloquense, tolde the tale as he was charged; and he spake so high that he myght wele be herde bothe of nygh and fer.

“Sirs,” quod he, “these barouns that beth here awarded that Bertelais le Rous shall be disherited of all his londe that he holdeth in youre powere, and shall forswhere the contré forever more, for that he toke the justice upon hymself of the knyght that he slough, and namly by nyght, for the justice longed not to hym. And on that other side, ye holde court open and myghty that oweth to condite alle saf goynge and saf comyng to alle tho that come at this high feste.” And with that sat down the Kynge Ban that no more seide at that tyme.

And whan Bertelays saugh he was forjudged and that he ne myght noon otherwise do, he returned withoute moo wordes; for he durste not the judgement withsey, for the highest lordes of the worlde and the moste puyssaunt hadde it don. But yef eny other hadde it don, anoon he wolde the judgement have falsed. And thus wente Bertelais le Rous; but many a knyght hadde he hym to conveye to whom he hadde yoven many feire yeftes, for he hadde be a noble knyght and a vigerouse.

And so he past forth on his journeys that he com to the same abbey whereas was the false Gonnore; and ther he abode and sojourned longe tyme, and was in grete thought as he that cowde moche evell, how that he myght be avenged of the Kynge Leodogan and the Kynge Arthur that hadde hym thus forejudged. And for

21 will, desire; **right be hadde**, justice is observed; **se**, see. **22 moste be at youre volunté**, must abide by your wishes. **23 yoven be**, given by; **rede**, advice. **28 voyde**, leave. **29 tale**, verdict. **30 high**, loudly. **31 awarded**, decided. **33 forswhere**, forswear. **34 longed**, belonged. **35 on that other side**, in addition to which; **holde**, held; **oweth**, ought to; **condite**, permit; **saf**, safe. **36 tho**, those. **38 saugh**, saw; **forjudged**, found guilty; **noon**, nothing. **39 moo**, more; **durste**, dared; **withsey**, oppose. **40 puyssaunt**, powerful. **41 have falsed**, challenged. **44 that**, until; **whereas**, where. **46 cowde**, knew. **47 forejudged**, condemned.

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that fill to Arthur grete trouble and so grete discorde betwene hym and his wif that he lefte her longe tyme, as ye shull here in the seconde book of this processe, yef God will vouchsaf to graunte me so longe space to writen it. But now we must cesse of this mater and speke of the goode Kynge Arthur that is at Toraise in Carmelide with the Kynge Leodogan, and with the grete compayne.

Full myry lif ledde the Kynge Arthur with his wif eight dayes. And the neynthe day after that he was spoused, he cleped his barouns and badde hem make hem redy to ride, for he was in talent for to repeire into the reame of Logres; and thei seide that thei were all redy to ride. And than the kynge toke Gawein in counseile and seide, "Feire nevew, take with yow as many of youre compayne that ther leve here but five hundred, for I will come ride after stilleche and esely. And ye shall go to Logres, my chief citee, and ordeyne redy alle things that is nessessarie, and of vitaile and of deynteis as ye may, so that nothinge ne faute. And sendith fer and nygh that I will holde court this mydde August, the richest that I may." "Sir," seide Gawein, "I have drede lest ye be encombred be the wey of some maner peple." "Of that have ye no drede," quod the kynge, "but go ye in all haste."

Than departed Sir Gawein from his uncle and com to his felowes, and bad hem to make hem redy for to ride. And thei wente to theire hostelles and hem armed; but firste thei toke leve of the Kynge Leodogan and of the barouns of Carmelide; and thus departed Gawein fro the courte, he and his compayne. And the Kynge Arthur abode with five hundred men, whereof two hundre and fifty were Knyghts of the Rounde Table.

And Gawein and his compayne com to Logres. But Gawein was ever pensif for his uncle that he hadde lefte in Carmelide, that hym sholde eny thinge myshappe upon the wey, for he hadde fer contrey to ride that marched into his enmyes er he com into his londe in safté. And he hym hasted to do the kynges comaundement, and sente to alle hem that the kynge loved that thei sholde come to his court at the myddell of August. And eche made hym redy to come to court as strongly as thei

47–48 **for that fill to**, as a result it caused. 49 **here**, hear; **yef**, if. 51 **cesse**, cease. 53 **myry**, merry. 55 **was in talent**, desired. 57–58 **that ther leve here**, so that is left here. 58 **will come ride**, wish to ride; **stilleche**, slowly. 59 **ordeyne redy**, prepare. 60 **vitaile**, food; **deynteis**, delicacies; **ne faute**, is lacking. 62 **encombred**, threatened; **be the wey**, along the way; **of, by**. 70 **pensif**, concerned. 71 **myshappe**, harm. 72 **marched into**, bordered upon. 75 **strongely**, quickly.

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myght. And Gawein ordeyned that vitaile com on alle parties with cartes and chariettis, that he stuffed so well the citee as longed to soche a feste, as he that full well coude hym entermete that nothinge ne failed. For as the storye seith, he was oon of the beste knyghtes and wiseste of the worlde, and therto the leste mysspeker and noon avauntor, and the beste taught of alle thinges that longeth to worship or curtesie. And whan he hadde made all redy, he toke his wey toward his uncle, for grete drede he hadde of that he sholde be distrobed on the wey of some peple. But now we shull a while cesse of hym and his compayne and speke of the Kynge Arthur.

The thridde day after that Gawein was departed from the Kynge Arthur his uncle, the kynge toke his wey towarde the Castell of Bredigan, he and his wif, and in her compayne was the Kynge Ban of Benoyk and the Kynge Bohors of Gannes that was his brother and the beste knyght that eny man neded to seche; and so ther were two hundred fifty Knyghtes of the Rounde Table that alle were feed men with the Kynge Leodagan. And the queene hadde so praied Sir Amnistian, that was chapelein with the Kynge Leodagan hir fader, that he com with hir and was sithen hir chapelein longe tyme. And so ledde Gonnore hir cosin, that was feire and debonaire and amyable to alle peple, and Sadoyne hir brother, that was elther than she and castelein of Daneblaise the noble citee.

And as soone as the Kynge Arthur was departed oute of the reame of Carmelide, the Kynge Loot hadde knowinge by his asspies. And he and his knyghtes rode agein hym and hem enbusshed in the Foreste of Sapernye. And [he] seide that ther sholde he abide the Kynge Arthur and take from hym his wif, yef he myght. But of hym we shull now cesse, and speke of the Kynge Arthur that was departed oute of Carmelide.

And the storie seith how the Kynge Leodagan conveyed hem thre dayes hole, and the fourthe day he returned into his reame. And than com Merlin to the Kynge Arthur and toke leve and seide that he sholde go to his maister Blaase, for longe

76 parties, sides. 77 as longed to, as was fitting for. **78 coude,** could; **entermete,** conduct. **79–80 leste mysspeker,** least speaker of ill. **80 noon avauntor,** not a boaster; **longeth to,** concerns. **81 worship,** honor. **82 of that,** that; **distrobede,** set upon; **of, by.** **87 her,** their. **88 seche,** seek; **so,** also. **89–90 feed men with,** retainers of. **91 com,** came. **92 sithen,** afterwards. **93 elther,** older. **94 castelein,** marshall. **96 asspies,** spies. **97 agein,** towards; **hem enbusshed,** lay in wait for them. **101 conveyed hem,** accompanied them.

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hadde he hym not seyn; and the kynge hadde well spedde of that he hadde for to
105 done. Than seide the kynge, “Merlin, feire frende, shull ye not be at my court at Logres?” “Yesse,” seide Merlin, “I shall be ther er it departe”; and therwith eche of hem comaunded other to God. But he was but litill wey thens whan no man wiste where that he was becomen.

And Merlin wente to Blaase the same nyght, and he hym resceyved with grete
110 joye whan that he hym saugh. And Merlin tolde hym alle the aventures that were falle seth that he departed; and he tolde hym how the Kynge Loot was enbusshes in the Foreste of Sapernye, and tolde hym other thinges inowghe that after befill in the reame of Logres. And Blaase hem wrote as he tolde, and by his booke have
115 we the knowinge. But now cesseth to speke of Merlin and Blase, and speke of Arthur.

Whan the Kynge Arthur was departed from the Kynge Leodogan, and Merlin also, as ye have herde, he rode with five hundre men of armes, and ledde with hym his wif Gonnore the queene. And he rode smale journeyes till he com into the Foreste of Sapernye, whereas the Kynge Loot was enbusshed with seven hundre
120 men of armes. And the gromes that ledde the somers wiste never worde till that thei were fallen even amonge hem. And as soone as thei saugh thei were men of armes, thei wiste well thei were not well come. Than thei abode and wente no ferther, and sente to the Kynge Arthur that thei hadde founde men iarmed. Whan the kynge saugh that he was aspied, he alight on foote and made his peple come
125 aboue hym and ordeyned for bataile; and comaunded forty knyghtes to kepe the queene and bad hem lede hir to garison yef thei saugh nede.

And than thei ride forth, her heedes bowed down undir theire helmes redy hem to diffende, yef thei founde eny peple to stoppe hem the wey. And so thei ride till thei dide falle upon the wacche; and the Kynge Arthur was before in the firste frounte, and the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Bohors and the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table. And the Kynge Looth sponghe oute with seven hundre men of armes and
130 com hem ageins theire spers, agein the assels of the sadeles, and the sheldes before theire breste, as faste as horse myght renne. And hem ascride so high that all

104 **well spedde of that**, understood what. 106 **departe**, concludes. 108 **wiste**, knew. 111 **seth that**, since. 120 **gromes**, grooms; **somers**, pack horses; **wiste**, knew. 121 **saugh**, saw. 126 **hem**, them; **lede hir to garison**, lead her to safety. 129 **dide falle upon**, encountered; **wacche**, scouts. 132 **assels**, shoulders. 133 **hem ascride so high**, they shouted so loudly.

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the foreste resounded; and these other com upon hem boldly with sharpe
135 trenchaunte speres, and mette togeder upon sheldes that many of hem perced and
slitte. Many were throwe to grounde on bothe sides, and many ther were that
brake theire speres and passed forth withoute fallinge. And whan the spers were
spente, thei drowgh oute theire swerdes and begonne the bateile right grete, that
never of so fewe peple ne saugh no man so fierce bateile, for thei were full noble
140 knyghtes upon bothe parties.

And so longe it lasted that the Kynge Arthur and the Kynge Looth mette togeder
with speres in hande, and lett renne that oon agein that other so harde as horse
myght renne, and mette so harde togeder with speres upon sheldes that the spere
145 poyntes stynte at the hauberkes. And thei theron shof with all theire force, and the
Kynge Loot brake his spere, and the Kynge Arthur smote hym so harde that he
bar hym to grounde over his horse croupe; but soone was he lepte upon foote as
he that was of grete prowesse, and drowh his swerde and covered hym with his
shelde and was so doelfull that nygh he yede oute of witte for that he was
overthrowe be the myght of a knyght alone, for he was not acustomed for to falle
150 often.

And the Kynge Arthur hadde made his returne and com toward the Kynge Loot
gripinge his spere, for he coveited to take hym quyk. And whan the Kynge Loot
saugh hym come, he glenched aside and Arthur failed of hym and past forth; and
in the passinge the Kynge Loot smote Arthurs horse in the bely thourgh the guttes.
155 And Arthur fill to grounde, and his horse upon his body that his thigh was betwene
the horse and the grounde so that he myght not arise. And the Kynge Loot sterte
to and caught hym by the helme and drough and pulled all that he myght, and sore
hym peyned for to smyten of his heede. And soone ther sholde have be so grete
damage that never myght it have be restored, but as the Kynge Ban and the Kynge
160 Bohors and the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table com fiercely upon the peple of
Kynge Loot, and began sore bateile and harde so that ther was noon but that he
hadde inough to done. And so thei peyned hem on both parties that the two kynges
be remounted, and begonne the stour grete and merveillouse. But at grete myschef

142 renne, run. **144 stynte**, stopped; **hauberkes**, mail shirts; **shof**, shoved. **146 croupe**,
cruppers. **147 drowh**, drew. **148 for that**, because. **149 be**, by. **152 coveited**, desired;
quyk, alive. **153 glenched**, moved. **156–57 sterte to**, leaped to him. **158 smyten of**, smite
off. **159 but as**, except that. **160 com**, came. **163 stour**, battle; **myschef**, danger.

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were the peple of Kynge Arthur, for the Kynge Loot hadde two hundre knyghtes
165 moo than hadde Kynge Arthur.

With that com Sir Gawein with foure score felowes well armed, and Kay the
Stiwarde bar the baner. And Arthur behielde and saugh Gawein come and knewe
hym well by his armes, and also Kay the Stiwarde be the baner that he bar in his
handes that sore desired the assemble, as he that was hardy and enterpendaunt and
170 right sure, ne hadde ben oon tecche that he hadde, for that he was copiouse of
langage in his disporte for the jolynesse that was in hym and the myrthe; for he
was ever bourdinge and japinge in game, and was the beste felowe in compayne
that eny man knewe. And for that ever he wolde of custome borde of the sothe,
175 hym hated many a knyght for the shame that thei hadde of his wordes; and therfore
he myshapped in many a place, for the knyghtes that he had scorned in myrthe
didde hym after grete annoye. But a trewe knyght was he ever agein his lorde, and
agein the queene, ever into the ende of his deth. Ne never in all his live dide he
treson saf oon, and that was of Lohoot, the sone of Kynge Arthur, that he slough
180 for envye in the Foreste Perilouse; and for that Percevale ly Galoys was accused
with grete wronge for the deth of the same Hoot, like as an ermyte hit tolde after,
that hadde seyn all the dede.

Whan the Kynge Arthur saugh Gawein his nevew come so fiercely, his herte
aroos for grete joye that he hadde. Than he com to the Kynge Ban and seide, "Sir,
se how riche socour to us cometh! Knowe ye not hym that rideth before upon the
blakke stede that gripeth the grete spere under the shelde of goolde and azur, ther-
ynne a lyon rampaunt?" And the Kynge Ban beheilde and seide, "Who is it? Telle
me, for I knowe hym not, saf that me semeth it sholde be Gawein youre nevew."
"Certes," quod Arthur, "he it is, and now may I me avaunten that in evell tyme
185 come these us for to assailen; for yef thei were yet as many moo, thei myght not

165 **moo**, more. 167 **beheld**, looked. 168 **be**, by. 169 **sore desired the assemble**, greatly wished to reach the assembly; **enterpendaunt**, enterprising. 170–71 **copiouse of langage**, excessive in speaking. 172 **bourdinge**, playing; **japinge**, joking; **game**, fun. 173 **for that**, because; **of custome**, by habit; **borde of the sothe**, make fun of the truth. 175 **myshapped**, was ill-treated. 176 **didde**, caused; **annoye**, harm; **agein**, to. 178 **saf oon**, except one; **slough**, slew. 180 **ermyte**, hermit. 181 **that**, who; **seyn**, seen; **dede**, deed. 188 **avaunten**, declare.

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190 agein us endure, yef God hym diffende from evell, he and his compayne.” “Trewly,” seide the Kynge Ban, “thei be not wise yef thei hym abide till that he be amonge hem medled.”

195 And while thei spake thus togeder com Gawein all before gripinge his grete spere. And whan he com nygh, he knewe well his uncle and saugh that he hadde grete myster of socour; and than he sponghe in amoneg hem rudely as tempest of thunder. And [it] fill that he mette with his fader the Kynge Loot that newliche was sette on horse and heilde a stronge spere. And [he] com agein hym as moche as the horse myght renne, and [thei] mette togeder upon the sheldes with all theire forces. And the kynge brake his spere upon Gaweins shelde, and Gawein smote hym agein so harde that he perced shelde and hauberke and wounded hym somwhat in the lifte side that the blode folowed after. And the kynge fill so harde to grounde that he wiste not wheder it was day or nyght. And Gawein paste forth rudely withoute arestinge; and whan he was returned agein, he fonde his fader lyinge on the erthe upright; and he rode over hym on horsebak thre or foure tymes, and brouzed hym sore and foule that nygh he was therwith slain.

200 210 And than Gawein alight and pight his spere in the grounde and drough oute Calibourne his goode swerde that shone bright and clier. And [he] com to the Kynge Loot that yet lay upright, and plukked hym by the helme and raced it of his heede so harde that on his nose and his browes it was well seene, for he was hurte right sore. And than he avaled the coyf of his hauberke benethe his shuldres, and seide that he was but deed but yef he wolde yelde hym to prison. And he was so anguysshous that litill he hym ansuerde; nevertheless, he dide hymself enforce so that he seide with grete sorowe at his herte, “Ha, sir gentilman, ne sle me nought! For never dide I forfeit agein thee wherfore that thou sholdest me sleen.” “Yesse,” quod Gawein, “that haste thou, and alle thi compayne that have assailed myn uncle for to distrouble him his weye.” “How so?” quod Kynge Loot. “Who be ye that calle hym youre uncle?” “What is that to thee what I am? Me liste nothinge

190 **yef**, unless. 192 **medled**, fighting. 195 **myster**, need; **rudely**, strongly. 196 **newliche**, newly. 197 **moche**, strongly. 201 **lifte**, left. 205 **brouzed**, bruised. 206 **pight**, stuck; drough, drew. 208 **upright**, face up; **raced it of**, tore it off. 210 **avaled**, opened. 211 **but yef**, unless. 211–12 **so anguysshous**, in such anguish. 213 **sle**, slay. 214 **forfeit agein thee**, harm to you; **wherfore**, for which; **sleen**, slay. 216 **distrouble**, disturb. 217 **Me liste nothinge**, I do not choose.

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thee to telle. But do anoon that as I thee sey, or thou art deed. And alle these other
220 that ben in thi compayne shull dye, and shull curse the tyme that ever thei were of
moder born."

"Telle me," quod the Kynge Loot, "who ye ben, for the love of that ye love
moste in this worlde." "But what art thou," quod Gawein, "that this doste me
demaunde?" Quod he, "Myn name is Looth, a caitife kynge of Orcanye and of
225 Leonoys, to whom nothinge doth falle but myschef, ne not hath don longe tyme.
Now telle me youre name what ye be." And whan Gawein undirstode verily that it
was his fader, anoon he nempned his name and seide his name was Gawein, the
nevew of Kynge Arthur. And whan the Kynge Loot herde that, anoon he lepte up
and wolde have clypt him in his armes and seide, "Feire sone, ye be welcome; and
I am the sorowfull caitif youre fader that ye have thus viliche overthrownen."

230 And Gawein bad hym drawe hym ferther arome, for his fader sholde he not be
ne his goode frende till that he were acorded with the kynge his uncle, and hadde
cried hym mercy for his forfeit, and than do to hym homage seynge alle his barouns.
"For othirwise, loke never to truste in me, for elles shull ye leve noon other wedde
235 saf youre heed." And than the Kynge Looth sowowned and fill down to the grounde;
and whan he awoke of swownynge, he cride hym mercy and seide, "Feire sone, I
will do all that yow may plesse; and holde here my swerde, for I yelde it to yow."
And Sir Gawein, that therof hadde grete pité, hit toke with gladde chere and myri,
and wepte right tenderly water with his iyen undir his helme, for sore he repente in
240 his herte of that he hadde so hurte his fader. But as moche as he myght, he kepte
hym so that he was not aperceyved.

Than thei com bothe to theire horse, and lept up and com to theire peple, and
hem departed. But fowlé were the Kynge Loothis men overleide, for the Knygthes
of the Rounde Table and the Felowes of Sir Gawein hadde hem so evyll beseyn at
the first metynge that moo than forty thei hadde felde to grounde that thei hadde

218 anoon, now; **that as**, what; **thee sey**, tell you. **221 that**, the one that. **223 caitife**,
wretched. **224 myschef**, misfortune; **ne not hath don**, nor has done for. **226 nempned**,
spoke. **227 nevew**, nephew. **228 wolde have clypt**, desired to embrace. **229 caitif**, wretch;
viliche, vilely. **230 arome**, back. **232 seynge**, in the sight of. **233 for elles**, or else; **leve**,
leave; **wedde**, pledge. **234 saf**, except for; **sowowned**, swooned. **238 iyen**, eyes. **240**
aperceyved, seen. **242 hem departed**, separated them; **fowlé**, foully; **overleide**, treated.
243 evyll beseyn, harshly treated. **244 moo**, more.

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245 no power to remounte. And Sir Gawein com and hem departed; and than wente Gawein to Arthur his uncle.

And as soone as the kynge saugh hym come, he com hym ageins and seide, “Feire nevew, ye be welcome. Wherefore be ye come into this parties? Wiste ye eny thinge of this awayte?” And Gawein seide that he douted hit sore, “For I myght never be in hertes ese till I hadde yow seyn; and oure Lorde God,” quod he, “now be thanked and honoured of this assemble; for it is the Kynge Loot my fader with whom that ye were in medlé. And now hit is so befallen that he is come to crye yow mercy as to his liege lorde ertly, for the trespassse that he hath done agein yow. And therfore resceyveth his homage like as ye owe for to do, for he is here all redy hit to performe and do.”

Whan the Kynge Arthur that herde, he joyned his handes toward hevene and thanked God of the worship that He hadde hym shewed. And with that com the Kynge Loot and his knyghtes down the medowes alle on foote, and hadde don of their helmes from their heedes and valed their coiffes of mayle upon their sholderes and com full symple. And whan Gawein saugh his fader come before, he seide to his uncle, “Sir, lo here my fader cometh to yow for to do homage.” And anon the Kynge Arthur sette foot to the grounde and alle the other barouns after. And the Kynge Loot com before Arthur and sette hym on his knee, and hielde his swerde be the poynte as he that hadde forfeited; and seide, “Sir, I yelde me here to youre mercy as he that hath often agein yow forfeited, and dide yow never but grevaunce and annoye. Now do yowre plesire of me and of my londe.” And ther becom the Kynge Loot liegeman to the Kynge Arthur before alle his barouns; and assured his feith to do hym servyse whan that he hym comaunded.

Than Arthur toke hym be the right hande and made hym to arise on his feet and seide, “Sir, stondeth up, for longe inough have ye kneled, for I ought it yow to pardon for that ye be so worthi a man. And a gretter forfeit than this is, for thowgh that I have hated yow never so dedly, ye have here soche children that have do me soche servise that I may have no will to do yow noon evell. And therfore I offre

248 Wherfore be, Why have; **parties,** area; **Wiste,** Knew. **249 awayte,** ambush; **douted,** feared. **251 of,** by. **252 medlé,** battle. **254 owe,** ought. **257 worship,** honor; **hym shewed,** given him. **258 don of,** taken off. **259 valed,** opened. **260 saugh,** saw. **264 be,** by. **265 forfeited,** surrendered. **271 for that,** because; **forfeit,** victory.

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here to yow all thinge that is myn at youre volunté, for the love of Gawein youre
275 sone that I love beste of eny knyght that is in the worlde. And ther be here two
knygthes that I owe to love as wele, and bothe ben thei kynges that moche have
me socoured in grete nede." And he stode up and seide, "Sire, gramercy."

Thus was made pees betwene Kynge Loot and the Kynge Arthur. And than thei
280 lepe to theire horse gladde and joyfull of this aventure, and riden so by here
journeyes till thei com to Logres, where thei were resceyved with the grettest joye
of the worlde. And every day the peple dide encrese, for the dwellers of the contrey
com thider for drede of the Saisnes that hem distroyed and the londe. And ther
was so grete prees of peple that many behoved to loigge in the medowes. And
285 whan the Kynge Arthur saugh so grete plenté of peple, he was gladde and myry
and seide that he wolde holde court open and enforced, and sente by his messangers
that alle sholde come to his court roiall.

And on the morowe the Kynge Loot dide his homage to the Kynge Arthur, and
made his oth in the chief mynster, seinge alle the peple, that was right grete and
huge. And the Kynge Arthur refeffed hym agein in his londe that he hadde before,
290 to hym and to hys heires forever more; and who that dide hym eny wronge he
sholde hym supporte to his power. And [he] resceyved hym gladde and jocunde as
a noble man; and fro that day forth were thei goode frendes all her lif.

And whan the masse was seide, thei com agein to the paleyse and yede to mete;
and thei were well served and richely. And after mete wente the knygthes to se the
295 medowes and the river and the tentes and the pavilouns that were pight withoute
the town, for ther were many full feire and riche. And [in] this disperte and solace
were thei eight dayes hool. And the peple dide sore encrece, for the kynge dide hit
comaunde for that he wolde holde court roiall and plentevouse, and bere crowne
he and his wif at the mydde of August. And whan it com to the evene that the
300 feeste sholde begynne on the morowe, Arthur yaf his yeftes soche as to hym
apertened, of horse and palfreyes and armour and money as golde and silver, for
he hadde plenté. And the queene yaf hem robes fressh and newe, as she that well

274 volunté, desire. 276 owe, ought. 278 pees, peace. 285 enforced, expanded. 287 on, in.
288 seinge, before. 289 refeffed, re-installed. 291 jocunde, happy. 293 yede, went. 295
pight withoute, pitched outside. 297 hool, altogether; sore encrece, greatly increase. 298
roiall and plentevouse, royally and generously. 300 yaf, gave; yeftes, gifts. 301 apertened,
belonged.

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hadde therfore ordeyned and moche cowde of honour and all curteysie, that alle
peple hadde hir in so grete love that hem thought thei hadde recovered the lady of
alle ladyes. And yef the knyghtes hadde riche presentes, the ladyes and dameselles
hadden also, and maydenes bothe fer and nygh.

And so spradde the renoun thourgh every contrey of Arthur, that the princes
that weren with hym wroth wisten of the pees that the Kynge Loot hadde made
with the Kynge Arthur, and how he sholde holde his court roiall at the myddill of
August, and that alle peple were thider somowned. And some of hem seiden se-
cretly to theire counseile that thei wolde gladly have spedde in the same manere
as the Kynge Loot hadde done. And some ther were of hem that thoughten in
theire hertis and praied to God that thei sholde never dye on no deth er thei were
acorded with the Kynge Arthur, “For all this trouble and myschef that is fallen
unto us is com thourgh the synne that we have don agein God and forfeit to hym.”
Thus seide oon to another.

And the Kynge Arthur was in his maister citee in joye and solace, as ye have
iherde. And whan it com to the day of the myddill August, thider com alle the
knyghtes to the courte clothed and araiied in the richest robes that thei hadden.
And the queene was appareiled, she and hir ladyes and maidens and dameselles,
richely as longeth to soche an high feeste. And whan thei hadde ronge to high
masse, thei wente alle to the mynster and herde the servise that the archebisshop
dide singe. And that day bar Arthur crowne, and the Queene Gonnore his wif.
And the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Bohors were crowned also for the love of hem.
And after masse thei com to the halle where the clothes were leyde; and the lordes
were sette thourgh the halle as thei owe for to be.

That day served Gawein at the high deyse theras the foure kynges seten. And
Kay the Stiward, and Lucas the Boteller, and Sir Ewein le Graunt the sone of
Kynge Urien, and Gifflet, and Ewein Avoutres, and Segramor, and Dodinell le
Savage, and Kay Destranx, and Kehedins ly Bens, and Kehedins le Petit, and
Ayglyn des Vaux that was his brother, and Galeantius the Walsh, and Blyoberis,
and Galescowde, and Colegrevault, and Lanval, and Aglovall, and Ewein Esclains,

303 cowde, knew; **that**, so that. **304 recovered**, found. **307 that**, so that. **308 wisten**,
knew; **pees**, peace. **310 somowned**, summoned. **311 spedde**, done. **313 er**, before. **315**
forfeit, the damage; **hym**, i.e., Arthur. **321 longeth to**, is right for. **323 bar**, wore; **crowne**,
the crown. **326 owe for to**, should. **327 deyse**, dais; **theras**, where.

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and Ewein de Lionell, and Ewein White Hande, and Guyomar, and Synados, and Gosevain Hardy Body, and Agravain the Prowde, and Gueheret, and Gaheries, 335 and Acon de Bemonde — and alle these twenty-one served at the high deyse. And forty other yonge bachelers served at other tables therynne. And thei were so well served of alle maner thinges that never peple were better.

And whan alle the meesse were served in, than spake the Kynge Arthur so lowde that alle that were in the halle myght it heren, and he seide: “Now lordinges, 340 alle ye that ben come here into my courte me for to gladen and counforte, I yelde yow graces and thonkinge for the honour and the joye that ye have me don, and that ye be come for to do. And I do yow to wite that I will stablissh to my courte alle the tymes that I shall bere crowne, that never from hensforth shall I not sitte to mete into the tyme that I here some straunge tydinge or elles some aventure, be 345 soche forwarde, that yef it be myster, I shall do it to be redressed by the knyghtes of my court, whiche for prise and honour hiderto repeire, and ben my frendes and my felowes and my peres.” And whan the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table herde this avow that the kynge hadde imade, thei spake togeder and seiden, “Seeth that the kynge hath made avow in his courte, hit behoveth that we make oure avow.” 350 And thei acorded alle to oon thinge, and therwith thei charged Nascien to reherse it before the kynge.

Than wente alle the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table; and Nascien began to speke before the kynge so high that thei alle myght here that were in the halle. “Sir,” 355 seide Nascien, “the Kyngthes of the Rounde Table be come here to God and in youre audyence and to alle the barouns that here ben. Inasmuche as ye have made avow, thei make here another that shall ever endure while her life lasteth, that yef eny maiden have eny nede, or come to youre courte for to seche helpe or socour by so that it may be acheved by the body of oon knyght agein another, thei will with goode will go into what contrey she will hem ledn hir for to delyver, and 360 make alle the wronges to be redressed that to hir hath be done.” And whan the kynge this undirstode, he asked of the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table yef thei dide

338 **meesse were served in**, dinner had been served. 340 **yelde**, give. 344 **into**, until; **here**, hear; **be**, by. 345 **forwarde**, promise; **yef it be myster**, if there is need; **do**, cause. 346 **prise**, fame; **hiderto repeire**, hither are come. 347 **peres**, peers. 348 **Seeth**, Since. 350 **acorded alle**, all agreed; **reherse**, say. 353 **high**, loudly; **here**, hear. 354 **to**, before. 356 **yef**, if. 358 **by so that**, of such a kind that.

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graunte to that as Nascien hadde seide. And thei seiden, “Ye.” And to this thei wolde be sworn hit for to mayntene, and not to spare for lif ne for deth.

And than began the joye gretter than it hadde byfore. And whan Gawein undirstode the joye that thei maden for the avowes that were ther istablisshed, he seide to his felowes, as he that cowde all norture and curtesie, “Sirs,” seide Gawein, “yef eche of yow will acorde to that I shall seyn, I shall ofre soche avow wherof shall come to yow and to me grete honour alle the dayes of oure lif.” And thei ansuerde and seide that thei wolde graunte and assente to alle that ever he wolde speke with his mowthe. “Than,” quod he, “assureth me youre feith to holde me companye.” And anoon thei hym assured, and were twenty-four be counte.

Whan that Sir Gawein hadde take the feith of his felowes, he come before the Queene and seide: “Madame, I and my felowes be come to yow and praye yow and requere that ye will withholde us to be youre knyghtes and youre meyné. That whan thei come in eny strange contrey to seche loos and pris, yef eny man hem aske with whom thei be and of what londe, than thei may seyn of the reame of Logres and be the Knyghtes of Queene Gonnore, the wif of Kynge Arthur.” Whan the queene undirstode this, she dressed hir upstondinge and seide, “Feire nevew, gramercy to yow and to hem alle, for I yow resceyve with gladde chere as lordes and my frendes; and as ye offre yow to me, so I offre me to yow with trewe herte. And I pray God, lete me so long lyve that I may yow guerdon of the worship and the curtesie that ye promyse me for to do.”

“Madame,” seide Gawein, “we be alle youre knyghtes. And ye have us withholde, God it yow quyte. Now shull we make avow: that what man or woman cometh to yow for to seche socour or helpe ageyn the body of oon knyght, he shall not faile to have oon of us to delyver hym body for body, and go with hem into what contrey thei will us bringe. And whiche of us so it be that take eny soche journey on hande, and hit happe that he come not agein withynne a moneth, eche oon of us shall go for to seche hym sool by hymself a yere and a day withoute repeire to

362 graunte to that as, assent to what. **363 ne**, nor. **364 it hadde**, there had been. **366 cowde**, knew; **norture**, manners. **367 ofre**, offer. **371 be, by**. **374 withholde**, claim; **meyné**, company. **375 come in**, go into; **seche**, seek; **loos and pris**, fame and honor. **375–76 eny man hem aske**, anyone asks them. **378 dressed hir upstondinge**, stood up. **381 guerdon of**, reward for. **383 And**, And since; **withholde**, claimed. **384 quyte**, reward. **389 sool**, alone; **repeire**, returning.

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390 courte, but yef withynne that terme he can bringe trewe tydinges of his felowe. And whan thei be come to court, everyche shall telle his aventures that hym befalleth in the tyme, whatsoever thei be, gode or evell; and thei shull be sworn to sey the trouthe of all, bothe in the goynge and in the comynge."

395 Whan the queene undirstode the avow that Gawein hadde made, she was the gladdest woman in the worlde, and the kynge was glader than eny other that was in the courte. And for the kynge wolde comforte the queene he seide, "Dame, seth God hath ordeyned yow this honour to have so feire a companye, some curtesie moste I do for the love of hem, and also for the love of youre self. And wite ye wheroft I putte in youre governaunce my tresour in soche maner that ye be lady 400 and partyner of all at youre plesier." And whan the queene this herde, she kneeled before the kynge and seide, "Sir, gramercy."

405 And than the queene called Sir Gawein and seide, "Feire nevew, I will that foure clerkes be stablisshed hereynne that shull do nothinge elles but write the aventures that falle to yow and youre felowes, so that after youre deth it may be remembred the high prowesse of the worthi men hereynne." "Madame," seide Gawein, "I graunte." And than were ther chosen foure clerkes to write the aventures as thei fill into the courte fro thensforth. And than seide Gawein that he sholde not here speke of noon aventure but he sholde go to seche it; and he and his felowes sholde do so moche that thei sholde bringe therof trewe tidings to courte. And so 410 seiden the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table in the same manere. And allwey fro thensforth was Sir Gawein and his felowes called the Queenes Knyghtes.

415 With that were the clothes taken up, and than began the joye right grete of oon and other therynne. But over alle other that were therynne was iherde Dagenet of Clarion, for he made gret myrthe amonge hem so that alle thei behelde hym for merveile. But a fooll he was of nature, and the moste coward pece of flessch that was in the worlde. This Dagenet began to trippe and daunce and cried so lowde with high voyse and seide, "Tomorow shall I so seche these aventures," and seide to Gawein, "Will ye come? And ye, Sir Ewein and Segramor, will ye come thider that be so feire and moche? And ye lordinges of the Rounde Table? Certes, I

390 **but yef**, unless. 391 **everyche**, everyone. 396 **wolde comforte**, wished to please; **seth**, since. 398 **moste**, must; **wite**, know. 399 **wheroft**, therefore. 402 **will**, wish. 412 **With that**, Then; **clothes taken up**, tablecloths removed. 413 **iherde**, heard. 415 **fooll**, clown. 419 **moche**, large.

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420 trowe not that ye have the herte ne the hardynesse me for to sewen ther I shall go
tomorowe."

Thus seide Dagenet the Coward, and the knyghtes therat lowen and hadde grete
game. And withoute faile, he hym armed many tymes and wente into the forestes
and henge his shelde on an oke and smote it so that alle the colours were faded
425 and the shelde tohakked in many places. And than wolde he seyn that he hadde
slayn a knyght or tweyne; and whan he mette eny knyght armed, he turned to
flight as fer as he myght here hym speke at the leeste. And many tymes fill yef he
mette eny knyght erraunt that were pensif that spake no worde, he wolde take hym
by the bridell and lede hym forth as he hadde hym taken. Of soche maners was
430 Dagenet, and yet he was right a feire knyght and of high lynage, and yet it semed
not by his countenaunce that he was soche a fooll.

420 sewen ther, follow where. **422 lowen**, laughed. **424 henge**, hung. **425 tohakked**,
hacked all to pieces; **seyn**, say. **427 fill yef**, it happened if. **429 as**, as if.

[The Tournament at Logres; King Lot and his Sons; and Morgan and Gyomar]

[Summary. Still chaffing over their humiliation in the Tournament at Toraise, the Knights of the Round Table challenge the Queen's Knights to compete in a tournament at Logres. Arthur, fearing a repetition of the malice and rancor that surfaced previously, asks Gawain to promise that it will not occur this time, but Gawain refuses to do so. King Ban advises Arthur to arm another group and hold them in reserve in case trouble develops.

The Knights of the Round Table take on a group of Gawain's young knights, who are assisted by King Lot's knights. When the Round Table Knights begin to get the upper hand, Gawain, Ewain, Sagremor, and Gifflet rush into the fray and drive their opponents back toward the river. Now greatly incensed, the Round Table Knights decide to arm themselves with "speres, grete and rude" — weapons whose use had been forbidden. Seeing what their foes are going to do, Gawain and his fellows decide to do likewise. Now the fighting becomes bitter and intense, with the two sides acting as if they are fighting a "mortal werre." Gawain unsheathes Calibourne and kills forty men himself. The Round Table Knights flee, with Gawain and his fellowship in pursuit. At this point Arthur and the three kings rush to the scene and intervene. Arthur rebukes Gawain, but Gawain insists that the real fault lies with the Round Table Knights. King Lot sternly berates his son, telling him to end his folly. At last Gawain begins to cool down.

The knights retire from the field, wash themselves, and then return to the court. The Knights of the Round Table agree to make amends, which pleases the king and queen. Gawain, however, remains hostilely silent. The king reproves Gawain for continuing in his anger. The queen, in a gentler fashion, urges Gawain to leave his anger and reminds him that all of Arthur's men should "love eche other and helpe agein alle peple; and yef youre enmyes come agein yow, to hem ye sholde be fierce, and not to hem that tomorrow shull put her bodyes in aventure of deth for my lorde." Gawain, moved by the queen's words, says he will do as she wishes. The Round Table Knights bow down to Gawain and ask him to pardon them. Gawain then joins their fellowship, and all of Arthur's knights agree never to tourney against each other again. The other Queen's Knights also become members of the Round Table, making a total of 90 Round Table Knights. Later, the author says, that number will become 400.

Tidings are brought to the people of Britain concerning the "Seint Graal," the holy

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vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea collected the blood that flowed from Christ's wounded side. They learn that this holy vessel, along with the Holy Spear, have come from heaven to the City of Sarras, and from there out into the world. Now no one knows what has become of them. Indeed, they are told that these objects will never be found until the coming of the best knight of the world. After learning this, Arthur's knights invite all the best knights from other countries to join their knightly fellowship. Fols. 172v (line 28)–179r (line 29).]

Full gladde and jocounde were the companye of the Rounde Table for that thei were accorded with Sir Gawein. And full moche thei hym preised and comended for the grete prowesse that thei saugh hym do at this turnement, and seide amonge hem in counseile that ten the best knyghtes therynne sholde not agein hym endure, body for body. Thus the knyghtes therynne seide theire volonté. But moche more spake the ladyes and the maydenes in the chambers. Than was water asked; and whan thei hadde waisshen, than sat every knyght as hym ought for to do. And the Quenes Knyghtes were sette by the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table. And the Kynge Arthur and the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Bohors and the Kynge Looth sat at the high deyse as thei ought for to do, and mo sat ther not but thei foure. And that day served Gawein and Kay the Stiward and Lucas the Botiller and Gifflet and other aboute a forty.

[Summary. After dinner, the four kings retire to a chamber and discuss what they should do in regard to the Saxons. Lot believes that if all of the British barons would unite behind Arthur, they could drive the Saxons out; he suggests that they ask the Saxons for a year's truce. Ban urges Lot to take that message to the Saxons, and Lot agrees to do so. Fols. 179v (line 6)–180r (line 23).]

Whan the Kynge Looth saugh how thei accorded that he sholde go upon this nede, he knewe well how thei hadde reson. Than he seide he wolde go and have with hym his foure sones. “Trewly,” seide the Kynge Bohors, “yef thei bene with yow, than have ye no drede of no man of moder born.” Whan [the Kynge Arthur] saugh that thei were to this accorded that the Kynge Looth sholde lede with hym his foure sones, he yaf a grete sigh, for he douted of Sir Gawein, in whom he 15 **jocounde**, cheerful; **for that**, because. 4 **agein**, against. 6 **asked**, called for. 10 **deyse**, dais. 12 **a forty**, forty more. 13 **acorded**, agreed. 14 **nede**, errand. 17 **lede**, take. 18 **douted of**, feared for.

The Tournament at Logres; King Lot and his Sons; and Morgan and Gyomar

hadde so tentefly sette his love, so that ther was nothinge in the worlde that he
20 loved so moche. And the quene knewe a partie of his thought and seide to the
kynge, “Sir, graunte the Kynge Looth to lede with hym his children hardely, for
thei shull have no drede yef God will; for the more thei be youre frendes the
better, and withe the more tendir herte shull thei do youre message as is nede,
more than sholde another that therof sette no charge. And lever I hadde that my
25 frende counseiled with myn enmyes than another that were straunge.”

“Dame,” seide the Kynge Arthur, “I me acorde, seth the barouns have it
ordeyned.” And than he seide to the Kynge Looth and praid hym to appareile
hym to go secretly that no man knewe whider he wolde go. With that was Gawein
30 cleped and his brethren that were pleyinge in the halle. And whan thei come to the
quene, she aroos and wente hem ageins and seide thei were welcome. And thei
dide yelde hir agein hir salew debonerly. Than Arthur tolde hem all as was de-
vised, how thei moste go on the message, and why thei hadde it amonge hem
purveyed. And than thei ansuerde and seide that it was goode for to be don.

After that seide the Kynge Looth to Sir Gawein, “Feire sone, goth forth and
35 appareile yow and youre brethern, that ye faile nought whan we shull go.” “Sir,”
seide Gawein, “what arayment sholde we have eny more but oure armours and
oure horse? We shull neither have somer ne male trussed, neither grete ne small,
but goode stedes and swyft on the whiche we shull ride, that may bere us to garison
40 yef myster be. Ne here behoveth noon abidinge, for yef ye do my counseile, we
shull meve yet this nyght at the first somme, and ride as grete journeyes as we
may, for soche a nede as this is sholde not be put in no delay.” “Trewly, nevew,”
seide Arthur, “ye sey soth. Now, go reste yow awhile and slepe.”

Than Gawein turned hym to the quene and seide, “Madame, I prey that ye thinke
on my felowes that leven here with yow, for the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table ne

19 **tentefly**, intensely. 21 **hardely**, boldly. 22 **no drede**, nothing to fear. 24 **lever I hadde**,
I would prefer. 25 **counseiled**, negotiated. 26 **me acorde**, concur; **seth**, since. 27 **ordeyned**,
proposed. 27–28 **appareile hym**, arrange. 28 **that¹**, so that; **whider**, where. 29 **cleped**,
summoned. 30 **hem ageins**, to them. 31 **yelde hir**, returned to her; **salew debonerly**, greeting
politely. 32 **moste**, must. 32–33 **amonge hem purveyed**, to them assigned. 36 **but**, be-
sides. 37 **somer ne male trussed**, pack horse nor bags packed. 38 **garison**, safety. 39 **yef myster**,
if need; **behoveth**, profits us; **noon abidinge**, no waiting. 40 **somme**, light. 43–44
41 **thinke on**, care for. 44 **leven**, remain.

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45 love not hem wele in herte, but have to hem envye, as ye knowe well youreself.
And paraventure whan I and my brethern be gon, thei will make some bourde or
some turnement agein hem; wherefore I praye yow, as my goode lady, that ye
suffre hem to make no party.” “And I yow graunte,” seide the quene, “that ther ne
shall noon be; yef my lorde will leve my counseile, ther shall never be turnement
50 as longe as the Saisnes be in this londe.” And than the kynge seide, “Be the feith
that I owe unto yow, no more ther sholde.” With that thei departed and wente to
theire chambres for to slepe and to reste; and thei that were in the halle wente to
theire hostelles and departeden.

But who that departed, Gyomar ne departed never but abode spekyng with
55 Morgain, the sustur of Kynge Arthur, in a wardrobe under the paleys, where she
wrought with silke and golde, for she wolde make a coyf for hir suster, the wif of
Kynge Looth. This Morgain was a yonge damesell, fressh and jolye. But she was
somewhat brown of visage and sangwein colour, and nother to fatte ne to lene, but
was full apert, avenaunt, and comely, streight and right plesaunt, and well syngynge.
60 But she was the moste hotest woman of all Breteigne and moste luxuriouse; and
she was a noble clergesse, and of astronomye cowde she inough, for Merlin hadde
hir taught. And after he lerned hir inough, as ye shull heren afterward, and so
moche she sette theron hir entent and lerned so moche of egramauncye that the
peple cleped hir afterward Morgain le Fee, the suster of Kynge Arthur, for the
65 merveiles that she dide after in the contrey. And the beste workewoman she was
with hir handes that eny man knewe in eny londe; and therto she hadde oon of the
feirest heed and the feirest handes under hevene, and sholdres well shapen at
devise. And she hadde feire eloquense, and tretable and full debonair she was, as
longe as she was in hir right witte; and whan she were wroth with eny man, she

46 **paraventure**, perhaps; **bourde**, game. 48 **suffre hem to make no party**, do not permit
them any such activity; **graunte**, promise. 50 **Saisnes**, Saxons; **Be, By**. 53 **departeden**,
separated. 54 **abode**, remained. 55 **wardrobe**, small room. 56 **wrought**, worked; **coyf**,
scarf. 58 **brown of visage**, dark-complexioned; **sangwein colour**, ruddy; **nother**, neither;
to, too. 59 **apert**, lively; **avenaunt**, cheerful; **streight**, slender. 60 **moste hotest**, lustiest;
luxuriouse, lecherous. 61 **clergesse**, scholar; **cowde**, knew. 62 **and**, then. 63 **egramauncye**,
necromancy. 66 **thereto**, also. 67 **feirest heed**, fairest heads; **sholdres**, shoulders. 67–68 **at
devise**, to see. 68 **tretable**, gracious; **debonair**, courteous. 69 **in hir right witte**, i.e.,
when calm; **and**, but.

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70 was evell for to acorde. And that was well shewed afterward, for hir that she sholde moste have loved of all the world dide she after the moste shame, wherof it was after alle the dayes of hir lif; and that was the Quene Gonnore, as that ye shull it heren hereafter, and wherfore it was.

75 Whan Guyomar entred into the chambre theras was Morgain the Fee, he hir salued full swetly, and she hym salued agein curteisly. And he sette hym down by hir and helped to wynde the threde of golde, and asked hir what she sholde therwith make. And he was a feire knyght and comly, well shapen, and his visage well coloured, and his heer was crull and yelowe, and was feire and plesaunt of body and of chere laughinge. And he aresoned hir of many thinges, and she beheilde 80 hym gladly and was well plesed with all that he seide and dide. And so longe thei spake togeder that he praied hir of love; and the more that she hym behilde, the better she was with hym plesed, and that she gan love hym so well that she refused nothinge that he wolde hir require. And whan he aparcseyved that she wolde suffre gladly his requeste, he began hir to embrace, and she hym suffred; and he began to kysse hir tenderly that bothe thei begonne to chauffe, as nature wolde, and fallen down on a grete bedde and pleyde the comen pley, as thei that gretly it desired. For yef he were desirouse, she was yet moche more, so that thei loved 85 hertely togeder longe tyme that noon it wiste. But after it knewe the Quene Gonnore, as ye shull here telle, wherfore thei were departed; and therfore she hated the quene and dide hir after gret annoye and of blames that she areised that ever endured while hir lif lasted. But now retourne we to Kynge Looth and his sones that 90 be go to slepe.

[*Summary. That night Lot and his sons set out. After riding for eight days they encounter a large party of Saxons. Clarion, one of the Saxon leaders, rides upon a magnificent horse. Fol. 181r (line 32)–181v (line 23).]*

70 **evell for to acorde**, vile tempered. 73 **wherfore**, why. 74 **theras**, where. 75 **salued**, greeted. 78 **crull**, curly. 79 **chere**, demeanor; **aresoned hir**, spoke to her; **beheilde**, considered. 82 **and that**, so that; **gan**, began to. 83 **aparcseyved**, saw. 85 **bothe thei**, both of them; **begonne to chauffe**, became excited; **nature wolde**, was natural. 86 **pleyde the comen pley**, i.e., made love. 87 **yef**, if. 88 **noon it wiste**, no one knew it; **after**, later. 89 **departed**, separated. 90 **annoye**, harm; **blames**, troubles; **areised**, caused. 92 **be go**, have gone.

Prose Merlin

This Clarion rode on Gringalet, an horse that was so cleped so for the grete bounté that he hadde. For as the storye seith, for ten myle rennyng abated he
95 never his corage ne hym neded no spore, ne no skyn of hym therfore ne sholde not swete. And whan the Saisnes hem saugh ridinge on her wey, thei knewe well by their armes and hir conysshaunce that thei were noon of her compayne; and thei hoved and abode. And whan Gawein saugh that, he hoved stille and bad his fader and his brethren to lepe upon their horses, and so thei dide delyverly. And the
100 gromes toke the palfreys and lept up and rode into the foreste that wey straight as their wey turned.

And thei com toward the Saisnes as the wey hem ledde, for thei deyned not to glenche. And mid-day was than passed and drough towarde noone. And so rode the Kynge Looth formest, and Gawein after, and his brethern hym beside a softe
105 paas. And whan thei hadde so riden that thei began to come nygh, than seide Gawein to his fader that he ne sholde entende to noon other thinge ne coveite but to perce hem thourghout — and to his brethern he seide the same — till thei were come on that other side.

Than the Saisnes hem ascride and seide, “Ye knyghtes that come ther, yelde
110 yow and telle us what ye be and what ye go sechinge.” And the Kynge Looth ansuerde, “We ben fyve messagiers of the Kynge Arthur that go on his erunde ther he hath us sente; and more will we not sey.” And thei seide, “Cesse and go no ferther; for we kepe the weyes in the name of Kynge Hardogabran and Orienx, the
115 sone of Brangue of Saxoyn, and in the name of Margrat, to whom we lede this pray and these prisoners; and of yow also shull we make present.” “Ye,” quod the Kynge Looth, “whan ye may!”

93 **so cleped so**, so named. 95 **corage**, strength; **ne**, nor; **no spore**, any spur. 95–96 **ne no skyn . . . swete**, nor did he anywhere show sweat. 96 **hem**, i.e., Lot and his sons. 97 **conysshaunce**, heraldic emblems. 98 **hoved and abode**, stopped and waited; **bad**, told. 99 **delyverly**, swiftly. 100 **gromes**, grooms. 103 **glenche**, turn aside; **noone**, 3 p.m. 104–05 **a softe paas**, an easy pace. 106 **ne sholde . . . coveite but**, should desire nothing but. 107 **perce hem thourghout**, ride right through them. 109 **hem ascride**, shouted to them. 110 **what**, who. 112 **Cesse**, Stop. 113 **kepe**, guard; **weyes**, roads. 114–15 **this pray**, these livestock. 116 **whan ye may**, i.e., if you can.

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[*Summary. King Lot and his sons charge through the Saxons, who turn and pursue them. When Lot's horse is killed, he fights on foot. Using Calibourne, Gawain defends his father against forty Saxons. Then he brings the horse of a dead Saxon to his father while his three brothers inflict great harm to the other Saxons. Lot and his sons then make another attempt to escape. Fols. 182r (line 10)–182v (line 14).]*]

And whan the thre kynges saugh hem departe, thei cried upon her men, “Now after hem, and lete not the traitours ascape.” Than thei passed the forde and chaced hem harde. And the Kynge Clarion that satte upon the Gringalet chaced hem formest the lengthe of an arblast. And Sir Gawein was behynde alle his felowes, his swerde in his hande all blody. And the sarazin that sore peyned hym to overtake ascribed hym, “Wy, yelde thee, or thou art but deed!” And Gawein loked and saugh the horse so swyftly renne that he gate grounde sore after hym; and gretly he hym coveited in his herte, and seide yef he myght gete soche an horse, he wolde not yeve it for the beste citee that Kynge Arthur hadde. And than he gan to ride a softer paas and rode walopinge; and Clarion hym enchased faste after.

And whan Gawein saugh he was come so nygh, he turned his shelde, and Clarion smote so harde hym upon the shelde that the spere fly on peces. And Gawein hym hitte upon the helme that he slytte thourgh the coif of mayle and the flessh to the harde boon, that he was so astoned that he fill in swowne to the grounde out of his sadill. And Gawein caught Gringalet be the bridell and ledde hym to a grove ther faste by of half a myle. And his fader rode alwey forth before and his thre sones, and entended to nougnt elles but to go theire wey, and wende thei hadde alle foure be by hym. And the duste and the powder was so thikke that oon myght not se fer from hym; and so thei hadde lefte Gawein behynde the space of half a myle.

And whan Gawein was come into the grove, he sawgh the five gromes come oute of the foreste that rode on the five palfreyes, and than was he gladde and preised hem moche for that thei hadde peyned hem sore hem for to sewe. Than he alight of his horse and lept on the Gringalet, and toke his horse to oon of the

117 **her**, their. 120 **arblast**, bow shot. 121 **sore peyned**, tried hard. 121–22 **ascribed hym**, shouted at him. 122 **Wy**, Man (Wight). 123 **gate**, gained; **sore**, quickly. 125 **yeve**, i.e., trade. 126 **walopinge**, galloping. 130 **swowne**, a swoon. 133 **entended**, attended; **nought elles**, nothing else; **wende**, thought. 134 **se fer**, see far. 138 **peyned hem sore hem for to sewe**, taken great pains them to follow.

Prose Merlin

140 gromes for to lede, and comaundered hem to go after his fader and his brethern that were gon before, and bidde hem spedhe hem faste on hir journey. “And I shall folowe anoon after, but I will se where these peple will be come.” But he abode for nougnt, for thei chaced no ferther after thei fonde the Kynge Clarion lyinge, but stode abowte hym and wende well he hadde ben deed, and made gret doel that
145 Sir Gawein myght here the crye ther he was.

[Summary. Lot and his sons, discovering that Gawain is not with them, mourn his demise. But then the grooms arrive with the palfreys and tell them that Gawain is safe. Meanwhile, Gawain sets upon the Saxons, who chase him but are not able to catch the fleet-footed Gringolet. Then Lot and his sons ride to Gawain's aid, slaying many of the Saxons. The remaining Saxons ride back to Clarion; Lot and his sons ride on their way until evening. Fols. 183r (line 6)–184v (line 15).]

150 And the Kynge Loot and his sones saugh it drough to nyght and rode forth theire wey, but who hadde sein theire armours, he myght have seide thei hadde not ben at sojourne, for theire sheldes were slitte and theire helmes tohewen and theire armours all torrente and theire horse all blode and brayn; and it semed that out of stronge stour thei were departed, with that thei be come to the grove ther
155 the gromes hem abiden. And thei alight of theire horse and lepe on the palfreyes. And the gromes ledde theire horse and bare theire speres and theire sheldes and theire helmes, and rode thourgh the wode that was grete till it was fer in the nyght. And the mone shone right clier till that thei come to a forester, that was a goode man and hadde foure sones that were feire yonge bachelers and hadde a wif that was a goode lady.

160 This foresters place was stronge and well closed with depe ditches full of water, and was environed with grete okes; and therto it was so thikke of busshes and of thornes and breres that noon wolde have wende that ther hadde be eny habitacion. Thider com the Kynge Loot and his foure sones at the first cok crowinge, and

142 anoon, soon. 142–43 abode for nougnt, waited in vain. 144 wende, thought; that, so that. 145 ther, where. 147 who, whoever. 148 at sojourne, idle. 150 stronge stour, fierce battle; with that, when; ther, where. 151 gromes, grooms; of, off. 153 grete, large. 154 that², who. 157 closed, enclosed. 158 environed, surrounded by; therto, near. 159 breres, briars; noon wolde have wende, no one would have thought.

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happed that her wey hem ledde to a posterne wherby men entred into the place, and made oon of theire gromes to crie and knokke till the yate was opened. And oon of the foresteres sones hem asked what thei were; and thei seide thei were five erraunt knyghtes that wente upon theire grete nede. “Sirs,” seide the yonge
165 man, “ye be welcome,” and ledde hem into the middill of the court, and thei alight of theire horse. And ther were inowe that ledde hem to stable and yaf hem hay and otes, for the place was well stuffed.

And a squyer hem ledde into a feire halle be the grounde, hem for to unarme.
170 And the vavasour and his wif and his foure sones that he hadde and his tweyne doughtres dide arise and light up torches and other lightes therynne, and sette water to the fier and waissched theire visages and theire handes, and after hem dried on feire toweiles and white, and than brought eche of hem a mantell. And the vavasour made cover the tables and sette on brede and wyne grete foysone, and venyson and salt flessh grete plenté. And the knyghtes sat down and ete and dranke
175 as thei that therto have grete nede. The vavasours two doughtres behilde Sir Gawein tenderly and his brethern, and sore thei merveiled what thei myght be. And the foresters foure sones served before the knyghtes, and the maidenes served of wyn. And the lady satte before Sir Gawein, and the hoste before Agravain and Gueheret and Gaheries togeder; and the Kynge Loot satte even beside his hoste a litill above.
180 And thei were well served as aboute soche hour, for it was full nygh mydnyght.

[Summary. When King Lot discovers that the forester is the liegeman of King Clarion of Northumberland and that his wife is related to several of Arthur's knights, he tells the forester that all of the barons are to assemble at a certain place in Scotland on St. Bartholomew's Day; the forester agrees to take that message to Clarion. The story then turns to King Pelles of Lystenoys, the brother of King Pellynor. King Pelles's son wishes to go to Arthur's court and receive his arms from Gawain, who he says is the best knight of the world. The youth sets out, accompanied by one squire, but they soon encounter the Saxons, who chase them. With the Lord's help, they defend themselves from the Saxons, killing several of them. Fols. 184v (line 12)–187v (line 4).]

161 **her**, their; **posterne**, back gate. 162 **crie**, shout. 163 **what**, who. 167 **otes**, oats; stuffed, supplied. 168 **be the grounde**, through the grounds. 169 **vavasour**, landholder. 173 **foysone**, quantity. 174 **salt flessh**, salted meat. 175 **behilde**, looked at. 176 **merveiled**, wondered; **what**, who. 180 **as aboute soche**, for such.

Prose Merlin

Whan the Kynge Looth and his foure sones were departed from the forester,
thei rode thourgh the foreste that was grete and high and delitable in for to traveile.
And it was feire weder and stille, and that nyght hadde ben a grete dewe; and the
185 briddes songen for swetnesse of the myry seson, and thei songe so myrily and so
high in theire langage that all the wode ronge. And the kynge hem herkened, and
his foure sones that were yonge and lusty, and remembred hem on theire newe
loves. And so thei ride a two myle, thinkinge on the briddes songe. And Gaheries,
that was amourouse, began for to singe a newe made songe; and he songe right
wele and merily and well entuned. And whan the sonne was up and he saugh his
190 brethern were somwhat fer behynde hym, he turned beside the wey to make his
horse stale till thei were come to hym, for thei herkened hym gladly. And Gaheries
com to Agravain and to Geheret and seide, “Let us singe”; and than thei begonne
to singe alle thre.

And than seide Gaheries to Agravain and to Gueheret, “Now telle me by the
195 feith that ye owe to the Kynge Looth my fader and yours, yef ye hadde the two
doughtres of oure hoste that was this nyght and thei were now here, telle me, what
wolde ye do?” “So God me helpe,” seide Agravain, “I sholde have my wille.” “So
helpe me God,” seide Gaheries, “so wolde not I do, but I wolde bringe hem to
saftee. And ye, Gueheret, what wolde ye do?” Quod Gueheret, “I sholde make hir
200 my love, yef I myght therto hir entrete; but be force wolde I nothinge do, for than
were the game nought but yef it plesed hir as well as me.”

While thei seide these wordes, overtoke hem the Kynge Looth and Gawein that
wele hadde herde that thei hadde seide. And thei lough alle togeder. And than thei
asked whiche hadde seide beste. “Of that,” quod the kynge, “shall Gawein youre
205 brother by juge.” “And I shall soone have seide,” quod Gawein. “Gaheries hath
seide beste and Agravain werste, for Agravain sholde se that noon dide hem noon
harme but sholde helpe to diffende hem at his power; but me semeth ther were no

182 **delitable**, delightful. 184 **briddes songen**, birds sung. 185 **high**, loudly; **wode ronge**,
woods rang; **hem herkened**, listened to them. 186 **remembred hem on**, thought about.
187 **thinkinge on**, listening to. 188 **that**, who; **amourouse**, in love; **newe**, newly. 191
stale, wait. 192 **begonne**, began. 195 **yef**, if. 197 **wille**, desires. 200 **be**, by. 201 **nought**,
worth nothing; **but yef**, unless. 202 **that**, what. 203 **lough**, laughed. 205 **by**, be. 206–07 **se**
that noon dide hem noon harme, see that no one harmed them.

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werse enmy than he. And Geheret hath yet seide better than he, for he seith he wolde nothinge do be force; and that he seith so cometh hym but of love and curtesie. And Gaheries hath seide as a goode man, for so as he seith wolde I do the same, yef it were for me to do.”

And than thei lough and japed with Agravain, and the kynge hymself more than eny other, and rode to Agravain and seide, “What, Agravain, hadde ye the doughter of youre hoste for youre foule delite, a feire rewarde yelde ye for the feire servise and the goode chere that she hath yow don, for trewly, she hath it evill besette.” “Sir,” seide Agravain, “thei sholde not therfore have no mayme of hande ne foote.” “No, “ quod the kynge, “but thei shull lese all worship.” “I cannot sey,” quod Agravain, “of eny man that wolde hem spare, yef he hadde hem alone by hymself, for after that he lete her passe, she sholde hym never love.” “But he sholde kepe and save his honour,” seide the kynge. “Certes,” seide Agravain, “never after he hadde lefte hir, she wolde but skorne and preyse hym the lesse.” Quod the kynge, “I wolde not sette at a boton what oon seide, so that my worship were saved, so that I hadde no vylonye ne reprof.” “Ya, ther is no more of,” quod Agravain, “but we shull us ylden into soche place ther we shull se no women.” “Ha, Agravain,” quod the Kynge Looth, “yef ye yow thus demene as ye sey, wite ye well ye shull myscheve, and that shull ye well se.”

And even as the kynge seide, so hym befill after that he langwissid longe above the erthe for the vilonye that he dide to a mayden that rode with hir frende with whom he faught till that he hadde hym discounfited and maymed of oon of his armes. And after wolde [he] have leyen by his love, and fonde hir roynouse of oon of hir thighes; and [he] seide hir soche vilonye that she after hurte his oo thigh and his arme so that it sholde never be made hooll, but yef it were be tweyne of the best knyghtes of the worlde, to whom she sette terme of garison. And the booke

208 seide, said; **seith**, says. **212 japed**, joked. **214 yelde**, yield. **215 evill besette**, evilly received. **216 no mayme of hande ne foote**, i.e., any physical harm. **217 lese all worship**, i.e., be disgraced. **222 sette at a boton**, set at the value of a button. **224 ylden into**, go to; **ther**, where. **225 demene**, believe. **226 myscheve**, have trouble. **227 hym befill after**, it befell him later; **langwissid**, suffered. **230 roynouse**, ruinous (diseased). **231 seide hir soche vilonye**, said such mean things; **oo**, one. **232 hooll**, whole; **but yef**, unless; **be tweyne of the**, by one of the two. **233 terme of garison**, condition of relief.

Prose Merlin

shall yow devyse hereafter how that it was warisshed by Gawein his brother and
235 by Launcelot de Lak that was so noble a knyght. But of this mater speketh no more at this tyme, but returneth how the Kynge Looth speketh to his sone Agravain that was pownde and fell. And thus thei rode in the foreste till it was paste pryme.

[Summary. Lot and his sons meet the squire of King Pelles's son, who has become separated from him. Then, seeing King Pelles's son being chased by Saxons, they ride to his aid and fight the Saxons. It is a difficult fight in which Gawain performs great deeds. At one point Gaheris rescues his father. The Saxons finally retreat, and Lot and the others escape into the forest. Fols. 188r (line 22)–190v (line 29).]

Whan the Saisnes were discounfited in the Valey of Rorestok, the Kynge Looth was gladdé for the squyer that thei hadde rescowed. And than thei wente to the somers that the Saisnes sholde have ledde to the siege before Clarence, and gadered hem togeder and behelde hem gretly. And than seide Gaheris a worde that was well herde. “Lord God!” quod he, “why be ther so many pore bachelers in the contrey whan thei myght thus wynne inough? Certes, thei lose nothinge but for slouthe and cowardise, for thei ne sholde not slepe in no bedde but wayte aboue 240 on the marches.” “Feire sone,” seide the kynge, “so myght thei have evell suerté, for who that soche thinge will undirtake, yef oon tyme hym happe wele, hit falleth 245 hym foure tymes evell.”

And than seide Gaheris to his fader, “Sir, aske Agravain my brother yef he have eny talent now to rage within these maydenes, yef he hadde hem here on this playn.” And Agravain loked on hym a traverse full proudly and seide to hym in reprof, “Gaheris, it is not longe tyme past that ye hadde no talent to jape whan the Saisne smote yow down of youre horse with his axe; and ne hadde be Gawein, ye hadde mette with hym in evell tyme.” “Though I fell,” quod Gaheris, “I may no more do therto. But I was not at so grete myschef, but I me diffended so as it 250 myght be. And of that ye myght wele have holde youre pees, for I saugh yow

234 **warisshed**, accomplished. 237 **fell**, cruel; **pryme**, 9 a.m. 238 **discounfited**, defeated.

240 **somers**, pack horses. 245 **evell suerté**, certain misfortune. 246 **happe wele**, succeeds.

247 **evell**, badly. 249 **talent**, desire; **rage within**, flirt with; **maydenes**, maidens. 250 **a**

traverse, a glance. 251 **talent**, desire. 252 **Saisne**, Saxon; **ne hadde be**, if not for. 253–54

may no more do therto, i.e., do not deny it. 254 **myschef**, danger. 255 **pees**, peace.

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today at soche pointe that though the feirest lady of the worlde hadde preide yow
of love, ye wolde not have ansuered hir a worde, for a maiden of five yere of age
myght have take from yow youre breche!"

And whan Agravain undirstode this, he was wroth and angry and for that he
260 cleped hym recreaunt. Wax he rody for shame and loked on hym with maltalement;
and yef thei hadden be alone, he wolde with hym have foughten. But the kynge
turned the wordes into other maner, for he wolde not have in no wise distrif
betwene hem two. And than he asked what sholde be do with the somers. "Sir,"
265 quod Gaheries, "asketh of Agravain." And than began Agravain sore to wrathe
and seide he sholde it abeyen, and hilde a tronchon of a spere in his honde and
smote Gaheries on the helme that it fly all to peces; and Gaheries remeved not but
suffred. And Agravain recovered and smote twys or thries so that nought of the
tronchon lefte in his handes. And his brother Gueheret ne hys fader cowde hem
not so deparate, but ever he ran upon hym as he myght from hem ascape.

270 Than com Gawain from the chace, and asked what aray that was. And the kynge
tolde hym all, worde for worde. And Gawein com to Agravain and blamed hym
sore for that he hadde so idon. And Agravain swor all that he myght swere that
never he wolde it hym foryeve. And whan Gawein undirstode the grete felonye,
275 he seide he sholde abyde on his body but yef he wolde be ruled. "Fy," quod
Agravain, "in despite of the devell this were of the newe that I sholde lette for
yow to do ought!" "Now shall it be sene," quod Gawein, "what thou wilt do."
Than Agravain smote the horse with the spores and ran to Gaheries with swerde
drawen, and smote hym on the helme that the fire sparclde oute. Ne Gaheries ne
remeved litill ne moche, for nothinge that he dide. And whan Gawein saugh his,
280 he drough oute Calibourne and swor by his fader sowle that in evell tyme he
hadde it begonne.

And whan the fader behilde all this he seide, "Now upon hym, feire sone! And

256 **at soche pointe**, i.e., so scared. 258 **breche**, breeches. 259 **and for that**, because. 260
recreaunt, coward; **maltalement**, malice. 262 **distrif**, strife. 263 **do**, done; **somers**, pack
horses. 265 **it abeyen**, pay for it; **tronchon**, shaft. 268 **lefte**, remained; **ne**, nor; **cowde**,
could. 270 **what aray that was**, i.e., what was going on. 273 **felonye**, wrong. 274 **abye**,
pay; **be ruled**, be controlled. 275 **of the newe**, something new. 275–76 **lette for yow to do**
ought, stop because you might do something. 278–79 **Ne Gaheries . . . litill ne moche**,
i.e., Gaheris remained still. 281 **it**, i.e., this strife.

Prose Merlin

go sle this harlot, for he is fell and proude!" And Gawein thought well what he wolde do, and com to Agravain and smote hym with the pomell of his swerde under the temple that he fill from his horse to the erthe so astoned that he wiste not where he was. And Gaheries seide to Gawein, "Sir, be not wroth for nothinge that he doth to me, for he is fell and proude; and therfore taketh nothinge to herte that he doth to me ne seith." "Fle from hens," quod Gawein, "mysproude lurdeyn! Never shall I love thee, whan thou wilt not spare for my lorde my fader, ne for noon of us." "Sir," seide Gaheries, "he is myn elther brother, and it sitteth me to do hym honour and reverence; ne for nothinge that I dide ne seide to him, ne dide I but jape."

"He is a fole and prowde," quod Gueheret, "but all that hast thow meved, and therfore have thow evelle happe." And Gaheries hym ansuerde, "Full evelle sholde I pleye with a straunger whan I may not pleyn nother with yow ne with hym. And wyte ye well," quod he, "this is the firste tyme and the laste that ever I shall pleye or jape with hym or with yow; and yef it were not for because that we be comen ute togeder, I wolde returne anoon right that no more compayne sholde I yow holde." And Geheret seide agein, "Evell happe have Agravain but he quyte yow this dere for this acolee that he hath hadde for yow."

"So God me helpe," quod Gawein, "yef owther of yow do enythinge othirwise than ye owe to do, I shall sette yow in soche place where ye shull not se nother hande ne foote this seven monethes. And therfore I diffende yow as dere as ye have youre owne bodyes that ye loke ye do hym noon evelle." "Sir," seide Gueheret, "we shull kepe us therfro right wele, seth ye it comaunde; for agein youre comaundement ne may we not do, ne we will not, but it hevyeth me whan ye will medle yow agein us for hym, and that ye have Agravain thus diffouled for nought." "For nought is it not," quod Gawein, "whan agein my deffence he ran upon hym in dispite of me, in my fader sight and myn. Ne never Gaheries ne wrathed for buffet

283 harlot, rascal; **fell**, mean. **285 astoned**, stunned. **288 mysprude lurdeyn**, prideful villain. **290 elther**, older; **sitteth me**, is right for me. **293 fole**, fool; **meved**, i.e., started. **294 evelle happe**, misfortune. **298 anoon right**, right now. **299 but**, unless; **quyte**, repay. **300 acolee**, blow. **301 yef**, if; **owther**, either. **302 owe**, ought. **303 diffende**, charge; **dere**, dearly. **304 have**, hold; **noon evelle**, no harm. **306 hevyeth**, grieves. **307 medle yow**, turn yourself; **diffouled**, injured; **nought**, no reason. **308 agein**, against; **deffence**, command. **308–09 in dispite of**, as an insult to. **309 wrathed**, got angry; **buffet**, blow.

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310 that he hym yaf. In dispite of the devell sholde he be so proude, for his pride shall greve bothe thee and hym."

"So helpe me God," quod the Kynge Looth, "For litill I shall take awey all the armes that thou haste, and of Agravain also, and leve yow in myddell of the felde like lurdeynes." "Sir," seide Gueheret, "ye speke not of this of youre owen mouthe but of others; for of this that ye sey ye have no talent for to do ne power, yef other ne were." "Ha, boyes!" quod the kynge, "thow art fell and forswollen. Verilé art thou his brother, for ye bothe be contrariouse. And I comaunde my sone Gawein that yef thou or Agravain do ought to my sone Gaheries that he do upon yow as grete reddure as upon harlottes or ribaudes."

320 Whan the squyer saugh that Gawein hadde smyte down Agravain that he bledde bothe at mouthe and nose, he ran to take his horse and brought hym by the bridill and made hym for to lepen up. And Gawein com to hym and seide, "Harlot, fle from hens! For with thee have I nought to do. And loke that I se thee never more in my compayne! And go where thou wilt, for with me shalt thou come no more. 325 And go ye alle forth with hym that love hym better than me, and with me that love my compayne."

[Summary. The young squire who is son of King Pelles now reveals his name; he is called Elizer; he says he has come to be knighted by Gawain. That night they lodge with a hermit. Hearing cries for help, Gawain and Elizer ride to the aid of a woman and a knight. Gawain rescues the lady from six attackers, while Elizer rescues the knight; they take them to the Castle of Roestok. In the morning Lot's party rides on to Cambenyk, where Duke Escam is being besieged by the Saxons. They tell the duke of the meeting of all the barons to be held in Scotland; then follows a great battle with the Saxons. Duke Escam sends messengers to the other barons, informing them of the meeting to be held on the Nativity of the Virgin. Lot and his sons proceed to the meeting place, and the barons arrive there also. Fols. 192r (line 2)–199r (line 19).]

And whan thei were alle assembled, the Kynge Looth seide that on the morowe he wolde telle wherfore he hadde made hem to assemble. And this was on Seint

310 **In dispite of**, To shame. 312 **litill**, a little. 313 **haste**, have. 314 **lurdeynes**, felons. 315 **talent**, desire. 316 **boyes**, uncouth youths; **fell**, cruel; **forswollen**, enraged; **Verilé**, Truly. 319 **reddure**, punishment; **harlottes**, rascals; **ribaudes**, thieves. 322 **Harlot**, Vilain. 328 **wherfore**, why.

Prose Merlin

Marie Even in Septembre. And eche of hem made to other grete joye and myrthe,
330 and rested ther all that nyght.

And on the morowe, thei assembled togeder all the prevy counseile and Sir
Gawein and his thre bretheren. And whan thei weren all sette upon a cloth of silke
that was leide upon the grene grasse, than aroos Gawein by the comaundement of
his fader the Kynge Looth, and seide: “Feire lordes, we be come hider for to speke
335 with yow in the name of the Kynge Arthur with whom we be. And my lorde yow
sendeth and prayeth as to hem that he wolde gladly have to his frendes yef it
myght be, that ye sholde yeve hym trewys saf to come and saf to go by feith and
suerté betwene this and Yole. And ye also to go and come thourgh his power
suerly, and he in yours at youre plesier. For yef it plese yow that we go alle togeder
340 and fight with the Saisnes that be come into this contrey till that we have hem oute
chaced, and yef God will ordeyne, that thei be discounfited, than acorde yow
togeder yef ye may be, and the pardon is yoven and graunted to alle tho that will
go fight with the Saisnes, that thei shull be clene quyte of alle ther synnes as thei
were the day of theire birthe.”

345 Whan the princes herde the request of Sir Gawein of that he dide hem amonesté,
thei asked the Kynge Looth his advise. And he seide it was the grettest bounté that
ever was seide or don. “And I do yow to wite I sey it nothinge for that I am his
sworn man, but I sey as longe as ye have ben ageins hym ye have myshapped, for
as I trowe this peple hadde never entred into this londe yef we hadde holden togeder,
350 and knowe it verily that it cometh thourgh oure synnes.”

“What!” seide the Kynge Urien. “Have ye don hym homage? Ye have nothinge
do as a trewe knyght, and I will telle yow whi, for yef it fill so that we yede upon
hym, hit behoveth us to go agein yow.” “That were right,” seide the Kynge Looth,
355 “withoute faile; and wite ye well, whoso hath werre agein hym hath werre agein
me.” “For sothe,” seide the Kynge Urien, “that is untrewly don, for ye be oon of
us, and ye sholde not us so leven.” “Sir,” seide the Kynge Looth, “I dide it magré
myn and agein my will, for I do yow to wite that day that I wende hym moste to

335 **we be**, we are allied. 337 **trewys**, truce. 338 **this**, now; **Yole**, Yuletide. 339 **suerly**,
safely. 343 **clene quyte**, entirely acquitted; **synnes**, wrongs. 345 **dide**, offered; **amonesté**,
amnesty. 348 **myshapped**, had misfortune. 349 **trowe**, believe; **this peple**, i.e., the Sax-
ons. 351–52 **nothinge do**, not behaved. 352 **yede upon**, went against. 354 **faile**, a doubt.
356 **leven**, desert. 356–57 **magré myn**, against my wishes. 357 **wende**, intended.

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greve or anoyen, I dide hym homage, and all this made me Gawein for to do, that ye here se."

360 Than he tolde hem alle worde for worde how the cas was befallen. And whan the other princes herde this, thei seide he myght noon other do, seith it was so he was not moche to blame. And some of hem that were there wolde right gladly that thei hadde happed in the same maner. Thei spake of oo thinge and of other, that thei accorded to holde the trewis. And therto thei it assured in Sir Gaweins honde hit trewly to holde, and sette hem a day that eche of hem sholde be with all his power on the playn of Salisbery with all his peple as eche of hem myght bringe. But thei seide well that whan the Saisnes were driven oute of the londe, that thei dide the kynge to wite that he diffende hym from theym. And Sir Gawein hem tolde that whan it were come therto that yef thei wolde hym ought mysdon, thei 365 sholde fynde that thei sholde have bothe theire armes wery and overcharged.

370 Whan the princes undirstode the wordes of Sir Gawein, ther were some that lough and some frowned with the heede. And the Kynge de Cent Chivaliers, that liste not hym to avaunte ne noon other to manace, seide he wolde be ther at Halowmesse, yef God hym sende lif, in the playn of Salisbery. And so seid eche 375 of hem for his partye.

357–58 **to greve**, injure. 358 **anoyen**, harm; **made**, made. 360 **cas was befallen**, adventure occurred. 361 **seith**, since; **so**, thus. 362 **wolde**, wished. 363 **happed**, acted; **that**, and. 372 **lough**, laughed. 373 **avaunte ne noon other to manace**, boast or anyone to threaten.

[King Arthur vs. King Rion]

[Summary. Merlin goes to Blase and reports all that has happened. Then he goes to Brittany to summon their armies to Salisbury for the great battle against the Saxons; he also makes a brief visit to Nimiane before returning to Logres. Sagremor, Galashin, and Dodinell ride off together seeking adventures, and three Round Table knights ride after them, hoping to provoke a confrontation; but Ewain, Kay, and Gifflet prevent that and bring the six knights back to court.

The Saxons, learning that Arthur is assembling a great force at Salisbury, also prepare for battle. Merlin tells Arthur that as long as he trusts in God, he will have the victory over his enemies. Arthur assures Merlin that he does. Merlin also predicts that never again will so many good knights be assembled in one place until “the fader shall sle the sone and the sone the fader, and that shall be in this same place.” Arthur asks Merlin to explain this cryptic remark, but Merlin prefers not to.

Arthur thanks all the barons for coming together with him, but several respond that they have come out of their love of God and Holy Church, not their love of Arthur. King Lot urges the barons to make peace with Arthur, but Uriens and Ventres respond angrily. King Pelles’s son Elizer comes to Gawain and requests to be made a knight. Gawain, assisted by Gaheris, soon obliges. Meanwhile, the Saxon army is on the move. At King Ventres’s fortress of Garlot they kill the steward and capture King Ventres’s wife. Gawain and Elizer lead a party to the rescue; they attack the Saxons and retrieve the queen; then Gawain presents her to her husband King Ventres, who is overjoyed.

The battle between the Saxons and Christians commences, with both sides inflicting great slaughter. Eventually the Saxons give ground. Sensing defeat, they flee toward their ships with the Christians in pursuit. The Saxons clamber aboard their ships and hoist the sails, though many of them drown in the process. At last all of the barons do homage to Arthur. Then they ride together to the city of Clarence where they force the Saxons besieging the city to flee. These Saxons also sail for Saxony, finally freeing Britain from all Saxon invaders.

Arthur and his barons give thanks to God, and then Arthur and his closest companions return to Camelot. Merlin advises King Ban and King Bors to return to their country and protect it from Cladas de la deserte. Enroute, King Ban has an adventure at the castle of Adravadain where, through Merlin’s enchantment, he begets a son (Estor de Maris) on

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Adravadain's daughter. Ban and Bors then go on to Benoyk, and Merlin makes a brief visit to Nimiane, before reporting everything to Blase. Fols. 199v (line 27)–217v (line 16).]

Whan the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Bohors and Merlin were departed from the
Kynge Arthur for to go into theire owne contrey, the kynge abode stille at Cameloth,
gladde and myri with the Quene Gonnore that moche hym loved, and he hir; and
so thei abide in joye and myrthe longe tyme till it drough nygh the myddill of
5 Auguste. And than seide the kynge to Sir Gawein his nevew that at the Feste of
Assumpcion he wolde holde court roiall, and that alle sholde be sent fore that
were of hym holdinge londe or feo. For he seide he saugh never his hool power
togeder at no feeste that he hadde holden before. “And therfore,” quod he, “I will
that alle be sent fore, bothe fer and nygh, bothe privé and straunge; and also I will
10 that eche bringe with hym his wif or his love that my court may be the more
honoured.” And Sir Gawein seide that he hadde well devised and that of gentell
herete meved this purpos. “And therfore I beseke yow that this be so don that it be
to youre honour.” And the kynge seide, “Certes, feire nevew, I desire to do so that
I have therof honour and that all the worlde therof may speke.”

15 Than Sir Gawein lete write lettres and writtes and sente hem to the barouns and
to knyghtes of the londe and comaunded hem alle, as dere as thei hym loved, that
thei be on the Assumpcion Even at Cameloth, for than wolde he holden court
grete and roiall, and every man to bringe with hym his wif or his love. And the
messagers wente to the princes and barouns and shewed hem theire lettres and
20 dide theire message thourgh the contrey. And the princes and the barouns made
hem redy in the moste roiall wise and com to the court as the kynge hadde
comaunded. And every man brought with hym his wif, and he that hadde no wif
brought with hym his love. And than ther com thider so many that merveile it was
25 to beholde the nombre, for ther ne myght not the tenth part into the citee of
Cameloth, but loigged withoute in the feire medowes in tentes and in pavelouns.

And the kynge hem resceived with grete joye and grete honour. And the Quene
Gonnore, that was the wisest lady of the worlde, rescayved the quenes and the
ladyes and the maydenes and damesels with grete honour, everiche of hem by

7 **feo**, rents; **hool**, whole. 8 **will**, desire. 9 **fer and nygh**, far and near; **privé and straunge**,
intimate friends and strangers. 16 **dere**, dearly. 17 **Even**, Eve. 28 **everiche**, every one.

Prose Merlin

himself, as she that hadde more witte and curtesie than eny lady in hir dayes, and
30 yaf to hem riche yeftes of golde and silver and clothes of silke, everiche after
theire astate. And she demened hir so well that thei seide ther was not soche
another lady in all the worlde as was she. And the kynge departed to knyghtes
35 robes and armes and horse, and dide hem so moche worship that day and curtesie
that thei loved hym the better as longe as their lif endured. And that shewed well
after in many a stour and in many a nede, as ye shull heren herafter.

Grete was the feeste that the kynge hilde on the Even of the Assumpcion to the
riche baronye that to hym were come. Whan the kynge and the barouns hadde
herde evesonge at the Mynster of Seint Stephene, the tables were sette in teintes
and pavelons, for thei myght not alle into the town. And on that othir side was the
40 Quene Gonnore and the ladyes and damesels, with soche joye that merveile it
were to reherse; for in all the londe of Breteigne ne in all the power of Kynge
Arthur, ne lefte mynstrall ne jogelour ne oon ne other, but alle were come to that
feeste. And at that soper were thei served so well as was convenient to so myghty
45 a prince as was the Kynge Arthur. And thus endured thei in joye and myrthe till
tyme was to go to reste till on the morowe.

And on the morowe aroos the Kynge Arthur and the riche barouns and the
quene and wente to hire masse at the Mynster of Seint Stephene, and the servise
was honorably seide in the worship and reverence of that high feste, and grete and
riche was the offrande. And the Kynge Arthur and alle other kynges and quenes
50 that day bar crownes in worship of the day; and so ther were sixty crownes, what
of kynges and quenes. And whan the masse was seide and the servise ended, the
Kynge Arthur lepe on his palfrey, and alle the other kynges after hym icrowned,
and so dide the Quene Gonnore and alle the other quenes, and everyche of hem a
crown of golde on their heedes. And the Kinge Arthur satte at the high deyse
55 and made alle the twelve kynges sitte at his table downwarde a renge. And also in
honour of the high feste of Oure Lady, he made the Quene Gonnore sitte by hym
crowned, and so dide alle the other twelve quenes byfore their lordes. And at

30 yeftes, gifts. 30–31 after their astate, according to rank. 31 demened, conducted. 32
departed, gave. 35 stour, battle; nede, need. 41 ne, nor; power, i.e., realm. 42 ne lefte,
was overlooked; jogeloure, entertainer; ne oon ne other, i.e., of this kind or that. 43
convenient to, fitting for. 49 offrande, offering. 50 bar, wear. 54 deyse, dais. 55 a renge,
in a row. 56 feste, feast.

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other tables satte other princes, dukes, and erles, and othir knyghtes were sette
richely thourgh the medowes in tentes and pavelouns, with grete joy and melodye
that never was seyn gretter in no court.

And as thei were in this joye and in this feste, and Kay the Stiward that brought
the firste mese before the kynge, ther com in the feirest forme of man that ever
hadde thei seyn before; and he was clothed in samyte and girte with a bawdrike
of silke harnysshed with golde and preciouse stones, that all the paleys flamed of
the light. And the heir of his hede was yelowe and crispe with a crowne of golde
theron as he hadde ben a kynge; and his hosen of fin scarlet and his shone of
white cordewan orfraied, and bokeled with fin golde. And [he] hadde an harpe
abowte his nekke of silver richely wrought, and the stringes were of fin golde
wire, and the harpe was sette with preciouse stones. And the man that it bar was
so feire of body and of visage that never hadde thei sein noon so feire a creature.
But this apeired moche his bewté and his visage for that he was blinde; and yet
were the iyen in his heed feire and clier.

And he hadde a litill cheyne of silver tacched to his arme, and to that cheyne a
litill spayne was bounde as white as snowe, and a litill coler aboute his nekke of
silke harneySED with golde. And this spaynell ledde hym streght before the Kynge
Arthur, and he harped a lay of Breteigne full swetely that wonder was to here.
And the refraine of his laye salewed the Kynge Arthur and the Quene Gonnore
and alle the other after. And Kay the Stiward that brought the firste cours taried
a while in the settinge down to beholde the harpur ententifly. Bot now we moste
cesse of hem a while and speke of the Kynge Rion.

[*Summary. King Rion, smarting from his earlier humiliation by Arthur, assembles a huge force and marches against the city of Toraise in Tamelide; and he sends a messenger to Camelot with a letter for Arthur. Fol. 218v (line 18)–219v (line 26).]*

62 mese, course; **feirest forme of**, handsomest. **63 samyte**, silk; **girte**, girded; **bawdrike**, baldric. **64 harnySSHED**, adorned. **65 crispe**, straight. **66 shone**, shoes. **67 orfraied**, gold-adorned. **71 apeired**, impaired. **72 iyen**, eyes. **73 cheyne**, chain; **tacched**, attached. **74 spayne**, spaniel; **bounde**, tied; **coler**, collar. **75 harneySED**, decorated. **77 refraine**, refrain; **salewed**, addressed.

Prose Merlin

Whan this messager was departed from his lorde, he and his squyer rode forth
till thei com to Cameloth on the Day of the Assumpcion, and alight down of his
horse and com into the halle as Kay hadde sette the firste cours before the Kynge
Arthur. This knyght saugh these kynges and these quenes that satte at the high
85 deyse alle crowned for the high feeste and saugh the harpour crowned with golde,
[and] he was all astonyed and for the dogge that hym ledde thourgh the paleis.
And he asked of Kay that served whiche was the Kynge Arthur; and Kay hym
shewed anoon right. And the knyght, that was wise and well cowde speke, com
before the kynge and seide so lowde that alle myght it undirstonde, “Kynge Arthur,
90 I grete thee nought, for I am not therto comaunded by hym that hath me to thee
isente. But I shall do thee to undirstande what he doth to the sende. And whan
thow hast herde his comaundement, do as thow art avised. And yef thow do his
will, thow shalt finde therin profite; and yef thow wilt it nought do, thee byhoveth
95 to forsake thi londe and fle in exile.” And whan the kynge this herde, he began to
smyle and seide full sobirly, “Avise thee of thi message; for of all that thow art
comaunded, thou mayst say boldly all thy will withoute encombraunce of me
or of eny other.”

And than he seide: “Kynge Arthur, to thee sente me the kynge of alle Cristin
that is the Kynge Rion of the Yles, whiche is at sege before Toraise in Carmelide.
100 And with hym nine kynges that alle ben his liege men and holde of hym theire
londes and their fees in honour, for he hath made hem alle enclyne to hym by his
prowesse. And of alle the kynges that he hath conquered wherof ther be nine, he
hath flayn of theire beerdes. Now my lorde sendeth the comaundement that thou
become his man; and that shall be to the grete honour to become liege man to so
105 puyssaunt a kynge as is my lorde, for he is lorde from the east into the west of all
the londe.”

And whan the knyght hadde thus seide, he drough oute the letter of Kynge
Rion that was seled with ten seles roiall and seide to the Kynge Arthur, “Sir, do

84 saugh, saw. **86 astonyed**, amazed; **and for**, because. **90 grete thee nought**, do not
greet you. **91 do thee to undirstande**, let you know. **92 avised**, advised. **93 thee byhoveth**,
it would behove you. **95 Avise thee**, i.e., Proceed in delivering. **96 encombraunce of**,
trouble from. **98 Cristin**, the Christians. **99 whiche**, who; **sege**, siege. **101 fees**, rents;
enclyne, do homage. **103 flayn of**, cut off; **beerdes**, beards. **105 puyssaunt**, myghty.

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110 rede this letter that my lorde hath thee sente, and than shalt thou heren his wille
and his corage." And therwith he delyvered hym the letter. And the kynge hit
toke to the archebisshop that was come thider to undirstonde the massage. And
he it unfolded and began to rede alowde that thei myght it wele undirstonde that
were in the halle.

115 "I, the Kynge Rion, that am lorde of all the west, do hem alle to wite that these
letteres shull seen, that I am at sege before Toraise in Carmelide, and with me be
nine kynges of my meyné and alle theire peple of theire londes that armes may
bere. And of alle the kynges that I conquerē, I have theire suerdes be my prowesse;
and also I have made a mantell of reade samyte furred with the beerdes of these
kynges. And this mantell is nygh all redy of all that therto longeth saf only tasselles;
120 and for the tassels faile, I have herde tidings of thy grete renoun that is spredde
thourgh the worlde, I will that it be honoured more than eny of the other kinges;
and therfore I comaunde thee that thow sende me thy beerde with all the skynne;
and I shall hit sette on the tassels of my mantell for the love of thee, for never
before this mantell be tasselled shall it not hange aboute my nekke. Ne I will of
125 noon other have it made but of thy beerde, for aboute the handes and the nekke
ought every prince sette the moste honorable thinges. And for thow art the moste
puyssaunt kynge as the renoun of thee recordeth, I will that thow sende me thy
beerde by oon or tweyne of thy frendes; and after, come thou to me and become
my liege man and holde of me thy londes in goode pees. And yef thou wilt nought
130 thus don, I comaunde thee that thou go exiled and forsake thi londe; for as soone
as I have conquered the Kynge Leodogan, I shall come upon thee with all myn
hoste and make thy beerde be flayn and drawe from thy chyn boustously; and that
thou shalt knowe verily."

135 Whan the archebisshop hadde redde this letter before the Kynge Arthur and
before alle the barouns, he delyvered the letter agein to the kynge that was full
wroth and angry with this comaundement. And the messager seide, "Kynge Arthur,

108–09 **do rede**, read. 110 **corage**, desire. 111 **undirstonde**, translate. 116 **meynē**, liegemen.
117 **suerdes**, swords. 118 **reade samyte**, red silk. 119 **nygh all**, nearly; **therto longeth**,
i.e., is needed. 120 **faile**, that are lacking. 121 **will**, desire. 123–24 **never before**, not until.
124–25 **Ne I will of noon other**, Nor will I of any other. 127 **puyssaunt**, mighty. 129 **pees**,
peace; **nought**, not. 130 **don**, do. 132 **boustously**, vigorously.

Prose Merlin

do that my lorde thee comaundeth that I may returne." And the kynge seide he myght wele returne whansoever he wolde, and telle his lorde that his beerd sholde he never have while he myght it diffende. And the knyght departed and com to his horse and rode forth, he and his squyer, till thei come to Toraise in Carmelide, where he fonde the Kynge Rion that assailede the castell full fiercely.

140 And thei withynne diffended hem full harde, that thei withoute loste moche of theirre peple; and therfore was the Kynge Rion full wroth. And whan the knyght was come before the Kynge Rion and tolde his ansuere from the Kynge Arthur, he seide he sholde not so soone have take the Kynge Leodogan, but anoon he wolde come upon hym with so grete power that he sholde not hem sustene ne endure. And now shull we speke of the Kynge Arthur and of his barouns.

145 Whan the knyght that hadde brought this message from the Kynge Rion was departed, the Kynge Arthur lefte stille, sittinge at mete in myrthe and in joye. And the harpour wente from oon place to another and harped myrily, so that thei behilde hym for a merveile, bothe oon and other; and hem liked more the melodye of this harpour than eny thinge that this other mynstralles diden. And the Kynge Arthur hadde grete merveile fro whens this man myght come, and yet he ought hym well to knowe, for many tymes hadde he hym seyn in other maner and in other semblaunces.

150 And whan thei hadde eten and the clothes were taken up, the harpour com before the kynge and seide, "Sir, yef it plese yow, graunte me reward for my servise." "Certes, frende," seide the kynge, "it is reson, and ye shull it have with goode will; and therfore sey youre will, for ye shull not faile yef it be soche thinge as I may yeve, savinge myn honour and my reame." "Sir," seide the harpour, "ye shull never have therin but honour, yef God will." "Than sey youre volunté," seide the kynge boldely. Than seide the harpour, "I aske yow and require to bere youre chief baner in the firste bataile that ye shall go to." "Feire frende," seide the kynge, "sholde that be worship to me and my reame? Oure Lorde hath sette yow in His prison. How myght ye youreself guyde, that may nougnt se, to bere a baner in bateile of a kynge that ought to be refute and counfort to alle the hoste?" "Haa,

137 **that**¹, what; **that**², so that. 142 **thei withynne**, those inside; **moche**, many. 145 **anoon**, now. 146 **sustene**, protect. 149 **lefte**, remained. 152 **this**, these. 154 **maner**, forms. 155 **semblaunces**, guises. 158 **Certes**, Surely; **reson**, right. 160 **reame**, realm. 161 **but**, only; **volunté**, desires. 165 **that**, who; **nought se**, nothing se. 166 **refute**, refuge.

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sir," quod the harpour, "God, that is the very guyde, me shall condite and lede that in many perilouse places me hath ledde; and wite ye well, it shall be for youre prowe." And whan the barouns it undirstode, thei hadde merveile.

170 Than behilde hym the Kynge Ban and remembred hym of Merlin that in the Castell of the Marasse hym served in disgise of a yonge knyght of fifteen yere age, and thought it sholde ben he. And [he] seide anoon to the kynge, "Sir, graunte hym his request, for he semeth to be soche a man that his desire ne ought not to be refusid." "Why," seide Arthur, "trowe ye it sholde be to oure profite and oure honour that a mynstrall sholde bere oure baner in bateile, whiche may not lede hymself? Though I hit withsey, I do nothinge agein right; for it is a thinge that I sholde not graunte lightly but I knewe right well the persone that it sholde bere."

175 And anoon as this worde was seide, the harpour vanysshed amoneg hem that noon wiste where he be com. Than Arthur bethought hym on Merlin, and was sory and wroth that he ne hadde it hym graunted. And alle that were therynne were abaisshed for that he was loste so sodeinly. And the Kynge Ban of Benoyk, that well aparceived it was Merlin, seide to the Kynge Arthur, "Certes, sir," quod he, "ye ought hym wele for to knownen." "Trewly," seide Arthur, "ye sey full trewe, but for that he hath made a whelpe hym for to lede that hath take awey fro me the knowinge." "Sir," seide Gawein, "what is he, than?" "Nevew," quod the kynge, "it is Merlin oure frende." "Yee," seide Gawein, "so helpe me God, I trowe yow wele that it be he, for often hath he be disguised before youre baronye; and this hath he don to make yow solas and counfort."

180 And as thei stode speikinge hereof, in the halle com in a litill childe that seemed of eight yere of age. And he was all naked and brecheles, and bar a staf in his honde, and com before the kynge and seide, "Sir, appareile yow for to go agein the Kynge Rion in bateile, and delyver me youre baner for to bere." And whan thei that were in the paleys saugh hym in that aray, thei begonne to laugh harde. And the kynge ansuerde all in laughinge, as he that soposed well it was Merlin,

167 **very guyde**, true guide; **condite**, conduct. 169 **prowe**, profit. 170 **behilde**, looked at. 174 **trowe ye**, think you. 175 **whiche**, who. 176 **hit withsey**, oppose it; **agein right**, unreasonable. 177 **but**, unless. 179 **wiste**, knew. 181 **abaissched**, astonished; **for that**, because. 182 **aparceived**, realized. 184 **whelpe**, puppy. 185 **what**, who; **than**, then. 188 **solas**, solace. 190 **brecheles**, pants-less. 191 **appareile**, prepare. 193 **paleys**, palace.

Prose Merlin

195 “So helpe me God, ye owe it well to bere, and I it yow graunte.” “Gramercy, sir,”
seide the childe, “for in me it shall be wele employde.” And with that he comaundered
hem alle to God and wente oute of the paleis. And than anoon he toke his owne
semblaunce soche as he was wonte to have, and seide to hymself that now hym
behoveth to somown the kynges hoste.

200 And [Merlin] wente toward the see and passed over and com to Gannes, to
Pharien and to Leonces of Painerne, and badde hem to assemble theire power of all
that thei myght bring oute of the londe and come to Cameloth. And thei seide thei
wolde do hys comaunderement. And Merlin com to the see and passed over and
205 wente to the londe of Kynge Urien and by the londe of Kynge Looth and seid to
the barouns and to othir princes that thei be withynne fifteen dayes afte Oure
Lady Day the Nativité in Septembre before Cameloth; and thei hym graunted alle.
And than he departed from them and com agein to the court er evesonge were alle
210 seide, upon the same day of the Assumpcion. And the kinge of hym made grete
joye and asked why he hadde hym so kept oute of sight. And he ansuerde that he
ought hym wele to knownen. “Ye, certes,” seide the kyng, “yef in me were eny
witte.” Thus thei abide in feeste and joye all that day.

On the morowe the kyng made alle his princes to assemble in his paleis and
ther also was Merlin. And the Kynge Arthur seide how hem behoveth to somowne
215 all the power that thei myght assemble, for he wolde socour the Kynge Leodogan
that was fader to the Queene Gonne. And Merlin seide how thei were alle
somowned bothe at Gannes and at Benoyk and thourgh alle the londes of the other
barouns. And the Kynge Arthur hym asked whan that was don, and he seide,
“Seth yesterday after mete.” And whan the kyng and the other princes this
undirstode that he hadde this don, thei hadde grete wonder, and were ther in joye
220 and in feste till all here peple was assembled. And than meved the Kynge Arthur
and his baronye and rode towarde the reame of Carmelide. And the kyng graunted
his baner to Merlin, as he hadde promysed before. And [thei] sped theire journyes
till thei come a litill journey fro Toraise, where the Kynge Rion had besiege the
Kynge Leodogan.

225 And whan thei were nygh the hoste, Merlin seide to Gawein and to Sir Ewein
and to Segramor, “Loke ye be ever nygh aboute me”; and thei seide thei wolde

195 **owe**, ought. 207 **er**, before. 214 **socour**, aid. 218 **Seth**, Since.

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don his pleisir. "Now than," quod Merlin, "sueth after me softly, and alle thei of the hoste, till we be in bateile; and ye shull smyte upon hem of that other partye withoute rennyng of youre bateile; and thinke ever to come nygh after my baner, what wey that ever ye se me turne." And thei ansuerde that so thei wolde with goode will; and so he seide to Arthur and to alle the other princes. And [thei] wente forth till thei com into the hoste of Kynge Rion, and Merlin before hem alle so harde as his horse myght renne, with the dragon in his hande that caste thourgh his mouthe fire and flame, that alle thei therof were abaisshed. And Gawein, that folowed hym next, mette with the Kynge Pharaon that with all his bateile com hym ageins. And as soone as he saugh hem approche, Sir Gawein hym smote so that shelde ne hauberk myght hym warante, but bar hym thourgh the body deed to the erthe. And than he seide in game, "He this is sworn to pees, for by hym shall never the Kynge Arthur lese acre of his londe ne his beerd be flayn from his chyn."

With that assembled bothe hostes, that oon agein that other. And grete was the noyse and the fray of the peple of Kynge Rion and of the peple of Kynge Arthur. And ther dide Gawein and Ewein and Segramor and Gaheries and the Knygthes of the Rounde Table merveiles with theire handes. For whan bothe hostes were mette, ye myght have sein many oon leide to grounde of oo party and of other, for thei were bold and hardy on bothe seides. And Merlin, that bar the dragon, drof into the prees, and Sir Gawein and his compayne after, and smote hem so harde that thei metten that thei neded no salve; and the speres fly in peces.

And that was a thinge that discounforted the Kynge Rion and his peple, for thei wende verily that fendes were fallen amounghe the hoste. But thei were so bolde and so chivalrouse that therfore thei wolde not be discounfited but hilde bateile grete and merveilouse agein the peple of Kynge Arthur, and made hem resorte bakke at hir first comyng. And therfore was Sir Gawein and his compayne full of dolour. And Merlin, that rode before hem, cried, "What, lordinges, what shall this bemene? Be ye now arrested? Sueth me, yef ye will youre loos encrese and your pris." Than

227 **sueth**, follow; **softly**, slowly. 229 **nygh after**, close behind. 232 **into**, near. 233 **renne**, run. 234 **abaisshed**, frightened. 237 **warante**, protect. 238 **game**, jest; **pees**, peace. 239 **lese**, lose. 248 **metten**, met. 250 **wende verily**, truly believed; **fendes**, fiends. 251 **discounfited**, defeated. 253 **dolour**, sadness. 254 **bemene**, mean. 255 **Be ye now arrested**, Are you resting; **Sueth**, Follow; **loos**, worship; **pris**, fame.

Prose Merlin

these felowes smyten in amonege hem of Irelonde, that well hem resceyved with trenchaunt wepenes. But Sir Gawein and his companye dide so well in armes that thei pressed thourgh the peple of Kynge Rion, but first was ther many a hevy stroke yoven and resceived, and many a knyght straught deed to the erthe.

260 And the Kynge Arthur and the Kynge Looth of Orcanye and the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Bohors were smyte into the bateile on another side where thei dide merveiles amonege their enmyes, for agein their strokes endured noon armure. But the peple of Kynge Rion mette hem so fiercely that thei smote down the Kynge Looth and the Kynge Bohors from their horse amyddle the presse; and so thei 265 myght soone have hadde grete damage ne hadde ben the grete prowesse that was in hem bothe. For thei lept on foote full vigerously with their swerdes drawen, and begonne to smyte down horse and men so crewelly that ther ne was noon that hem saugh but he hilde it for a merveile. And the Kynge Arthur and the Kynge Ban pressed that wey hem to remounte. And Merlin com drivinge with the baner 270 in his hande that thourgh his throte caste fire and flame, and smote into the grettest presse. And whan the peple of Kynge Rion saugh the grete merveile of the dragon that so caste fire, thei hadden grete drede and forsoke place and the two kynges on whom they dide abide. And Merlin com to them and delyvered to everiche of 275 theym a good horse and a swifte, for inowe ther were astray thourgh the felde. And thei anoon lept upon horse and rode into the bateile and begonne to do so well in armes, and so dide alle their companye.

280 But the force of Kynge Rion was so grete that thei of the reame of Grete Breteigne myght it not endure, but sholde alle have be discounfited, as to my felinge, ne hadde be the prowesse of Sir Gawein and his companye and the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table, for these shewed merveiles wher thei com, for thei smyten down men and horse bothe that alle that hem withstode semed it were feendes.

On another side of the bateile was the Kynge Ventres and the Kynge Tradilyvans and the Kynge Urien and the Kynge de Cent Chivalers, that full fiercely faught agein the peple of the Yles that kept hem short, for of the Yles was many a valiaunt knyght and bolde in armes. And [oon] hadde smyten down the Kynge Tradilyvans 285

259 yoven, given; straught deed, struck dead. 261 were smyten, had charged. 267 begonne, began. 273 dide abide, i.e., were attacking. 274 inowe, enough. 278–79 ne hadde be, if not for. 281 bothe, so; semed it, they thought; feendes, fiends. 284 hem short, hemmed them in.

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of North Wales and hilde hym by the helme. And Merlin com to Gawein and seide, "Now lete se what ye will do, for we have loste the Kynge Tradilyvans but he hastely [have] socour. Sewe me!" Than wente Merlin that wey and Sir Gawein and his felowes folowinge, till thei com to the Kynge Tradilyvans that was in grete aventure of deth. And than begonne thei so harde bateile that wonder was to beholde, so that thei that hilde the Kynge Tradilyvans, that were bolde and hardy and durable in bateile, were alle abaisshed; but yet dide thei grete peyne hym to withholde. And thei of the Rounde Table have hym rescowed and sette on horse, and were full wroth and angry and begonne agein the bateile and the medlé, that hidiouse was to have seyn; for oon fill deed upon another so that ther were grete mountayns of deed cors though the feelde theras the bateile was. For Sir Gawein hadde so many slain with his swerde that bothe swerde and arme were all besoiled with blode and brayn.

Than the Kynge Leodagan saugh the bateile so crewell and so fell theras he stode lenyng out at a wyndowe, and saugh the dragon that Merlin bar that caste fier though his mouthe so that the heyr was all reade. And he knewe it wele, for he hadde it sein before tymes, and knew well it was the signe of Kynge Arthur. And than he called upon his knyghtes and cried, "As armes, for my sone the Kynge Arthur fighteth with oure enmyes, and is come me for to socour, God quyte hym!" And whan thei this undirstode, thei ronne alle to armes though the castell and com oute at the yate iarmed ten thousand and moo of bolde men and hardy, and smyten into the hoste of the kynges of the Yles full fiercely, and thei hem resceived, for thei were of grete hardynesse. And Cleodalis the Stiward and Hervy de Rivell and her other felowes begonne to do merveiles of armes. And the bateile was so grete and so thikke on alle sides of the hoste of Kynge Rion that it was merveile so many ther were deed of oo parte and of other.

And whan the Kynge Rion saugh the grete mortalité and slachtur of his peple, and also of the peple of Kynge Arthur, his herte wax tender and hadde therof pitee, and seide to hymself that that mortalité wolde he no lenger suffre. And than

286 **hilde**, held. 287 **but**, unless. 288 **Sewe**, Follow. 290 **aventure**, danger. 292 **abaisshed**, frightened. 294 **medlé**, melee. 295 **fill deed**, fell dead. 296 **deed cors**, dead bodies; theras, where. 299 **fell**, fierce; **theras**, where. 300 **lenyng**, leaning. 301 **heyr**, air; **reade**, red. 303 **As**, To. 305 **quyte**, reward. 306 **yate**, gate; **moo**, more. 311 **oo parte**, one side. 312 **saugh**, saw. 313 **wax**, grew. 314 **suffre**, permit.

Prose Merlin

315 he toke a braunche of sicamor in his hande and wente before the hoste to dissever
the bateiles, and wente forth till he fonde the Kynge Arthur, and spake so high
that he myght wele ben herde. “Kynge Arthur, wherfore doost thou suffre thi
peple to be slain and distroied, and also myn? Do thou now well, yef ther be so
moche worthinesse in thee as the worlde recorded. Delyver thy peple fro deth,
320 and I shall deliver also tho of myn, and we shull make oure peple withdrawe on
bothe parties a rowme. And thou and I shull fight togeder body for body, by
soche covenauant that yef thou may me conquere, I shall returne to my contrey
with the peple that is me beleft on lyve; and yef I may thee conquere, thou shalt
holde thi londe of me and be my soget, as ben these other kynges that I have
325 conquered. And I shall have thy berde with all the skyn to make the tasselles of
my mantell.”

“In the name of God,” quod the Kynge Arthur, “thow sholdest so have the
better part of the pley whan thou sholdest repeire into thy contrey all hooll yef I
330 thee conquered, and ne sholdest not become my man. And thou desirest that I
sholde be thy man yef thou myght me conquere! But I will fight with thee in this
maner as thou hast seide, that yef I thee conquere thou shall be my liege man;
and in the same wise I graunte it thee yef thou me conquere.” “Sir,” seide the
Kynge Rion — that was so stronge that he douted no man body for body, and he
hadde conquered so nine kynges that alle were his liege men — “and I it yow
335 graunte, like as ye have seide.”

Than thei sured theire feithes betwene hem two to holde these covenauentes, and
made departe the bateiles that were so horible. And the barouns drough aside that
were wroth and angry with these covenauentes. And Sir Gawein, that was wrother
340 than eny other, com to the kynge his uncle and seide, “Sir, yef it plese yow, graunte
me this bateile.” “Now therof require ye no more,” quod the Kynge Arthur, “nother
ye, ne noon other. For noon other than I shall sette therto noon hande, for I shall
do the bateile with the helpe of God, seith he hath me therto requireth.”

315 **sicamor**, sycamore; **dissever**, separate. 316 **bateiles**, armies. 318 **yef**, if. 319 **recorded**,
i.e., believes; **Delyver**, Save. 320 **tho**, those. 321 **rowme**, distance. 322 **covenauant**, agree-
ment. 323 **is me beleft on lyve**, to me remain alive. 324 **of**, from; **soget**, subject. 328 **all hooll**, i.e., alive; **yef**, if. 333 **douted**, feared. 336 **sured**, swore; **feithes**, oaths. 337 **departe**,
withdraw; **bateiles**, armies; **drough**, drew. 338 **wrother**, angrier. 340 **require**, ask; **nother**,
neither. 341 **ne noon**, nor any. 342 **seith**, since.

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Than bothe hostes were drawnen aside on that oon part and on that other, and the two kynges were armed full richely all that nedeth to a noble prince. And eche of hem toke a spere stronge and rude, and than rode eche of hem from other more than two but lengthe, and than smote the horse with spores and mette togeder as tempest, for well ran bothe horse and were of grete force. And the two kynges were fierce and hardy and mette with so grete raundon with speres that were grete and shorte and the heedes sharp igrunden, upon the sheldes that thei perced; but the hauberkes were so harde that thei fauced no mayle; and the horse were of grete force and the knyghtes of grete prowesse that the speres splintered in splyntes.

And than thei leide hande to their swerdes that weren of grete bounté, and smyten grete strokes upon helmes that thei breke the serkeles of golde and stones whiche weren of grete vertu, and tohewen the sheldes and hauberkes, and in the flessh so depe that the blood stremed after. And in short tyme eche of hem so araid other that ther ne was nother of hem but he hadde nede of a leche. And their sheldes weren slitte and hewen that ther was left of theym [not] so moche that thei myght with hem cover. And than thei caste the remenaunt to grounde and caught the swerdes in bothe hondes, and smyte pesaunt strokes at discouert so that thei toslitte helmes and torente hauberkes, so that the flessh shewed all bare. And ther ne was noon of hem bothe but he was wery for traveile of yevinge of strokes and receivinge. And that was oon thinge that lengest hem hilde, for yef thei hadde ben fresh and newe to that thei weren withouten sheldes and their hauberkes torente and their helmes toquasshed, thei myght not have endured. Nevertheles, ther ne was noon of hem bothe but he was sore hurt and wounded.

Whan the Kynge Rion, that was bolde and hardy above alle thoo of the londe, saugh the Kynge Arthur hym contene ageins hym, he hadde therof grete merveile, for he wende that he sholde not again hym have endured, and seide to hymself that never befor hadde he seyn so goode a knyght. And than he douted hym sore and seide, "Kynge Arthur, hit is grete harme of thee, for thou art the beste knyght

346 **but**, butts (archery targets). 348 **raundon**, force. 350 **fauced**, pierced. 353 **leide**, laid.

354 **serkeles**, circles. 355 **vertu**, value. 357 **araied**, dealt with; **nother**, neither; **leche**,

doctor. 360 **pesaunt**, strong, heavy; **discouert**, unprotected places. 362 **traveile**, the efforts; **yevinge**, giving. 363 **hilde**, saved. 364 **to that**, when. 365 **toquasshed**, smashed.

368 **hym contene**, himself defend. 369 **wende**, thought. 370 **douted**, feared.

Prose Merlin

that I faught with ever beborn; and I se well and knowe verily that thy grete herte
that thow hast shall make thee to dye, for it will not suffre thee to come to my
mercy; and I knowe well that thow haddest lever dye than be conquered, and that
375 is grete damage. And therfore, I wolde pray thee and requyre for the grete prowesse
that is in thee, that thou have pitee on thyself and yelde thee for outrailed, for to
save thi lif thorough the covauntes that ben betwene us, so that my mantell were
performed in my live. For better I love thi lif than thi deth, and thow art come to
thi fin — that knowest thow well, and so don alle these barouns here aboute that
380 here ben."

Whan the Kynge Arthur undirstode the wordes of the Kynge Rion, he hadde
grete shame, for so many a valiante prince hadde it undirstonde. And than he ran
upon hym with his swerde in bothe handes as he that was full wroth and full of
matalente, and wende to smyte hym on the helme. But the Kynge Rion blenched
385 that saugh the stroke comyng with so grete ravyne; and nevertheles, he Araught
hym upon the helme and kutte of the nasell; and the stroke descended and smote
the stedes nekke asounder, and the Kynge Rion fell to the erthe.

And as he wende to have rise, Arthur smote hym on the lifte shuldre into the
flesshe two large ynche, and the Kynge Rion stombeled therwith and fill agein to
the erthe. And whan the Kynge Arthur saugh the Kynge Rion falle agein to grounde,
390 anoon he alight to grounde and ran to hym lightly and caught hym by the helme
and drough it to hym with so grete force that the laces brast asonder; and he it
raced from his heed, and than lifte up the swerde and seide he was but deed but he
wolde yelde hym outerly. And he seide that wolde he never, for he hadde lever
395 dye than live recreaunt. And whan Arthur saugh that he myght hym not therto
bringe to holde hym for outrailed, he smote of the heed in sight of alle that were in
the feelde.

And than ronne to [hym] the princes on alle parties and made grete joye and
sette hym on a horse, and brought hym into the Castell of Toraise and hym un-
400 armed and serched his woundes. And the baronye of Kynge Rion com to hym and

374 lever, rather. 375 damage, shame. 376 for outrailed, as defeated. 378 performed,
completed; live, lifetime. 379 fin, end. 384 matalente, malice; blenched, turned aside.
385 ravyne, force; Araught, struck. 386 kutte of, cut off; nasell, nose piece. 387 fill, fell.
388 wende, i.e., tried; lifte, left. 392 brast, burst. 393 raced, pulled. 394 outerly, utterly.
394–95 lever dye, rather die. 395 recreaunt, shamed. 396 outrailed, defeated; of, off.

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resceived of hym theire londes and theire fees and dide hym homage, and than returned into theire contrey, and with hem bar the body of Kynge Rion, and it biried with grete lamentacion and wepinge.

And the Kynge Arthur was at Toraise, gladdie and joyfull of the victorie that
405 God hym hadde yoven; and sojourned in the castell till he was warisshed of his woundes that he hadde in the bateile. And whan he was all hool, he departed fro Toraise with grete joye and feste; and the Kynge Leodogan conveyed hym on his wey and after returned. And the Kynge Arthur and his compayne ride till thei come to Cameloth whereas the Quene Gonnore and the other quenes were abidinge,
410 that of theire comynge made grete joye. And ther sojourned the princes four dayes, and on the fifte day thei departed; and every man repeired to his owne contrey and ledde with hem theire wyves, thei that eny hadden.

And the Kynge Arthur com agein into the citee of Logres and sojourned ther longe tyme with the quene, and with hym was Sir Gawein and the Companye of
415 the Rounde Table and Merlin, that dide hem grete solas and grete companye. And he com to Kynge Arthur and seide that from hensforth he myght hym wele forberen, for he hadde somdell apesed his londe and sette it in reste. And therfore he wolde go take his disporte where hym liked.

Whan the kynge this undirstode, he was pensif and sory, for he loved hym
420 entirly and fain wolde he that he abood stille, yef it myght be. And whan he saugh he myght hym not withholde, he praied hym dierly that he wolde come to hym agein in short tyme; and Merlin seide he sholde come agein all be tyme er he hadde nede. “Certes,” seide the kynge, “every day and every hour have I to yow nede and myster, for withoute yow I can nought; and therfore I wolde we sholde never departe companye.” And Merlin seide, “I shall come another tyme to youre
425 nede, and I shall not faile day ne hour.”

And the kynge was stille a longe while and began to stodie sore. And whan he hadde be longe in this thought, he seide all sighinge, “Ha, Merlin, feire swete frende, in what nede shull ye me helpe? I pray yow telle me, to sette myn herte in more ese.” “Sir,” seide Merlin, “and I shall yow telle, and after I shall go my way.

405 **yoven**, given; **warisshed of**, recovered from. 406 **hool**, whole. 416 **forberen**, not see.
417 **somdell apesed**, somewhat pacified. 418 **disporte**, enjoyment. 419 **pensif**, sad. 421
praied, requested; **dierly**, sincerely. 422 **all be tyme**, eventually. 423 **Certes**, Indeed. 424
myster, urgent want; **wolde**, would wish. 427 **stodie sore**, reflect seriously.

Prose Merlin

The lyon that is the sone of the bere and was begeten of a leopart shall renne by
the reame of the Grete Breteigne; and that is the nede that ye shall have.” With
that Merlin departed and the kynge belefte in grete myssese and sore abaissched of
this thinge, for he knewe not to what it myght turne. But therof shull we cesse at
435 this tyme and returne to speke of Merlin.

431 bere, bear. **433 belefte**, left; **myssese**, uneasiness; **abaissched**, concerned. **434 cesse**,
cease.

[Merlin and Nimiane; and Arthur and the Giant of St. Michael's Mount]

[Summary. Merlin leaves Logres and goes to Jerusalem where King Flualis, the powerful saracen ruler, has had an engimatic dream. When Flualis's wisemen cannot explain the dream, Merlin proceeds to do so. The dream signifies the coming of the Christians and the defeat of the saracens. Fols. 224r (line 13)–225r (line 5)].

And Merlin wente a grete sped that never he stinte till he com to the reame of Benoyk, and yede to Nimiane his love that sore desired hym for to seen, for yet
5 cowde not she of his art of that she desired for to knowe. And she made hym the grettest joye that she myght; and [thei] ete and dranke and lay in oon bedde. But so moche cowde she of his connynge that whan he hadde will to ly with hire, she hadde enchaunted and conjured a pelow that she kepte in his armes; and than fill Merlin aslepe. And the storie maketh no mencion that ever Merlin hadde flesshly
10 to do with no woman. And yet loved he nothinge in this worlde so wele as woman; and that shewed well, for so moche he taught hir oo tyme and other that at laste he myght holde hymself a fooll; and thus dide he sojourney with his love longe tyme.
15 And ever she enquired of his connynge and of his maistries ech thinge by hitself. And he lete her all knowe; and she wrote all that he seide, as she that was well lerned in clergie, and lerned it lightly all that Merlin hir taught. And whan he hadde sojourned with hir longe tyme, he toke his leve and seide that he sholde come agein at the yeres ende; and so eche of theym comaunded other to God full tendirly.

And than com Merlin to Blase his maister, that gladde was of his comynge and sore he longed hym for to se, and he hym also. And Merlin tolde hym alle the aventures that were befallen seth he fro hym departed, and how he hadde be with
1 stinte, stopped. 2 yede, went; sore, greatly. 3 cowde, knew; of that, what. 5 connynge, skill; will, desire; ly, lie. 6 pelow, pillow. 9 oo, one. 13 clergie, knowledge; lightly, quickly.
15 comaunded, commended. 19 seth, since.

Prose Merlin

- 20 Nimiane his love, and how he hadde hir taught of his enchauntmentz. And Blase wrote all in his boke.

[*Summary.* Merlin rejoins Arthur at Logres. As the court is assembled in the great hall, a beautiful damsel enters accompanied by an ugly dwarf; she asks the king for a boon; Arthur agrees, as long as her request is honorable. To the amusement of the court, she asks Arthur to make the dwarf a knight; she claims he is actually a lord of noble birth. Kay makes jokes at the dwarf's expense, but Arthur agrees to her request. Then two squires appear at court bearing knightly equipment, and the damsel herself produces a pair of golden spurs. Kay asks for the honor of knighting the dwarf, but the damsel refuses him. Arthur knights the dwarf; then the damsel and the dwarf ride on their way.]

Shortly thereafter a group of twelve messengers arrive at the court bearing a letter from Lucius, the emperor of Rome. Arthur is accused of having taken lands and rents away from the emperor; and he is ordered to appear before the emperor in Rome to make amends. Arthur and his privy council consider the matter; they decide that rather than Rome having a claim on Britain, Britain has firm historical precedents for making a claim on Rome. Thus Arthur gives the messengers gifts and then sends them back to the emperor with his negative reply. Angered, the emperor assembles his forces. Arthur does likewise; and then he and his army sail to Brittany. There Arthur has a vision in which he sees a great bear on a mountain attacked by a fiery dragon. Merlin interprets the dream, saying that the bear is a giant and Arthur is the dragon. Fols. 225r (line 20)–228v (line 12).]

- With that thei trussed tentes and pavilons and ride forth on theire wey. But thei hadde not longe gon whan tidinges com to the Kynge Arthur of the geaunte that distroied the londe and the contrey so that therynne duelled nother man ne woman but fledde thourgh the feldes as bestes disolate for drede of the geaunte. And [he] hadde born by force a mayden of the contrey that was nyece to a lorde of the contrey that was a grete gentilman. And he hadde born hir with hym up to a mounteigne whereas he repeired, that was all closed with the see. And that mounteign is yet cleped the Mounte Seint Michel, but at that tyme ther was nother mynster ne chapell; ne ther was no man so hardy ne so myghty that durst fight with the geaunte. And whan the peple of the contrey dide hym assaile, thei myght not agein hym endure neither on londe ne on se, for he slough hem with the roches
22 trussed, packed. 23 geaunte, giant. 25 disolute, frightened. 26 born, taken. 28 whereas, where; repeired, dwelled; closed with, surrounded by; see, sea. 29 yet cleped, still called; nother, neither. 30 ne, nor; durst, dared. 32 slough, slew; roches, rocks.

Merlin and Nimiane; and Arthur and the Giant of St. Michael's Mount

and made theire shippes to sinke. And the peple of the contrey fledde thourgh the wodes and forestes and mounteynes with their children in their armes; and so
35 thei lefte their londes and their richesses.

Whan Arthur herde how the geaunte distroied so the londe, he cleped Kay the Stiward and Bedyver and badde hem make hem redy-armed aboute mydnyght; and thei dide his comaundement and com togeder, thei thre and two squyres only and no mo, and rode till thei come upon the mounte and saugh a grete fire bright
40 shynynge on that o side. And on that othir side was another mounte that was not so grete as that, and theron was a fire merveilouse grete; and thei wiste not to whiche thei sholde gon. Than he cleped Bediver and bade hym go loke on whiche mounte the geaunte was. Than Bediver wente into a bote that was full of the flos of the see. And whan he was come to the next monteyn, he wente up hastily on the
45 roche and herde grete wepinge. And whan he that herde he hadde doute, for he wende the geaunte hadde be there. But he toke upon hym hardynesse and drough his swerde, and wente forth and hoped for to fight with hym, as he that for no drede of deth ne wolde be founde no cowarde; and in this thought he clymbed upon the mountein.

50 And whan he was come up, he saugh the fier that was clier brennyng and saugh a tombe faste by that was newly made; and beside that tombe satte an olde woman discheveled and all torente hir heir, and wepte and sighed full sore. And whan she saugh the knyght she seide, "Haa! Gentleman, what art thou? What dolour hath brought thee into this place? For with grete dolour thou shalt ende thy
55 lif, yef the geaunte thee finde. Fle hens hastely as faste as thou maist, for thou art to unhappy yef thou abide till that this devell come that hath no pité of nothinge! Fle hens as fer as thou maist, yef thou wilt thy lif save!"

Whan Bediver saugh the woman so wepe and so pitously regraged Helayn sighinge, and bad hym to fle but yef he wolde dye. And he seide, "Good woman, lette be thy wepinge, and telle me what thou art and why thou makest so grete
60

36 cleped, summoned. 40 o, one. 43 bote, boat; flos, tide. 44 see, sea. 45 doute, fear. 46 wende, thought; be, been; hardynesse, courage; drough, drew. 47 hoped for, expected. 50 saugh, saw; clier brennyng, brightly burning. 52 torente, torn. 53 what, who. 54 dolour¹, grief; dolour², sorrow. 55 yef, if; Fle hens hastely, flee from here quickly; maist, may. 56 unhappy, misfortunate. 58 Whan, Then; regrated, sorrowed for. 59 but yef, unless. 60 what, who.

Prose Merlin

sorowe and why thou art upon this mounte by this tombe. And telle me all the occasion of thy sorowe, and who lith here in this sepulture."

"I am," quod she, "a dolorouse caitif that wepe and make waymentacion for a mayden that was nyece to Hoell of Nautes, that I norished and yaf souke with my mylk; and she lieth under this tombe, and it was me comaunded hir to norish and to kepe. Now is ther a devell that hir hath taken awey and brought hider her and me, and wolde have leyn by the childe that [was] yonge and tender. But she myght hym not suffre ne endure, for he was moche and hidiouse and lothly. And so he made the soule departe from the body, and thus he berafte my doughter, falsly and be treson. And ther I have hir biried, and for hir wepe bothe day and nyght."

"And wherfore," quod Bediver, "gost thou not hens, seth thou art left here alone and hast hir loste seth that ther is noon recover?" "Sir," quod she, "I knowe well ther is no recover; but for that I se ye be a gentilman and therto so curteise, I will kepe nothinge from youre knowinge but I will telle yow the trouthe. Whan that my dere doughter was entered, for whos love I wende wele have loste my witte and dyed for doel, the geaunte made me to abide stille to have his foule lecherouse lust upon me. And he hath me diffouled by his strengthe that I moste suffre his wille whedir I wolde or noon, for I have no myght agein hym. And I take oure Lorde God to recorde it was never my will, and ner therwith he hadde me slain; for with hym have I suffred grete peyne and gret anguysh, for he is unmesurable grete; and he cometh hider to fulfille his lecherie upon me. And thou art but deed and maist in no maner ascape, for he cometh anoon right; for he is ther above in that mountayn where thou seist that fier. And therfore I pray thee go hens thy wey, and lef me here to compleyne and make my mone for my doughter."

Grete pité hadde Bediver of the woman, and moche he hir counforted. And seth he com agein to the kynge and tolde that he hadde sein, and seide how the geaunte

62 **lith**, lies. 63 **dolorouse caitif**, pitiful wretch; **waymentacion**, lamentation. 64 **that**, who; **yaf souke**, gave suck. 65 **it was me comaunded**, I was ordered; **norish**, nurture. 66 **kepe**, protect. 67 **leyn**, lain. 68 **suffre**, permit; **moche**, huge. 69 **berafte**, murdered; **falsly**, wickedly. 70 **be**, by; **biried**, buried. 71 **wherfore**, why; **hens**, away; **seth**, since. 73 **for that**, because; **se**, see. 75 **entered**, interred; **wende wele have**, nearly. 76 **abide**, stay. 77 **that**, so that; **moste**, must. 78 **whedir I wolde or noon**, whether I wished to or not. 79 **ner**, nearly. 82 **maist**, may; **maner**, way; **escape**, escape; **anoon right**, right now; **in**, on. 84 **lef**, leave. 85 **seth**, then. 86 **that**, what.

Merlin and Nimiane; and Arthur and the Giant of St. Michael's Mount

was upon the high hill ther he saugh the grete fier and smoke. Than the kynge
made his felowes go with hym upon the mounteyne, and thei were come upon the
hill. Than the kynge comaunded his felowes to abide and seide that hymself alone
90 wolde go fight with the geaunte. "Nevertheles," seide the kynge, "loke that ye
waite well upon me; and yef it be myster, cometh me to helpe." And thei seide
thei wolde with good will, and thei abide.

And the kynge wente toward the geaunte that satte before the fire and rosted
flesh on a spite, and kut of the side that [was] most inough and ete it. And the
95 kynge wente toward hym with swerde in honde drawen a softe pas gripinge his
shelde, for he wende hym to have surprised. But the geaunte, that was full false
and malicioouse, behelde and saugh the kynge come and lept up, for the kynge
hadde his swerde in his hande. And the geaunte stert to a grete clobbe that stode
by hym, that was grete and hidiouse of a plante of an oke, that was a grete birthon
100 for a myghty man; and caught it from the fire, and leide it on his nekke and com
fiercely agein the kynge as he that was of a grete force, and seide to the kynge that
a grete fooll was he to come ther, and reised the batte for to smyte the kynge on
the heed. But he was wight and delyver, and lept aside so that he of hym failed;
and therwith the kynge smote at hym and wende to smyte hym on the heed. But
105 the geaunte, that was bolde and hardy, kept it on his clobbe or elles hadde he be
deed. Nevertheles, somdel he touched hym with Marmyadoise, his good swerde
that he conquered of the Kynge Rion, and touched hym betwene the two browes
that he wax all blinde for the blode that ran over his yen. And that was a thinge
that sore hym greved, for he myght not se where to smyte, and began to scarmyshe
110 and to grope aboute hym with his staffe as a wood devell and sore abaisshed. And
the kynge hasted hym full harde but areche hym myght not, for the geaunte caste
about hym grete strokes that yef he hadde hym smyten he hadde ben all tobrosed.

And thus thei foughten longe that the oon ne touched not that other, and therfore

87 ther, where. 91 yef it be myster, if there is need. 92 abide, waited. 94 kut of, cut off;
[was] most inough, was well cooked. 95 a softe pas, i.e., moving silently. 96 wende,
hoped. 98 stert to, reached for. 99 plante, branch; oke, oak; birthon, burdon. 100 leide,
placed; nekke, shoulder. 103 he, i.e., Arthur; wight, agile; delyver, quick. 104 wende,
hoped. 105 kept it on, blocked it with. 106 somdel, somewhat; touched, hit. 107 con-
quered of, had captured from. 108 yen, eyes. 109 scarmyshe, flail about. 110 wood, mad.
111 areche, reach. 112 tobrosed, battered. 113 that¹, while.

Prose Merlin

115 thei were sore anoyed. And than the geaunte wente tastinge here and there that he
sesed the kynge by the arme. And whan he hadde hym caught he was gladde and
joyfull, for anoon he wende hym to have threst to deth. And so he hadde, but that
the kynge was wight and delyver and wrast out of his gripinge with grete peyne.
And than he ran upon hym with his swerde and smote hym on the heed and on the
lifte sholdre that all the arme fremysshed. And so harde was the hide of the ser-
120 pent that in the flesh myght it not atame. And the geaunte myght hym not se, for
his iyen were all covered with blode; and than he saugh the shadowe of the kynge,
and than he ran that wey. But the kynge, that wiste he was of grete force, durste
not come in his handes.

125 And so hath he gon up and down that he stombeled on his clubbe; and it sesed
and ran theras he wende to finde the kynge. But the kynge blenched so that he
myght hym not areche, and therfore hadde he grete sorow in herte. And than he
caste awey his clubbe and tasted to chacche the kynge in his armes. And so he
130 wente gropinge and frotinge his iyen till he saugh the light and the shadowe of the
kynge. And than he spronge to hym and caught hym by the flankes with bothe his
armes that nygh he hadde with his gripes brosten his chyne. And than he began to
craspe after his arme for to take from hym his swerde out of his honde. But the
kynge it well perceyved and threwe down the swerde, that in the fallinge he myght
135 here it ringe cler. And than he griped the kynge with that oon hande and stouped
down to take the swerde with that other hande; and in the stoupinge, the kynge
smote hym with his kne that he fill in swowne. And than he lept to the swerde and
hente it up, and stert to the geaunte ther he lay and lifte up the serpentes skyn and
rof hym thourgh the body with the swerde. And so was the geaunte slain.

And Kay the Stiwarde and Bediver made grete joye of the kynge, and behelde
the geaunte that so grete [was] that wonder was to beholden, and thanked oure

114 **tastinge**, searching; **that**, until. 115 **sesed**, seized. 116 **anoon**, now; **wende**, expected;
threst, stabbed; **he hadde**, he would have. 117 **wight**, agile; **delyver**, quick; **wrast**, twisted;
peyne, effort. 119 **fremysshed**, shook. 120 **atame**, penetrate. 122 **wiste**, knew; **durste**,
dared. 124 **it sesed**, he halted. 125 **theras**, where; **wende**, hoped; **blenched**, moved back.
126 **areche**, reach. 127 **tasted**, tried; **chacche**, catch. 128 **frotinge**, rubbing; **iyen**, eyes.
130 **gripes**, grip; **brosten**, broken; **chyne**, spine. 131 **craspe**, reach. 133 **here**, hear. 135
kne, knee; **swowne**, swooning. 136 **hente**, grabbed; **ther**, where. 137 **rof**, stabbed. 138
grete, huge.

Merlin and Nimiane; and Arthur and the Giant of St. Michael's Mount

140 Lorde of the honour and the victorie that he hadde yove the kynge, for never
hadde thei seyn so grete a feende. And the kynge bad Bediver smyte of the heed
that it myght be born into the hoste to se the grete merveile of the gretnesse of
hym. And he dide his comaundement; and than [thei] com down of the mounteyn
and lepe on their horse. And the flode was come agein that gretly hem disesed.

145 And with grete peyne thei passed the greves and com agein to the hoste. And the
barouns were sore abaissed for the taryinge of the kynge, for that thei wiste not
whider he was wente; and thei were meved hym for to seche in diverse parties, ne
hadde ben Merlin that bad hem be nothinge dismayed, for he sholde come hastely.

150 While the princes and the barouns were in this afry for the Kynge Arthur, he
and the stiwarde and Bediver com down into his teinte, and hadde the heed of the
geaunte trussed at Bedivers sadell by the heir. And thider com alle the barouns
whan he was alight, and asked fro whens he com, for he hadde put hem in grete
afry. And he seide he com fro thens ther he hadde foughten withe the geaunte
that distroied so the londe and the contrey theraboute, and how he hadde hym
slayn thourgh the grace of oure Lorde. And than he shewed hem the heed that
Bediver hadde trussed. And whan the barons it saugh, thei blessed hem for the
wonder therof, and seide that never in all theire lif had thei not seyn so grete an
heed. And alle that were in the hoste preised God for the kynges victorie. And
than thei dide unarme the kynge with grete joye and gladnesse.

140 **yove**, given. 141 **of**, off. 142 **of**, from. 144 **flode**, tide; **disesed**, bothered. 145 **peyne**,
effort; **passed the greves**, crossed the sands. 146 **sore abaissed**, greatly concerned; **wiste**,
knew. 147 **whider**, where; **meved**, inclined. 147–48 **ne hadde ben**, if not for. 148 **hastely**,
soon. 149 **afry**, fear. 150 **teinte**, tent. 151 **trussed at**, tied to. 153 **afry**, fright; **ther**,
where. 156 **trussed**, brought.

[The Defeat of Lucius; and Arthur and the Devil Cat]

[Summary. Arthur's forces proceed against the Romans. Gawain leads an envoy to the Roman camp, telling the Romans they must leave Arthur's lands. The emperor is angered by this demand; and when a young man sitting beside him says the Briton's words are greater than his deeds, Gawain immediately cuts off his head. The messengers leap to their horses, with the Romans in pursuit. Arthur's men ride to the rescue, and the Britons slaughter many Romans. The entire Roman force enters the fray, causing the Britons to lose many knights; the Britons are forced to retreat. Before the great battle is about to commence, the emperor gives his troops a stirring talk; then they prepare to attack. The battle ensues, with both sides using their full forces. The Britons do many great deeds, yet 2,000 of them are slain. Gawain advances on the emperor, and they fight; using Calibourne, Gawain succeeds in killing Lucius. The enraged Romans fight on, but the Britons prove too much for them, and the surviving Romans are forced to flee. Fols. 230r (line 28)–235r (line 9).]

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10

Full gladde was the Kynge Arthur of the discounfiture of the Romains and of the victorie that God hadde hym yoven. And than [thei] com into the feelde ther the bateile hadde be and biryed the deed bodies in chirches and abbeyes of the contrey, and the wounded lete hem be ledde to townes and serched theire sores. And after, [the Kynge Arthur] made take the body of the emperor and sente it to Rome on a beere and sente worde to the Romains that it was the trewage of Breteaigne that he sent to Rome; and yef thei wolde aske eny more, he wolde hem sende soche another in the same wise. And whan he hadde don thus, he toke counseile wheder he sholde holde forth his wey or turne agein into Gaule; and the princes seide he sholde take counseile of Merlin.

Than the kynge called Merlin and seide, “Dere frende, how pleseth it you that I shall do?” “Sir,” seide Merlin, “ye shull not come at Rome ne ye shull not yet

1 discounfiture, defeat. 2 yoven, given; ther, where. 4 serched, attended to; sores, wounds. 6 beere, bier; trewage, tribute. 9 agein into, back toward. 12 at, to; ne, nor.

The Defeat of Lucius; and Arthur and the Devil Cat

returne, but holde forth youre wey, for ther be peple that have grete nede of youre
15 helpe.” “How so?” seide the kynge. “Is ther werre in this contrey?” “Sir,” seide Merlin, “ye, beyonde the Lak de Losane, for ther repeireth a devell, an enmy so
that ther dar nother abide man ne woman, for he distroith the contrey and sleth
all that he may gete.” “How so?” seide the kynge. “May ther no man hym endure,
20 than is he no man as other ben?” “No,” quod Merlin, “it is a catte full of the devell
that is so grete and ougly that it is an horible sight on to loke.” “Jhesu mercy!”
seide the kynge to Merlin, “whens myght soche a beeste come?” “Sir,” seide Merlin, “that can I welle telle you.

“Hit befill at the Assencion hens a foure yere that a fissher of the contrey com
to the Lak de Losane with his nettes and his engynes. And whan he was redy to
caste his nette into the water, he promysed to oure Lorde the firste fissh that he
25 sholde take. And whan he drough up his nette, he toke a fissh that was worth
thirty shillings. And whan he saugh the fissh so feire and grete, he seide to hymself
softly betwene his teth, “God shall not have this, but He shall have the next that I
take.” Than he threwe his nett agein into the water and toke another fissh that was
30 better than the firste. And whan he saugh it was so good and so feire, he seide that
yet oure Lorde God myght wele abide of this, but the thridde sholde He have,
withoute eny doute. And than he caste his nett into the water and drough oute a
litill kyton as blakke as eny cool. And whan the fissher it saugh, he seide that he
hadde nede therof in his house for rattes and mees. And he it norisshed and kept
35 up in his house till it stranglede hym and his wif and his children, and after fledde
into a mountayn that is beyonde the lak that I have to you of spoken. And [he]
hath be ther into this tyme, and distroith and sleth all that he may se and areche.
And he is grete and horible that it is merveile hym to se; and we shull go that wey,
for it is the right wey toward Rome. And yef God will, ye shull sette the peple in
reste that be fledde into straunge londes.”

40 Whan the barons undirstode these wordes, thei gonне to blesse hem for the

14 werre, war. **15 repeireth**, dwells; **an enmy so**, such an enemy. **16 dar nother**, dares
neither; **sleth**, slays. **17 May ther no man hym endure**, If no man can survive him. **18 than**, then; **catte**, cat. **19 ougly**, ugly. **20 whens**, from whence. **22 hens a foure yere**, four
years ago; **fissher**, fisherman. **23 engynes**, equipment. **32 kyton**, kitten; **cool**, coal. **33
mees**, mice. **36 into**, until; **se**, see; **areche**, reach. **38 sette**, restore. **38–39 in reste**, to
comfort. **40 gonне**, began.

Prose Merlin

grete merveile that thei hadden, and seiden that it was vengeance of oure Lorde,
and a tokne that he was wroth for the synne that the fissher hadde broken his
promys. And therfore thei trowed oure Lorde were wroth with hym for that he
hadde falsed his covenant. Than the kynge comaunded to trusse and to make
hem redy to ride. And thei dide his comaundement and toke theire wey toward the
Lak de Losane, and fonde the contrei wasted and voide of peple that nother man
ne woman durste therynne enhabite.

And thei laboured so till that thei com under the mounte whereas this devell
dide abide, and loiged hem in a valey a myle fro the mountein. And the Kynge
Looth toke his armes, and Sir Gawein and Gaheries and the Kynge Ban and Mer-
lin for to go withe the Kynge Arthur, and seide thei wolde go se this feende that so
grete damage and harme hadde don in the contrey. And thei clymbe upon the
mountein as Merlin hem ledde that well knewe the wey for the grete witte that
was in hym.

And whan thei were come up, than seide Merlin to Arthur, "Sir, in that roche
ther is the catte," and shewed hym a grete cave in a medowe that was right large
and depe. "And how shall the catte come oute?" seide the kynge. "That shull ye se
hastely," quod Merlin. "But loke ye be redy you to diffende, for anoon he will
yow assaile." "Than drawe yow alle abakke," seide the Kynge Arthur, "for I will
preve his power." And thei dide his comaundement; and anoon as thei were
withdrawen, Merlin whistelid lowde. And whan the catte that herde, anoon he
lept oute of the cave, for he wende that it had be som wilde beste, and he was
hungry and fastinge and ran woodly astraye toward the Kynge Arthur.

And as soone as the kynge saugh hym comynge, he bar agein hym a short spere
and wende to smyte hym thourgh the body. But the feend caught the steill heed in
his teth so harde that he made it bende; and in the turnyng that the kynge made,
the shaft tobroke faste by the heed that was in [the] cattes mowthe. And he began
to make a grym noyse as he were wood. And the kynge caste down the tronchon
of the spere and drough his cuerde and caste his shelde hym before. And the catte
lepte to hym anoon, and wende to sese hym by the throte; and the kynge lifte the

42 tokne, sign. **43 trowed**, believe. **44 falsed**, broken; **covenant**, promise. **46 contrei**,
country. **51 se**, see. **55 roche**, rock. **57–58 se hastely**, soon see. **60 preve**, test **61 lowde**,
loudly. **62 wende**, hoped. **65 wende**, thought. **68 wood**, mad; **tronchon**, shaft. **70 wende**,
hoped; **sese**, seize.

The Defeat of Lucius; and Arthur and the Devil Cat

- shelde agein hym so fiercely that the catte fill to grounde. But soone he lept upon his feet and ran upon the kynge full fiercely, and the kynge lifte up the cuerde and smote the catte on the heed that he cutte the skyn. But the heed was so harde that he myght not entre; and nevertheles, he was so astonyed that he fill to the erthe upright. But er the kynge myght his shelde recover, the catte sesed hym at discov⁷⁵ert be the sholdres so harde that his clawes griped thourgh his hauberke into the flesshe, and plukked so hard that he brast moo than four hundred mayles that the reade blode folowed his clawes. And ther failed but litill that the kynge hadde falle to the erthe.
- And whan the kynge saugh his blode, he was wonder wroth. Than he caste his shelde before his breste and hilde his swerde in his right hande and ran to the catte vigerously, that likked his clawes that were weet of blode. And whan he saugh the kynge come toward hym, he lepe hym ageins and wende to sese hym as he hadde do beforne. But the kynge launched his shelde hym before, and the catte smote therin his two feet before with so grete fiersnesse thourgh the shelde, and breied so harde that the kynge enclyned to the erthe so that the gige of the shelde fly from his nekke. But he griped the shelde so faste by the enarmynge that the catte myght it not hym bereve ne pulle oute his clawes, but henge in the shelde be the two feet before.⁸⁰
- And whan the kynge saugh this, he griped faste the shelde and smote hym with his swerde upon bothe legges that he cutte hem asonder by the knees, and the catte fill to grounde. And the kynge caste awey his shelde and ran to hym with swerde drawen; and the catte sterte upon the hynder feet and grenned with his teth and coveited the throte of the kynge. And the kynge launched at hym and wende to smyte hym on the heed. And therwith the catte strayned hys hynder feet and lept in his visage and griped hym with her hynder feet and with hir teth into the flesshe, that the blode stremed out in many places of breste and sholdres on high. And whan the kynge felte hym holde so harde, he sette the point of his swerde to the bely for to launche hym thourgh; and whan the catte felte the cuerde, she lefte⁹⁰
- 95** ⁷⁴ astoyned. stunned. ⁷⁵ upright, face-up. ^{75–76} at discov^{er}t, unprotected. ⁷⁶ be, by. ⁷⁷ brast, burst. ⁷⁸ reade blode, red blood. ⁸² likked, licked. ⁸⁴ do, done; launched, raised. ⁸⁵ breied, pounced. ⁸⁶ gige, strap. ⁸⁷ enarmynge, handle. ⁸⁸ bereve, release; henge in, hung on; be, by. ⁹³ sterte, leaped; grenned, grinded. ⁹⁴ coveited, desired; launched, lunged; wende, hoped. ⁹⁵ therwith, then. ⁹⁷ that, so that. ⁹⁸ holde, held.

Prose Merlin

100 hir bitinge and wolde have falle to grounde. But the two hynder feet were so depe
ficched in the hauberke that the heed of the catte hanged downwarde; and than the
kynge smote asonder the two hynder feet, and the body fell to grounde.

105 And as soone as the catte was fallen, she began to whowle and to braye so
lowde that it was herde thourgh the hoste. And whan she hadde caste this cry, she
began to crepe faste down the foreste by the grete strengthe that was in hir, and
drough toward the cave whereas she com oute. But the kynge wente betwene hir
and the cave and ran upon the catte; and the catte launched toward hym and wende
to cacche hym with hir teth. But in the launchinge, the kynge smote of hir two
legges before.

110 And than Merlin and the other ronne to hym and asked how it was with hym.
“Well,” seide the kynge, “blessed be oure Lorde, for I have slain this devell that
grete harm hath don in this contrey. And wite it verily that I hadde never so grete
doute of myself as I hadde now agen this catte, saf only of the geaunte that I
slough this other day on the mountein; and therfore I thanke oure Lorde.”

115 “Sir,” seide the barouns, “ye have grete cause.” Than thei loked on the feet that
were lefte in the shelde and in the hauberk, and thei seide that never soche feet
hadde thei sein before. And Gaheries toke the shelde and wente to the host makinge
grete joye. And whan the princes saugh the feet and the clawes that were so longe,
thei were abaissched, and ledde the kynge to his tente and unarmed hym, and loked
120 on the cracchinges and the bitinge of the catte. And the leches waished softly his
woundes and leide therto salve and oynementes to clense the venom, and dight
hym in soche maner that he letted nothinge to ride.

125 And that day thei sojourned till on the morowe that thei returned toward Gaule.
And the kynge lete bere the shelde with the cattes feet; and the feet that were in
the hauberk lete put in a cofer and comaunded to be well kept. And the kynge
asked Merlin how this mountein was cleped; and Merlin seide that peple of the
contrey cleped it the Mountein de Lak, for the lak that was in the valey. “Certes,”
seide the kynge, “I will that this name be taken awey; and I will it be cleped the

100–01 **depe ficched**, deeply embedded. 103 **whowle**, howl; **braye**, cry. 106 **whereas**,
from which. 107 **launched**, leaped; **wende**, hoped. 108 **of**, off. 112 **wite**, know. 113 **doute**
of, fear for. 119 **abaissched**, astonished. 120 **cracchinges**, scratches; **leches**, doctors. 121
dight, readied. 122 **letted nothinge**, was able. 124 **lete bere**, carried. 125 **cofer**, chest.
127 **lak**, lake. 128 **will**, wish.

The Defeat of Lucius; and Arthur and the Devil Cat

Mountein of the Catte, for the catte hadde ther his repeire and was ther slain."
130 And after that the name of that hill never chaunged, ne never shall while the worlde
dureth. And now awhile cesseth the tale and returneth to hem that ledde the pris-
oners.

130 **ne**, nor. 131 **dureth**, endures.

[Merlin's Imprisonment; and Gawain and the Dwarf Knight]

[Summary.] As Arthur's forces are returning through France, they are set upon by men loyal to Cladas de la deserte, King Ban and King Bors's old enemy. Many men are killed in the fighting before Cladas's men finally flee. Then Arthur's army proceeds on to Benoyk. Meanwhile, a rich lord comes to Agravadain at the Castle of the Marasse and asks for his daughter in marriage. When Agravavain's daughter privately tells her father she is carrying King Ban's child, he is angry, but he agrees to ask the rich lord to postpone the marriage for two years. Angered by being put off, the rich lord besieges the castle. Agravavain successively fights the best knights in the besieging army, defeating them all; his daughter has her baby, naming him Estor.

In Jerusalem, all that Merlin had predicted now comes about. The saracen ruler Flualis is overcome by the Christians and his children are slain. He and his wife convert to Christianity, being baptized and changing their names. They have four daughters who marry four Christian princes and have fifty-four children. Those children prove to be good knights who claim pagan lands for the Christian faith; some of them go to Logres to serve King Arthur.

In Benoyk, tidings are brought to Arthur that King Leodegan of Tamelide has died. Arthur immediately prepares to depart for Britain. He says his final farewells to King Ban and King Bors, and after that time he never sees them again. Fols. 236v (line 15)–239v (line 12).]

Whan the Kynge Arthur was departed fro the two kynges that were brethern that so moche honour hadde hym don, he traveiled so by his journeys that he com to the see and entred into shippes and passed over and landed at the port of Dover. And [they] lepe on theire horse and ride forth to Logres, and ther thei fonde the Quene Gonne that hem resceived with grete joye. And [she] tolde how hir fader was passed oute of this worlde, and he hir counforted in the beste wise he myght. And after, the kynge departed his peple, and thei yode hom into theire contreyes. And the Kynge Arthur aboode at Logres, and Sir Gawein and the Knygthes of the Rounde Table and Merlin sojourned ther longe tyme.

5

7 departed, dismissed; yode, went; into, unto.

Merlin's Imprisonment; and Gawain and the Dwarf Knight

10 Than he hadde grete talent for to se Blase his maister for to telle hym of all that was befallen seth he fro hym departed; and fro thens he wolde go to Nimiane his love, for the terme drough faste on that was sette. And he wente to the kynge and seide that hym behoved to go. And the kynge and the quene prayed hym right entierly soone for to come agein, for he dide hem grete solas and counfort of his
15 companye, for the kynge hym loved feithfully, for in many a nede he hadde hym socoured and holpen, for by hym and by his counseile was he kynge. And he seide to hym right tenderly, "Dere frende Merlin, seth ye will go, I dar yow not withholde agein youre wille and volunté. But I shall never be in hertes ese till that I may se yow; and therfore, I praye you for the love of oure Lorde, haste you
20 soone to come agein."

"Sir," seide Merlin, "this is the laste tyme; and therfore, to God I you comaunde." Whan the kynge herde how he seide it was the laste tyme that he sholde hym se, he was sore abaisshed. And Merlin departed withoute moo wordes sore weeping, and travailed till he com to Blase his maister that grete chere hym made, and asked how he hadde sped sethen; and he seide "Wele."

25 And than he tolde him alle thinges as thei were befallen of the Kynge Arthur and of the geaunte that he hadde slain; and of the bateile of the Romans; and how he had slain the cat; and tolde hym also of the litill duerfe how the damesell hadde hym brought to court, and how the kynge hadde made hym knyght. "But thus moche," seide Merlin, "I shall telle yow; he is a grete gentilman and is no duerf by nature; but thus hath a damesell hym myshapen whan he was thirteen yere of age for that he wolde not graunte hir his love. And he was than the feirest creature of the worlde; and for the sorowe that the damesell hadde, araid she hym in soche wise that now is the lothliest creature and of moste dispite. And fro hens
30 nine wikes shall cesse the terme that the damesell sette, and [he] shall come into the age that he ought for to be, for at that day shall he be twenty-two yere olde."

35 Whan Merlin hadde alle thinges rehersed and Blase hadde hem alle writen oon after another in ordre, and by his boke have we the knowinge therof. And whan

10 **he**, i.e., Merlin; **talent**, desire. 11 **seth**, since. 12 **drough**, drew; **faste on**, near; **sette**, agreed upon. 13 **behoved**, needed. 14 **entierly**, earnestly. 17 **seth**, since. 18 **agein**, against; **volunté**, desire. 23 **sore abaisshed**, greatly upset. 25 **sped**, fared; **sethen**, since [last time]. 27 **of**, with. 28 **duerfe**, dwarf. 32 **for that**, because. 33 **araied she**, she transformed him. 34 **dispite**, shame. 35 **wikes**, weeks; **cesse**, end.

Prose Merlin

Merlin hadde be ther eight dayes, he toke leve of Blase and seide, “This is the
40 laste tyme that I shall speke with yow eny more, for fro hensforth I shall sojourne
with my love, ne never shall I have power hir for to leve ne to come ne go.”

Whan Blase undirstode Merlin, he was full of sorowe and seide, “Dere frende,
seth it is so that ye may not departe, cometh not ther.” “Me behoveth for to go,”
45 quod Merlin, “for so have I made hir covaunt; and also, I am so supprised with
hir love that I may me not withdrawn. And I have her taught and lerned all the
witte and connynge that she can, and yet shall she lerne more, for I may not hir
withsein ne it disturve.”

Than departed Merlin from Blase, and in litill space come to his love that grete
joye of hym made, and he of hir, and dwelled togeder longe tyme. And ever she
50 enquered of his craftes, and he hir taught and lerned so moche that after he was
holden a fooll, and yet is. And she hem well undirstode and put hem in wrtinge as
she that was well expert in the Seven Artes.

Whan that he hadde hir taught all that she cowde aske, she bethought hir how
she myght hym withholde forever more. Than began she to glose Merlin more
55 than ever she hadde do even beforne and seide, “Sir, yet can I not oon thinge that I
wolde fain lerne, and therfore I pray you that ye wolde me enforme.” And Merlin,
that well knewe her entent seid, “Madame, what thinge is that?” “Sir,” quod she,
“I wolde fain lerne how I myght oon shet in a tour withouten walles or withoute
60 eny closure be enchauntement, so that never he sholden go oute withouten my
licence.” And whan Merlin it herde, he bowed down the heed and began to sigh;
and [whan] she it aparceived, she asked whi he sighed.

“Madame,” seide Merlin, “I shall telle yow. I knowe well what ye thinke, and
that ye will me withholde; and I am so supprised with love that me behoveth to do
youre plesier.” And than she caste hir armes aboute his nekke and hym kiste, and
65 seide that wele he ought to be hirs seth that she was all his. “Ye knowe wele that
the grete love that I have to you hath made me forsake alle other for to have yow
in myn armes nyght and day; and ye be my thought and my desire, for withoute

41 **ne**¹, and; **ne**², nor; **ne**³, or. 43 **seth**, since. 44 **hir covaunt**, her a promise; **supprised with**, overcome by. 46–47 **hir withsein**, from her withhold. 47 **ne it disturve**, nor it prevent. 50 **after**, later. 51 **holden**, considered. 53 **cowde**, did. 54 **withholde**, possess; **glose**, flatter. 55 **can**, know. 58 **shet**, shut; **tour**, tower. 59 **be**, by. 63 **withholde**, imprison; **supprised**, overwhelmed.

Merlin's Imprisonment; and Gawain and the Dwarf Knight

70 yow have I neither joye ne welthe. In you have I sette all my hope, and I abide noon other joye but of yow; and seth that I love you and also ye love me, is [it] not right than that ye do my volunté and I yours?"

75 "Certes, yesse," seide Merlin. "Now sey than what ye will." "I will," quod she, "ye teche me a place feire and covenable that I myght enclose by art in soche wise that never myght be undon; and we shull be ther, ye and I, in joye and disperte whan that yow liketh." "Madame," seide Merlin, "that shall I well do." "Sir," quod she, "I will not that ye it make, but lerne it to me that I may it do, and I shall make it than more at my volunté." "Well," seide Merlin, "I will do youre plesire."

80 Than he began to devise the crafte unto hir, and she it wrote all that he seide; and whan [he] hadde alle devised, the damesell hadde grete joye in herte. And he hir loved more and more, and she shewed hym feirer chere than befor. And so thei sojourned togeder longe tyme till it fill on a day that thei wente thourgh the foreste hande in hande, devisinge and disportinge, and this was in the Foreste of Brochelonde, and fonde a bush that was feire and high of white hawthorne full of floures; and ther thei satte in the shadowe. And Merlin leide his heed in the damesels lappe, and she began to taste softly till he fill on slepe. And whan she felt that he was on slepe, she aroos softly and made a cerne with hir wymples all aboute the bussh and all aboute Merlin, and began hir enchauntementez soche as Merlin hadde hir taught, made the cerne nine tymes and nine tymes hir enchauntementes. And after that she wente and satte down by hym and leide his heed in hir lappe and hilde hym ther till he dide awake. And than he loked aboute hym, and hym semed 85 he was in the feirest tour of the worlde and the moste stronge, and fonde hym leide in the feirest place that ever he lay befor.

90

95 And than he seide to the damesell, "Lady, thou hast me disceived but yef ye will abide with me, for noon but ye may undo this enchauntementes." And she seide, "Feire swete frende, I shall often tymes go oute, and ye shull have me in youre armes, and I yow. And fro hensforth shull ye do all youre plesier." And she hym hilde wele covaunt, for fewe hours ther were of the nyght ne of the day but

69 **seth that**, since. 70 **volunté**, wishes. 71 **will**, desire. 72 **teche**, to show; **covenable**, private. 76 **volunté**, desire. 77 **devise**, teach; **crafte unto**, skill to. 83 **shadowe**, shade. 84 **taste**, touch him. 85 **cerne**, circle; **wymples**, scarf. 87 **cerne**, circle. 89 **hilde**, held; **hym semed**, thought. 90 **tour**, tour. 92 **but yef**, unless. 93 **abide**, stay. 96 **hym hilde wele covaunt**, kept her promise to him.

Prose Merlin

she was with hym. Ne never after com Merlin oute of that fortresse that she hadde hym in sette, but she wente in and oute whan she wolde. But now moste we reste a while of Merlin and of his love and speke of the Kynge Arthur.

100 The same hour that Merlin was departed fro the Kynge Arthur and that he hadde seide how it was the laste tyme that he sholde hym se, the kynge aboode sore abaissched and full pensif of that worde. And in soche maner he aboode after Merlin seven wikes and more. But whan he saugh that he com nougħt, he was full pensif and full of hevynesse. And on a day, Sir Gawayn asked what hym eiled.
105 "Certes, nevew," seide the kynge, "I thinke on that I trowe I have loste Merlin, and that he will never more come to me; for now hath he abiden lenger than he was wonte. And gretly I am dismayed of the worde that he seide whan he fro me departed, for he seide this is the laste tyme; therfore I am in doute that he sey soth, for he ne made never lesinge of nothinge that he seide. For so helpe me God, I
110 hadde lever lese the cité of Logres than hym. And therfore, fain wolde I wite yef eny myght hym finde fer or nygh; and therfore I praye you as derely as ye me love that ye hym seche till ye knowe the verité."

115 "Sir," seide Gawayn, "I am all redy to do youre volunté, and anoon ye shull se me meve fordwarde. And I suere to you be the oth that I made to you whan ye made me knyght that I shall seche hym a yere and a day, but withynne that space I may knowe trewe tidinges." In this same wise swor Sir Ewein and Segramor and Agravain and Geheret and Gaheries and twenty-five of her felowes.

[Summary. The knights set out on the quest to find Merlin. In the meantime, the lady and the dwarf-knight that Arthur had knighted have a series of adventures. The dwarf defeats a knight in single combat and requires him to go to Arthur's court where he tells of his defeat by the dwarf. Ewain and his companions encounter this same lady, who now rides mourning for her love (who is called Avadain the Dwarf), for she believes he is about to be killed by five knights. Ewain rides to help the dwarf-knight; when he gets

97 **Ne**, But. 98 **wolde**, wished; **moste**, must. 101–02 **sore abaissched**, greatly troubled. 102 **aboode after**, waited for. 103 **wikes**, weeks. 104 **hevynesse**, sadness; **eiled**, ailed. 105 **trowe**, believe. 106 **abiden**, stayed away. 108 **in doute**, fearful; **sey soth**, spoke the truth. 109 **lesinge**, a falsehood. 110 **lever**, rather; **wite**, know. 112 **seche**, seek; **verité**, truth. 113 **volunté**, wishes. 114 **meve fordwarde**, make a promise; **suere**, swear; **be**, by. 115 **but**, unless. 117 **her**, their.

Merlin's Imprisonment; and Gawain and the Dwarf Knight

there, the dwarf has already defeated several of his foes. Ewain unhorses one of the attacking knights. When the dwarf-knight attempts to kill the knight, Ewain stays his hand, telling him he has done enough. The defeated knight thanks Ewain for saving his life, and yields his sword to the dwarf. Ewain and his companions ride on their way; and at the end of the year, they return to court, not having found Merlin. The story now returns to Gawain. Fol. 241r (line 3)–243r (line 22).]

Whan that Sir Gawein was departed fro his felowes, he rode forth thourgh the foreste, he and five knyghtes of his companye; and ther thei departed and eche wente his wey, for he wolde ride sooll by hymself. And in this wise thei departed
120 so that eche of hem toke his wey. And Sir Gawein rode so alone serchingre grete part of the londe till it fill on a day that he rode pensif and hevy for that he myght not finde Merlin. And in this stody he entred into a foreste; and he hadde riden aboute two Walsh myle, ther com a damesell hym agein that rode on the feirest palfrey of the worlde. And [it] was all blak, and the sadell and the stiropes were
125 all of golde, and the cloth of scarlet traillinge to the erthe, and the bridill of golde. And she was clothed in white samyte and hir kirchires of silke and richely atired, and com ridinge before Sir Gawein, as he was in this pensifnesse, that he dide her not value.

130 And whan he was passed the damesell, she reyned hir bridill and turned the heed of hir palfrey and seide, “Gawein, Gawein, hit is not trewe the renomee that renneth of thee thourgh the reame of Logres; for it is seide of thee that thou art the best knyght of the worlde; and of that thei sey [not the] trouthe. Also it is seide that thou art the gentilest and the moste curteise knyght; but in that faileth the
135 renoon, for thou art the moste viley knyght that ever I mette in my lif, that in this forest so fer fro peple haste me imet alone; and so grete felonye in the is roted that thou deynest not me ones toalue ne to speke a worde; and knowe thou verily, thou shalt it repente of that thou hast don in so moche that thou shalt wissh thou haddest it not don for all the reame of Logres.”

140 And whan Sir Gawein undirstode the damesell, he was sore ashamed and turned

118 **departed**, separated. 120 **sooll**, alone. 124 **Walsh myle**, Welsh miles; **hym agein**, towards him. 127 **samyte**, silk; **kirchires**, scarfs. 129 **alue**, greet. 130 **was**, had. 131 **renomee**, fame. 132 **renneth of thee**, circulates about you. 135 **renoon**, renown; **that²**, who. 136 **haste**, have; **felonye**, crime; **roted**, rooted. 137 **ones**, once; **alue ne**, greet nor.

Prose Merlin

agein hir his bridell of Gringalet, and seide all shamefast as ye shull heren. “Damesell,” quod Sir Gawein, “so help me God, I thought upon a thinge that I go sechinge; and therfore I pray yow that ye foryeve it me that I have mysdon.” “So helpe me God,” quod the damesell, “rather shalt thou abyte it full dere, for inough thou shalt have of shame and lothlynesse; and therfore, remembre another tyme whan thou metest with eny lady or damesell that thou hir salue for curtesie. But I sey not that it shall thee ever endure; ne of that thou goist sechinge, shalt thou finde noon in the reame of Logres that thee can telle no tidinge, but in the Litill Breteigne maist thou here som maner tidinges. And I will go now theras I have to don; and thou shalt go seche that thou art moved fore. And the firste man that thou metest with mote thou be like, till thou se me eftsones.”

Than departed Sir Gawein and the damesell. But he hadde not riden fully half a Walissh myle though the foreste that he mette with the duerf knyght and the damesell that on the even before were departed fro Sir Ewein and hadde sent the 155 foure knyghtes in Arthurs prison; and it was on Trinité Sonday aboute mydday. And than he remembred hym on the damesell that he hadde mette before, and lefte his pensifnesse and seide to the damesell, “God yeve you good day and moche joye of hir compayne.” And the damesell and the duerf hym ansuerde that God yeve hym good aventure. And so thei past a litill asonder, Sir Gawein on that oon 160 part and thei on that other. And whan thei were departed a litill thens, the duerf knyght becom agein into his bewté as he hadde be at the first tyme, and was in the age of twenty-two yere, right wele furnysshed and wonderly well shapen of large stature; and therfore hym behoved to do awey his armes, for thei were to hym nothinge meete. And whan the damesell saugh hir love come agein into so grete bewté, she hadde so grete joye that no tonge myght it telle; and caste hir armes aboute his nekke and hym kiste an hundred tymes. And [they] ride forth that oon by that other, gladdie and joyfull in grete solas, and thanked oure Lorde of the honour that he hadde hem don, and praied oure Lorde to sende Sir Gawein good

141 agein, towards. **143 sechinge**, seeking. **144 abyte**, pay for; **dere**, dearly. **146 salue**, greet. **147 ne of that thou goist sechinge**, as to what you are seeking. **148 noon**, it not. **149 theras**, where. **150 that¹**, what; **moved fore**, looking for. **151 mote**, must; **se**, see; **eftsones**, later on. **153 Walissh**, Welsh; **duerf**, dwarf. **154 even**, evening. **159 yeve**, give; **aventure**, fortune. **161 bewté**, handsomeness; **be**, been. **163 hym behoved**, he needed; **do awey**, discard. **164 nothinge meete**, unsuitable.

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aventure that hadde seide that God yeve hem joye. And so hadde he done, and
170 thus thei ride forth theire journey. But now shull we speke of Gawein.

Whan that Sir Gawein was passed the duerf knyght and the damesell wele a
two bowe draught, anoon he felte that the sleves of his hauberk passed fer of
lengthe over his hondes, and also the lengthe of his hauberk henge down benethe
175 his feet, and his legges were waxen so short that thei passed not the skirtes of the
sadill. And [he] behilde and saugh how his hosen of stiell resten in the stiropes,
and saugh how his shelde henge toward the erthe, and aperceyved wele that he
was become a duerf; and seide to hymself that it was that the damesell hadde hym
promysed. And therwith he wax so wroth that for a litill he hadde gon oute of his
180 witte; and rode forth so in that wrathe and in that anguyssh in the foreste till he
fonde a crosse and a ston therby. And thider he rode and alight upon the ston and
toke his stiropes and made hem shorter and his hosen of stiell and the renge of
his swerde and the gige of his shilde and the sleves of his hauberk with thonges of
lether upon his shuldres, and araied hym in the beste wise he myght, so wroth and
angry that he hadde lever to be deed than on lyve.

185 And after that he lept up and rode forth his wey, and cursed the day and the
hour that ever he entred into that quest, for shamed he was and dishonoured. And so hath he gon in this maner that never he lefte castell ne towne ne burgh but that
he asked tidinges of Merlin of alle the men and women that he mette; and many
oon he mette that grete shame and grete reproves hym seiden. And nevertheles he
190 dide many prowesses, for though he were a duerf and mysshappen, he hadde not
lost his strengthe netthir his hardinesse, and many a knyght he conquered. And whan he hadde serched the reame of Logres up and down and saugh that he cowde
not finde Merlin, he thought to passe the see and go into the Litill Breteigne. And so he dide, and serched it fer and nygh, but never cowde he here no tidinge of
195 Merlin. And so it drough nygh the terme that he hadde promysed to returne.

And than he seide to hymself, "Allas, what shall I now do, for the terme aproched
that I muste returne, by the oth that I have sworn to myn oncle to repeire. Returne
moste I nede, for elles sholde I be forsworne and untrewe, and that will I not in no

172 **two bowe draught**, two bow shots. 175 **behilde**, looked. 177 **that²**, what. 181 **renge**,
belt. 182 **gige**, strap. 184 **lever to**, rather. 189 **reproves hym seiden**, insults said to him
190 **prowesses**, fine deeds. 191 **netthir**, nor. 192 **cowde**, could. 194 **here**, hear. 195 **drough**
nygh, drew near.

Prose Merlin

maner, for the oth was soche that yef I were in my delyver powsté, and in my
200 powsté am I nougħt, for I am foulé disfigured and a thinge of grete dispite and I
have nougħt of myself; and therfore may I wele abide of goinge to court. Certes,
now have I evell seide, for never will I be forsworne for to go ne to come, what
persone that ever I be; and for that I am not shet in prison, I may go at my wille.
And I may not abide but I be forsworne; and therfore me behoveth to go, for
205 untrouthe will I never do. But I pray to God to have of me mercy and pité, for my
body is shamefully and lothly arayed.”

In these complayntes that Sir Gawein ther made, he returned bak for to come to
courte; and fill as he rode thourgh the Foreste of Brocheliande and wolde turne
210 for to come to the see. And ever as he rode he made grete moone; and as he made
this weymentacion, he herde a voice a litill upon the right side above. And he
turned that wey where he hadde herde the voice, and loked up and downe and
nothinge he saugh but as it hadde ben a smoke of myste in the eyre that myght not
passe oute. Than he herde a voice that seide, “Sir Gawein, disconfort you nothinge,
for all shall falle as it behoveth to falle.”

215 Whan Sir Gawein herde the voyce that hadde hym cleped by his right name, he
ansuerde and seide, “Who is that, in the name of God, that to me doth speke?”
“How is that?” quod the voice. “Ne knowe ye me nougħt? Ye were wonte to
knowe me right wele, but so goth the worlde; and trewe is the proverbe that the
wise man seith, that ‘Who is fer from his iye is soone foryeten’; and so fareth it be
220 me. For while that I haunted the courte and served the Kynge Arthur and his
barouns, I was wele beknownen of yow and of many other. And for that I have left
court, I am unknownen; and that ought I not to be, yef feith and trouthe regned
thourgh the worlde.”

225 Whan Sir Gawein herde the voice thus speke, he thought anoon it was Merlin,
and ansuerde anoon. “Certes, it is trouthe I ought you wele for to knowe, for many

199 **yef**, if; **delyver powsté**, normal condition. 200 **nougħt**, not; **dispite**, ridicule. 201
abide, delay; **of goinge**, returning; **Certes**, To be sure. 202 **evell seide**, evilly said. 203 **for
that**, because. 204 **abide but**, delay unless. 207 **In**, After. 208 **fill as**, it happened that. 209
moone, moan. 210 **weymentacion**, lamentation. 212 **eyre**, air. 214 **behoveth**, needs. 215
cleped, called. 217 **Ne knowe ye me nougħt**, Do not you know me; **were wonte to**, used
to. 219 **iye**, eye; **foryeten**, forgotten; **be**, with. 221 **for that**, because. 222 **yef**, if.

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tyme have I herde youre speche; and therfore I pray you that ye will apere to me so that I may yow se.” “My lorde Sir Gawein,” quod Merlin, “me shull ye never se; and that hevieth me sore that I may do noon other. And whan ye be departed fro hens, I shall never speke with yow no more, ne with noon other saf only with my leef. For never man shall have power hider for to come for nothinge that may befall. Ne fro hens may I not come oute, ne never I shall come oute, for in all the worlde is not so stronge a clos as in this whereas I am. And it is nother of iren ne stiell ne tymbir ne of ston, but it is of the aire withoute eny othir thinge by enchauntemente so stronge that it may never be undon while the worlde endureth.

230 Ne I may not come oute ne noon may entre, saf she that me here hath enclosed, that bereth me compayne whan hir liked, and goth hens whan hir liste.”

“How is that, swete frende,” quod Gawein, “that ye be in this maner withholden, that noon may you delyver by no force that may be do, ne ye may not you shewe to me, that be the wisest man of the worlde?” “Nay, but the moste fole,” quod 235 Merlin, “for I wiste wele that sholde befall; and I am soche a fole that I love another better than myself, and have hir lerned so moche wherethough I am thus beclosed and shette in prison, ne noon may me oute bringe.” “Certes,” seide Sir Gawein, “that me hevieth sore, and so [it] will the Kynge Arthur myn uncle whan he it knoweth, as he that maketh yow to be sought thourgh alle londes.”

240 “Now he moste it suffre,” quod Merlin, “for he shall me se never more, ne I hym, for thus is it befall. Ne never shall no man speke with me after you. Therfore for nought meveth eny man me for to seche. For youreself, anoon as ye be turned fro hens, ye shull never here me speke. And therfore, now returne and grete wele the Kynge Arthur and my lady the quene and alle the barouns, and telle hem how 245 it is with me; and ye shull fynde the kynge at Cardoell in Wales. And whan ye come thider, ye shull finde alle youre felowes ther that fro you were departed. And discounforte yow not of that is yow befall, for ye shall fynde the damesell

226 **apere**, appear. 228 **hevieth**, grieves. 229 **saf**, save. 230 **leef**, love. 231 **Ne fro hens**, Nor from here. 232 **a clos**, an enclosure; **whereas**, where. 235 **ne noon**, nor none. 238 **do**, done. 238–39 **ne ye may not . . . me**, can you not show me. 239 **that be**, [you] who are; **moste fole**, greatest fool. 241 **lerned**, taught. 244 **as**, for. 245 **suffre**, endure. 247 **meveth**, attempts; **seche**, seek. 248 **grete**, greet. 252 **discounforte . . . befall**, do not be discouraged by what has befallen you.

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that so hath yow mysshapen in the foreste whereas ye hir mette. But foryete not
hir to salue, for it were folye.” “Sir,” seide Gawein, “ne nought I shall, yef God
will.” “Now,” quod Merlin, “I beteche yow to God that kepe the Kynge Arthur
and the reame of Logres as for the best peple of the worlde.”

Than departed Sir Gawein gladdé and sorowful — gladdé for that Merlin hadde
hym assured to be releveth from his lothlynesse, and sory for that he hadde Merlin
thus loste. And [he] rode so forth till he com to the see, and passed over hastily
inough, and than toke his wey to ride to Cardoell in Walis. And [it] fill that he
mette the damesell that [he] hadde passed by withoute saluyng in the foreste.
And than he remembred of that Merlin hadde hym seide that he sholde not foryete
hir to salue whan he hir mette. And he hadde grete feer and douted lesse she
passed er he myght hir salewe; and [he] dide of his helme of his heed for to se hir
more clerly, and began to beholde before and behynde and on alle sides, till that
he com in the same place where he mette the damesell. And than he loked betwene
two busshes, for the forest was somdell depe and thikke, and saugh two knyghtes
that were armed at alle poyntes, saf of theire sheldes and helmes that thei hadde
don of, and hadde theire horse reyned to theire speres that were pight in the grounde,
and hilde a damesell betwene hem two and made semblaunce hir to enforce, and
yet therto hadde thei no talent, for the damesell made hem it for to do for to assaye
the will and the corage of Sir Gawein; and she made countenaunce like as thei
hadde constreyned hir be force.

And whan Sir Gawein saugh this, he wax wroth and rode thider gripinge his
spere, and seide to the knyghtes that thei were but deed for that thei dide force the
damesell withynne the lordship of Kynge Arthur. “For ye knowe wele,” quod he,
“that thei sholde go sure.” And whan the damesell hym saugh, she hym ascried
and seide, “Gawein, now shall it be sene yef ther be soche prowesse in you that ye
may me delyver from this shame.” “Damesell,” seide Gawein, “so God be my

253 **whereas**, where. 254 **alue**, greet; **ne nought I shall**, I shall not. 255 **beteche**, commend; **kepe**, protects. 258 **releveth**, relieved. 260 **Walis**, Wales. 261 **saluyng**, greeting.
262 **of that**, what. 263 **douted**, worry. 264 **er**, before; **dide of**, took off. 267 **somdell**,
somewhat. 269 **don of**, taken off; **pight**, stuck. 270 **hilde**, held; **enforce**, rape. 271 **thereto**,
to do that; **talent**, desire; **assaye**, test. 275 **deed**, dead; **for that**, because. 276 **lordship**,
realm. 277 **sure**, safely; **saugh**, saw; **ascried**, called out.

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280 socour, as ye shull have no shame theras I may you diffende, for owther I shall
dye or I shall you delyver." And whan the knyghtes this undirstode, thei hadde
therof grete disdeyne and dispite; and lepte on foote and laced theire helmes, for
yet thei douted of hym, and nevertheles the damesell hadde hem assured that of
285 hym sholde thei have noon harme, and hadde hem so enchaunted by hir art that no
man myght hem anoye; and therfore thei were the more sure at that tyme. And
whan theire helmes were laced, thei henge theire sheldes aboue theire nekkes and
seide to Sir Gawein, "So helpe me God, false duerf countifeted, thou art but
deed; and nevertheless shame us semeth to dele with soche a wrecche as thou art."

290 And whan Sir Gawein herde hymself cleped duerf and so dispised, he hadde
grete sorowe in herte and seide, "As lothly a wrecche as I am, in evell tyme I am
come to youre behof. But lepe upon youre horse, for vilonye me semeth to requere
you on horsebak while ye be on foote." "Trusted so moche in thyself," seide the
295 knyghtes, "that thou wilt abide till we be horsed?" "I trust so moche in God,"
quod Gawein, "that whan ye departe fro me ye shull never forfete to lady ne
damesell in the londe of Kynge Arthur."

300 Than thei lepe to theire horse and hente theire speres and seide to Sir Gawein
that he was but deed; and drough hem to the wey that was moste playne and
withdrough that oon fro that other. And than thei bothe lete renne agein Sir Gawein
and he agein hem. And thei smote bothe upon his shelde so harde that theire speres
braste asonder, but thei hym meved not from his sadill. And he smote so that oon
that he bar hym to the erthe upright, and the spere brake in peces, and he rode over
hym that was fallen and unhorsed so that he brosed hym sore. Than he drough his
suerde and rode toward that other and wolde smyte hym upon the helme. And
305 than the damesell cried, "Inough, Sir Gawein, ne do no more!" "Damesell," seide
Gawein, "will ye that it so be?" And she seide, "Ye." "And I will suffre than for
youre sake, that God yeve you than good aventure and to alle the damesels of the
worlde. And wite ye well, ne were it for youre prayer, thei sholde be slain; for

280 **theras**, where; **owther**, either. 283 **douted of**, feared; **and nevertheles**, even though.
285 **anoye**, harm. 287 **duerf**, dwarf; **countifeted**, ill-shaped. 288 **dele**, deal. 291 **behof**,
need; **me semeth**, it seems to me; **requere**, fight. 294 **forfete**, do harm; **ne**, nor. 296 **hente**,
took. 297 **wey**, path; **playne**, open. 298 **withdrough**, withdrew; **agein**, toward. 300 **braste**,
burst; **hym meved not**, did not budge him. 301 **upright**, on his back. 302 **brosed**, bruised.
306 **yeve**, give; **aventure**, fortune. 307 **ne were it**, if not.

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thei have don you to grete shame and anoye, and to me seide vilonye, that “countirfet duerf” have me called. And yet therof thei seide soth, for I am the moste lothly creature of dispite that is in the worlde, and in this foreste it me befill eight monethes passed.”

And whan the damesell and the knyghtes hym undirstode, thei begonne to laugh; and than seide the damesell, “What wolde ye yeve hir that of that wolde warisshen?” “Certes,” seide Gawein, “yef it myght be that it were warisshed, I wolde yeve mysilf firste and formest, and after, all that I myght raunsome in all the worlde.” “It shall not nede you yeve so moche,” seide the damesell, “but ye shull make to me an oth soche as I shall you devise.” “Lady,” seide Gawein, “I will do all youre volunté.” Quod she, “Ye shull to me swere be the oth that ye made to the Kynge Arthur youre uncle that never ye shull faile lady ne maiden ne damesell, ne never mete lady ne damesell but ye shull hiralue er shealue you, yef ye may.” “Lady,” quod Gawein, “this I graunte as I am trewe knyght.” “And I take the oth in this maner that yef ye breke youre oth that ye become into the same poynte that ye be now.” “Lady,” quod he, “to this I assent, with that the quarell be trewe of hir that of helpe me requereth, for untrouthe will I not do in no maner wise, nother for lif ne for deth.” “Thus I you graunte,” quod the damesell, “for I will that ye be soche as ye were before.”

Anoon brake the layners that he had bounden up his hosen of stiell, for his membres that were strecched oute and com agein anoon in his owne semblaunce. And whan he felte that he was come agein into his power, he kneled before the damesell and seide that he was hir knyght for ever more. And the damesell hym thanked and raught hym up be the honde. Than toke the damesell leve of Sir Gawein and departed, and hir two knyghtes with hir, and comaunded eche other to God.

And Sir Gawein abood there and lengthed his hauberke and appareiled his shelde and his armes full richely, and lepte upon the Gringalet with his shelde aboute his nekke and his spere in hande, and rode forth toward Cardoell so fro day to day till that he com thider at the terme devised. And the same day that Sir Ewein and

308 **you to**, to you; **anoye**, harm; **countirfet**, ill-shaped. 310 **dispite**, ridicule. 313 **warisshen**, correct. 318 **volunté**, desires. 320 **alue er**, greet before. 322 **poynte**, condition. 323 **with**, so. 327 **brake**, broke; **layners**, thongs. 328 **membres**, limbs. 331 **raught**, caught.

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Segramor and her felowes were comen; and eche of hem hadde seide his aventure of that was hem befallen in [this quest].

[Here the Middle English text breaks off.]

[Summary. Everyone marvels at Gawain's adventures, but Arthur grieves for Merlin. While the court is celebrating Gawain's return, a handsome young man enters accompanied by a damsels. He informs the king he is the dwarf that Arthur had knighted earlier, and he explains how he came to regain his real shape. Arthur invites this handsome knight, whose name is Evadem, to join the Round Table.

The story turns to events in Benoye, where King Ban and King Bors are living joyfully with their wives. King Ban's wife gives birth to a son who is baptised Gallead and is surnamed Lancelot; King Bors's wife gives birth to a son named Lyonel and a year later to a son named Bohort. These three sons will achieve great renown in the land of Logres later on. But now the fortunes of King Ban and King Bors take a turn for the worse, for King Bors is stricken by a terrible sickness, and their old enemy Cladas de la deserte begins to mount a new military campaign against the land of Benoye. King Ban has too few people to repel Cladas's attack; and when King Ban is betrayed by his own seneschal, the Castle of Trebes falls to his enemy, as the story will later describe.]

337 **her**, their.

Commentary

The Birth of Merlin

[Fols. 1r–8r (line 10)]

Geoffrey of Monmouth is the first medieval writer to provide an account of Merlin's conception and birth. In *The History of the Kings of Britain* Geoffrey offers a relatively brief recounting of the impregnation of Merlin's virtuous human mother by an invisible incubus demon (Thorpe, pp. 167–68). Wace, in his *Roman de Brut*, adds little to Geoffrey's narrative. "The Birth of Merlin," however, follows the French Vulgate version by developing this basic story much further and providing a specific rationale for the begetting of Merlin that is absent from Geoffrey's work. The motif of a great consultation among the fiends occurs in several places in medieval and Renaissance literature, the most famous of which is in Book II of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*; in ME literature there is the poem "The Devils' Parliament," which depicts the devils' consternation over the Virgin Birth. Here the fiends have been thrown into confusion by Christ's recent Harrowing of Hell, during which he releases the Old Testament patriarchs from Satan's bondage. Plotting revenge, the devils decide to father a fiendish child — a kind of antichrist — by producing a "virgin birth" of their own. The result of their plan is the boy Merlin. But the devils' revenge goes awry, due to the basic goodness of Merlin's mother and the timely advice of a holy hermit named Blase.

- 2 *Adam and Eve and other*. A reference to the Harrowing of Hell, in which Christ, following the Crucifixion, descended into Hell and released the Old Testament patriarchs from Satan's hellish prison. Although this event is not described in the New Testament, it was well-known in the Middle Ages, principally from the account in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus (See M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993]). Plays

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on the liberation of the patriarchs are prominent in the English mystery cycles, and references to the Harrowing of Hell are common in English medieval literature — compare the lyric “Adam lay i-bounden” — and it is described in some detail in works such as in *Piers Plowman* (B.18 and C.20) and *Death and Liffe* (lines 388–430).

- 4–17 The *he* here clearly refers to God, but I have left it without capital because the devil, in his confusion, has no idea of who the intruder might be.
- 10 *the prophetes*. The speaker is referring to the Old Testament prophets whose messianic prophecies foretold the birth of Christ, e.g., Isaiah 11:10 and Jeremiah 23:5–6.
- 11–12 *the synners of Adam and Eve*. The descendants of Adam and Eve, who have been born in sin.
- 18 *waishhen in a water*. The speaker is referring to baptism, one of the most important of the seven sacraments for medieval Christians.
- 25 *we yede and assaied Hym*. A reference to the tempting of Christ in the wilderness, depicted in Matthew 4:1–11 and Luke 4:1–13.

Summary For the text of the summary, see *EETS* 10, pp. 3–7.

- 60 *a comyn woman*. A prostitute. The plight of the two sisters may seem somewhat curious, since the one guilty of fornication is executed while the one who turns to prostitution is spared. But this accords with medieval law, which often condoned open prostitution but condemned women caught out in covert acts of immorality, which might endanger purity of lineage and inheritance.
- 73 *grete ire or wrath*. As the holy man points out, people who succumb to the sin of wrath offer the devil an easy avenue into their hearts. In Chaucer’s *The Parson’s Tale*, for example, wrath is said to chase the Holy Spirit out of a person’s soul and to put in its place the likeness of the devil (*CT* X.543–45).

Commentary

Indeed, as the passage in The Parson's Tale indicates, "Ire is a ful greet
pleasaunce to the devel." The second part of the holy man's advice — that she
always sleep in the presence of a light — proves to be just as crucial as his
advice to avoid anger, for the devil loves darkness.

- 112–13 *grete sorowe and grete ire at hir herte*. This phrase suggests that she is about to
fall into the sin of despair, which the fiend believes will place her *owte of
Goddes grace* (line 114).
- 234 *knewe of soche mysteré*. These knowledgeable women, presumably, are espe-
cially skilled as midwives.
- 261 *cristened Merlyn*. The suggestion that Merlin was given the name of his grand-
father, his mother's father, is also found in some of the OF MSS and in Lovelich's
Merlin; but it is not commonplace in later Arthurian tradition.

Summary Based on EETS 10, pp. 18–21.

- 367 *Than [Merlin] toke the juge apart*. This little episode offers the first demon-
stration of Merlin's remarkable knowledge and prophetic powers.
- 421 *Joseph Abaramathie*. Joseph of Arimathea, from Matthew 27:57, one of Jesus's
dedicated followers, and a figure who became especially important in medieval
works focusing on the Grail Legend. As will be seen below, Joseph was the
first "Grail Keeper" in a long line of men entrusted with this most holy object.
- 422 *Pieron, and of othir felowes*. This refers to the earliest group of men who were
closely associated with the Grail in the segment of the story known as The
History of the Grail. Pieron is probably Petrus (not St. Peter, Jesus's Disciple),
and the *othir felowes* might include men such as Alain le Gros and Bron.
- 443 *Maister Martyn*. The alleged translator of a book from Latin into the vernacular,
describing the early kings of the Britons. He is referred to in only a few of
the OF MSS; in Lovelich's *Merlin* (lines 1667–74) he is called "Martyn de
Bewre," and he is said to have translated "the Story of Brwttes book" (i.e.,

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Brutus's book) "From latyn into Romaunce" (i.e., French). Both the book and its translator are obscure.

Vortiger's Tower

[Fols. 8r (line 11)–13v (line 33)].

For the events surrounding Vortiger's rise to power and his ill-fated attempt to build an impregnable citadel, the author of the *PM* adapts materials from several earlier sources, sometimes altering them in significant ways. His handling of the story of King Constantine and his three sons appears somewhat muddled, at least in comparison with the accounts found in Geoffrey of Monmouth (Thorpe, pp. 150–69) and Wace (lines 7491–7710), where the three sons are named Constans, Aurelius Ambrosius, and Uterpendragon. In the *PM* King Constantine is called Constans, and his sons are identified as Moyne, Pendragon, and Uter. Later on in the *PM* an explanation is offered for the conflation of the names Uter and Pendragon.

The story of Vortiger's tower is found in Nennius's *Historia Brittonum* (sections 40, 42, 47, 48). Nennius's account includes the wisemen's suggestion that the foundation of the tower will not hold unless it is sprinkled with the blood of a fatherless boy; and it also describes the pair of dragons whose struggles prevent the tower from standing. In Nennius, however, the fatherless boy is not specifically identified as being Merlin. The versions of the story contained in Geoffrey and Wace more closely parallel the one in the *PM*, but major differences remain.

Summary Based on EETS 10, pp. 23–30.

67 *this werke that I have begonne.* Blase is referring to the book that Merlin has commissioned him to write, in which he will record all the things that Merlin periodically tells him, events that will lead up to and include the Grail story. It should be noted that neither Geoffrey nor Wace includes the figure of the holy Hermit named Blase (or Blaise or Blasy). References to a hermit that Merlin occasionally visits do occur in Layamon's *Brut*, but the author of the *PM* appears not to have known Layamon's work.

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- 101–02 *a carl that hadde bought a payre of stronge shone.* Two minor incidents of a prophetic kind occur on the road as Merlin and his companions make their way to Vortiger. In the first incident Merlin laughs when he sees a man with a new pair of shoes, for he knows the man will die before he can wear them. In the second, Merlin laughs when he sees a priest chanting before a funeral procession, because he knows the dead child is the priest's own son, though the weeping husband does not know it. Somewhat analogous incidents occur in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini* (lines 490–532), a work which the author of the *Prose Merlin* probably did not know. It is more likely that he was familiar with stories of this kind from popular oral tradition.
- 208 *two dragons.* The fighting dragons, one red and one white, originate in Nennius and occur also in Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace. It should also be noted that the pseudo-historical tale from the *Mabinogion*, “Lludd and Llevelys,” provides an explanation of how the dragons came to be buried in the ground in the place where Vortiger wishes to build his tower. The relationship between the tale in the *Mabinogion* and the accounts in Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace is unclear.
- 280–81 *swere never to entermete of that arte.* Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace have nothing to say concerning the fate of Vortiger's wisemen, whose flawed acts of divination had placed Merlin's life in jeopardy. But here Merlin has them renounce their practicing of the black arts, confess themselves, and receive penance. Thus Merlin is presented as being compassionate towards the very ones who had plotted his death.
- 285–86 *the significaunce of the two dragons.* The meaning attributed to the two dragons here departs significantly from that proposed by Geoffrey of Monmouth (Wace omitted any interpretation). Whereas Geoffrey has the red dragon representing the British nation and the white dragon representing the Saxons, here the red dragon betokens Vortiger and the white dragon stands for the surviving sons of Constans.

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Vortiger's Demise; The Battle of Salisbury; and The Death of Pendragon

[Fols. 13v (line 34)–20r (line 14)]

This section of the *PM* depicts several important events that are also found in Geoffrey of Monmouth (Thorpe, pp. 186–204) — the burning of Vortiger’s tower, the battle against the Saxon invaders, the death of Pendragon (called Aurelius by Geoffrey), and Merlin’s marvelous feat of moving and erecting the stones of Stonehenge. However, the two works differ considerably in their treatment of these events.

Summary Based on *EETS* 10, pp. 41–54.

- 1 *the Boke of Prophesyes*. Incorporated into Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *The History of the Kings of Britain* is a section devoted exclusively to the prophecies of Merlin (Thorpe, pp. 170–85). It was originally written as a separate work, and the reference here is undoubtedly to a work of this kind.
- 3 *the sarazins*. Throughout the *PM* the Saxon invaders of Britain are frequently referred to as the *sarazins*, occasionally as the *Danes*, and sometimes simply as the “heathen people.”
- 19 *yef ye will do my counseile*. This is the first time in the work that Merlin serves as a military strategist. Later on he fills this role frequently, for King Arthur and for others.
- 44 *Tamyse*. The Thames River does not pass very close to the area in which this battle is supposed to occur, the Salisbury Plain. But the geography of Arthurian literature often bears only a faint resemblance to actual fact.
- 55–56 *go betwene hem and the aryvage*. Merlin’s strategy is to cut off the Danes’ escape route by positioning half the British army between the Danes and their ships.
- 58 *a dragon all reade fleynge up in the ayre*. The red dragon that Merlin says will appear in the sky is apparently a peculiar astrological or meteorological phe-

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- nomenon (a comet, perhaps?). It is not clear whether Merlin causes it to happen or if he simply knows that it will happen. In any case, it provides a connection between the red dragon of Vortiger's tower and the golden dragon image that Uther (and later Arthur) will employ as their battle standard.
- 89 *Logres*. In general in the *PM*, *Logres* refers to a city, and very likely to London. More commonly in Arthurian literature, however, *Logres* refers to the geographical area roughly equivalent to modern-day England. According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, this name derives from Locrinus, the eldest son of Brutus, who was the legendary founder of Britain. Brutus gave Locrinus that portion of the island; he gave Kamber, his second son, the area of Wales (Kambria); and he gave Albanactus, his youngest son, Scotland (Albany).
- 104 *Sende after the grete stones*. Merlin's bringing the stones of Stonehenge from Ireland is described at much greater length by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace, and in those earlier works the stones are brought for a different purpose. Indeed in Geoffrey, Aurelius is still alive at the time that Merlin performs this feat. In the *PM*, in contrast to the earlier accounts, there is no mention of the fact that the stones were believed to have medicinal properties.
- 119–20 *they sholde be dressed upright*. Merlin is credited not only with the feat of moving the stones of Stonehenge but also with devising and implementing their final architectural design. The fact that Merlin believes they will *seme feyrer* (look more attractive) if they are standing upright brings to mind the important Neolithic stone circle at Arbor Low in Derbyshire, where the stones in the stone circle lie flat on the ground.
- 143 *this knyght whiche hadde taken oure Lorde down*. The “knight” is Joseph of Arimathea, and he is being introduced here as the first of the Grail knights, a line of knights entrusted with the keeping of the Holy Grail. The episode briefly described here is a section from the larger narrative that recounts the history of the Holy Grail.

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- 148 *make a table.* The author is intent on establishing a parallel between this table and the one used by Jesus and his Disciples at the Last Supper. The building of this second table by Joseph of Arimathea anticipates the creation of yet a third table, the famous Arthurian Round Table. These three tables replicate each other, and, taken together, they reflect the concept of the Holy Trinity.
- 173 *Cardoll, in Walys.* The city of *Cardoll* in Wales, though one of the most famous cities in Arthurian literature, cannot be finally identified. It might be logically associated with Cardiff, but it is more likely that it corresponds to the ancient Roman fortress of Caerleon, a “city” that Geoffrey of Monmouth describes in *The History of the Kings of Britain* at great length (Thorpe, pp. 226–27).
- 175 *I shall go before and make the table.* There is great variation in medieval accounts concerning the origin of the Round Table. The Round Table is completely absent from Geoffrey of Monmouth, making its first appearance in Wace’s *Roman de Brut* (lines 9,994–10,005), where it was established by Arthur, not Uther. In Layamon’s *Brut*, following an unruly upheaval at court, the Round Table was fashioned by a Cornish carpenter at Arthur’s request. Here, Merlin creates the Round Table for Uterpendragon, and the table is explicitly linked to the story of the Grail. In later versions of the story, including Malory’s, the table was passed from Uther to King Leodegan, Guenevere’s father, and then passed back again to Arthur as a part of Guenevere’s dowry.

Uther and Ygerne

[Fols. 20r (line 15)–31v (line 13)]

The story of Uther’s great desire for the wife of the Duke of Cornwall and the subsequent begetting of Arthur is one of the most important episodes in Arthurian literature. It first occurs in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *The History of the Kings of Britain* (Thorpe, pp. 204–08), and treatments of it remain relatively consistent throughout the Middle Ages — compare Geoffrey’s account, for example, with the version of the story with which Thomas Malory begins his *Morte D’Arthur*. The version in the *PM*, while somewhat fuller

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than most of the treatments of this episode and also somewhat richer in characterization, preserves all the essential narrative features.

- 2–3 *Pentecoste and Witsontyde.* The Feast of Pentecost is one of the most important religious holidays of the Middle Ages, and it is also one of the most important time periods in Arthurian literature, for more of the central events in the Arthur Story occur around this date than around any other. Pentecost is a moveable feast, with its date determined by the date of Easter. Pentecost occurs on the seventh Sunday after Easter and celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Disciples. Whitsunday is another name for Pentecost, and Whitsuntide is the period of several days immediately following Pentecost. Also important during this holy time is the first Sunday after Pentecost, which is Trinity Sunday, and the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday, which is Corpus Christi, a festival celebrating the Eucharist.
- 7 *fifty.* It appears that Merlin's Round Table is designed to seat a total of fifty-one, if the fifty knights that Merlin is going to select occupy every seat except for the one that remains empty. In comparison with other medieval romances, this is a smaller number of seats than is usual. In Malory, for example, the number of seats is 150. On the other hand, the number of seats at the table used for the Last Supper was merely thirteen.
- 10 *the voyde place.* The empty place at the table, as will soon be explained, is reserved for a person of unusual merit. Anyone else attempting to sit in this seat will suffer dire consequences. In Malory and other accounts the empty seat is called the *Siege Perelous*.
- 20–21 *we be entred as brethern.* The fifty knights, by virtue of sitting together at the Round Table, have formed a special bond of brotherhood which they are now loath to break. The suggestion seems to be that this is the initial formation of a fellowship of knights who will be known as the Knights of the Round Table.
- 26 *who shall fulfile the place that is voyde.* In response to the king's question, Merlin explains that the empty seat will not be filled until some time well in the future. Merlin also points out that the person who will do this will also sit in

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the empty seat at the table of Joseph of Arimathea, providing another link between the two tables. The knight who will accomplish these deeds will be the pre-eminent Grail knight, Sir Galahad.

- 32 *hensforth that ye hoilde alle youre grete festes in this town.* Thus Cardoell is established as Uther's principal city and the place where the Round Table resides permanently.
- 85 *hem that wolden begile.* The belief that a "beguiler will himself be beguiled" was a common medieval proverb. Chaucer's Reeve quotes a version of it near the end of his tale when he says, *A gylour shal hymself bigyled bi* (*CT I.4321*).
- 101 *the Duke of Tintagel.* Throughout this section of the *PM* Ygerne's husband is always called the Duke of Tintagel; he is never referred to as the Duke of Cornwall, nor is he named Gorlois, as he is in most accounts.
- 105 *she was right a gode lady.* Ygerne's moral rectitude is emphasized here, as it is throughout Arthurian tradition. She makes every effort to thwart Uther's desires and to remain a virtuous wife. Malory, similarly, refers to her as "a passyng good woman" (Vinaver, p. 3).
- 145–46 *ete ne slepe . . . ne ride.* Uther, in his inability to eat, sleep, or ride, exhibits traits shared by many a medieval lover.
- 167 *alle the londe of Logres.* Here *Logres* refers to a large geographical area, whereas earlier (and more commonly in the *PM*) it refers to a city.
- 266–67 *sende, . . . forty dayes before.* The king is advised by his council to give the duke forty days in which to respond to the king's challenge. If the duke fails to do the king's bidding by the end of that time, then the king may launch his assault.
- 278 *another castell.* The other castle is not named in the *PM*. Geoffrey of Monmouth calls it Dimilioc, and Malory identifies it as Castel Terrabyl.

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- 324–25 *he mette with a man that he nothinge kenned.* Merlin’s shape-shifting abilities are fully displayed in this episode, as Merlin appears to Ulfin first in the guise of an old man and then as a cripple. This anticipates the more remarkable shape-shifting that Merlin will soon engage in involving Ulfin, the king, and Merlin himself.
- 451 *he toke an herbe.* Here Merlin, Ulfin, and the king achieve the likenesses of the duke and his men by rubbing an herb on their skin. In Geoffrey of Monmouth they drink a concoction that Merlin has devised. Malory offers no explanation as to how their physical transformations were brought about.

Arthur and the Sword in the Stone

[Fols. 31v (line 14)–35v (line 26)]

The “sword in the stone” episode became a integral part of the Arthurian story during the thirteenth century; its origin, however, is obscure. The episode is not found or even alluded to in the works of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, Layamon, or Chrétien de Troyes, but it does occur in the OF Vulgate. Perhaps a parallel to it occurs in the *Volsunga Saga* (ch. 3), in an episode in which Sigmund succeeds in pulling a sword out of the Branstock after others have failed — a sword that was divinely sent from the wizard-god Odin, whom some have seen as a forerunner of Merlin. Rough similarities may also be seen in the story of Theseus and his father Aegeus in Greek myth. Theseus is fathered out of wedlock by Aegeus, who leaves a pair of shoes and a sword under a huge stone; later, Thesues proves himself by having the strength to raise the stone and retrieve the shoes and the sword. A stone playing a vital role in the selection of the king is also encountered in Celtic tradition in the magical stone called Lia Fail, or Stone of Destiny, which gave a shriek when the rightful king stood upon it. That tradition may still be reflected in the British custom of a monarch being crowned while seated upon the Stone of Scone. Nonetheless, medieval romance literature contains many episodes in which only one person can accomplish a particular deed — several such episodes occur in Malory alone.

What is especially significant about this episode is that the sword provides proof that Arthur, despite the questions surrounding his birth, is king by divine election. It is also significant that Merlin bows out of the proceeding, turning it over to the archbishop, the

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highest official of the church. The *PM* does not identify the archbishop, who in Geoffrey and Wace is said to be the Archbishop Dubricius. It is likely that he is the same clergyman who is called Bishop Brice in several other Arthurian stories.

Malory's rendition of this episode, while somewhat briefer, contains most of the basic narrative elements found here in the *PM*. In the *PM*, however, the tactics of the foot-dragging barons are drawn in much greater detail. In both versions Arthur's foster father (here named Antor, in Malory named Ector) does not know the real identity of the child he has raised as his own son, and in both versions the scene in which Arthur learns that Antor/Ector is not his father possesses considerable dramatic power.

- 13 *Martinmasse*. The Feast of St. Martin, which celebrates St. Martin of Tours, occurs on November 11.
- 33 *I shall not be ther*. Merlin's decision to be absent during the episode in which Arthur proves himself to be Uther's rightful successor probably has to do with Merlin's fiendish origins. Because Merlin is the son of a devil, and because Arthur is being chosen according to the Divine Will, it might be inappropriate for Merlin to have any direct involvement with Arthur's election.
- 42 *Halowmasse*. Allhallows, or All Saints' Day, a church festival honoring all the saints; it is November 1.
- 47–48 *thei ledde . . . Yoole Even*. Christmas Eve, which was the feast of Adam and Eve, was a day of partial fasting.
- 84 *Te Deum Laudamus*. "We praise thee, O Lord" — a famous Latin hymn, frequently used for official celebrations, from funerals to coronations.
- 112–13 *justice in erthe . . . in the swerde*. The archbishop observes that the sword represents the king's responsibility to uphold justice for all people, to defend the church, and to maintain righteousness. He also seems to suggest that the sword symbolizes the nobility, while the anvil symbolizes the commoners.
- 133 *the eight dayes*. This is the octave of Christmas, which extends from Christmas Day through New Year's Day.

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- 141–42 *the knyghtes to boorde.* The knights customarily hold a great tournament on New Year's Day following Mass.
- 200 *that for no forfeit.* Antor's main request of Arthur is that he assign the high office of King's Steward to Sir Kay, Arthur's foster brother. In addition, Antor (Ector) wants Arthur to overlook any future offences that Kay may commit, anticipating Kay's later rude behavior, and helping to explain why Arthur is so tolerant of Kay's frequent lack of civility.
- 235 *Candelmesse.* Candlemas, observed on February 2, is an important feast day celebrating the Presentation of the baby Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:22–39), as well as the Purification of the Virgin Mary.
- 245 *every man do* I.e., "In that case, it is every man for himself," meaning that all agreements are canceled. The barons are trying to have things all their own way, and the archbishop, in order to preserve the peace, tolerates their delaying tactics.
- 317 *Alle that nyght.* On the Eve of Pentecost, Arthur keeps an all-night vigil in the minster; he is preparing himself spiritually for his coronation on the following day.

The Barons' Revolt

[Fols. 35v (line 27)–40r (line 17)]

The barons' refusal to accept Arthur's kingship and their rebellion against him is one of the major narrative strands of the *PM*, and it is woven throughout the greater part of the work. There is nothing comparable to this rebellion in the writings of Geoffrey of Monmouth or Wace, but the initial events in the barons' revolt have a close parallel in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (Vinaver, pp. 11–13), though Malory's rendition is much briefer, as is usually the case.

It is at this point in the OF Vulgate *Merlin* that the sequel section to Robert de Boron's

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Merlin commences. In the ME text, the only indication of this is a large capital letter on fol. 35v that is similar to the one with which the text began.

Summary Based on *EETS* 10, pp. 107–13.

- 31 *This is in the reame of Kynge Leodegan of Tamalide.* Although the text is not very explicit about this, it becomes clear that the Knights of the Round Table have left the realm of Logres to help King Leodegan defend his kingdom against his enemy King Rion. Leodegan's kingdom is sometimes called Tamelide and sometimes Carmelide. This confusion probably results from the fact that the capital letters C and T are often difficult to distinguish in many scribal hands.
- 39 *he hath taken alle their berdes.* As the text indicates, King Rion trims his mantle with the beards of defeated kings. Later in the *PM*, as well as in Malory (Vinaver, p. 36), King Rion sends a messenger to Arthur requesting Arthur's beard, which is the final beard he needs to complete his mantle. Arthur points out that his beard is still rather meager because of his youth. In the Balin section in Malory, Balin and his brother capture King Rion and present him to Arthur (Vinaver, pp. 46–47). Geoffrey of Monmouth noted that Arthur had once killed a giant named Retho who made a fur cloak from the beards of kings he had slain (Thorpe, p. 240); there appears to be a connection between Geoffrey's Retho and King Rion in the *PM*, who also hails from a land of giants.
- 44 *yef he lese his londe, thow shalt lese thyn after.* If King Rion is able to capture Tamelide, Merlin suggests, then Arthur's kingdom of Logres will soon be overcome also — a medieval variation on the domino theory.
- 48 *he shall yeve thee his daughter to be thy wif.* Here Merlin predicts that Arthur will wed Gonnore, King Leodegan's daughter. It is important to note that throughout the *PM* Merlin always speaks favorably of Gonnore, and he fully endorses Arthur's marriage to her. His attitude stands in sharp contrast to that of Malory's Merlin, who warns Arthur that she will not be wholesome for him (Vinaver, p. 59).

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- 54–55 *archebisshop shall a-curse.* As Merlin here indicates, the archbishop will soon set his curse upon the rebel kings. In all probability, by cursing them the archbishop is placing them under interdict rather than the more serious curse of excommunication. Interdict would mean that all church services were forbidden except for baptism and last rites. Early in the thirteenth century Pope Innocent III had placed just such an interdiction on King John's England.
- 66 *Merlin made to Kynge Arthur a baner.* This is the famous dragon banner which is similar to that which Merlin had fashioned earlier for King Uterpendragon. Kay, Arthur's foster brother and steward, is chosen to bear the standard for Logres.
- 118 *cosin germain.* This phrase means that they are first cousins, which is one of the most important relationships in Arthurian romances; at times first cousins share an even stronger bond of loyalty and friendship than brothers do.
- 132 *he drowgh his swerde oute of skabrek.* This passage has a close parallel in Malory: "thenne he drewe his swerd Excalibur, but it was so bryght in his enemyes eyen that if gaf light lyke thirty torchys . . ." (Vinaver, p. 12). Here Arthur's famous sword is called *Escaliboure*, but later it is called *Calibourne*, and the two names are used indiscriminately. These and other variations on the name of Arthur's sword occur throughout Arthurian literature. Geoffrey of Monmouth called it Caliburn, and noted that the sword was forged in the Isle of Avalon. In the story of "Culhwch and Olwen" from the *Mabinogion* Arthur's sword is named *Caledywlc* (Gantz, p. 140). In "The Dream of Rhonabwy" from the *Mabinogion* it is described as having two serpents on its golden hilt, and when it is unsheathed, "What was seen from the mouths of the serpents was like two flames of fire, so dreadful that it was not easy for anyone to look upon" (Gantz, p. 184). In Malory the sword which Arthur receives from the Lady of the Lake is also called *Excalibir*, which is said to have the meaning "Kutte Stele" (Vinaver, p. 40). The suggestion that the name originates in Hebrew occurs in the OF Vulgate.

- 147 *the seven kynges.* In the *PM* it is repeatedly stated that there are seven kings who oppose Arthur, but only six are clearly identified: Lot of Orcanye, Uriens of Gorre, Ventres of Garlot, Carados of Strangore, Aguysas of Scotlonde, and Ydiers. The seventh may be Briadas, who is said to have married one of Ygerne's daughters. At this point in Malory there are only six rebel kings: Lott, Uryens, Nayntres, Cardos, the Kynge of Scotland, and the Kyng with the Honderd Knyghtes (Vinaver, p. 11).

The Grand Tournament at Logres

[Fols. 40r (line 18)–47v (line 20)]

In this section Arthur's two most crucial allies, King Ban and King Bors, come from their kingdoms of Benoyk and Gannes in Brittany to help him to quell the barons' rebellion. Later on in the larger Arthurian narrative the sons of these two men become central figures in Arthur's knightly fellowship, with Lancelot, the son of King Ban, emerging as Arthur's pre-eminent knight. Other important relationships are established in this section also, in particular the close bond formed by Kay and Lucas the boteler and Lucas's cousin Gifflet.

Summary Based on *EETS* 10, p. 120 to *EETS* 21, p. 132.

In lines 5 ff. of the summary reference is made to *Ygerne's daughters and their husbands*. Although the *PM* is not consistent on the matter of Ygerne's daughters, here it is stated that she and the Duke of Tintagel had five daughters, in addition to two other daughters from an earlier marriage. In addition, the writer claims that Ygerne's youngest daughter, Morgan, was illegitimate. Each of Igerne's daughters, including Morgan, becomes the wife of one of Britain's lesser kings.

In lines 6 ff. we learn that *Arthur himself fathered the last one*. The story of Arthur's involvement with Blasine, the wife of King Lot, which is mentioned in passing here by Merlin, will soon be related in full by the narrator in the form of a flashback. Merlin mentions it here to make Arthur aware of the fact that Mordred is his illegitimate son.

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- 5 *as aboute August.* Although the weather resembles that of August, the time is actually late October and hence a kind of Indian summer.
- 12 *coriouse ordenaunce.* For descriptions of the devices that made up components of the *coriouse ordenaunce* of splendid feasts see “The Manner of Serving a Knight, Squire, or Gentleman” in *Hugh Rhodes’s Boke of Nurture*, or the receipts for serving wine, meats, fish, and grand feasts with several courses in John Russell’s *The Book of Nurture* (from Harlin MS 4011) in *The Babees Book, The Bokes of Nurture of Hugh Rhodes and John Russell, etc.*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall EETS o.s. 32 (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1868; rpt. New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), especially pp. 66–68 and 139–75.
- 16 *Lucas the Boteler.* This significant character — who is usually named Lucan, not Lucas — holds the important position of King’s Butler, making him one of the highest-ranking officials in the royal court. Normally a “butler” was responsible for overseeing the provisioning of a nobleman’s hall.
- 20 *the yonge bachelors.* “Bachelors” are young noblemen training for knighthood. Chaucer’s Squire in the *Canterbury Tales*, the son of the pilgrim Knight, is similarly described as a “lusty bacheler” (*CT* I.80).
- 82–83 *felisship of the table of Logres.* This refers to the best of Arthur’s knights, who are taking a brief respite from the tournament. The use of the word “table” may simply be a mistake — since these are clearly not the Knights of the Round Table, who at this time are with King Leodegan in Tamelide — or it may just imply that these knights are bound together in knightly fellowship.
- 93 *This tecche . . . he dide of sowke.* Kay’s habit of “evil speech” stems from the fact that he was taken away from his mother and nursed by a woman of low birth, so that Arthur could be nursed by Kay’s mother. This is part of the debt that Arthur owes to Kay and his family.
- 106–07 *cride “Clarence,” the signe of Kynge Arthur.* “Clarence” is Arthur’s battle cry, used to spur on his troops in the heat of battle. In some medieval accounts of

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the Arthur Story, however, “Clarence” is said to be the name of another of Arthur’s swords; see *The Alliterative Morte Arthure*, lines 4193–4205.

- 170 *the wordes that Merlin hadde hym tolde.* Merlin, apparently, has already informed Arthur about the difficulties that Ulfen and Bretell experienced in delivering Arthur’s message to King Ban and King Bors.

The Battle of Bredigan Forest

[Fols. 47v (line 21)–58r (line 27)]

The Battle of Bredigan Forest and its immediate aftermath is also described at length in Malory’s *Morte D’Arthur* (Vinaver, pp. 16–26). It is one of Arthur’s most decisive victories against the rebel barons, and it depicts great feats of arms by Arthur, Ban, Bors, and several other prominent knights. It also presents Merlin in several distinctive roles — as magician, military strategist, moral conscience, and shape-shifting prankster. Near the end of this episode Arthur has a sexual encounter with a young woman named Lysanor; Arthur’s illegitimate son Hoot results from that union.

Summary Based on *EETS* 21, pp. 140–52.

- 3 *the eleven kynges.* Earlier there were six (or seven) lesser kings opposing Arthur; now they have been joined by five more, thus increasing the forces against Arthur.

Summary Based on *EETS* 21, pp. 155–59.

Summary Based on *EETS* 21, pp. 160–64.

- 124 *And than com Merlin and seide.* Merlin checks Arthur’s pursuit of his enemies at this point and directs him to return home, thus bringing the battle to an end. There may be a hint of disapproval in Merlin’s words to Arthur, but if so, it is not nearly so explicit as the direct rebuke that occurs in Malory, where Merlin says: ““Hast thou nat done inow? Of three score thousande thys day hast thou

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lefft on lyve but fyftene thousand! Therefore hit ys tyme to sey, “Who!” for God ys wroth with the for thou woll never have done”” (Vinaver, p. 24).

- 132 *Blase seide he dide but foly.* Apparently Blase has misgivings about the extent to which Merlin has become involved in Arthur’s activities. There is no hint of this in Malory.

- 159–60 *sente agein alle knyghtes and squyres . . . saf forty.* At this point Arthur dismisses his army, keeping only a core group of forty knights with him. This group of forty, along with Arthur and Merlin, become Arthur’s famous “Forty-two” who perform impressive deeds subsequently at Tamelide.

- 193 *Who hath tolde this cherll?* The kings are astonished to discover that this rustic figure knows about the treasure that is hidden in the earth, and they wonder who could have told him.

- 249–50 *he is dowted of many a man.* Merlin’s supernatural powers, such as the shape-shifting abilities he demonstrates in this episode, cause many people to fear him; and as this passage goes on to indicate, there are many people who would like to see Merlin dead.

- 261 *Arthur aqueyned hym with a mayden.* Arthur’s brief affair with Lysanor (in Malory she is named *Lyonors*) results in the begetting of Hoot (in Malory named *Borre*, and elsewhere named *Loholt* or *Lohoot*), who later becomes a good knight of the Round Table. This is presumably the same man mentioned by Malory in the healing of Sir Urry episode called “sir Boarte le Cure Hardy that was kynge Arthurs son” (Vinaver, p. 667). It is notable that Merlin assists Arthur in his affair with Lysanor and that there is no suggestion of moral disapproval.

The Young Squires

[Fols. 58r (line 28)–65r (line 34)]

The Young Squires introduced in this section of the *PM* are the sons or close relatives of the rebelling barons; but unlike their fathers or uncles, they take up arms in support of Arthur, not against him. Hoping to be knighted by Arthur, they set off to find him and offer their support. The author emphasizes the noble lineage of these young men and describes the circumstances that prompt them to set off in search of Arthur. The Young Squires' brave deeds against the Saxon invaders are depicted in the sections that follow.

Also occurring in this section is the important episode concerning the begetting of Mordred; he is the fifth son of King Lot's wife but is fathered by Arthur. This event is told as a flashback, and the author's intention is to suggest that both Arthur and King Lot's wife are essentially blameless. Arthur is portrayed as an exuberant, lusty youth, while Lot's wife does not realize she has slept with someone other than her husband until Arthur confesses it to her later.

- 9 *Bandemagu*. This character is more commonly known in Arthurian works as Bagdemagus or Baugdemagus. Early in Malory he is called Sir Bagdemagus and later Kynge Bagdemagus. In Chrétien's *Lancelot*, as in Malory, he is the father of Meleagant (Mellyagaunce in Malory), the evil knight who abducts Queen Guenevere.

Summary Based on EETS 21, pp. 172–77.

- 22–23 *Basyne, the wif of Kynge Ventres*. In Malory, the woman who marries King Ventres of the land of Garlot is named Elaine; in both the *PM* and Malory she is said to be Arthur's half-sister and one of the daughters of Ygerne and the Duke of Tintagel.
- 24–25 *two hundred fifty Knyghtes of the Rounde Table*. The number of Round Table knights varies from work to work, and here the author suggests the number was 250. Malory states the number was 150, not 250.
- 43–44 *I have herde my moder sey*. This description of Ygerne's great sorrow at the loss of her son is a poignant humanizing detail; it does not occur in Malory.

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- 82–88 *Kynge Loot . . . frely yaf hem all . . . were come of.* The writer praises King Lot's noble qualities and emphasizes the fact that his sons inherit their noble qualities from their father. Malory is far less charitable in his characterization of King Lot; he never portrays Lot as coming to see the error of his ways, nor does he describe any reconciliation between Lot and Arthur. In Malory, Lot lives and dies a villain.
- 93–94 *Mordred . . . that the Kynge Arthur begat.* The author of the *PM* offers a very different account of the begetting of Mordred from the one given by Malory. As he says, “moche peple it preyse the lesse that knowe not the trouthe” (lines 96–97) and his clear intention in this little digression is to set the record straight and to do all he can to exculpate both parties from harsh moral judgments. Malory has no such intention; indeed, Malory suggests that Arthur's adulterous and incestuous act will have dramatic and disastrous consequences.
- 98 *Hit befill in the tyme that.* In the *PM* the begetting of Mordred occurs before Arthur has even become a knight; in Malory it occurs after Arthur has become king, after his liaison with Lyonors, and after he has seen and fallen in love with Guenevere. In neither work, though, does Arthur know that Lot's wife is also his own half-sister.
- 154–55 *of hym deviseth no more here saf only of a tecche that he hadde.* Gawain's waxing and waning strength, one of his most famous attributes in medieval Arthurian literature, is here detailed. Although the *PM* author's account is a little confusing, it appears that Gawain's great strength doubles once by the time it is fully *prime* (the period from 6 to 9 a.m.); doubles again by the completion of *tierce* (the period from 9 to 12 a.m.); and doubles yet again by *mydday* (the period from 12 a.m. to 3 p.m.), when the sun has reached its zenith. Then his strength decreases by the similar amounts at similar intervals. Here the term *noone* seems to refer to the period extending from 3 p.m. until 6 p.m. Some scholars interpret this linking of Gawain's strength to the strength of the sun as suggesting that Gawain was originally a solar deity.
In Malory the first mention of Gawain's waxing and waning strength occurs in his fight against the Irish knight Sir Marhaus: “But sir Gawayne, fro hit was

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nine of the clok, waxed ever strenger and strenger, for by than hit cam to the howre of noone he had three tymes his myght encresed. And all this aspyed sir Marhaus and had grete wondir how his myght encreced. And so they wounded eyther other passyng sore. So whan hit was past noone, and whan it drew toward evynsonge, sir Gawayns strength fyebled and woxe passyng faynte, that unnethe he myght dure no lenger, and sir Marhaus was bygger and bygger" (Vinaver, p. 96). Late in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, Lancelot will perceive the variability of Gawain's strength and will use this to his own advantage in his fights against Gawain.

- 200–01 *by I ones oute of my fader house, I will.* Gawain here swears an oath that he will not return until he has brought peace between his father (King Lot) and his uncle (King Arthur); later in the *PM* he makes good on this vow.

- 206 *And than seide Agravain.* From the outset Agravain is characterized as a brash and outspoken young man. In this instance, his chiding of Gawain stems from noble instincts, but later on his outspokenness causes trouble. Malory charges Agravain with being "ever opynne-mowthed" (Vinaver, p. 612) and considers him one of the parties most responsible for the downfall of Arthurian society (Vinaver, p. 669).

Summary Based on EETS 21, pp. 184–86.

- 239–40 *Renomee, . . . so that every contrey spake of the Kynge Arthur.* The spread of Arthur's fame, and the attraction that Arthur's court held to noble young men everywhere, was first suggested by Geoffrey of Monmouth in *The History of the Kings of Britain*: "Arthur then began to increase his personal entourage by inviting very distinguished men from far-distant kingdoms to join it. In this way he developed such a code of courtliness in his household that he inspired peoples living far away to imitate him" (Thorpe, p. 222).

Summary Based on EETS 21, pp. 187–88.

Summary Based on EETS 21, pp. 189–91.

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The Deeds of the Young Squires

[Fols. 65r (line 35)–69r (line 30)]

In an episode unique to the *PM*, the Young Squires hold the Saxon invaders at bay while Arthur is absent from Logres. Nothing of this kind occurs in the Geoffrey of Monmouth or in the other chronicle accounts, nor does it occur in later renditions such as Malory's. Here these yet-to-be knighted youths prove themselves deserving of knighthood, and their noble actions also lay the groundwork for the later reconciliation between Arthur and the rebel barons. Especially emphasized are the great deeds of Gawain, who proves himself a warrior of superior prowess. Here Gawain's great love for his brothers is also depicted, especially for Gaheris, who corresponds to Malory's Gareth. Besides describing the heroic deeds of the Squires, this section of the *PM* offers a realistic portrayal of the devastation that could be visited on the land by a foraging, pillaging army.

1 *aboute the entré of May*. This passage depicting the season of May, while highly conventional, reflects the joy at the coming of spring so often expressed in medieval literature, especially in lyric poetry. It brings to mind the opening verses of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* as well as Malory's famous passages on the merry month of May (Vinaver, pp. 648–49; 673).

14–15 *wheroſ was grete pité . . . for myslyvinge*. This is one of the few places in the *PM* where the writer suggests that the Saxons are a divine scourge sent to punish the British for their sins. This remark is reminiscent of the attitude toward his fellow countrymen expressed by the sixth-century British monk Gildas, who bitterly denounced the sinfulness of the British in *De Excidio Britonum* (The Ruin of Britain).

66 *neded hym no ſalve*. This is ironic understatement, of course, for it would take more than salve to help anyone who had been on the receiving end of a direct blow from Gawain's ax.

83 *that ther were dwellynge*. The reference is to the local British inhabitants whom the Young Squires have enlisted to take the baggage train, now recaptured from the Saxons, back to the city.

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- 99–100 *he was of merveilouse prowesse . . . to Gawein his brother.* Gaheris (Malory's Gareth) is usually the youngest of King Lot's sons, while Gawain is the oldest. It is pointed out here that in time Gaheris will prove himself to be Gawain's equal in prowess. Indeed, in Malory Gareth reaches the point where he surpasses his older brother, not only in physical prowess but in chivalric virtue.
- 131–32 *Seinte Marie Virgin . . . ne suffre not that I lese my brother.* The fact that Gawain offers a prayer to the Virgin may simply be what any medieval Christian would do in similar circumstances. However, in some other Arthurian works, particularly *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain is shown to have a special association with Mary and is even described as being Mary's knight. In any case, Gawain is especially distraught here because it is Gaheris, the brother he loves most, who is in danger of being killed. When Gareth is killed in the final section of Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, Gawain is inconsolable.
- 167 *two Scottissh myle.* According to the OED, the Scottish mile was somewhat longer than the English mile. It is now obsolete as a measure of distance, unlike the Irish mile (also different from the English mile) which still survives. In "Merlin's Imprisonment" the *PM* writer uses the phrases *two Walsh myle* (line 124) and *half a Walisssh myle* (lines 152–53).
- 231 *ye shall se my strokes and my prowesse double.* It is not clear whether Gawain means that he intends to double his efforts, or if he is actually referring to the fact that his strength increases during the day as the heat of the sun increases.

Arthur at Tamelide

[Fols. 69r (line 31)–90r (line 11)]

The mission of "the Forty-two Soldiers" (Arthur, Merlin, and the Forty Companions) to assist King Leodegan in his war against King Rion is yet another section of the narrative that is largely unique to the *PM*. One of its central purposes is to introduce Arthur to his future wife Gonnore, the daughter of King Leodegan. Geoffrey of Monmouth, one of the first writers to mention Arthur's wife, offered little information about her except to say

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that she was descended from a noble Roman family and was the most beautiful woman in Britain (Thorpe, p. 221); but the author of the *PM* tells us a great deal about Gonnore's parents and about the night when she and her notorious half-sister, known as the "False Gonnore," were begotten by Leodegan. Malory, on the other hand, reduces all of the material in this section to a mere ten lines, and one has the impression that he prefers to avoid the attractive and appealing descriptions provided by this author of Arthur and Gonnore falling in love. Malory simply says, "And there had Arthure the firste syght of queene Gwenyvere, the kyngis daughter of the londe of Camylarde, and ever afffir he loved hir" (Vinaver, p. 26).

- 21–22 *alle yonge bacheleres at pryme barbe.* Arthur and his companions (other than Ban, Bors, and Merlin) are all in the first stage of young adulthood; they are youthful knights proudly sporting their first beards (their *pryme barbe*).
- 30 *not to knowe oure names.* Knights choosing to conceal their identities until after they have proved themselves is a narrative device that occurs often in medieval romances. One of the most famous examples is in Malory's "Tale of Gareth."
- 73 *at the Ascencion.* Ascension Day, commemorating Christ's Ascension into heaven, is the fortieth day after Easter (see Acts 1:9).
- 81–82 *in tho dayes fyve hundred was cleped a thousande.* The writer may be uneasy about the extremely large numbers of warriors involved in these battles; this appears to be an attempt to preserve credibility.
- 104–06 *a smal ganfanon . . . crownes of golde.* Both the smaller standard that Cleodalis bears and the larger one that Hervy bears display typical medieval heraldic devices. The smaller banner has two red diamond-shapes ("losenges") displayed on a field of gold, along with two blue crowns; the description of the great banner is less specific, but it seems to have four diamond-shapes (also on a field of gold?) with gold crowns inside the losenges.

- 285 *to reherse the names of tho worthi men.* Long catalogs listing the names of knights are common in Arthurian literature. Chrétien, for example, provided catalogs in *Erec* of the best of Arthur's knights and of the people attending Erec's wedding. Perhaps the most famous catalog of knights is Malory's listing of the knights who attempt to heal Sir Urry (Vinaver pp. 665–67). There is no group of knights in Malory corresponding to the Forty-two Soldiers of the *PM*, but during the Battle of Bredigan Forest Malory does list twenty-one knights who performed well there, and most of them are included in this list of the Forty-two.
- 321–22 *a Feste of Seint John.* This would probably be the Feast of John the Baptist, celebrated on June 24, rather than December 27, the saint's day commemorating St. John the Divine (Christ's disciple).
- 326 *that was cleped Gonnore.* The name of Leodegan's daughter, the woman who will become Arthur's wife, occurs in a variety of forms in medieval literature. In the early Welsh legends she is called Gwenhwyvar; in Geoffrey of Monmouth she is Guanhumora; in Malory her name is Gwenyvere. But the form used in the *PM*, Gonnore, is one of the more common forms of her name in medieval Arthurian works.
- 329–30 *to sey Matyns and to heere all servyse to messe.* Leodegan's wife is a very devout woman whose custom is to attend all the religious services of the day, beginning with matins (the earliest service, often sung at 2 a.m.) and on until Mass when the Eucharist is celebrated.
- 337 *and than he . . . bad hir be stille.* Although medieval rulers often took great liberties with their subjects, Leodegan's behavior here is deplorable. And, as often happens in medieval and Renaissance stories, the child conceived in such a circumstance — in this case “the False Gonnore” — will turn out to be morally corrupt, as in the famous instances of Mordred and the bastard Edmund in Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

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342–43 *upon the childe reynes a litill crosse like a crowne for a kynge.* The true Gonnore possesses a tiny birthmark, the only physical difference between these virtually identical half-sisters; later on, of course, Gonnore’s birthmark will provide the means by which the sisters are distinguished.

Summary Based on EETS 21, pp. 214–24.

453–54 *be ye not abaisshed at youre sopere.* Gonnore’s remark is said in the spirit of light-hearted banter — “you should not be frightened by your supper, a man like you who today showed no fear of the Saxons.”

506–07 *saf only Helayn that was withouten pere.* Gonnore, the writer claims, surpasses all the women of Britain in beauty and virtue except for one — Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles, the niece of the Fisher King and the Maimed King, and the mother of Sir Galahad.

508–09 *the Kynge Pesceor and of the seke kynges wounded.* King Pesceor is the Fisher King, and the “sick wounded king” is his brother Alain, also known as the Maimed King.

510 *the spere vengeresse.* This is the weapon by which Alain is wounded through both thighs; Malory calls the event in which this wounding takes place the striking of the “dolorouse stroke” (Vinaver, pp. 53–54).

Summary Based on EETS 21, pp. 229–57.

Merlin and the Young Squires

[Fols. 90r (line 12)–103v (line 29)]

Making considerable use of his shape-shifting abilities, Merlin tests the mettle of the Young Squires; Gawain, in particular, proves himself up to the challenge. Here Sir Sagremor, who has come all the way from Constantinople to be knighted by Arthur, establishes himself as one of the best young knights within the group also.

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- 87–88 *lefte theire palfreyes and lepe upon stedes.* Here the young knights exchange their riding horses (their palfreys) for their warhorses (their steeds).

Summary Based on *EETS* 21, pp. 271–95.

Gawain's Rescue of his Mother

[Fols. 103v (line 29)–106v (line 15)]

In this brief but dramatic episode, King Lot and his wife and their baby son Mordred flirt with disaster when they leave the safety of the city in an attempt to escape the Saxons. Gawain, prodded by Merlin who appears in yet another of his guises, performs a daring rescue of his mother, who has been captured and vilely mistreated by a Saxon named Taurus. What is perhaps most significant about this section is the way it reveals the powerful bond of kinship that exists among the members of Gawain's family. By the end of this section, Gawain is determined to use those powerful feelings as leverage in bringing about a reconciliation between his father King Lot and his uncle King Arthur.

- 9–10 *But he desired it not gretly . . . distroied all environ.* Prior to besieging the city, the Saxon King Arans accompanies his troops as they lay waste to the surrounding countryside. Realizing this, King Lot and his group decide to make a run for it before the siege commences.
- 30 *Than the squyer fledde.* This is the squire who is carrying Mordred in his cradle. The squire's quick response prevents Mordred from falling into the Saxons' hands.
- 34 *a knyght right well armed.* It comes as no surprise when we learn later that this “knight” is Merlin.
- 105–06 *Seint Marie, . . . helpe me and socour!* Prayers to the Virgin to aid one in their hour of need are very common and reflect the important role of Mary as Intercessor. Compare Gawain's prayer to the Virgin in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (lines 736–39), when he prays to find lodging on Christmas Eve.

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- 136–37 *for it was not inough to hem . . . smale peces.* After Gawain has killed Taurus, his brothers vent their anger by mutilating the body of the man who had abused their mother. Whether or not this gruesome scene foreshadows what Malory calls their “vengeable” natures (Vinaver, p. 224), it certainly attests to their powerful emotions.
- 139 *Gawein slough so many . . . blode and brayn.* This description of Gawain covered with blood and gore has a close parallel in Malory in his description of Arthur during the Battle at Bredigan Forest: “And kynge Arthure was so blody that by hys shylde there myght no man know hym, for all was blode and brayne that stake on his swerd and on hys shylde” (Vinaver, p. 22).
- 185–86 *And the foure bretheren swore . . . theire uncle.* Here Gawain and his brothers hit upon the plan to use their mother as a bargaining chip in securing the peace between King Lot and King Arthur.

Merlin and Nimiane

[Fols. 106v (line 16)–109v (line 22)]

In this section Merlin has his initial encounter with the young woman who will prove his undoing. The author of the *PM* provides far more information about the developing relationship between Merlin and Nimiane than does Malory, surrounds it with greater moral complexity, and brings the two together under very different circumstances. In Malory, the young woman named Nenyve, who is said to be one of the damsels of the Lady of the Lake (Vinaver, p. 76), is first brought to Arthur’s court by Pellynore; and Malory treats Merlin’s fatal attraction to her, and her attempts to avoid his designs on her, in less than two pages. In the *PM*, Merlin goes to Brittany to seek her out, after first informing Blase that in that land is “the wolf” (Nimiane) who will bind “the leopard” (Merlin).

- 16 *the two remes of Benoyk and Gannes.* Benoyk and Gannes are the two small kingdoms in Brittany ruled by King Ban and King Bors. They are vulnerable because Ban and Bors are in Britain helping Arthur deal with the rebellious

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barons. (Later on in the story King Ban fathers Lancelot and his half-brother Estor, and King Bors fathers Bors, Lionel, Blamour, and Bleoberis.)

27–31 *"And yet," quod Merlin . . . he shall not meve.* Here Merlin obliquely foretells his own demise at the hands of Nimiane, who will bind him in "circles" made of no earthly material. The closest parallel to this prediction in Malory occurs when Merlin informs Arthur that Arthur will die a worshipful death, but Merlin will "dye a shamefull dethe, to be putte in the erthe quycke" (Vinaver, p. 29). In both cases the clear suggestion is that despite his foreknowing, there is nothing Merlin can do to avoid his fate.

42–48 *the merveillouse leopard . . . ordenaunce of God.* Here Merlin predicts the coming of Lancelot (the leopard), who will father the greatest of the Grail Knights, Galahad (the lion). Merlin knows that his responsibilities, which require him to go to Brittany, will also lead to his downfall; indeed, if he were not obligated to fulfill God's "ordenaunce," Merlin would prefer not to go there at all.

Summary Based on EETS 21, pp. 305–07

61–62 *Diane . . . the goddesse.* There is a curious, though not unusual, blending of mythologies here. It is not made clear why Dionas is the goddess Diana's godson, but it is clear that Diana has plans of her own for Dionas's daughter. Since Diana is the moon goddess — i.e., "The White Goddess" — Nimiane's abilities and designs may be informed by paganism.

76 *the deduyt of the wode and the river.* Dionas's love of hunting and hawking (which often occurred along the edge of a river) identifies him as a young nobleman of aristocratic tastes, as does his building of a manor house in the forest to which he can "repair."

85 *[and] hym served with nine knyghtes.* Dionas appears to be one of ten knights who are most esteemed by King Ban; for his service in the war against Claudas de la deserte, Dionas is richly rewarded by both King Ban and King Bors.

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- 96 *And this turned upon Merlin.* Nimiane's name — which means "I shall not lie" — is rather ironic, since she "turns" Merlin's infatuation to her own advantage and to Merlin's considerable disadvantage.
- 104–06 *and thought . . . God to lese and dispiese.* As this passage reveals, Merlin is fully aware of the danger in allowing his reason to be seduced by his sensuality. He knows it is sinful; he knows he will shame himself; he knows he will displease God — yet he is unable to stop himself from proceeding.
- 108 *That lorde that alle thoughtes knoweth.* In her welcoming remarks to Merlin, Nimiane suggests that she is aware of the powers he possesses, and hints at her willingness to grant him what she knows he desires.
- 127 *by covenauant that . . . youre love.* Here Nimiane states her intentions quite clearly, although promising to be his love does not necessarily imply her willingness to give him her physical love; Merlin is quick to accept her offer.
- 131 *that noon evel ne thought.* The text is ambiguous in regard to which of them expected no harm to come from it, and it might be argued that young Nimiane is the naive one. But in the larger context of this passage, it seems fairly clear that it is Merlin who is being led down the garden path by the young woman rather than the other way round.
- 145–46 *Vraiemt . . . dolours.* In a piece of ironic foreshadowing, the singers Merlin has conjured up provide a perfect description of what will occur in Merlin's affair with Nimiane in the refrain of their song.
- 187–88 *and ye also for to do my plesier of what I will.* Now Merlin asks that she be willing to give him *whatever* he wishes, a more explicit indication of his desire for her physical love. After a moment's thought Nimiane assents, on the condition that she will be able to perform herself all the things that she asks him to teach her. Falling into her trap, Merlin readily agrees.

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Arthur and Gonnore; and The Battle against King Rion

[Fols. 109v (line 23)–128v (line 12)]

The author of the *PM* treats the initial phase of the Arthur-Gonnore relationship at great length and with great tenderness, in contrast to Malory, who describes it in just two sentences — “And there had Arthure the firste sighte of queene Gwenyvere, the kyngis daughter of the londe of Camylarde, and ever aftir he love hir. And aftir they were wedded, as hit tellith in the booke” (Vinaver, p. 26). Especially important in this section is Gonnore’s desire to attend upon Arthur as he is armed for battle; and as Merlin insists, Arthur’s arming is not completed until he has been armed with Gonnore’s kiss.

The battle with King Rion is also treated at great length in the *PM*, although we have summarized much of it here. One especially notable aspect of the battle concerns King Rion’s weapons. While it is mentioned at one point that he carries a huge ax, King Rion’s preferred weapon is his *betill* of brass, a mighty hammer or club. Only after Arthur has destroyed the club does Rion resort to using his famous sword “Marmyadoise,” about which the author provides a detailed background account. After King Rion loses his acclaimed sword to Arthur, Arthur delights in using it himself.

Summary Based on EETS 21, pp. 312–17.

102 *the dragon*. This is the same fire-breathing battle standard that Merlin had used so effectively in earlier battles.

112–16 *Ydiers . . . yow declare hereafter*. Here the writer alludes to a marvelous deed that Ydiers will perform at a later time, when he will be able to do what no one else in Arthur’s court can do — remove five rings from a dead man’s hand. Ydiers’s deed is similar to other one-of-a-kind deeds in Arthurian literature such as Balyn’s extracting the sword from the sheath and Lancelot’s healing of Sir Urry.

131 *the two Gonnores*. As will be explained more fully later, Gonnore has a half-sister (also named Gonnore) who is practically her twin. They differ only slightly in physical appearance, but the real Gonnore surpasses her sister in virtue and

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courteous speaking. One physical difference not noted here is Gonnore's birth-mark, which will serve as an important recognition token later on.

- 147 *Bertelaux the traitour.* The initial phase of the Bertelaux (or Bertelak) story will soon be related in the *PM*. The later phase of his story, in which he commits his acts of treachery, occurs when he seeks revenge on Arthur for the harsh punishment he received for his alleged crime. It is probable that this figure is connected in some way to Bertilak de Hautdesert in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Summary Based on *EETS* 21, pp. 326–38.

- 296–97 *it was som tyme Hercules.* King Rion's sword “Marmyadoise” had once belonged to Hercules, who is also King Rion's distant ancestor. This sword is a weapon of great distinction; it was originally made by Vulcan and subsequently owned by many men of great renown.

- 339–43 *oon may never passe . . . it mosste be fallen.* This obscure passage seems to suggest that no one will be able to pass beyond King Rion's realm — i.e., Iceland — until the laws established by Judas Maccabeus (hero of 1 and 2 Maccabees in the Old Testament, and one of the Nine Worthies) are nullified by a Grail Knight (presumably Galahad), who will succeed in passing through the gates of the Gulf of Satan.

Summary Based on *EETS* 21, pp. 342–46.

Summary Based on *EETS* 21, pp. 347–59.

Summary Based on *EETS* 21, pp. 360–63.

Arthur and Gawain

[Fols. 128v (line 12)–134r (line 18)]

In this section of the *PM* Arthur and Gawain finally meet. Arthur is so impressed by his nephew that he formally invests him as the king's constable, a position of great honor as well as of great authority. In addition, what the Young Squires have so fervently desired — to be knighted by Arthur — finally occurs. In formal knighting ceremonies each of them receives a new sword and his spurs (the symbol of knighthood), which are ceremoniously attached to his feet by the attending kings. Gawain has the supreme honor of being given Arthur's sword Calibourne.

Once again there is little here that has a direct counterpart in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*. In Malory, Gawain requests that Arthur make him a knight on the same day that Arthur weds the queen (Vinaver, p. 60); but when the king knights Sir Pellinor's son Torre ahead of Gawain, Gawain feels slighted and insulted. No others are knighted at this time in Malory; indeed, Gawain's younger brothers are yet to figure in the story at all.

Summary Based on *EETS* 21, pp. 363–70.

- 3 *the tresour*. This refers to the buried treasure that Merlin had revealed to Arthur and Ban and Bors earlier.
- 59–63 *for to a goode man . . . in hym is*. Gawain seems to be saying that it is right to report honorable and virtuous deeds to a good man (one such as Arthur); but it is better not to do so to a wicked leader, for he will be unappreciative and will fail to reward such deeds appropriately.
- 83 *the name of the lesse that is short and fatte*. In the description of the Young Squires, the author (in Gawain's words) makes some attempt to individualize the young men on the basis of their physical appearance. Thus one is said to be short, another tall, another darker complexioned, and so on. Sagremor is singled out particularly for his “great beauty” and well-shaped body.
- 105 *right wellcome [. . .]*. About three words at the end of Arthur's speech are indecipherable in the MS.

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- 107–08 “*Gawein, feire nevewe . . . I yow enffeffe.*” Here, in formal feudalistic terms (“*I yow enffeffe*”), Arthur bestows upon Gawain the constableship of his household and the lordship of his lands. Gawain is thus established as one of Arthur’s most important liegemen.
- 121 *The same nyght.* An important part of the spiritual preparation for knighthood is the vigil that young knights-to-be must observe on the night prior to their knighting. The knighting ceremony itself occurs the next morning and is followed by a high Mass.
- 126 *Arthur toke Calibourne.* During the knighting ceremony a young knight is given his sword and his spurs. Here Arthur bestows a very special honor on Gawain by giving him his own sword Calibourne. Arthur then attaches Gawain’s right spur, and King Ban attaches the left one. Finally, Arthur gives Gawain the “acolee,” an embrace signifying his entry into the chivalric brotherhood of knights. The other knights are given swords from the treasure that Merlin had directed them to, with the exception of Sagremor, who has brought a special family heirloom from Constantinople for this purpose.

The Begetting of Lancelot; and Merlin and Nimiane

[Fols. 134r (line 19)–158v (line 4)]

After Arthur and his men help to repulse the attack on Benoyk and Gannes mounted by the several enemies of King Ban and King Bors, Merlin is called upon to interpret a pair of prophetic dreams, one experienced by Ban’s wife Heleyne, and one by Ban himself. Although the dreams are enigmatic and Merlin refrains from explicating them fully, it is clear that the leopard in the queen’s dream represents Lancelot, who has been conceived on that very night. King Ban’s dream is not as fully related as the queen’s, but the voice he hears is apparently providing an affirmative answer to what he had prayed for earlier, that he be allowed to die on the day that he desires it.

This episode does not occur in *Morte D’Arthur*, although Malory does briefly describe a visit Merlin makes to Benwyke in which he meets King Ban’s wife and has his first sight of Lancelot as a young boy: “And there Merlin spake with kyng Bayans wyff, a fayre

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lady and a good; and hir name was Elayne. And there he saw yonge Launcelot. And there the queene made grete sorowe for the mortal werre that kynge Claudas made on hir lord and on hir londis" (Vinaver, p. 76).

Near the end of this section, Merlin goes once more to visit Nimiane, who now asks him to teach her how to accomplish some very particular things. Merlin knows very well why she wants to learn those things; he teaches her anyway, because he also knows he can deny her nothing.

Summary Based on EETS 36, pp. 379–411.

- 10 *the Newe Knyghtes*. This phrase is used to refer to the young men previously called the Young Squires. Now the New Knights, and the Knights of the Round Table (Uther's knights who had been with Leodegan), and the Forty Fellows (or Forty Soldiers or Forty Companions, Arthur's original core of knights) are the three main groups within Arthur's forces.
- 28 *Queene Heleyne conceyved a childe . . . Kynge Ban*. The child she conceives is Lancelot; and in her dream that follows, he is represented by the leopard who becomes involved in the struggle between the crowned lion and the uncrowned lion.
- 44–45 *four hundred boles*. The 400 bulls represent Arthur's knights. In a very different context, Arthur's knights are also represented by bulls in Gawain's dream during the Grail section in Malory. In his vision in *Morte D'Arthur*, Gawain sees 150 bulls, almost all of which are black. He also sees three white bulls, representing the three successful Grail Knights (Vinaver, pp. 558–59).
- 93 *he synne dedly in avoutré*. King Ban learns in his dream that on one occasion he will succumb to the sin of adultery. This event is subsequently described in the *PM* when, by means of Merlin's enchantment, Ban sleeps with the daughter of Agravadain ly Noir, who then conceives Estor (Ector de Maris), Lancelot's half-brother. Because Ban was not personally responsible for his sinning, God forgives him.

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- 127–28 *Merlin hym tolde even as the kynge hadde mette.* Merlin has the ability to relate both the queen's and king's dreams, even though no one has told them to him.
- 174 *sette upon an ympe.* This may mean that Merlin and Nimiane are sitting on the branch of a tree, but more likely they are sitting beneath the tree.
- 175 *the mayden made hym to slepe in hir lappe.* Perhaps Nimiane has simply lulled Merlin to sleep with his head in her lap; or perhaps she is trying out her newly-acquired ability to cause a person to sleep. There is nothing overtly sexual in the phrase “to slepe in hir lappe,” and as we discover below, the author asserts that Merlin never required any sexual favors from Nimiane.
- 179 *he taught hir thre names.* Merlin gives Nimiane three magic names, or perhaps phrases, to protect her from being harmed sexually. It is likely that she believes she needs them in order to protect herself from Merlin.
- 185 *we fynde not . . . eny vylonye of hir.* The author of the *PM* declares there is no evidence in any written work to suggest that Merlin ever desired Nimiane (or any other woman) to engage in sex with him. But it is also clear that Nimiane suspected that that is precisely what he desired from her. Malory, on the other hand, offers a very different view of Merlin's intentions, stating of Merlin that “allwayes he lay aboute to have hir maydynhode . . .” (Vinaver, p. 77).
- 188 *of thinges paste.* In his mentoring of Nimiane, Merlin teaches her about things that have happened, about things that are happening, and about things that will happen in the future.

Summary Based on *EETS* 36, pp. 419–20.

Merlin and Grisandolus

[Fols. 148v (line 12)–158v (line 4)]

This largely self-contained episode allows Merlin to showcase his multifarious talents as prankster, shape-shifter, prophet, philosopher, and moral counselor; and it also provides some important information concerning the conflict that will develop before much longer between Britain and Rome. But the most intriguing aspect of this episode, in all likelihood, is the daring young woman named Avenable. Having been separated from her family, she turns up in Rome disguised as a young man named Grisandolus. By virtue of her abilities Grisandolus becomes knighted, and shortly thereafter he/she is appointed by the emperor to be the steward of Rome. By the time the events in this episode reach a conclusion, her true identity and her true sex have been revealed; and in the end, Avenable/Grisandolus marries the emperor of Rome — all of which may seem reminiscent of Shakespearean comedies, such as *Twelfth Night*.

- 4 *it was that Julius.* Arthur's later victory over the Romans is here foreshadowed, although the Roman leader that Gawain will kill is Lucius, not Julius.
- 18 *This mayden com in semblaunce of a squyer.* There are a great many stories and episodes in medieval and Renaissance literature involving cross-dressing, particularly ones in which a young woman is disguised as a man; but this story, which probably derives from an independent source, is one of the few to find its way into Arthurian narrative.
- 64 *five braunches.* The hart that Merlin has transformed himself into has a very impressive rack of antlers.
- 108 *that by . . . hir cleped.* The hart has addressed the steward by her true name — Avenable — rather than as Grisandolus, the name by which she is known in Rome.
- 226–38 *This is the trouthe . . . what I am.* The savage man's account of his begetting, birth, and Christian baptism provides a rough analogue to — or perhaps a kind

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of allegorical version of — his actual birth as it was told in the initial section of the *PM*.

- 227 *Foreste of Brocheland.* This is the famous Forest of Broceliande, a place of wondrous and mysterious occurrences throughout Arthurian literature.
- 353 *that a woman hadde.* Merlin is saying that only a woman — not a man — could possess the crafty subtlety of mind needed to ensnare him. This remark anticipates his lecture on the nature of women that soon follows; and it may also provide an oblique comment on Merlin's relationship with Nimiane.
- 357 *the grettest tresour hidde.* This is the second time in the *PM* that Merlin serves as a kind of divining rod for buried treasure.
- 382 *But the prophesie seith.* This somewhat misplaced paragraph provides the first installment of Merlin's prophecies concerning the war that will occur between Britain and Rome.
- 401 *the riche userer.* Following his general comments on the sin of avarice, Merlin offers a more specific commentary on the sin of usury — lending money at exorbitant rates. Medieval texts frequently contain satire against usurers and usury, and also against lawyers, the next group that Merlin will comment on.
- 410 *who hath a goode neighbour hath goode morowe.* This is the first recorded example of this proverbial saying in English (see Whiting N77); and see its opposite: “Evil neighbor makes evil morn” (Whiting N75). The gist of the proverb is that if you have a good neighbor, you can wake up in the morning knowing that he has not stolen from you during the night.
- 443 *Province . . . Monpellier.* Montpellier is located in Provence, in southeastern France.
- 454–55 *the lyon crowned . . . the lyon volage.* Arthur is the crowned lion; and Gawain, presumably, is the *lyon volage* — the youthful (or perhaps over-eager) lion.

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- 454–64 *I tolde yow . . . sle the grete boor.* Merlin now elaborates upon the prophecy he had mentioned earlier concerning the coming warfare between Britain and Rome. In his allegorical depiction of it, the dragon is the Emperor Julius, the turtle is Avenable, and the boar is Lucius; the lion is Arthur, and the fawn that will kill the boar is Gawain. In his earlier comment Merlin had called Gawain a *bole* (bull), not a fawn.

Summary From *EETS* 36, pp. 437–47.

The Marriage of Arthur and Gonnore

[Fols. 158v (line 5)–166v (line 12)]

The *PM*, in contrast to Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, offers an extensive account of the events surrounding the wedding of Arthur and Gonnore. Included among these events is the Tournament at Toraise, in which feelings of rivalry and jealousy are revealed among the major groups of Arthur's knights. Also described here is the plot to abduct Gonnore and replace her with her half-sister, the False Gonnore. This abduction attempt is foiled through the wits of Merlin and the brave efforts of Sir Ulfin and Sir Bretell. Also introduced here is the figure of Bertelak (who has been alluded to earlier), a man whose cause is just but who makes the grave mistake of taking the law into his own hands and pays a heavy penalty for so doing.

Summary Based on *EETS* 36, pp. 449–52.

- 127–29 *For dere sholde be bought . . . he ther dide.* As this line suggests, the resentment and envy the Knights of the Round Table harbor toward Gawain and the other young knights will come to a head in the Tournament at Logres, which is described in the next section of the *PM*. In that tournament the rancor reaches such a high level that a great many knights are killed.

Summary Based on *EETS* 36, pp. 455–62.

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- 150–51 *after was the bedde of Arthur blessed.* The final event in the celebration of the nuptials of Arthur and Gonneore, as was often customary for medieval marriages, is the priest's blessing of their wedding bed.
- 227–28 *the signe of the crowne upon hire reynes.* Gonneore and her half-sister look so much alike that the only sure way to tell them apart is by the crown-shaped birthmark that Gonneore has on her *reynes*. The word “*reynes*” is the common term for the kidneys, or the seat of emotions, and thus, by metaphoric extension, the loins, where the kidneys (and the passions) find egress.
- 238–45 *Thus sholde the queene . . . and stode acursed.* The *PM* contains several references to the treachery that will occur later on, when the spiteful Bertelak tricks Arthur into abandoning Gonneore in favor of her sister, the False Gonneore. But the text of the *PM* ends before these events actually occur.

The Banishment of Bertelak; and King Arthur and King Lot

[Fols. 166v (line 13)–172r (line 27)]

Arthur's strife against the rebel barons now nears its end, as King Lot agrees to do homage to Arthur and the two become reconciled. This section is important also for establishing the foundations for a code of knightly conduct, for depicting the ways in which Arthur wishes to conduct his court, and for introducing several of the specific customs of the court. For example, it is here for the first time that Arthur declares he will not eat when he is holding court until he has heard some strange tiding. Here, too, is established the tradition of Arthur's knights returning to the court no later than a year and a day from the time they set out and openly reporting their adventures to the court.

This section of the *PM* begins, however, with the trial of Bertelak le Rous, who was mentioned earlier as a great traitor to Arthur. Bertelak's most serious crime is not that he has killed the man who raped his cousin's wife, but stems from the fact that by taking the law into his own hands he has violated the safe-conduct the king had established during the time surrounding his daughter's wedding. Thus, despite his many good qualities as a knight, he is judged quite harshly by the king's council of barons (which includes Arthur and Gawain), who recommend that he be stripped of his land and banished. As he em-

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barks on his exile, Bertelak arrives by chance at the same abbey where the False Gonneore had taken shelter earlier; and now having been thrown together by chance, the pair of outcasts begin plotting revenge.

12–13 *but firste I dide hym deffie.* Bertelak is saying that he announced his hostile intentions to his enemy in an open and formal manner. Normally, serving such notice to one's enemy in this fashion is the honorable way for a knight to act.

21 *Bertelak le Rous.* Bertelak le Rous, or Bertelak the Rede, may have some relationship to the figure of Bertilak de Hautdesert in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The two men possess similar knightly attributes; each lives far off in a wild country; each is associated with a wily, attractive temptress; and each becomes involved in a plot to challenge the supremacy of Arthur's court. Bertilak de Hautdesert's "beaver-hued" beard (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 845) may even relate to Bertelak's epithet — "le Rous" or "the Red."

35–36 *ye holde court open . . . this high feste.* In addition to taking justice into his own hands, Bertelak has also violated the general safe-conduct that King Leodegan had ordered for the period of time surrounding the royal wedding.

47–50 *And for that fill to Arthur . . . to writen it.* Once again the author alludes to the great difficulties Bertelak will create for Arthur later on; however, the ME version of the *PM* breaks off before reaching this section of the story.

170–76 *for that he was copiouse of langage . . . grete annoye.* The author is very understanding of Kay's joking and jesting nature, as is Arthur; but as the author points out, many of Kay's fellow knights were not so forgiving or understanding, and as a result, they often treated him with malice.

176–81 *But a trewe knyght was he . . . all the dede.* The author suggests that in his lifetime Kay was only guilty of one real act of treachery — the killing of Loholt (or Hoot), the son Arthur had begotten on Lysanor. While this act of treachery is only alluded to in the *PM*, it is actually described in the OF *Perlesvaus*.

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- 185 *the shelde of goolde and azur.* The heraldic device on Gawain's shield is a "lyon rampaunt" (a lion standing upright on its hind legs) in "azur" (blue), displayed on a field of gold. The device on Gawain's famous shield in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is a golden pentangle (five-pointed star) displayed on a field of "gules" (red).
- 292 *and fro that day forth . . . all her lif.* This reconciliation and newly established friendship between King Lot and King Arthur stands in stark contrast to what occurs in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, where King Lot remains Arthur's bitter enemy until he is killed in battle (Vinaver, p. 48).
- 342–43 *I will stablissh to my courte alle the tymes.* Arthur is declaring that he will hold his high court (those special occasions when he "shall bere crowne") at regular times throughout the year — e.g., at the high feasts of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and so on. He also announces that on such occasions he will not sit down to eat until after something unusual has occurred. This famous custom turns up frequently in medieval Arthurian works — e.g., in Chrétien's *Perceval*, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and in both the "Gareth" and "Grail" sections in Malory.
- 356–57 *yef eny maiden have eny nede.* This vow that all of the Knights of the Round Table swear — that they will aid any maiden who comes to the court and requests assistance — becomes one of the fundamental tenets of the Chivalric Code.
- 377 *the Knyghtes of Queene Gonne.* Gawain and his fellows wish to establish a special bond of "fealty" with the queen, and the queen is pleased to grant their request. Thus comes into being "The Queen's Knights," an important subgroup within the larger knightly fellowship. In Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* ten of these knights accompany the queen when she goes a-Maying at the beginning of "The Knight of the Cart" episode: "And that tyme was such a custom that the quene rode never wythoute a grete felshyp of men of armys aboue her.

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And they were many good knyghtes, and the moste party were yonge men that wolde have worshyp, and they were called the Quenys Knyghtes" (Vinaver, p. 650).

- 387–93 *And whiche of us so it be . . . in the comynge.* Here Gawain sets guidelines for how his knights will conduct themselves in their individual adventures: they must endeavor to complete their tasks and return to the court within a year and a day, if not sooner; and they must swear that upon their return they will report truthfully all that has happened to them.
- 399–400 *I putte in youre governance . . . at youre plesier.* This is a remarkable gesture of love and trust on Arthur's part.
- 413–14 *Dagenet of Clarion.* In Malory, Dagonet appears only in the "Tristrem" section, where he is portrayed as being little more than the court fool. So too in Tennyson's "The Last Tournament."

The Tournament at Logres; King Lot and his Sons; and Morgan and Gyomar

[Fols. 172r (line 28)–199v (line 27)]

This section of the *PM* is unusually rich in characterization, offering glimpses into the individual personalities of Gawain's brothers, in particular Gaheris and Agravain, as well as a glimpse into the character of Arthur's half-sister Morgan le Fay. The brief episode involving Morgan not only reflects her intensely amorous nature, but it also establishes the fact that she can be powerfully vindictive. Indeed, this episode provides an explanation for the great antagonism that develops later between Morgan and Gonne.

The rancorous dispute that occurs in this section between Gawain's younger brothers serves to do two things — it creates sharp distinctions amongst them, separating them into a highly virtuous pair (Gawain and Gaheris) and a much-less-virtuous pair (Agravain and Gueheret); and it also allows for the introduction of a discussion of proper attitudes and behavior towards women, as Agravain's extremely unchivalrous attitude is played off against Gaheris's more idealistic one. This section is notable, too, for containing the brief

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episode in which Gawain wins the magnificent horse Gringolet away from one of his Saxon foes.

Summary Based on *EETS* 36, pp. 483–503.

Summary Based on *EETS* 36, pp. 504–06.

88 *But after it knewe the Quene Gonnore.* This later episode occurs in the Vulgate *Lancelot* (Sommer, vol. 4, p. 121). When Gonnore learns of the love affair between Morgan and Gyomar (who is Gonnore's cousin), the queen insists upon breaking it up and forcing the lovers to go their separate ways. As a result, Morgan develops an intense hatred for Gonnore. It should be noted that in Chrétien's *Erec* there is a reference to a man named Guingamar, who is said to be “the friend of Morgan le Fay.” It seems probable the figures of Gyomar and Guingamar are closely related.

Summary Based on *EETS* 36, pp. 509–10.

99 *to lepe upon theire horses.* That is, Gawain directs them to shift from their riding horses (their palfreys) to their warhorses. The grooms then take the palfreys into the forest for safekeeping.

Summary Based on *EETS* 36, pp. 510–12.

Summary Based on *EETS* 36, pp. 513–16.

Summary Based on *EETS* 36, pp. 518–25.

After line 182. *St. Bartholomew's Day.* The Feast of St. Bartholomew (who was one of the twelve Disciples) is celebrated on August 24. In fact, though, the meeting with the barons actually takes place on the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, which is September 8.

Summary Based on *EETS* 36, pp. 528–35.

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- 205–06 *Gaheries hath seide beste.* Gawain's judgment on the views of his three brothers establishes a basic tenet of the knightly code of conduct — that a knight should never take a woman by force; for as Gawain says, "ther were no worse enmy than he" (lines 208–09). This provision of the Arthurian code of ethics is made very explicit in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*: "Allwayes to do ladyes, damsels, and jantilwomen and wydowes [socour:] strengthe hem in hir ryghtes, and never to enforce them, uppon Payne of dethe" (Vinaver, p. 75).

Summary Based on EETS 36, pp. 528–35.

- 263–64 "Sir," quod Gaheris. Gaheris's remark is nothing more than a wisecrack in which he implies that Agravain is a know-it-all. As this scene makes clear, Gaheris has a talent for getting under Agravain's skin.
- 266–67 *Gaheries remeved not but suffred.* Gaheris stands stock still and suffers the blows that Agravain inflicts upon him; and he also refrains from retaliating — noble behavior, to be sure, but undoubtedly infuriating to his attacker.

Summary Based on EETS 36, pp. 538–58.

- 328–29 *Seint Marie Even.* The Eve of the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, September 7.
- 350 *knowe it verily that it cometh thourgh oure synnes.* Beginning with Gildas in the sixth century, Arthurian writers frequently suggested that the Saxon invasion was visited upon Britain because of the sinful behavior of the British people, particularly their leaders. Here it is also suggested that if the barons had only accepted Arthur at the outset as God's duly appointed king, they would not have had such great difficulties dealing with the Saxons. Hence, they have brought their troubles upon themselves.

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King Arthur vs. King Rion

[Fols. 199v (line 27)–224r (line 12)]

This section contains the grand climax of the *PM*. Now, with the rebellious barons finally pacified and the Saxons invaders finally expelled, the last remaining threat to Britain is posed by King Rion of the Western Isles (Ireland and the other islands west of Britain such as the Isle of Man). It is here that King Rion makes his demand for Arthur's beard, which he needs to complete his mantle that is trimmed with the beards of vanquished kings. This section culminates with King Arthur and King Rion confronting each other in single combat.

Near the close of this section Merlin tells Arthur that he will now be pursuing his own interests, since peace and order have been established in Arthur's kingdom. But Merlin assures a concerned Arthur that he will return to assist him when the lion that is the son of the bear shall run through Great Britain — a prophecy alluding to the later treachery of Arthur's son Mordred.

Summary Based on EETS 36, pp. 559–612.

- 5–6 *the Feste of Assumpcion.* The Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is celebrated on August 15.
- 22–23 *And every man brought with hym his wif . . . his love.* It is customary when Arthur holds high court that every man must be accompanied by a woman, whether his wife or his love. One of the earliest occurrences of this practice is found in the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman tale “The Lay of the Horn,” attributed to Robert Biket.
- 56–57 *he made the Quene Gonne sitte by hym crowned.* Normally at major celebrations the women would not be seated with the men. In Geoffrey of Monmouth’s description of Arthur’s coronation, for example, the women feast quite separately: “the king went off with the men to feast in his own palace and the queen retired with the married women to feast in hers; for the Britons still observed the ancient custom of Troy, the men celebrating festive occasions with their fellow-men and the women eating separately with the other women” (Thorpe, 1962, 11).

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p. 229). But because this particular feast is in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Arthur insists on having the women seated on equal terms with the men.

Summary Based on *EETS* 36, pp. 615–18.

- 89–90 *Kynge Arthur, I grete thee nought.* The messenger has been instructed not to give Arthur a proper salutation, thus emphasizing the insulting nature of the message he brings.
- 105 *he is lorde from the east into the west.* In keeping with the general vagueness of Arthurian geography, it is never made entirely clear what lands King Rion controls, though it appears to be all the islands in the sea to the west of Britain, the chief of which would be Ireland. It is clear, however, that King Rion, in contrast to Arthur's Saxon foes, is a Christian and rules over a Christian people. He also abides by a more chivalric code of behavior than do the pagan Saxons.
- 110–11 *And the kyng hit toke to the archebisshop.* It is not clear whether the letter is given to the archbishop as a matter of ceremonial responsibility, or because Arthur lacks the ability to read it himself. It is true, however, that during the earlier Middle Ages many European monarchs were not highly literate.
- 118–19 *I have made a mantell of reade samyte furred with the beerdes of these kynges.* Beginning with Geoffrey of Monmouth, many Arthurian writers describe the request of an arch foe for Arthur's beard, which they wish to use in the trimming of a cloak or mantle. In Geoffrey of Monmouth, it is a giant called Retho who makes this request and who challenges Arthur to a duel. In the duel Arthur kills the giant and takes *his* beard (Thorpe, p. 240).
- 144–45 *he seide he sholde not so soone have take the Kynge Leodogan.* King Rion was planning to take his time during the siege of Toraise; now that Arthur has insulted him, he intends to take the city more quickly so that he can get on to the matter of dealing with Arthur.
- 164–65 *Oure Lorde hath sette yow in His prison.* The prison Arthur is referring to is the harper's “prison” of blindness.

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- 200–01 *to Pharien and to Leonces.* These are the chief lieutenants of King Ban and King Bors who have been minding things in Benoyk and Gannes in the absence of their lords. King Ban and King Bors, of course, are currently fighting at Arthur’s side.
- 248 *that thei neded no salve.* They needed no salve because they are dead — an example of ironic understatement.
- 345–46 *more than two but lengthe.* That is, they moved apart more than the distance between two archery targets — two “butts.”
- 431–32 *The lyon that is the sone of the bere . . . ye shall have.* Merlin is here foretelling the final confrontation that will occur much later between Arthur and his son Mordred. (Arthur’s epithet as “the bear of Britain” appears to have a very early origin; there is a marginal note in one of the “Nennius” MSS indicating that the name Arthur means “the dreadful bear.”) One peculiarity of Merlin’s prediction is his suggestion that he will return to assist Arthur in his great need against Mordred. In the traditional accounts, however, Merlin plays no role in the final battle between Arthur and Mordred.

Merlin and Nimiane; and Arthur and the Giant of St. Michael’s Mount

[Fols. 224r (line 13)–230r (line 28)]

Surprisingly, Arthur’s European campaign against the Romans takes up relatively little space in the *PM*. This portion of the Arthurian story originates with Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *The History of the Kings of Britain*, comprising more than half of the narrative material concerning Arthur in that work. It is also the central focus in the ME *Alliterative Morte Arthure*; but by the time of Malory’s *Morte D’Arthur*, its centrality to Arthur’s story was considerably diminished. Arthur’s great personal combat against the Giant of St. Michael’s Mount also has its origin in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *The History of the Kings of Britain*, and it remains a basic component of the Arthurian narrative in many later medieval accounts. Perhaps the most stirring rendition of this episode is found in the ME

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Alliterative Morte Arthure (lines 900–1221), which is also the direct source for Malory’s version of the episode in *Morte D’Arthur* (Vinaver, pp. 119–23).

Summary Based on EETS 36, pp. 631–34.

Summary Based on EETS 36, pp. 635–45.

In line 9, the arrival of *a group of twelve messengers* provokes Arthur’s campaign against the Romans as they demand his allegedly unpaid tribute to the Roman Emperor Lucius. Arthur treats the messengers who bring this demand hospitably, but he sends them back to Rome bearing a strongly hostile reply. In line 13, Britain’s claim on Rome is based on *historical precedents*, that is, the exploits of earlier British heroes whose European campaigns are described by Geoffrey of Monmouth — first Belinus and Brennius, and later, Maximianus.

- 29 *Mounte Seint Michel*. This is the famous Mont Saint Michel, located on the seacoast of Normandy close to the border with Brittany.
- 58 *Helayn*. The name of the young woman for whom the old woman is grieving is Elaine or Helena; she is the niece of Hoell of Nantes, the Duke of Brittany.
- 119–20 *the hide of the serpent*. The giant is protected by the skin of a serpent (perhaps a dragon’s hide); when Arthur finally kills the giant, he has to lift the skin and stab the giant beneath it.

The Defeat of Lucius; and Arthur and the Devil Cat

[Fols. 230r (line 28)–236v (line 14)]

Stories about monstrous cats or devil cats are common in European folklore and were especially prevalent in medieval France, where the story of the monster cat “Le Capalu” first became associated with the story of Arthur. In early Celtic literature cats were often depicted as possessing dark and demonic powers, and perhaps the most famous of these Celtic cats is the monstrous “Cath Palug.” In the *PM*, the story of the murderous monster

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cat is for all intents and purposes little more than a moral fable about keeping one's promises to God. When the fisherman's selfishness causes him to break his promise to God, he pays a great price personally, and he unleashes this terrible monster on the world.

Summary Based on *EETS* 36, pp. 650–64.

In line 4, Gawain's impulsive act of cutting off his head, first described by Geoffrey of Monmouth who depicts Gawain as a rash and impassioned youth, jeopardizes the mission and precipitates a great battle. In lines 10–11, the drama of Gawain's killing of Lucius using Calibourn is at odds with most other medieval accounts. Geoffrey of Monmouth states that Lucius was felled by an unknown hand; and Malory, following the account in the ME *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, has Arthur being the one to inflict the fatal wound.

- 22 *the Assencion*. The Feast of the Ascension of the Virgin, which is celebrated on August 15.
- 26 . Perhaps the amount is intended to suggest a parallel with the pieces of silver Judas received for his betrayal of Christ.

Merlin's Imprisonment; and Gawain and the Dwarf Knight

[Fols. 236v (line 15)–245v (line 33)]

The final section of the *PM* focuses on Merlin's departure from Arthurian society. After saying his personal farewells to Arthur and Blase, his two dearest friends, Merlin proceeds to his fateful rendezvous with Nimiane, knowing that it will result in his permanent imprisonment. Overlapping with this poignant account of Merlin's fated demise is the strange episode of the handsome knight who has been transformed into a dwarf by a woman to whom he denied his love. That enchantment is subsequently shifted from the knight to Gawain, who has gone in search of Merlin. It is while Gawain is still in this dwarfish form that he has his final encounter with Merlin, or rather with the voice of Merlin, for all Gawain is able to see is a misty cloud. After Merlin details his plight to Gawain, Gawain carries the story back to Arthur and the court.

This episode also provides an explanation for Gawain's great courtesy toward women;

Prose Merlin

for it is when Gawain inadvertently fails to accord proper respect to a woman that the enchantment is cast upon him that transforms him into a dwarf. This explanation for Gawain's kindness toward women is strikingly different from the one provided in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*; there, the act for which Gawain must atone is the beheading of an innocent lady.

Summary Based on EETS 36, pp. 669–78.

Estor (line 9), who is the son of King Ban, is also Lancelot's brother; the usual form of his name is Ector de Maris.

52 *the Seven Artes*. These are Seven Liberal Arts of the Trivium and the Quadrivium. The Trivium, the three verbal arts, are grammar, rhetoric, and logic (or dialectic); the Quadrivium, the four mathematical arts, are arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.

94–95 *Feire swete frende . . . do all youre plesier*. Here Nimiane indicates that she will spend much time with Merlin as his companion in his captivity, and her attitude toward Merlin is clearly benign. But this is not at all the case in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, where she desires to be rid of his unwanted attentions. See E. A. Robinson's *Merlin* (1917), which likewise presents an eroticized version of Merlin and Nimiane's happy love of each other in Broceliande.

Summary Based on EETS 36, pp. 682–89.

155 *Trinité Sonday*. Trinity Sunday is the Sunday following Pentecost; it usually falls on the first or second Sunday of June, depending on the date of Easter.

210 *he herde a voice a litill upon the right side above*. Gawain hears Merlin's voice coming out of a smoky-mist in the air above him, which is quite a different concept from that suggested in Malory, where Merlin is trapped in the ground beneath a huge rock. In *Morte D'Arthur* it is Bagdemagus, not Gawain, who hears Merlin's voice (Vinaver, p. 81).

318–20 *Ye shull to me swere be the oth . . . er shealue you*. Gawain's oath to never fail lady, maiden, or damsels serves the practical end of undoing the enchantment

Commentary

that has been placed upon him, but it also explains his great courtesy toward women. In Malory, the queen and the ladies of the court force Gawain to swear a similar oath, after he explained why he returned to court with a lady's head hanging from a rope around his neck (Vinaver, p. 67).

Summary Based upon the OF text found in BL Additional MS 10292, from fol. 216r, col. 3, I.14 to its end on fol. 216v, where the OF text concludes with the rubric: “Explicit lenserrement de merlin; / dieux tous a boine fin” [Here ends the imprisonment of Merlin; / May God bring us all to a good end].

Textual Notes

The Birth of Merlin

- 26 *[assayed]*. MS is illegible.
 [synne]. MS is illegible.
28 *[wolde]*. MS is illegible.
36 *rather*. MS: *raher*.
 [But]. MS is illegible.
38 *[maystrie]*. MS is illegible.
121 *[thi dere]*. MS is illegible.
122 *[aros, and sought aboute]*. MS is illegible.
123 *[therynne, and she ran to the]*. MS is illegible.
125 *[chamber]*. MS is illegible.
135 *[eny]*. MS is illegible.
141 *[on her]*. MS is illegible.
142 *[sorowe made hir]*. MS is illegible.
145 *[thynge myght]*. MS is illegible.
 [this]. MS is illegible.
163 *performe*. MS: *perfome*.
168 *creature*. MS: *crature*.
184 *and deleted between MS: frendes axeden*.
214 *anon.* MS: *anono*.
231 *and yef* written twice.
252 *Thus*. MS: *This*.
261 *and so it was* written twice.

Prose Merlin

- 262 *the¹* written twice.
263 *it¹* written above line.
264 *And* written twice.
274 *that* written twice.
276 *chelde*. MS: *chede*.
290 *creature*. MS: first *e* written above line.
291 *ye* written above line.
340 *armes*. MS: *pud* (?).
 to written twice.
341 *not*. MS: *no*.
344 *Freunde*. MS: *Reinde*.
367 [*Merlin*]. MS: *he*.
426 *and¹* written above line.
443 *resteth*. MS: *rested*.

Vortiger's Tower

- 58 *hymself*. MS: *hymslef*.
71 First letter in *sef* is illegible.
105 *he²* written above line.
113 *quod*. MS: *quo*.
117 *knowes*. MS: *knowe*.
149 *that* repeated in MS.
182 *ther* written twice.
231 *significacion*. MS: *singnificacion*.
278 *sholde be*. MS: *sholbe*.
316 *brethren*. MS: *bethern*.

Vortiger's Demise; The Battle of Salisbury; and The Death of Pendragon

- 12 *We* written above line.

Textual Notes

- 35 *ther.* MS: *thet.*
40 *brethern.* MS: *bethern.*
43 *weke.* MS: *woke.*
66 *tolde* written twice.
103 *worldes.* MS: *worles.*
122 *covenauant.* MS: *comenaunt.*
131 *above that* deleted between *hath* and *yove.*

Uther and Ygerne

151–52 *and juwels* are the first words on fol. 23; fols. 22 and 23 have been transposed in the MS.

- 156 *to* written above line.
220 *yowr.* MS: *yow.*
276 *he²* written above line.
316 *was* written above line.
340 *messager.* MS: *message.*
358 *and seide* deleted after *lawghyngē.*
393 *he.* MS: *ye.*
396 *performe.* MS: *perfome.*
412 *as.* MS: *a.*
439 *I* written above line.
445 *a* in *shall* added above line.
466 *thought.* MS: *dought.*
482 *seynyngē.* MS: *seynge.*
484 *it.* MS: *is.*
486 *I.* MS: *ye* written above line.
493 *so* written above line.

Prose Merlin

Arthur and the Sword in the Stone

- 8 *acordeth*. MS: *acorded*.
20 *thourgh*. MS: *though*.
27 *but* written above line.
29 *cherches*: MS: *cherche*.
41 *never*. MS: *ver* with *ne* inserted above line.
59 *amonge*. MS: *amonges*.
88–89 *that noon*. MS: *that god noon*.
98 *that* written above line.
112 *he* struck through before *oure*.
194 *yow* written above line.
200 *not* written above line.
205 *turnement*. MS: *turment*.
252 *the archebishop*. MS: *tharchebisshop*.
302 *were*. MS: *we*.
303 *thought*. MS: *dought*.
325 *ther* in *therwith* written above line.

The Barons' Revolt

- 12 *Arthur*. MS: *archebisshop* with *Arthur* written above line.
87 *thought*. MS: *dought*.
90 *and^l*. MS: *an*.
97 *part* written above line.
196 *two pence*. MS: *ijd*.

The Grand Tournament at Logres

- 15 *two*. MS: *tw*.
77 *Savage*. MS: *sauge*.

Textual Notes

- 80 *hem.* MS: *he.*
133 *delyvred.* MS: *delyued.*
169 [*King Arthur*]. MS: *he.*
235 *hem.* MS: *he.*
267 *it* written above line.

The Battle of Bredigan Forest

- 5 *for* deleted before *thei.*
90 *and.* MS: *an.*
144 *the* written above line.
147 *Leonces.* MS: *Leone.*
158 *and².* MS: *a.*
166 *Kynge.* MS: *ky.*
189 *yeve* written twice.

Following *yeve* in the MS is a misplaced line that reads: *Sir quod Ulfín and this is not the firste tyme.*

- 229 *hym.* MS: *hem.*
249 *ye* written above line.

The Young Squires

- 15 *never.* MS: *ever.*
19 [*Kynge Ventres*]. MS: *he.*
65 *resteth.* MS: *rested.*
74 *and.* MS: *a.*
92 *com* written above line.
134 *ne* written above line.
181 *bretheren.* MS: *betheren.*
 for. MS: *fo.*

Prose Merlin

- 234 *at* written above the line.
247 *evry.* MS: *euy.*

The Deeds of the Young Squires

- 61 *as.* MS: *at.*
83 *ther.* MS: *the.*
93 *his²* written twice.
103 *brotheres.* MS: *brother.*
176 *thei.* MS: *the.*
205 *and* deleted before *heilde.*
244 *heed* written above line.
259 *a* deleted after *as.*
272 *a* written above line.

Arthur at Tamelide

- 3–4 *Tamelide* and *Toraise* are transposed in the MS.
41 *worthynesse.* MS: *wordynesse.*
120 *of* written twice.
130 *he.* MS: *it.*
188 *that.* MS: *than.*
292 *Blois.* MS: *Blios.*
302 *Amadius.* MS: *anmadius.*
411 *plesyngē.* MS: *pelesyngē.*
453 *displese.* MS: *dispelse.*

Merlin and the Young Squires

- 4 *served.* MS: *serneved.*
69 *sones.* MS: *sone.*

Textual Notes

- 81 *mysbelevinge*. MS: *mybelevinge*.
97 *shouldered*. MS: *sholderes*.
162 *felowes*. MS: *felowles*.
163 *sone* as written above live.
218 *so* written above line.
234 *lothly*. MS: *lotly*.
236 *taken*. MS: *tken*.
276 *troubled*. MS: *trouble*.
359 *while*. MS: *wihile*.
367 *wend*. MS: *we*.
382 *the²* written above line.
392 *and*. MS: *a*.

Gawain's Rescue of his Mother

- 16 *men*. MS: *man*.
23 *than*. MS: *tha*.
 Taurus. MS: *Teucus*.
88 *shull* deleted between *ne* and *may*.
114 *smote*. MS: *somte*.
170 *it* between *lady* and *understode* is struck through in the MS.

Merlin and Nimiane

- 35 *thus* written above the line.
53 *speke*. MS: *seyde*.
82 *whan it* written twice.
175 *and³* written twice.
197 *it* canceled between *bringe* and *ende*.

Prose Merlin

Arthur and Gonnore; and The Battle against King Rion

- 15 *thei.* MS: *the*.
87 *the³* written twice.
168 Three words struck through between *armes* and *and*.
269 *malentelent.* MS: *mantelent*.
318 *thyn.* MS: *thym*.
327 *that he wolde telle hym* deleted between *covenauant* and *what*.
408 *com* written in margin.
428 *ne* written above line.

Arthur and Gawain

- 31 *thei.* MS: *the*.
58 *in* written above line.
105 Three words expunged between *wellcome* and *and*.
124 *Knygghtes* written above line.
223 *and.* MS: *a*

The Begetting of Lancelot; and Merlin and Nimiane

- 46 Final *s* in *grasses* inserted above line.
50 *in* written above line.
94 *not.* MS: *no*.
168 *yet.* MS: *ye*.

Merlin and Grisandolus

- 6 *that Merlin* written twice
8 *is.* MS: *it*.
 the trouthe. MS: *throuthe*.
32 *Avenable.* MS: *Auable*.

Textual Notes

- 90 *valiaunt.* MS: *vailaunt.*
- 119 An extra *that he were not knownen* deleted between *wey* and *with*.
hand. MS: *nekke.*
- 154 *Thus.* MS: *this.*
- 155 *an* added above line.
- 162 *rode.* MS: *rde.*
- 211 *hem.* MS: *hym.*
- 273 *with.* MS: *wt.*
- 301 *se* added above line.
- 348 *foreste.* MS: *freste.*
- 362 *spake.* MS: *sapake.*
- 378 *be* added above line.
- 396 *douteth.* MS: *doutheth.*
- 402 *scornynge.* MS: *sornynge.*
- 426 *the* added above line.
- 460 *not hir.* MS: *nothir.*
- 487 *to* written twice.
- 493 *messager.* MS: *messagers.*
- 495 *he.* MS: *and.*
- 499 *I.* MS: *ye.*

The Marriage of Arthur and Gonnore

- 13 *the* written twice.
- 58 *bide* written above line.
- 60 *not.* MS: *no.*
- 107 *men.* MS: *me.*
- 185 *thei.* MS: *and.*
- 196 *that the slytte hym to the teth, and Ulfín smote another* deleted between *another* and *that.*

Prose Merlin

- 211 *be deleted between nothinge and dismayed.*
223 *he.* MS: *the.*
229 *and².* MS: *a.*

The Banishment of Bertelak; and King Arthur and King Lot

- 73 *in-* in *into* added above line.
76 *that vitaile* written twice.
367 *to* written above line.

The Tournament at Logres; King Lot and his Sons; and Morgan and Gyomar

- 16 *no* written above line.
 [*the Kynge Arthur*]. MS: *he.*
59 First *g* in *syngyne* added above line.
65 Second *wo-* in *workewoman* added above line.
124 *his.* MS: *hir.*
208 *than.* MS: *that.*
233 *And.* MS: *As.*
363 *Thei* written twice.

King Arthur vs. King Rion

- 117 First *e* in *theire* added above line.
120 *the* written above line.
200 [*Merlin*]. MS: *he.*
215 *fader.* MS: *fade.*
284 *valiaunt.* MS: *vailaunt.*
359 *hem.* MS: *he.*
 remenaunt. MS: *renenaunt.*
382 *valiante.* MS: *vailante.*

Textual Notes

389 *and².* MS: *a.*

Merlin and Nimiane; and Arthur and the Giant of St. Michael's Mount

22 *thei.* MS: *the.*

The Defeat of Lucius; and Arthur and the Devil Cat

5 *[the Kynge Arthur].* MS: *he.*

26 *thirty shillings.* MS: *xxx.s.*

83 *hym.* MS: *hy.*

125 *kynge* written above line.

Merlin's Imprisonment; and Gawain and the Dwarf Knight

15 *loved.* MS: *love.*

19 *and.* MS: *a.*

118 *thourgh* written above line.

142 *God.* MS: *go.*

284 *so.* MS: *se.*

318 *ye* written above line.

330 *ever.* MS: *evever.*

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