

Prose Merlin

Prose Merlin

Introduction

The Middle English *Prose Merlin* survives in a single manuscript text, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.3.11. This late medieval Arthurian work was written, scholars believe, near the middle of the fifteenth century, not long before Thomas Malory was composing his *Morte D'Arthur*. Because it pre-dates Malory's work, the Middle English *Prose Merlin* is considered the earliest piece of Arthurian literature written in English prose. In contrast to Malory's work, however, which draws upon a wide variety of sources and combines them in a unique fashion, the Middle English *Prose Merlin* offers a straightforward and fairly accurate translation into English of a single source, the Merlin section of the Old French Vulgate Cycle, an interconnected set of Arthurian works composed during the first half of the thirteenth century. One of the real values of the Middle English *Prose Merlin* is that it gives students of medieval Arthurian literature access, though at one remove, to this important Old French work. But the value of the *Prose Merlin* goes far beyond that, for the work is a treasure trove of Arthurian characters, incidents, and motifs — many of which are found nowhere else in Arthurian literature. Perhaps its greatest potential value for students of English medieval literature, however, lies in the dramatic literary counterpoint the Middle English *Prose Merlin* provides to Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*. A careful examination of these two nearly contemporaneous texts, in their relationships to each other, can do much to illuminate each of them.

The *Prose Merlin*: An Overview

The Middle English *Prose Merlin* is, first and foremost, the history of Merlin. Just as Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* begins with the events leading up to Arthur's birth and concludes with those occurring shortly after his death, the *Prose Merlin* does much the same for the figure of Merlin, providing its readers with a complete account of Merlin's life.

Introduction

The initial episode in the *Prose Merlin* describes the events surrounding Merlin's birth, and the final episode, occurring after Merlin has said farewell to those dearest to him, provides a clear indication of the fate he must endure henceforth — a kind of living death.

In addition to presenting a full account of the life of Merlin, the *Prose Merlin* also presents a detailed account of the initial phase in the evolution of Arthurian civilization, a phase which may be called the Rise of Arthur. This is the segment of the Arthurian story that extends from Arthur's birth through his coronation and marriage and the pacification of Britain. It describes at great length the several threats to the land the young king must address — particularly the baronial revolt and the Saxon invasion — before peace and stability can be returned to Britain. This early phase in the larger story also includes Arthur's courtship of Gonnore (Gwenyvere) and their subsequent marriage, Merlin's intense emotional involvement with his protégé Nimiane (Nyneve), as well as several events contributing to the initial development of a code of knightly conduct. In this last matter Gawain (Gawayne) and his brothers and cousins — a group known collectively as the Young Squires — figure prominently. This important early phase in the larger narrative concludes shortly after Merlin's departure, with the implication that Merlin has fulfilled his function and Arthur must now proceed without his mentor's guiding hand.

In its larger structure, scholars believe, the *Prose Merlin* consists of two principal sections. The first, which begins with the story of Merlin's birth and continues through Arthur's coronation — the first five sections in this volume — is probably derived from the Old French poem *Merlin* by the late twelfth-century writer Robert de Boron. The remainder of the *Prose Merlin* is thought to be based on a lengthy sequel to Robert's poem that was written during the first half of the thirteenth century, when a Merlin section was needed to complete the overall design of the Old French Vulgate Cycle. This sequel section of the *Prose Merlin* accomplishes several things: it fleshes out the story of Arthur's rise to his apogee; it describes the manner in which many important characters first became a part of the story; it lays the groundwork for many later events in the Vulgate Cycle, most importantly those having to do with the Holy Grail; and it provides a smooth transition into the next major phase in the larger story which will focus on the figure of Lancelot.

These two sections of the *Prose Merlin* are merged without fanfare, however, and there is little in the Middle English text to indicate that a structural division even exists. And yet as one moves from the Robert de Boron section to the so-called Sequel, it becomes clear that the basic approach to the handling of the narrative has been altered. In the Robert de Boron section the narrative is relatively simple, straightforward, and single-stranded; in

Prose Merlin

the Sequel it becomes far more digressive and diffuse, and more importantly, it becomes multi-stranded. The Sequel clearly manifests the interlacing pattern — that of pursuing one strand of the narrative for a few pages, then a second strand, and then a third, before returning to the first — that typifies the works belonging to the Vulgate Cycle.

The Robert de Boron Section

The Robert de Boron section of the *Prose Merlin* opens dramatically upon a council of devils. Dismayed and aggrieved by Christ's Harrowing of Hell, an event in which the Old Testament patriarchs have been freed from Satan's bondage, the fiends of hell seek a means by which to undo the work of Christ. The plan they hit upon is to create their own demonic agent — a kind of antichrist — who will go into the world and do their bidding in the cosmic struggle between good and evil. This plan is put into effect, and such a being is soon fathered upon a virtuous woman by one of the fiends. But their scheme goes awry, in part because of the advice the woman receives from her religious advisor, a holy man named Blase (Blaise), in part because of the purity of her own heart. And thus it comes about that the special powers with which the fiends have endowed the child — who is christened Merlin, after the woman's father — will be used for benevolent ends rather than malevolent ones. And yet, although Merlin has been snatched from the service of Satan and entered into the service of God, reminders of his demonic origins persist throughout the work, most obviously in Merlin's impish sense of humor and his childish delight in playing pranks.

The second episode in the Robert de Boron section relates the story of Vortiger (Vortigern) and his ill-fated tower. This episode provides the boy Merlin, now aged seven, with ample opportunities to display his astonishing prophetic powers. When the tyrant Vortiger — who has usurped the British throne and who now lives in fear of the rightful heirs, Pendragon and Uther — attempts to build himself a great tower, his efforts prove futile for the tower continually collapses. Vortiger's sages claim the foundations will not hold unless they are sprinkled with the blood of a fatherless boy; the fatherless Merlin is soon discovered and brought before the tyrant. The boy saves himself by revealing what Vortiger's sages can not, the true reason for the tower's collapse, which is the shaking of the foundation caused by a pair of red and white dragons who struggle in a pool buried beneath the tower. That struggle, the youthful prophet tells them, signifies the struggle

Introduction

which will soon be taking place between Vortiger and the brothers Pendragon and Uther. (This is in contrast to other works, where the fighting dragons are said to be emblematic of the conflict that is going to occur between the Saxons and the Britons.) The pool is drained and Vortiger's tower is completed, only to become the site of Vortiger's fiery death, which Merlin had also predicted.

After Vortiger's death, Merlin assists Pendragon, who is now the British king, and his brother Uther in their struggles against the invading Saxons. Just as Merlin has foreseen, a great battle is fought near Salisbury in which Pendragon meets his death. Uther then ascends the throne and adopts the name "Uterpendragon" to honor his brother, and Merlin erects the great stone ring (Stonehenge) on Salisbury Plain as a memorial to the fallen Britons. With Uther now firmly established as Britain's king, Merlin advises him on the creation of the Round Table — one of the most significant events in the *Prose Merlin*. The table he will construct, Merlin tells Uther, is a replica of the table of the Grail that was first fashioned by Joseph of Arimathea, which was itself a replica of the table used at the Last Supper. Together, the three tables represent the Holy Trinity. Moreover, the Round Table that Merlin creates for Uther's knights comes to represent a bonding between the ideals of worldly chivalry and the transcendent spiritual mysteries represented by the Holy Grail.

In the fourth episode of the Robert de Boron section, King Uther becomes enamored with Ygerne, the wife of the Duke of Tintagel, and he soon begins waging a civil war against his Cornish liegeman. With the aid of Merlin's shape-shifting abilities Uther, in the likeness of the Duke, sleeps with Ygerne at the castle of Tintagel, and Arthur is conceived. Following the Duke's death in battle, Uther and Ygerne are wed, thus ensuring Arthur's legitimacy; and after Arthur is born, he is given into the foster care of Antor (Ector), who raises him as his own son. Great emphasis is placed throughout this episode on Ygerne's virtue and on her fidelity to her husband. She is shown to be entirely blameless in Arthur's having been conceived out of wedlock, and much the same thing occurs later in the *Prose Merlin* in the episode concerning the begetting of Mordred, when the wife of King Lot is similarly exonerated from any moral wrong-doing. (Perhaps we are meant to see a "trinity" of virtuous women in the three somewhat parallel episodes involving the conceptions of Merlin, Arthur, and Mordred.)

The final episode in the Robert de Boron section relates the famous story in which Arthur draws the sword from the stone, thus proving that he is Britain's king by divine election. The recalcitrant barons force Arthur to perform the feat repeatedly at every high

Prose Merlin

feast from New Year's to Pentecost, but eventually they capitulate — at least for the time being — and the episode culminates in Arthur's coronation. This episode should seem very familiar to most readers since the version of the "Sword in the Stone" story told here closely resembles the account contained in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*. Although Malory's rendition of these events is more abbreviated, the two versions accord with each other in almost every significant detail — which is rarely the case for this pair of contrastive works.

The Sequel Section

Following Arthur's coronation, the narrative tapestry becomes far more complex. Numerous plot lines are introduced, as well as a huge cast of characters. Also, medieval warfare becomes very much at the center of things in this section of the *Prose Merlin*, with the narrative focusing on five distinctive sets of military conflicts: Arthur's civil war against his rebellious barons; Britain's war against the invading Saxons; the war King Rion wages against King Leodegan; the war in France that Cladas de la deserte wages against King Ban and King Bors; and finally, Arthur's European campaign against the Romans. The text includes a great many extended descriptions of battles which, it must be said, are not likely to have much appeal for most modern readers. For the purposes of this volume, therefore, much of this material has been summarized. But military events vital to the larger story have been retained, along with enough battle description to capture the flavor of this central feature of the work.

The most important wars in the *Prose Merlin* are those involving the rebellious barons and the invading Saxons. The least important is Arthur's European campaign, which seems to receive a rather half-hearted treatment and which is greatly inferior to accounts such as those found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain* or the Middle English *Alliterative Morte Arthure*. It does preserve a spirited description of Arthur's fight with the Giant of St. Michael's Mount, however, and it also contains the curious though extraneous episode in which Arthur fights the gigantic devil cat of Losane. The war in France, which occurs late in the work and which is mostly summarized in this volume, is important in demonstrating Arthur's commitment to repaying King Ban and King Bors for supporting him in his struggle against the barons. The war between King Rion and King Leodegan provides the opportunity for Arthur to meet and fall in love with Gonneore and for the re-introduction into the story of the Uther's Round Table, which had

Introduction

been placed in Leodegan's care after Uther's death.

The two vitally important conflicts in the *Prose Merlin*, though, are Arthur's struggle with his unruly barons and Britain's war against the Saxons, both of which threaten to destroy Arthurian society before it has had a chance to take root. Following Arthur's coronation the Eleven Kings, a large group of Britain's most powerful barons, renew their refusal to accept Arthur as their liege lord. Assembling a huge military force, they rise against him and his loyal supporters, intending to remove Arthur from the throne. This civil war reaches its climax in the Battle of Bredigan Forest — the first of the many lengthy battle descriptions in the *Prose Merlin*. Merlin plays a major role in the battle, both as military strategist and as a direct participant in the action. Merlin also arranges for Arthur's secret rendezvous with the French forces led by King Ban and King Bors, who become Arthur's close friends and allies. With the help of Ban and Bors, to say nothing of Merlin's special powers, Arthur's outnumbered army inflicts a humiliating defeat upon the rebels. In the meantime, the Saxons have entered Britain in vast numbers and are overrunning the rebel barons' own homelands. Many of the barons now regret having opposed Arthur. It is not until much later, however, that they actually become reconciled with the king, an accord that comes about through the brave deeds of young Gawain (Gawayne), whose noble instincts have led him to side with Arthur against his own father.

Gawain is by far the most impressive figure among the many young heroes who are first introduced in the *Prose Merlin*. He is the leader of a group of noble youths who become known as the Young Squires, a group that includes Gawain's brothers Agravain, Gaheriet (Gaheris), and Gaheris (Gareth); his cousins, including Ewain (Uwayne), Galashin, and Dodinell; and others, including a daring young knight from Constantinople named Sagremor. All of these "children" (i.e., youths) leave their homes to seek out Arthur, whom they wish to serve and by whom they wish to be knighted. They perform many illustrious deeds against the Saxons, and at one point Gawain achieves a daring rescue of his mother and baby brother Mordred from their Saxon kidnappers. With his mother and baby brother now under his protection, Gawain uses them as leverage in persuading his father King Lot, one of the leaders of the rebels, to make peace with Arthur and swear allegiance to him. By the end of the *Prose Merlin*, Gawain has emerged as the pre-eminent young knight in Arthur's court. The final episode in the *Prose Merlin* focuses on Gawain and his partially successful quest to find Merlin, and it provides an explanation — one very different from that provided by Malory — for the great courtesy with which Gawain treats women from that time on.

Prose Merlin

One of the intriguing things about the *Prose Merlin* is the way in which it provides explanations for details and motifs commonly encountered in other Arthurian works. Numerous examples of this characteristic occur throughout the *Prose Merlin*, such as the explanation it offers for Kay's habit of rude speaking and for Arthur's tolerance of it; the explanation it offers for the great enmity that develops between Morgan le Fay and Queen Gonnore; and the explanation it offers for why Arthur will not eat on important feast days until a special adventure has presented itself. Also explained is how Gawain comes into possession of his wonderful horse Gringolet, and how Gawain comes to be the possessor of Arthur's sword Calibourne (Excalibur).

The *Prose Merlin*¹ not only attempts to explain how things came about, but it also attempts to explain *away* some aspects of the narrative that are potentially unsavory. The account of the begetting of Mordred — in which all parties are exonerated from any serious wrong-doing, in stark contrast to Malory's account — is an especially good example of this; the writer states explicitly that his intention is to set the record straight about the matter, since many people seem to have erroneous notions about what actually happened. Indeed, a strong element of Christian morality permeates the *Prose Merlin*, normally working to shield characters from criticism or censure, especially the women characters, and the work reflects a very generous view of almost every well-known Arthurian figure. That includes several major characters — e.g., Gawain, Gonnore, and King Lot — whose weaknesses and flaws are much more openly revealed in Malory's work. While a few characters in the *Prose Merlin* remain ambiguous and enigmatic — Nimiane is perhaps the best example — none of the familiar Arthurian characters is seriously vilified. The closest the work ever comes to doing that is with Agravain and Morgan le Fay, whose hot tempers and vengeful, malicious natures are briefly glimpsed.

The great triumvirate of heroic figures in the *Prose Merlin*, clearly, is comprised of Merlin, Arthur, and Gawain. Merlin is the central unifying figure in the entire work, virtually ever-present and constantly moving about between the various sets of characters; he is frequently involved in prompting the actions of the other characters, orchestrating events, and heading off catastrophic situations, and he himself participates in events to a degree rarely, if ever, encountered elsewhere in Arthurian literature. In contrast to Malory, where

¹ Given the fact that the Middle English *Prose Merlin* is a close translation of the Old French Vulgate version, when I speak of the *Prose Merlin* here and elsewhere in the Introduction, the remarks apply both to the ME and OF texts.

Introduction

Merlin operates primarily behind the scenes, here Merlin is a character of great vitality who does not hesitate to ride in front of Arthur's troops as they go into battle, personally carrying Arthur's fire-spewing-dragon battle standard, an emblem (and weapon) of Merlin's own devising.

Arthur, of course, performs many heroic deeds throughout the work, several of which have already been mentioned, such as his defeat of the Giant of St. Michael's Mount and his killing of the devil cat of Losane. Arthur's most glorious deed in the *Prose Merlin*, though, is his great triumph over King Rion in single-combat. Arthur's victory means, among other things, that his beard will not be used to complete the trimming of King Rion's beard-lined mantle; but its greater significance is that the last external threat to Britain has been extinguished, and Arthur has succeeded in bringing peace to the land of Britain, which he now firmly controls. But it also signals another significant change, for as Arthur completes his final heroic deeds in the *Prose Merlin*, his active role is nearing its end, and Arthur is about to assume a more passive and regal role, as the focus shifts toward the adventures of the more youthful figures of Arthur's court, young knights such as Sir Gawain — and before long, Sir Lancelot — who will be the main figures in the dazzling array of knightly adventures that lie ahead.

The Old French Vulgate Cycle

After the appearance in the second quarter of the twelfth century of Geoffrey of Monmouth's great Latin work *The History of the Kings of Britain*, the work which contained the first full-scale account of King Arthur's life, Arthurian literature experienced a remarkable burgeoning in popularity throughout western Europe. By the early thirteenth century, an ever-expanding number of Arthurian lays, romances, and chronicle accounts were being recorded in a great many vernacular literatures, and a highly diverse body of new materials, drawn from various literary sources and from folklore, had been brought into association with King Arthur and his court. Among the most significant additions to the Arthur story were narratives concerning the Holy Grail and tales involving the famous lovers Tristan and Isolde. By the early decades of the thirteenth century, Arthurian literature had evolved to such a point that Geoffrey's original account had long since been swallowed up in a sprawling and fairly amorphous body of narrative materials. It was perhaps for this reason that during the first half of the thirteenth century certain writers in

Prose Merlin

France undertook an ambitious project designed to bring order and coherence to Arthurian literature by culling and sorting these materials and arranging them into a single sustained narrative sequence. What emerged from this project was the monumental set of Old French prose works generally known as the Vulgate Cycle.

The Vulgate Cycle — which has also been called “The Pseudo-Map Cycle” and the “Lancelot-Grail Cycle” — is an expansive set of interconnected narratives that traces the Arthurian story in chronological order from its beginning, in apostolic times, to its end, which occurs in the aftermath of Arthur’s death. The Vulgate Cycle was probably written during a twenty- to thirty-year period, from around 1210 until perhaps the middle of the 1230s. Scholars believe that the long section dealing with Lancelot was probably the first part of the Vulgate Cycle to be written. That section led logically and directly into a section concerning the quest for the Holy Grail, which led in turn into a section dealing with the events surrounding Arthur’s death. Those three parts having been completed, the writers then turned their attention to the very beginnings of the story, first writing the section that deals with the earliest history of the Grail, its initial guardians, and how it came to Britain; and then writing the Merlin section, which filled in the last remaining segment of the larger narrative sequence. When it was finished, then, the completed Cycle contained five major sections: 1) *The History of the Grail*; 2) *Merlin*; 3) *Lancelot*; 4) *The Quest for the Holy Grail*; and 5) *The Death of Arthur*.

At the time the Vulgate Cycle was being composed, the romances of the late twelfth-century writer Chrétien de Troyes had already become extremely popular and influential. But the Vulgate Cycle reflected two important attributes that set it apart from Chrétien and the writers influenced by him. For the sequence of works in the Vulgate Cycle were presented as being *historical* works, not romances, and at their center they possessed a serious *religious* purpose. They also convey a strong sense of the importance of preserving and recording all of the deeds and adventures surrounding their religious center — primarily, matters pertaining to the Holy Grail. This is done initially through Merlin’s reporting of all the events to his mentor Blase, who has the responsibility of recording them for posterity. Religious prophecies and miracles are interspersed throughout the parts of the Vulgate Cycle, most of which are directly or indirectly concerned with the story of the Holy Grail. Thus in the works of the Vulgate Cycle a great effort is made to bestow upon the events of the Arthur story a fundamentally religious purpose, and also to suggest that the ultimate achievement of Arthurian society, for which only a few would be worthy, is the attainment of a transcendent spirituality.

Introduction

Before concluding these remarks on the Old French Vulgate Cycle, it is important to mention two other thirteenth-century prose works that are closely associated with it. One of them is the prose work commonly known as the *Prose Tristan*, which was probably written as a sequel to the Vulgate Cycle. The importance of the *Prose Tristan* for students of English medieval literature stems from the fact this work provided the principal source for the Tristan material found in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*. While this work has no special pertinence for the *Prose Merlin* and no bearing on the question of the relationship between Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* and the *Prose Merlin*, another thirteenth-century prose work that is closely connected to the Vulgate Cycle certainly does. This is the work known as the *Suite du Merlin*.

In the overview of the *Prose Merlin* presented above, it was pointed out that the *Prose Merlin* contains two major sections, a Robert de Boron section and a Sequel section. The *Suite du Merlin*, like the Sequel section of the *Prose Merlin*, is a continuation of the Robert de Boron material, but its contents differ substantially from the material contained in the *Prose Merlin*. In order to distinguish between them, these two works are often called the historical continuation (the *Prose Merlin* Sequel) and the romantic continuation (the *Suite du Merlin*). (The *Suite du Merlin* has also been called the "Huth Merlin" because it is contained in British Library Addit. MS 38117, which is known as the Huth MS.) The narrative contents of the *Suite du Merlin*, though, may seem rather familiar to students of Arthurian literature, since this is the work that Malory drew upon for the first major section in the *Morte D'Arthur* — the section titled "The Tale of King Arthur" in the Vinaver edition of Malory (*Works*, pp. 3–110). Malory handled this material very freely — condensing it, rearranging it, and sometimes altering it — but all in all, the ground covered in the two works is much the same. Both Malory and the *Suite du Merlin* not only describe Arthur's war with the rebels and his later marriage, but they also include the tragic tale of Balin, the triple quests of Gawain, Tor, and Pellynore, Morgan's plots against Arthur, and the triple adventures of Gawain, Ewain, and Marhaus — none of which occurs in the *Prose Merlin*. The *Suite du Merlin* is only preserved in a few manuscripts, two of which are the Huth MS of the British Library and Cambridge University Library Addit. MS 7071.

Prose Merlin

The Prose Merlin and Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*

The Middle English *Prose Merlin* and Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* have much in common: both are lengthy Arthurian works in prose, both were written in England near the middle of the fifteenth century, and both are derived in part (Malory) or in full (the *Prose Merlin*) from thirteenth-century French sources. And, while Malory's work presents a "romance-biography" of the life of King Arthur, the *Prose Merlin* does the same for the life of Merlin. The two works also contain a few very similar episodes within their larger narratives, such as their depictions of the episode in which Arthur removes the sword from the stone. But despite the existence of such similarities, the two works are in fact extremely different. The *Prose Merlin* is much more narrowly focused than Malory's work, being concerned only with the initial phase in the evolution of Arthurian society; at the same time, it is far more diffuse and detailed, and treats this phase of the story in a very drawn-out fashion. Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* is much broader in the overall design of its narrative, and yet his tendency throughout is to simplify, reduce, and disentangle the narrative threads of his sources. Thus it is not surprising that the *Prose Merlin*'s depiction of the rise of Arthur is roughly six times longer than the equivalent section in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*.

But as striking as the differences between the two works are in regard to their structures and the presentation of their narratives, the differences in their thematic concerns and tonal qualities are even more striking. One of Malory's chief concerns throughout the *Morte D'Arthur*, for example, is with human frailty and human fallibility. As a result, his work carries strong tragic overtones and is imbued with an overriding sense of pessimism. In the playing out of the larger story, almost all of Malory's characters are morally compromised by their choices and actions. There are extreme examples of this — e.g., Morgan, Margawse, and Gawayne — but even the characters Malory most admires — Arthur, Merlin, and Lancelot — prove unable to exert much control over their actions or their hearts. Only Malory's trio of Grail Knights (Galahad, Percivale, and Bors) and Gawayne's brother Gareth remain essentially untainted by the darker undercurrents of human nature that surface in his other characters.

The *Prose Merlin*, on the other hand, is brimming with optimism, and the intention of this work is to portray Arthur and his fledgling court in the most favorable possible light. While Arthur's external enemies — the Saxons, the Romans, and King Rion — are portrayed as being out-and-out villains, the British never are, not even the rebellious barons;

Introduction

although they are seriously misguided for much of the narrative, they eventually see the error of their ways, are forgiven, and are welcomed back into the fold. Perhaps a telling example of this fundamental difference between the *Prose Merlin* and Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* may be seen in the way each of them depicts King Lot, Gawain's father. In the *Prose Merlin* King Lot, even though he strenuously opposes Arthur's kingship, is consistently portrayed as a courageous and noble figure. He is also a loving husband and father, and he is a man who, when he realizes his mistakes, tries to atone for them. Malory's King Lot, however, is shown to be jealous and brooding and malicious. He nurses a personal hatred for Arthur (which is not entirely undeserved), and he and Arthur never reconcile. In contrast to what occurs in the *Prose Merlin*, in Malory King Lot is slain in battle before the rebellion has been put down; and his influence on events does not end there, for Lot's death drives a wedge between two factions of Arthur's knights and contributes directly to several vengeful deeds that occur later in the story.

There are many aspects of the *Prose Merlin* and Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* that are worth considering in relation to each other — the contrasting roles played in the works by Merlin, their treatments of the relationship between Arthur and Gonneore, their treatment of the relationship between Merlin and Nimiane, to list only a few of particular significance. But this is not the place to do that, and so we leave such undertakings to students of Arthurian literature who might wish to pursue them on their own.

Manuscripts

The Middle English *Prose Merlin* is recorded in Cambridge University Library MS Ff.3.11. The text in the Cambridge MS is nearly complete, and is flawed only by the lack of its final three MS leaves; a summary of the missing material has been provided here, based upon an analogous Old French text. No other significant Middle English texts of the work survive, although MS Rawlinson D.913 of the Bodleian Library in Oxford preserves a small fragment of the work on a single MS page (fol. 43). Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 802, which dates to the second half of the sixteenth century, contains a prose rendition of the opening section of the *Merlin*, but this material, which is probably the work of Simon Forman, M. D., has no direct relationship to either of the Middle English texts.

Prose Merlin

A Note on the Text

Modern conventions for punctuation and capitalization have been followed throughout this edition of the *Prose Merlin*. The paragraph divisions contained in this text result from editorial decision, though they often coincide with divisions in the MS text indicated by small capital letters; however, the MS divisions are usually much longer than would be normal for modern paragraphs, and at times, too, they also seem rather idiosyncratic. The MS text does not contain many contractions or abbreviations, but the few it does contain have been silently expanded. The MS text does contain a great many instances of Roman numerals; for the convenience of modern readers, those numerals have been written as words. In several places I have supplied words to clarify the sense of the text. The author often omits the subject within a series of clauses. In some instances words have been left out or are obliterated by blemishes in the MS. All such additions or emendations are set off by brackets. If I have emended a word that is found in the MS, that emendation is cited in the notes.

The MS spelling of words has been preserved, and spelling has not been normalized; the only exception to this is in the case of words containing *u/v*, where modern conventions have been followed; for example, the name *Vter* in the MS has been printed as *Uter*. In the few cases where archaic letters occur, they have been modernized; e.g., “thorn” is printed as *th*. Word division and spacing have also been modernized in some instances; for example, the word *together* is printed as a single word, as in modern English, not as two words as it appears in the MS. Also, hyphens have occasionally been inserted into words to make them more immediately understandable: the syllabic final *-e*, I have marked *-é*; to indicate the long vowel of the second-person familiar pronoun, I have transcribed *thee* where the MS has *the*.

Emendations have been made sparingly and only when it appears obvious that there is an uncorrected error in the MS text; in all such instances, the actual MS readings are recorded in the Textual Notes. Words or phrases contained in square brackets in the text have been editorially supplied. This occurs when the words in the MS were indecipherable; and it also occurs in some sentences where a verb or pronoun is required to make the sentence grammatically complete according to modern usage. This has been done only to make the text more immediately understandable to modern readers.

Introduction

Select Bibliography

Manuscripts

Cambridge University Library MS Ff.3.11. [This nearly complete text provides the basis for this edition.]

Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson D. 913. [This MS contains only a very small fragment of the Middle English *Prose Merlin*, found on a single MS leaf (fol. 43).]

Editions

Wheatley, Henry B., ed. *Merlin, or the Early History of Arthur: A Prose Romance*. EETS o.s. 10, 12, 36, 112. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1865–98.

Cranmer-Byng, Lancelot, ed. *Selections from the Prose Merlin*. London: Sedgwick & Jackson, 1930.

Studies and Related Materials

Ackerman, Robert W. “Arthur’s Wild Man Knight.” *Romance Philology* 9 (1955–56), 115–19.

Bogdanow, Fanni. “The *Suite du Merlin* and the Post-Vulgate *Roman Du Graal*.” In *Arthurian Romance in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*. Ed. Roger Sherman Loomis. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. Pp. 325–35.

Boron, Robert de. Fragment of *Merlin* poem. In *Le Roman de l'Estoire dou Graal*. Ed. William A. Nitze. Paris: H. Champion, 1927. Appendix, pp. 126–30.

Burns, E. Jane. *Arthurian Fictions: Rereading the Vulgate Cycle*. Columbus: Ohio State University, 1985.

Prose Merlin

Carman, J. Neale. *A Study of the Pseudo-Map Cycle of Arthurian Romance, to Investigate Its Historicoo-Geographic Background and to Provide a Hypothesis as to Its Fabrication*. Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1973.

Dean, Christopher. *A Study of Merlin in English Literature from the Middle Ages to the Present: The Devil's Son*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992.

Frappier, Jean. "The Vulgate Cycle." In *Arthurian Romance in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*. Ed. Roger Sherman Loomis. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. Pp. 295–318.

Kibler, William W., ed. *The Lancelot-Grail Cycle: Text and Transformations*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

Kölbing, E., ed. *Arthour and Merlin nach der Auchinleck-Hs, nebst zwei Beilagen*. Altenglische Bibliothek, IV. Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1890.

Lacy, Norris J., ed. *The Arthurian Encyclopedia*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991. Pp. 373–74; 496–99.

_____, ed. *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate Cycle and Post-Vulgate in Translation*. Trans. Lacy et al. 5 vols. New York: Garland, 1993–96.

Le Gentil, Pierre. "The Work of Robert de Boron and the *Didot Perceval*." In *Arthurian Romance in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*. Ed. Roger Sherman Loomis. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. Pp. 251–62.

MacDonald, Aileen Ann. *The Figure of Merlin in the Thirteenth-Century French Romance*. Lewiston: Mellen Press, 1990

Micha, Alexander. "La Guerre contre les Romains dans la vulgate du *Merlin*." *Romania* 72 (1951), 310–23.

_____. "Les Sources de la Vulgate du *Merlin*." *Le Moyen Âge* 58 (1952), 299–345.

Introduction

———. “The Vulgate Merlin.” In *Arthurian Romance in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*. Ed. Roger Sherman Loomis. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. Pp. 319–24.

———, ed. *Lancelot: Roman en prose du XIIIe siècle*. 9 vols. Geneva: Droz, 1978–83.

———, ed. *Merlin: Roman du XIIIe siècle*. Geneva: Droz, 1979.

Newstead, Helaine. “The Prose Merlin.” In *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English. Vol. I: Romances*. Ed. J. Burke Severs. New Haven, Connecticut: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967. P. 49.

Sommer, H. Oskar, ed. *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*. 7 vols. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institute, 1908–16.

Works Cited

Alliterative Morte Arthure. In *King Arthur’s Death: The Middle English Stanzatic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure*. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Rev. Edward E. Foster. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994.

Chrétien de Troyes. *Arthurian Romances*. Ed. and trans. William W. Kibler. London: Penguin Books, 1991.

Didot Perceval. Ed. William Roach. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941.

Geoffrey of Monmouth. *The History of the Kings of Britain*. Ed. and trans. Lewis Thorpe. London: Penguin Books, 1966.

———. *The Vita Merlini*. Ed. and trans. John J. Parry. University of Illinois Studies in English 10, no. 3. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1925.

Prose Merlin

Gildas. *The Ruin of Britain and Other Documents*. Ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom. London: Phillimore & Co., 1977.

Layamon. *Brut*. Ed. G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie. EETS o.s. 250, 277. London: Oxford University Press, 1963, 1978.

Lovelich, Herry, skinner and citizen of London. *Merlin: A Middle-English Metrical Version of a French Romance*. Ed. Ernst A. Kock. 3 vols. EETS e.s. 93, 112; o.s. 185. London: Oxford University Press, 1904–32.

Mabinogion. Ed. and trans. Jeffrey Gantz. London: Penguin Books, 1976.

Malory, Sir Thomas. *Malory: Works*. Ed. Eugene Vinaver. Second ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Nennius. *Historia Brittonum*. In Nennius's “History of the Britons”, together with “The Annals of the Britons” and “Court Pedigrees of Hywel the Good”, also “The Story of the Loss of Britain.” Ed. and trans. A. W. Wade-Evans. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1938.

Of Arthour and of Merlin. Ed. Macrae-Gibson, O. D. EETS o.s. 268, 279. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, 1979.

Perlesvaus. Ed. and trans. Nigel Bryant. Cambridge: Brewer, 1978.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon. London: Oxford University Press, 1960.

Thorpe, see Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Vinaver, see Malory.

Völsunga Saga. Trans. William Morris. Ed. Robert W. Gutman. New York: Collier Books, 1962.

Introduction

Wace. *Le Roman de Rou de Wace*. Ed. Anthony J. Holden. Publications de la société des ancient textes français. 3 vols. Paris: A. J. Picard, 1970.

Whiting, Bartlett Jere. *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings mainly before 1500*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968.

[The Birth of Merlin]

Full wrothe and angry was the Devell, whan that oure Lorde hadde ben in helle
and had take oute Adam and Eve and other at his plesier. And whan the fenes
sien that, they hadden right grete feer and gret merveile. Thei assembleden togedir
and seiden: “What is he this thus us supprisith and distroyeth, in so moche that
5 oure strengthes ne nougth ellis that we have may nougth withholde hym, nor again
hym stonde in no diffence but that he doth all that hym lyketh? We ne trowed not
that eny man myght be bore of woman but that he sholde ben oures; and he that
thus us distroyeth, how is he born in whom we knewe non erthely delyte?”

Than ansuerde another fende and seide, “He this hath distroyed, that which we
10 wende sholde have be mooste oure availe. Remembre ye not how the prophetes
seiden how that God shulde come into erthe for to save the synners of Adam and
Eve, and we yeden bysily aboute theym that so seiden, and dide them moste turment
of eny othir pepill; and it semed by their semblant that it greved hem but litill or
nought, but they comforted hem that weren synners, and seide that oon sholde
15 come which sholde delyver hem out of tharldome and disese?

“So longe have thei spoken of hym that now is he comen and hath taken from us
tham that non othir ne myght us bereve. Ye knoweth well that he maketh hem to
ben waisshen in a water in the name of the Fader, Sone, and Holy Goste; and after
that have we no powre upon them but yef they do turne agein to us by theire evel
werkis. In this wise hath He putt down oure power, and yet moreover, for [He]
20 hath his mynystres lefte in erthe that dayly hem saveth from us, thowh they have
don never so many of oure werkes, yef they will repent and forsake their

2 **plesier**, pleasure. 3 **sien**, saw (had seen). 4 **What . . . this**, Who . . . that. 5 **ne nougth**,
nor anything; **nought**, not. 6 **ne trowed not**, did not believe. 10 **wende**, thought; **be**, been.
12 **yeden**, went. 13 **semblant**, appearance. 15 **tharldome**, servitude; **disese**, suffering. 17
tham, those (them); **bereve**, deprive. 19 **yef**, if. 21 **mynystres**, ministers; **thowh**, even
though. 22 **never so many**, i.e., very many; **werkes**, i.e., sins.

Prose Merlin

myslyvinge, and do as they teche hem that ben for the grete love He hadde to man
and gret tendirmesse, whan for to save man He wolde come down in to erthe to be
25 born of a woman. And we yede and assaied Hym in alle the maners that we cowden,
and when we hadde [assaied] Hym, and we dyd that [synne] nought fynde in
Hym; yet wolde He dye for to save man, ful moche lovede He man, when He
[wolde] suffer so grete peyne for to have hym agein, and to take hym from oure
30 power. Thanne moche oughte we for to laboure with grete besynesse to gete agayn
that He hath us beraffte in soche wyse, that they may not repente ne speke with
hem that myght gete hem pardon, and turne hem agayn from oure power.”

In this maner the fendes helden a gret conseill and seide that tho that hadde
greved hem moste that were they that tolde tydinges of His comyng in to erthe:
“And they have don us gret damage and hynderyng, and the more they tolde of
35 His comyng, the more we dide hem anger and disease; and as us semeth, He hasted
Hym the rather to come for to delyver them from our daunger. [But] how myght
we have a man of oure kynde that myght speke and have oure connynge and
[maystrie] worke, and have the knowleche as we have of things that be don and
seide, and of thynges that be past, and that he myght be in erthe conversant with
40 these other? For witeth it wele that soche on myght moche helpe us to begile His
pepill, like as the prophetes begiled us and tolden that we trowe never myght have
ben. In the same wise sholde soche oon telle alle thynges that were don and saide,
both of that is passed and of thynges that is to come, and be that sholde He be
bileved of moche peple.” Than thei ansuerde alle, and seiden that wele hadde he
45 sped that soche a man myght gete, for he sholde be long beleved of all thinges that
he seide.

Than ansuerde another fende and seide, “I have power for to sowe seede in
woman and make her conceyve, and I have oon that doth all that ever I wille.”
And thus undirtoke he this enterprise, to gete a man that sholde do their werkes
50 after their alle entente. Full grete foles were thei whan they wende that oure Lorde
sholde have no knowyng of their ordenaunce and engine. Thus they departed
25 yede, went; **assailed**, tested. **30 beraffte**, taken away. **31 hem¹**, them; **gete**, place; **hem²**,
themselves; **hem³**, themselves. **32 tho**, those. **33 that were they**, were those. **36 Hym**,
Himself; **rather**, quicker. **38 [maystrie]**, mastery (power). **40 on**, one. **41 trowe**, believe.
42 soche oon, such a one. **43 be that**, by that means. **45 gete**, beget. **50 wende**, thought.
51 engine, plan.

The Birth of Merlin

from this conseille and were assented to this conclusion; and this feende that toke this enterprise ne taried not, but in al the haste that he myght, he come theras this woman was that wrought all his wille.

[*Summary. The woman over whom the fiend has such power is married to a rich man, and they have a son and three daughters. To achieve his end, the fiend makes the rich man's animals die, strangles the man's son, and causes the wife to commit suicide. Grief-stricken, the rich man dies, whereupon the fiend sets about to corrupt the daughters. One of them commits fornication, for which she is executed, and another becomes a prostitute. But the eldest daughter withstands the fiend's tempting and seeks a holy hermit's advice. Fols. Iv (line 9)–3r (line 4).]*]

55 And when the elder mayden sye that hir suster was thus gon, she yede anoon to the holy man that hadde taught hir the right creaunce, full hevy and pensif, makyngre grete doell and sorow. And when this gode man sye her so pensif, he hadde grete pitee and seyde to hir, “Blesse thee and comaunde thee to God, for I se thee gretly affraied.” And she ansuerde, “I have grete cause, for I have loste my suster, that is 60 become a comyn woman.”

65 And when the gode man herde this he was gretly astonyd and seide, “The feende is full besy abowte yow, which will not cesse till he have disseyved thee, but God be thyn helpe.” “A sir,” quod she, “how may I kepe me from his disceytis? For ther is no thyngre that I have so grete feire of as that he sholde have over me eny power.” Quod the holy man, “Yef thou wilte do after my counsell, he shall never disceyve thee.” “Certeyn,” quod she, “I will gladly do your counsell.”

70 “Than,” quod he, “belevest thou not in the Fadir, Sone, and Holy Goste, and that these thre personnes be oon God in Trynit , and that God com down in to erthe, and becom man for the redempcion of mannes sowle, of hem that in Hym stadtfastly beleve, and kepe His comaundmentis?” And she seide, “Right as ye sey, I beleve. And so, veryly, I pray to God be my socoure and helpe.” “Now then,” quod he, “I pray thee and comaunde that thou kepe thee fro fallynge into grete ire or wrath, for in that the feende repairethe moste, bothe in man and woman,

55 sye, saw; **yede**, went. **56 creaunce**, beliefs. **57 doell**, grief (dole). **60 comyn woman**, prostitute. **64 feire**, fear. **65 Yef**, If. **73 repairethe**, resorts.

Prose Merlin

namly, when they be in grete ire and comberauncis. That thou haste yelde thee in
75 the graces of oure Lord and alle seyntis; and at alle tymes [when] thou goist to
bedde or arysist, blisse thee in the name of the Fader, Sone, and Holy Goste, and
make upon thee in the name of the crosse, on the whiche He suffred His passion to
bye us fro the peynes of helle. And yef thou do thus, thou shalt have no drede of
80 the feendes power. And where that thou slepest on nyght, loke that thou have
lyght, for the devell hatyth all clerenesse and lyght, and gladly will not com there.”

Thus taught the holy man the mayden, which hadde grete drede of the develes
engynes. And so she returned hom ageyn to her house, full stabill in the feith, and
full humble to God, and to the pore peple which comen unto hir and seiden:
“Trewly, it is no wonder though ye be gretely affraied of the turment that is falle
85 of youre fader, and of youre moder, and youre broder and sustres, that thus be
myscheved; but now taketh gode counsell and be of gode comfort, for ye ar right
ryche and have grete herytage. Wherfore every worthy man will be glad to have
yow.” And she ansuerde ageyne and seide, “Oure Lorde kepe me in His servyse,
as He knoweth it is grete nede.”

90 Thus endured she wele two yere, that the feende myght never begyle her, ne
never myght make her do evell werke. And he sye wele that he ne cowde not make
her lese that the holy man hadde hir lerned, lesse than she were made wroth. Than
made he hir suster come on a Saterday, at even, to do hir more turment and anger,
to loke yef he might gete hir in that manere. And when hir suster com, it was fer
95 withynne nyght, and she brought with her a grete hepe of harlotys. And when she
sye her suster so com, she was angry and seide unto here, “Feire suster,” quod
she, “as longe as ye caste yow to lede soche lyf, ye ought not to come in this place,
for ye make me have grete blame, wheroft I have lityll nede.”

And she ansuerde ageyne, as a woman that the feende was withynne, and seyde
100 that she wolde yet do worse, and seide that she was more evell than she, and bar
hir on honde that she loved the holy man paramours, and yef it were knownen the
trouth, that she [was] worthy to be distroid. And when her suster herde this, she
griped her be the shulders and put hir owt at the dore. And the tother, to avenge

74 **comberauncis**, troubles; **thee**, yourself. 76 **arysist**, arise. 78 **bye**, redeem. 82 **engynes**,
devices. 86 **myscheved**, harmed. 91 **cowde**, could. 92 **lese that**, lose what; **lerned**, taught;
lesse than, unless. 95 **grete hepe**, large group. 100–01 **bar hir on honde**, claimed falsely.
101 **paramours**, as a lover. 103 **tother**, other.

The Birth of Merlin

hir, made the harlotys that come with her to kache hir suster and bete hir right
105 evelé. So with grete peyne she aschaped fro them and fledde into hir chamber
and shet her dore and barred hit from her and the harlottis that were come with
her.

And she abode in her chamber alone, and leyde her down on her bedde all
clothed and wepte tendirly for sorowe. And when the devell sye that she was
110 angry and sole by herself, and that it was derke, he was gladde. And she remembred
the myschef of hir fader and moder and brother and susters, and sore wepte when
she hadde thought on all parteis. And so ther was grete sorowe and grete ire at hir
herte. And when the feende sye that she hadde foryete that the holy man hadde
taught her, he thought that she stode owte of Goddes grace, and of her maister.
115 "And now myght I well put oure man in hir."

And this feende that hadde power to make woman conceyve was all redy and
lay by hir while she was slepyng.

And when she hadde concayved she awaked, and in her wakyng she thought on
the holy man, and therwith she blissed here and seide, "Seynt Mary, what is me
120 befall, for I am disceyved sith I leyde me here. Now gracyouse Lady, pray unto
[thi dere] sone that He have mercy upon me, and diffende my body fro torment of
the enmy." And than she [aros, and sought aboute] after hym that sholde have
done that dede, for she wende to have founde hym [therynne, and she ran to the]
dore and fonde it shet in the same maner as she hadde barred it herself. And than
125 she sought over all in her [chamber], but nought cowde she fynde. Than she demed
that it was the enmy that so hadde her begiled; and than she made full grete sorowe
and cryde moche upon oure Lord, prayinge Hym that He wolde not suffer her to
be shamed here in this worlde.

And anoon as it was day, the feende ledde away this othir suster, for she hadde
130 fully esplayted his purpos. And when they were alle passed, she com owte of hir
chamber sorowfull and pensif and called after her servaunt, and anoon sente after
two women. And when they were come, anoon she wente to hir confessour. And
the gode man sye her comyng; he seide, "Thow hast som grete nede, for I se thee
gretely affraied." And she answerde, "I ought wele to be affrayed, for it betyde to

105 **aschaped**, escaped. 113 **foryete that**, forgotten what. 118 **concayved**, conceived. 119
here, herself. 119–20 **is me befall**, has befallen me. 125 **over all**, everywhere. 130
esplayted, completed.

Prose Merlin

135 me that never fill to [eny] woman saf oonly to me. And therfore I come to seche
youre counsell, for I have herde yow saye that ther was nevere creature that dede
so grete offence that yef he were confessed and repentant, that he wolde resceyve
penance for his trespassse, that he sholde anoon have foryevenesse. Sir, I have
synned, and wete ye wele I am disceyved be the devell."

140 Than she tolde how hire suster com to hir howse, and all, gynnyng and ende,
as ye have herde, and how she fill on slepe [on her] bedde, and hir dore shette and
barred, and how hir grete [sorowe made hir] foyete to blisse hir. And quod she,
"When I awoke, I fonde me diffoulde and my maidenhede loste. Sir, I sought
145 thourgh my chamber and fonde my dor shet, ne I cowde fynde no lyvinge creature
that eny suche [thyng myght] have don to me. For in [this] wyse I have sinned,
wherfore I crye God mercy, and yow, and that I may have soche penance that I
lese not the lif everlastynge."

150 The holy man lestned well to all hir confession, but he yaf no grete credence to
that she seide, for he herde never before of no soche thyng. And therfore he
seyde unto hir, quod he, "Thow art full of the devell. How sholde I absoyle thee or
enjoyne thee penance for thynges which I wene thow lyest veryly, for never was
ther woman that loste her maydenhede but she wiste by whom and how; or at the
lest, that she myght fele the man that dyde the dede. And thow woldiste make me
155 bileyve this merveyle that thow seyst in this wyse is thee befalle!" And she
ansuerde, "So, verily, God be my socoure in my moste nede, as I have seide trouth."

160 The holy man seide, "Yef it be so as thow haste seyde unto me, it shall verily be
knowe bothe to thee and to me withynne shorte tyme. Thow haste broken the
obedience that I comaunded thee; therfore I charge thee in penaunce that alle the
Saterdayes while thow lyvest that thow ete no mete but ones on the day. And as
touchynge the lecherye that thow hast tolde — wherof I can not leve thee — thow
oughtest to have penaunce all thy lyftyme, yef thow wil take soche as I shall the
enjoyne." And she answerde, "Ye can not charge me with noon but I will gladly
performe it."

165 Than seyde the holy man, "Thou comest to have counsell of Holy Church, and
to the mercy of oure Lorde Jhesu Criste, that bought us with His precyouse blode

135 **fill**, fell; **seche**, seek. 140 **all . . . ende**, from beginning to end. 142 **hir³**, herself. 144
ne, nor; **no**, any. 149 **that**, what. 150 **absoyle**, absolve. 151 **enjoyne thee**, assign you;
lyest veryly, truly lie. 160 **leve**, believe. 161 **yef**, if. 162 **noon**, anything.

The Birth of Merlin

and with His bitter deth. And [thow] haste very repentaunce of herte, like as thow seyst with thy mouth, and forsakeste all lechery and synne, saf oonly that fill in thi slepynge, fro the whiche no creature may kepe hym clene."

170 And she graunted hym, with that he wolde be hir plegge before God that she sholde be saved, and that she were not dampned for that synne. She toke hir soche penaunce as he enjoyned her with gode will, sore wepynge as she that was very repentante. And this gode man assoiled hir and yaf hir his blissynge, and sette hir ageyne in the love of God in his beste manere; and brought her to the haly water and made her to drynke in the name of the Fader, Sone, and Holy Goste; and caste 175 of the same water upon her and badde hir to thynke wele on that he hadde charged her with. "And alle tymes, when thow haste eny nede, come to me ageyn." And than he betaught hir to God. And so he put in her penaunce alle her gode dedes and almesse and prayers that she sholde do.

180 And so returned this damsell in to her howse, and ledde full holy lyf. And when the devell sye that he hadde loste her in soche manere that he wiste not what she dede ne what she seyde, he was wroth and angry.

185 Thus longe she abode that the seed myght no lenger ben hidde whiche she hadde in hir body, so that her wombe gan to waxen grete, that the peple aperceyved wele that she was with chylde. And they that were hyr frendes axeden hir be whom it was. And she answerde, so God be hir helpe, she wiste not be whom it was. Quod they, "How may this be? Have ye than hadde so many men that ye knowe not who is the fader?" And she answerde, "God lete me have delyveraunce yef ever man, my witynge, hadde to do with me in soche maner." And they that this herden blessed them for merveyle, and seyde that it myght never be so, neythir of hir ne 190 of noon other — "but that ye hope to excuse hym so that hath don the dede. But truly, grete pité it is of you, for as soone as the juges knowe therof, ye moste be deed."

When she herde this she was sore abaished and seyde, "So veryly God make my soule safe, as I sawe hym never that hath don me this, ne never I hym knewe." 195 And the women that her herde speke helde her for a foole and untrewe, and clatered

166 **very**, true. 167 **that fill**, what befell. 169 **with that**, so that. 171 **enjoyned**, ordered. 172 **assailed**, absolved. 177 **betaught**, committed. 182 **abode**, abided. 184 **be**, by. 186 **than**, therefore (then). 188 **my witynge**, with my knowledge. 190 **but that**, because. 191 **moste**, must. 193 **abaished**, disconcerted. 195 **clatered**, chattered.

Prose Merlin

it aboute, and seyden certeynly that hir bewté was foulé spente, seth it was loste in
soche manere. And when she herde this, she remembred on hir confessour, and
com to hym, and tolde as the wymen hadden seide. The gode man sye that she was
200 grete with quyk childe, and merveiled gretly, and axed hir yef she hadde wele
holden hir penaunce. “Sir,” quod she, “ye, withoute fayle.”

Quod he, “Befill yowe never this merveyle saf ones?” “Certes, sir,” quod she,
“never before ne after.” And when the gode man herde this, he merveyled
205 strongeleche, and sette the oure and the nyght in writynge, like as she hadde tolde
hym, and seide, “Be ye right syker, when this chelde shal be born, I shall well
knowe yef ye have made eny gabbynge, and I have very trust in God that yef it be
as ye have seide, ye shall not be deed therfore. But ye may wele have grete feer,
for as soone as the judges knowe therof, they well make yow to be take for covetyse
of youre londes and herytage, and do justice upon yow. But when ye be taken,
210 sende me worde, and I shall come to helpe yow and conforte in all that I may.
And wite well that God shall helpe yow, yef ye be soche as ye sey.” And then he
seide, “Goth hom to youre howse and have no drede. And loke ye, be of gode
counfort and good lyvynge, for that ledith man and woman to gode endynge.”

And so she departed and come to hir owne house and ledde holyly hir lif, till
the judges made hir to be taken and brought hir before them. And anon as she was
215 arrested, she lete sende after the gode ermyte that hadde alwey ben her counfort.
And he cam in all the haste that he myght. And when he was comen, he fonde that
the judges hedde brought hir byfore them. The justyces clepid hym to hem, and
told hym the ansuere that she hadde seide hem, [that] she hadde never knowynge
of mannes company. “And trowe ye,” quod thei, “that eny woman myght have
220 childe withoute mannes company?”

The gode man ansuerid and seide, “I shell not sey all that I thynke, but thus
moche I sey unto yow: yef ye will do my counsell, ye shall not put hir to jugement
while she is with childe, till that she be deliverd, for the childe hath no deth de-
served.” The judges seiden, “We shall do as ye counsele.”

Quod the holy ermyte, “Yef ye do by my counsele, ye shall put hir in a stronge
tour in gode warde, wher she shall have no power over hirself; and with hir ye

196 **bewté**, beauty; **seth**, since. 199 **quyk**, living. 203 **strongeleche**, greatly; **oure**, hour.

204 **syker**, certain. 205 **gabbynge**, falsehood. 207 **well**, will. 210 **wite**, know. 217 **clepid**,
called; **hem**, them. 221 **shell**, shall. 226 **in gode warde**, under guard.

The Birth of Merlin

shall put two women for to helpe hir at hir delyveraunce when tyme is, in soche
maner that thei may not come oute no more. And thus shell she be lefte till she
have chelde, and let hir aftar be kepte tyll she be stronge to goo by herself. And
230 then yef ye se none other thyng be her than ye se now, than do the justice as ye
seme right. Thus shall ye do now be my rede, and yef ye do othirwise, I may no
more." And even as the good man devised, they dede.

And so she was shet in a stronge tour, and with her two women, the wiseste that
they knewe of soche mysteré, and made hem a wyndowe to hale upe that hem
235 ought to have. When this was don, the gode man spake to hem benethe on the
grounde withoute, and seyde to the damsell, "When thow haste childe," quod he,
"make it to be baptiseth as soone as thow mayste. And when thow shalte be brought
oute ageyn to jugement, let me have wetynge."

In this wyse abode they stille in the tour a grete while, til that she was delyvered
240 of a sone, as God wolde. And when he was born it hadde the engyne and the witt
of a feende, after the kynde of hym that begate hym. But the devell wrought so
folily that our Lorde toke it to His owne use, be the very repentaunce of the modir,
that hir put in the mercy and ordenaunce of God and holicherche, and hilde wele
245 the doctryne of His mynystres. And therfore, oure Lorde wolde not lese that shulde
be His. And ther the devell was disseyved of his purpos, that he hadde ordeyned
that childe to have his art and witte to knowe alle thynges don and seide, bothe
that were paste and that were to come. And oure Lorde, that alle thynges knoweth,
[when He] sye the repentaunce of the moder and that it was not her will that was
so befellen, He wolde have hym on His parte; nevertheles, He yaf hym fre choys
250 to do what he wolde, for yef he wolde he myght yelde God His parte, unto the
fende his also.

Thus was this childe born, of whom the wemen were sore afeerde, for they sye
255 hym more rougue than other childeren that they had seyn. And so they shewed [it]
to the moder, and when she it sough, she sayned her and sayd, "This childe maketh
me to have grete feir." Quod the wemen, "So doth it to us." Quoth the moder,

229 **chelde**, child. 231 **rede**, advice. 234 **mysteré**, matters; **hale upe**, haul up. 238 **have wetynge**, know. 240 **engyne**, cunning. 241 **kynde**, nature. 242 **folily**, foolishly; **be, by; modir**, mother. 243 **hir put**, placed herself. 244 **lese that**, lose what. 249 **parte**, side. 253 **more rougue**, hairier. 254 **sough**, saw; **sayned her**, crossed herself.

Prose Merlin

"Lete it be let don owte at the wyndowe that it may be baptysed." And they dyd
soo.

260 "What shalbe his name?" "I will," quod she, "that it have name after my fader." Then they let it down by a corde owte at the wyndowe of the tour, and cherched hem that weren benethe that it shulde be baptysed and named after the gode man that was fader of the modre; and so it was. And so was it cristened Merlyn, and was delyvered to the women up to the wyndowe to the moder, and ther was none othir women that durste norishe it but the moder, for it was so grysly to syght, and therfore was the moder suffred to norishe it tell it was ten monthes of age. And
265 than it semed two yere age or more. And whan it was twelve monthes of age the wemen seide to the modre, "Dame, we will no lenger be here in this case from oure frendes. We will gone owte, for we have be here longe tyme."

270 Then quod she, "As sone as ye departe from hens shall I be brought to jugement." Quod they, "We may no more be hereynne, and therfore we ne may no more do therto." Then she wepte and cryde hem mercy, praynge hem to abyde a while, and they graunted hir. And as they lened lokynge oute at the wyndowe theras she were sore wepyng, [she] toke the child in her armes sayinge, "Feyre sone, for youre sake shall I suffir the deth, and I have it not deserved. For ther is noon, saf
275 oonly God, that knowith the trowthe. And I may not be byleved, wherfore I most with grete wronge be put to deth."

280 And as she made this lamentacion, the chelde gan to beholde hir and seyde, "Moder," quod he, "be not dismayed, for ye shull never be juged to deth for my cause." And when the moder herde this ansuere, she aferid that as she sodenly made a sprynge, the childe fill oute of hir arme and cryde. The wemen that were at the wyndowe wenden that she hadde ben aboute to kylle the childe, and sodeynly axed hir, "Whi made the childe this shrike? Wilt thou slen it?" And she ansuerde, "I thought it never, but it was for a merveyle that it seide unto me." Quod she, "It
285 seyde I sholde never be deed for hym." Than quod thei, "We shull heire hym sey othir thynges."

285 Than they toke the childe and cherishid it, prayinge [it] to speke to hem. But for ought they cowde do, thei myght gete of hym no mo wordes, till on a tyme the
256 **don**, down. **258 will**, wish. **263 durste**, dared to. **268 hens**, hence. **278 aferid that** as, was so startled that. **280 wenden**, thought. **281 shrike**, shriek. **283 heire**, hear. **285 cherishid**, embraced. **286 cowde**, could; **mo**, more.

The Birth of Merlin

modir seyde to the wemen, quod she, “Manace me and sey I shalbe brente,” for
fayn wolde she that the wemen herde it speke. The wemen seyde to the moder,
“Truly, it is grete damage and pité that youre fayre body shalbe brent for so foule
290 a creature. Better it were that he hadde never be born.”

“Certes,” quod he, “falsly ye lyen, and that hath my moder made yow to sey.”
And when they herde this they were sore abaisshed and seiden, “Certes, this is no
childe, but it is a devell who myght this have knownen that he hath seide.” Than
they axed hym many demaundes, but he wolde speke no more, saf he seide, “Let
295 me be, and beth in pes, for ye ben more synfull than is my moder.” And when they
hadde herde this they hadden grete merveyle and seide, “This may not be kepte
counseill, ne it ought not to be, and therfore we will telle it to the peple benethe
withoute forth.”

300 Tho wente they unto the wyndowe and clepeden to the peple and tolde them
this merveyle of the childe, insomoche that these tydinges com to the juges; and
thei hadde therof grete merveile, and seide it was tyme to do justice upon the
moder. Thei sente to the bailé that withynne forty dayes she sholde be brought
before them to have her jugement. When the moder of Merlyn knewe that hir day
was come, she hadde grete feer and sente worde to the gode hermyte, hir confessour.

305 Thus she abode eight dayes or more, till the tyme com that she sholde be brent.
Whan she remembred hir on hir deth she made grete lamentacion for grete drede.
The childe wente aboute in the tour and sye his moder wepynge, and he lowgh
and was mery. The wemen that this behelde seide, “Thow thynkest full lityll on
thi moders grete sorowe, that this weke for thee shall be brente.”

310 To this worde ansuerde the childe, “Feire moder, be not afeirde, for while I leve
shall noon be so hardy to putt yow to deth, saf oonly God that is Almyghty.”
When the wemen herde this they seiden, “This childe shall ben a wise man and a
wonderfull.”

315 And when the day com that was sette, the wemen were taken oute of the tour,
and she bar hir sone in hir armes. The juges were come and toke the two women in
counseill, and axed yef it were trewe that the childe hadde seyde soche wordes.
And they seiden like as they hadden herde. And the juges seiden he moste be

287 Manace, Threaten. **288 fayn wolde she**, much she desired. **291 lyen**, lie. **294 demaundes**, questions. **299 Tho**, Then; **clepeden**, called. **300 insomoche**, with the result.
302 bailé, bailiff. **307 lowgh**, laughed. **309 weke**, week.

Prose Merlin

connynge of moche thynge, yef he shulde save his moder. And the gode hermyte was come to conforte the moder. And oon of [the] juges seide to hir, “Dame, make yow redy, for ye moste suffir this martire of deth.” And she ansuerde, prayinge she myght speke with hir confessour; and they yaf hir lycence. And they entred into a chamber and lefte hir childe withoute, and the peple aresoned it with many questyons, but he yaf noon ansuere.

The moder spake with hir confessour, pitosly wepynge. And when she hadde seyde all that she wolde, the gode man axed yef hir childe spake, and she seyde, “Ye.” “Certes,” quod the gode man, “therof shall come merveiles.”

Than thei come oute before the juges. The damsell was in hir smok, with a mantill abouten hir, and fonde hir son withoute the chamber, and toke him in her armes and stod still. And the juges examyned hyr: “Who was the fader of the childe?” And she ansuerde, “I knowe well I go to my deth, and so God have mercy and pyté on my soule, as I never knewe the fader, ne never hym saugh, ne never erthely man hadde I of knowleche, wherthourgh I sholde have childe.” The juges seide, “We may never bileyve that this be trewe that thou seiste.”

Than the juges drough hem apart and cleded these othir wemen and seide, “Dames, befill it ever to yow or to eny othir woman that ye herde of speke, that myght have childe withowte carnall knowynge of man?” And those seyde, “Withoute manes feliship myght no woman have chylde.” Than the juge turned to this damesell and tolde how those wemen hadde seide: “and, therfore, it is grete reson that we do justice upon yow.”

Then Merlyn sprong oute of his mother’s armes angrye, and seide to the juge, “It is not right that she be deed, for she hath it not deserved. And yef other shulde be don justice upon all tho that don avouterye besyde ther housbands, many there were werthy to be brent. And as touchynge this that is putte on my moder, she is nothyng gilty. Freinde of that gode man yef ye charge hym to say the trouthe.”

Then the juges examyned the gode hermyte yef it were so, and he seide “Ye,” as by his wetynge; and he told hem how she was begiled in her slepe, and that “she never sedd him that dide the deed, ne I never hym sygh, wherfore al that aperteyneth to God I take upon me for hir. Nevertheles, I herde never of no soche

318 **connynge**, knowledgable. 320 **martire**, torment. 322 **aresoned**, addressed. 327 **smok**, smock. 332 **wherthourgh**, by which means. 334 **drough**, drew. 342 **avouterye besyde**, adultery against. 344 **Freinde**, Ask. 346 **wetynge**, knowing. 347 **sedd**, saw; **sygh**, saw.

The Birth of Merlin

merveyle, safe only of this."

350 Than seide the child, "Ye have the houre and the tyme writen that I was ynne
conceyved, and therby may you knowe yef my mother sey troath." The gode man
ansuerde, "Thow seist soth, ne I wot not how thow myght knowe this." Than were
the women cleped which tolde the hour of the childes berthe, and so was the gode
mannes writyng fonde trewe. And the juge seide, "For al that, she sholde not go
355 quyte."

Than wrathed the childe and seide, "I know better my fader than thou doste
thyn, and thy moder wiste beter whom is thy fader than my moder knoheth mynne."
Than wrathed the juge and seide, "Yef thow censt ought say of my moder, sey on."
Quoth the child, "I cowde sey so moche be thy moder that she hath beter deserved
360 the deth then hath my moder therfore, yef that thove me. Leet my moder be in pese
that natht knoweth of that thow puttest on hir in thy inngendure."

365 Tho gan the juge to be right wrath and seyd, "Yef thow canste do so, then haste
reserwed thy moder fro brennynge, but wyt thow well, yef thow canste not prewe
this upon hir, I shall brenne bothe thee and thy moder togedere." "That shall never
be while I lyfe," quoth Merlyn, "that thow shall have no powre overene my moder."
This was Merlyne's pletere for his moder.

[*Summary.* Merlin tells the judge that he knows his own father better than the judge
knows his. Angered by the implications of Merlin's assertion, the judge summons his own
mother, and in a private chamber asks her if her husband is really his father. She assures
him that he is; but when Merlin offers a detailed account of the judge's having been fa-
thered by a parson, the astonished mother admits that this is so. Fols. 6v (line 1)–7r (line
20).]

370 Than [Merlin] toke the juge apart and said, "Thi moder will anoon go telle hym
that thee bygat all that I have seide, and when he hereth this, he will fle for feir of
thee. And the devell, whom he hath ever servid, shalle lede hym to a water ther to
drown hymself. And so mayste thow prove that I knowe thynges that be to come."
"Yef this be so," quod the juge, "never shall I mystrowe thee."

355 **quyte**, free. 357 **knoheth**, knows. 358 **censt ought**, can anything. 359 **be**, about. 360
thove, allow. 361 **inngendure**, engendering. 362 **wrath**, angry. 363 **reserwed**, saved. 366
366 **pletere**, pleading. 371 **Yef**, If; **mystrowe**, disbelieve.

Prose Merlin

Thus departed this counsell and come before the peple, and the juge seide well he hadde delyvered his moder fro brennyng be gode reson: "And be it well knowe to yow alle that never was seyen so wyse a man." And they ansuerde, "Blessed be oure Lorde that she is quyt fro the deth."

375 Thus delyverid Merlyn his moder, and [he] abode with the juge. And the juge sent thre men with his moder to witte yef it were trewe that the childe hadde seyde. And anoon as the judges moder was com hom, she tolde the person the merveyle that she hadde herde. And when [he] herde that, he was so astonyed that 380 he kowde ansuere no worde, supposynge that anoon as the juge were come, he wolde sle hym. And so he spedde hym oute of the town till he com to a ryver, and seyde to hymself that better it were ther to drowne hymself than the juge sholde hym shamfully do hym to deth before the peple. Thus ledde hym the devell that he hadde served, that he hadde lepte into the ryver and drowned hymself. And 385 that saw they that were sent with the lady.

And when they were returned, they told the juge, and hadde grete merveyle, and seyde unto Merlyn this thynge. And Merlyn lowgh. "I pray thee," quod he, "tellith to Blase, my moder's confessour." The juge tolde the gode man the merveyle that was befallen of the person. Than wente Merlyn and his moder and Blase and the juge whereas they liked.

390 This Blase was a nobill clerk and subtile, and herde Merlyn speke sotilly as of his age, as he that was but two yere olde and an half, and he merveylede gretely whereof his grete wytte myght come. And he assaide Merlyn in many maners. And Merlyn seyde, "The more thou assayest me, the more shalt thou fynde. But 395 do and beleve that I shall sey, and I shall lyghtly teche thee to have the love of Jhesu Cryste and the lyf everlastingne."

Blase ansuerde, "I have herde thee sey, and I leve well that thou art the sone of the devell. Wherfore I doute thee sore, lest thou me disceyve and begyle." "Hit is a custome," quod Merlyn, "that alle shrewed hertys gon in alle their afferes, as 400 well the evell as the gode, even as thou hast herde me sey that I was conceyved of the devell. So haste thou herde me sey that God hath yove me mynde to knowe thynges that be to come. And wytte thou well that it is Godes will that I sholde knowe it, for He wolde that the devell sholde lese his part in me. But I have not

375 **quyt**, reprieved. 378 **person**, parson. 387 **lowgh**, laughed. 393 **assaide**, tested. 395 **that**, what. 399 **shrewed**, sinful. 401 **yove**, given.

The Birth of Merlin

lost the knowyng of here engynes, but I holde of hem that I ought to conne. But
405 they ne shole therby take profyte, for they have fro henesforth loste ther travayle,
for they put me in so digne a vessell, the whiche ne ought not to be theirs. But yef
they hadden putt me in an evell woman, I sholde have hadde no power to have
knownen what God hadde i-be. Therfore, leve that I sey unto thee. And I shall telle
410 thee soche thynges that thou woldest trowe no creature myght sey unto thee. And
therfore make a boke, and alle tho thathe this boke shul se sholde the rather kepe
hem from synne."

Blase ansuerde and seide, "The boke I will gladly make, but I conjure thee in
the name of the Fader, Sone, and Holy Goste that thou have no power me to
begyle, ne to make me do soche thynge that God sholde with [me] be displeased."

415 "Alle these thynges," quod Merlyn, "ne mowe thee hynder in body ne in sowle,
for never shall I make thee do thynge that shal be ageyn the volenté of oure Lord
Jhesu Cryste." "Than sey what thou wilt, and fro hensforth I will do it gladly."
Quod he, "Gete ynke and parchemyn and all that longeth to writynge, and than I
will telle thee."

420 Blase sought all that hym mystered to write with, and when he was all redy,
Merlyn began to telle the lovyng of Jhesus Criste, and of Joseph Abaramathie,
like as thei hadden ben of the slain; and of Pieron, and of othir felowes like as
they weren departed; and the fynyshment of Joseph and of alle other. And after he
tolde hym that whan alle thise thynges were don, how the develles toke theirie
425 counseile of that they hadde loste their power that they were wonte to have over
man and woman. And how the prophetes hadden hyndred here purpos, and how
they were acorded to purchase a man that sholde have their witte and mynde to
disceyve the peple. "And thou hast herde be my moder, and also be other, the
travayle that they hadden to begete me. But through theirie foly they alle loste their
430 travayle."

Thus devised Merlyn this boke and made Blase to write it, which hadde therof
so grete merveile that he wolde not telle it to no persone, and alwey hym thought
that his tales weren gode, and therfore he herkened hem gladly. In the menetyme

404 here engynes, their deceits; **holde of hem**, retain of them; **conne**, know. **405 shole**,
shall. **406 digne**, worthy. **408 i-be**, been; **leve**, believe. **410 tho**, those. **411 hem**, them-
selves. **415 ne mowe thee hynder**, can not hinder you. **416 volenté**, desires. **420 mystered**,
needed. **423 fynyshment**, ending. **426 here**, their.

Prose Merlin

that they entended aboute this mater, come Merlyn to Blase and seyde, "Thow
435 moste have grete traveyle aboute the makynge, and so shall I have moche more."
And Blase axed, "How?" Merlyn seyde, "I shall be sente after to seche oute of the
weste, and they that shull come to seche me have graunted their lorde that they
shull me sle. But whan thei come and here me speke, they shull have no will me
440 to sle. And I shall go with hem. And thow shalt go into that partyes where they be
that have the Holy Vessel. And ever hereafter shall thy boke gladly be herde.
And he that will know the lyf of kynges whiche were in the Grete Bretayne be-
fore that Cristendom come, beholde The Story of Bretons, that is a boke that
Maister Martyn traunslated oute of Latyn. But heire resteth this matere."

434 entended aboute, attended to. **436 to seche**, to be sought. **439 partyes**, districts. **442 Bretons**, Britons (i.e., the British, not the Bretons).

[Vortiger's Tower]

[Summary. The story now concerns Constance, King of the Britons, and his sons Moyne, Pendragon, and Uther; and the treacherous deeds of Vortiger, Constance's steward.

After a long reign, King Constance dies and is succeeded by his son Moyne. The heathen Danes take this opportunity to invade Britain. Because King Moyne is unable to repulse them, the people begin to turn against him. The barons want Vortiger to become king, but he says that he will not do this as long as Moyne is alive, a remark that leads some of his followers to murder the king. Vortiger feigns anger at Moyne's murder but accepts the throne. Mistrusting Vortiger, Constance's two remaining sons flee to Benoye in Gaul. Vortiger executes Moyne's killers, angering their friends and causing them to rebel; Vortiger drives the rebels out of the kingdom.

Now the people realize that Vortiger is a vicious tyrant. They rise against him, and Vortiger requests help from the Danes. Vortiger marries the daughter of Aungier, the Danish leader. Fearing his own people and fearing the surviving sons of Constance, Vortiger begins building a mountain stronghold. But when his tower reaches a certain height, the walls tumble down. Vortiger's wisemen cannot explain this marvel, but seven of them tell Vortiger he must find a seven-year-old boy born without an earthly father. The boy's blood, they say, will strengthen the tower's foundations. Search parties are sent out to find such a boy. They are instructed to kill him and bring back his blood. Fols. 8r (line 10)-10r (line 15).]

Thus thei reden in oon company, alle four, till on a day that thei passeden thourgh a feelde beside a town wherein were grete plenté of children that therin were pleyinge. And Merlyn, that knewe well that these four com to inquere after hym, drough hym towarde oon of the richest of the company, for that he wiste hym moste fell and hasty. He hente his staf and yaf this childe a grete buffet. And anoon, this othir began to crye and wape and to myssey Merlyn, and reproved hym with a lowde voyce, and cleped hym mysbegeten wrecche and faderles.

1 **reden**, rode. 5 **fell**, cruel; **hente**, seized; **yaf**, gave. 6 **wape**, weep; **myssey**, revile. 7 **cleped**, called; **wrecche**, wretch.

Prose Merlin

When these messagers herden this, thei com toward the childe that was wepynge
and axed hym whiche was he that hadde smyten hym. And he hem ansuerde, “It is
10 the sone of a woman whiche never knewe who hym begat, ne never man cowde
telle of his fader.”

And when Merlyn herde this, he com ageyn them laughinge and seide, “I am
he that ye seche, and he that ye be sworn ye sholden sle, and bryngye my blode to
Kynge Vortiger.” And [whan] thei herden hym thus sey, thei were sore a-merveyled
15 and axeden hym, “Who hath tolde thee this?” Quod he, “I wiste it er ye were
sworn.” Quod thei, “Than moste thow come with us.” “Nay,” quod he, “I doute
that ye will me sle.” And yet he knewe well that thei hadde therto no talant, but he
seide that for to preve hem better.

Quod Merlyn, “Yef ye will graunte me that ye shull not do me disese, I will go
20 with yow, and also telle why the tour may not stonde.” And when thei herde that,
thei were more abaissed than before. “Truly,” quod thei, “this childe is merveilouse,
and grete pité it were hym to sle.” And eche of hem seyde that hem were better to
be forsworn than to sle this childe.

Than seide Merlyn, “Ye shull come herberewe theras is my moder, for I may
25 not go with yow withoute takynge leve of here, and also of a gode man which is in
the same place.” Thei seide, “We will go where that thow wilte.”

Thus brought Merlyn the messagers of the kynge to his moder place, and when
Merlyn come into the house, he comaunded that thei sholde have gode chere.
When thei were alyght, he brought hem before Blase and seide, “Se hem here that
30 I tolde sholde come to seche me to sle.” And [he] seide to them, “I pray yow that
ye sey the trouthe before this gode man, why that ye beth sente, and wite ye well
yef ye gabbe enythynge, I know it wele inough.” And thei ansuerde, “We will no
lesynge make.”

Quod Merlin to Blase, “Maister, understande well what thei sey.” Quod the
35 massanger: “We be with Kynge Vortiger, whiche hath begonne to make a stronge
toure. And when the werke of this tour is thre or four fadom of height, it may not
holde, but synketh in an hour all that is wrought in thre monthis. Wherefore the
kynge is angry and wroth, and he dide sende after clerkes to knowe the cause that

12 ageyn, towards. **15 wiste**, knew. **16 moste**, must. **18 preve hem**, test them. **19 disese**,
injury. **21 abaissed**, abashed. **23 be forsworn**, break their promise. **24 herberewe**, lodge.
29 alyght, dismounted. **32 gabbe**, lie. **33 lesynge**, falsehood. **36 fadom**, fathom.

Vortiger's Tower

his werke may not holde."

40 "Ye," quod Merlin, "but noon of the clerkes ne cowde se the cause that letted
the werke to holde. But thei sien how I was born and how that I myght hem
distroie, and so thei dide acorde that I sholde be slain and seide that the kynges
werke sholde stonde yef he myght have the blode of the childe born withoute
fader. And when Vortiger herde this, he heilde this a grete merveile, and trowed
45 that that the clerkes seiden [was] trewe. And the clerkes charged the kynge that in
no maner he sholde not se me alyve; but as sone as I were founde, that I sholde
withoute respite be slain, and my blode to be brought to be putte with the morter
in the foundement of the tour, and by that thei seiden it sholde holde. Vortiger, by
their techynge, toke twelve messagers and made alle twelve to swere that thei
50 sholde me sle and bringe with hem my blode. And of these twelve be heer four
whiche, when ye were met, passeden thourgh the feild where childern were
bourdinge, and I, that knewe ye come me for to seche, smote oon of my felowes,
for I wiste well he wolde sey of me the werste that he knewe in his anger. And
therfore I it dide, that this gode man shulde fynde me trewe of that I hadde seide.
55 Now, maister," quod Merlin to Blase, "axe hem yef it be so as I sey."

"Truly," seide Blase, "it were grete pité hym to sle, for yef he lyve he shal be
right wise." "Certes," seide evereche of the messagers, "I hadde lever be disherited
than he hadde rescveyved deth thourgh me, and he hymself seth that he knoweth
all thyng, wote yef therto we have talent or noon."

60 Than thei cleped in ageyn Merlyn, that was gon oute at dore. And Blase seid to
hym how thei badde hym axe yef he wiste that thei hadden talent hym to sle. And
Merlyn lowgh and seide, "I wote well now thei be nothyng in will therto." Quod
thei, "Wilt thou go with us?" And Merlin seide, "Ye, with gode will, yef ye will
promyse me truly to bryng me before the kynge, and that ye ne suffer noon other
65 to do me harme ne diseise, er I have with hym spoken." And thei hym graunted.

Than seide Blase, "I se well that thou wilt now leve me. What wilt thou that I
shalle do of this werke that I have begonne?" "That shalle I telle thee," quod
Merlin. "Thow woste well that oure Lord hath yove me so moche witte and

40 **letted**, prevented. 44–45 **trowed that that**, believed that which. 48 **foundement**, foundation. 50 **heer**, here. 52 **bourdinge**, playing. 57 **evereche**, every one; **lever**, rather. 59 **wote**, knows; **talent**, intentions [to slay him]. 68 **yove**, given.

Prose Merlin

memorye that he that wende to be siker of me hath failed of his purpos, and I
70 moste go in to that contré fro whiche these be come to fecche me. And ther shalle
I be the beste beleved man that ever was, sef all only God that is Almyghty. And
thow shalt come thider to make an ende of the werke. But thow ne shalt not come
with me, but by thy self, and axe after a londe that is cleped Northumbirlonde.
75 And that contré is full of grete forestis and full wylde to them of the selve contré.
Ther thow shalt abide, and I shall come to thee and telle thee all the mater that
longeth to thi werke. And moche is thy travayle, and thow shalt have gode leyser;
and as longe as the worlde dureth shall thi boke gladly ben herde. And wite thow
well that my grete traveill shall not be byfore this kynges courte. This kynge, to
whom all my grete traveill shall be, and the traveile of Grete Bretayne, his name
80 shal be Arthur. Thow shalt go thider, as I have told thee, and I shall often come to
thee and brynge soche tidinges as thow shalt put in thi boke. And wite it well,
peple shul be glad ever to heiren it. For shul but fewe thinges be don but in no
place, but therin shal be a partye. And thi boke shal be cleped while the worlde
endureth the *Boke of the Seynt Graal.*"

85 Thus spake Merlyn with his maister, and taught hym how he sholde do. He
ycleped hym "maister" for that he was maister to his moder. When the gode man
herde Merlin thus speke, he was glad and seide, "What thow wilte comaunde me,
I am redy to do it."

90 Thus Merlyn made hym redy to go and seide to the messengers, "I will go take
leve of my moder." Tho he brought hem theras was his moder and seide, "Feire
moder, heire ben come men of fer contrees for to seche me, and I will go by youre
leve. For me hoveth to yelde thee to Jhesu Criste, of that He hath yove me power.
And that I may not do but I go thider as thei shullen lede me. And Blase, youre
maister, also shall go, and moste we bothe departe fro yow at this tyme."

95 "Feire sone," quod she, "to God I comaunde yow, for I knowe not yef it were
wisdom to witholde yow or noon. But yef it were youre plesier, I wolde that
Blase sholde abide." "Dame," quod he, "it may in no wise ben." Thus toke Merlyn
leve of his moder and wente with the massengers; and on the tother side Blase

69 **wende**, thought; **siker**, certain. 71 **sef**, except. 74 **selve**, same. 76 **moche**, great; **travayle**,
toil; **leyser**, leisure. 86 **ycleped**, called; **maister**, religious instructor. 90 **Tho**, Then. 91
fer, distant. 92 **me hoveth**, it behoves me. 95 **comaunde**, commend. 96 **witholde**, re-
strain.

Vortiger's Tower

departed and yede in to Northumberlond, ther Merlin had him comaunded.

100 And the massagiers rode forth till thei come thourgh a town in whiche was a market. And when thei were passed thorugh thei overtoke a carl that hadde bought a payre of stronge shone, and also stronge lether to clowte hem with. And when Merlyn sye the carle, he began to laughe. The messagiers axed hym wherfore he lough. "I laugh," quod he, "at this cherl that hath bought hym so stronge shoone, 105 and also clowte lether, and I telle yow certeynly that he shal be dead before he com fully to his howse."

And when thei herde that, thei heilde it a grete merveile and seide thei wolde wyte yef that were trewe. Than two of them sewed hym, and other two abode with Merlyn. They hadde not folowed the cherl half a myle that thei fonde hym deed in myddell of the wey, and his shone aboute his nekke. Than thei returned and overtoke 110 hir felowes and tolde hem the merveyle that thei hadde seien.

115 "Forsothe," quod thei, "grete foles were the clerkes that so wise a man wolde have slayn." "In faith," quod the oon, "I sholde suffer grete myschef er he had eny harm." And so thei seiden all four that Merlyn ne herde it not. And when thei were come to Merlyn, he thanked hem of that they hadde seide, and that [thei] wolden hym so moche gode. And thei were gretly abasshed and seiden, "We may nought 120 sey ne do but this childe knowes it."

Thus thei riden forth her journeis till thei come withinne Vortigers power. And as thei passed thourgh a town, they saugh a deed childe on a beere born to chirche to be beried. And after the corse was made grete doel and wepynge. And when Merlyn saugh the wepynge and sye the preste and the clerkes wente synginge before, he gan to laugh and seide to his felowes, "I se a merveile." And thei axed, "What?" Quod Merlyn, "Ye se that gode man that maketh this grete sorowe?" And thei seide, "Ye." "And se ye not the preeste that singeth al before?" Quod thei, "We se hym well." "Forsothe," quod Merlin, "he ought to make the sorowe that the tother gode man maketh, for wethet it well that the childe is the prestes sone. And the other man wepeth and hath more cause to laugh." Quod thei, "How 125 may we knowe that it be so?" "Goth to the moder and axe whi she doth wepe. And she will sey for her sone that is deed. And ye shall sey, it is not hir sone but the

99 **yede**, went. 101 **carl**, churl, peasant. 102 **shone**, shoes; **clowte**, mend. 108 **wyte**, know; **sewed**, pursued. 116 **abasshed**, amazed. 118 **her**, their. 119 **beere**, bier. 123 **Ye se**, Do you see. 126 **wethet**, know.

Prose Merlin

130 prestes sone that so hye singeth. And than shall ye heere what she will sey."

The massagers wente to the woman and toke her in counsell and seide as Merlyn hadde hem taught. And when the woman herde hem so say, she was abaisshed, and seide, "Seres, for Godes love, mercy! I se wele I may not to yow lye, thowgh I wolde, for that ye sey is trewe. But I beseche yow, telle it not my housbonde, for 135 than he wolde me sle." And when thei hadde herde this merveile, thei turned and overtoke her felishep and seiden as thei herde.

And than thei reden forth till they come a journey fro thens ther Vortiger was. Than seide two of the messagers to Merlin, "We shall go before to the kynge and telle hym that we have founden. Now yeve us counseile how thow wilte we shall 140 sey, for I trowe he will blame us that we have not thee slain."

"Sirs," quod Merlyn, "Sey as I shall telle yow, and ye shal be well excused. Ye shull go to Vortiger and sey that ye have me founden, and sey I shall telle hym truly the cause whi his tour may not stonde. With this condicion: that the clerkes have the same juyse that thei hadde ordeyned for me. And also sey hym I can telle 145 hym why the clerkes wolde have me deed. And when ye have seide thus, doth hardely that he yow comaundeth."

With that the messagers departed and come to Vortiger. And when he sye them he was gladde, and axed anoon how they hadde spedde. "Sir," seide thei, "in the beste wise that we may." Than thei cleped the kynge in counseile and tolde how thei hadde found Merlyn. And also they seide, yef he hymself ne wolde, thei sholde him never have founden.

"Of whiche Merlin," seide the kynge, "speke ye? Sholde ye not have sought the fadirles childe and have brought me the blode of hym?" "Sir," thei seide, "that same is Merlin that we of speke to yow. And wetith it wele that he is the wisest man and the beste devynour that is, saf only God. And sir," seide thei, "right as ye made us to swere to do youre comaundement, all that was don and seide he cowde wele telle us at oure firste metynge. And he tolde us also that the clerkes ne knewe not the cause why that youre tour may not stonde. But he shall telle yow apertly. And many other grete merveiles hath he us shewed be the wey, and hath us sente 155 for to wite yef ye will with hym speke. And yef ye will we shull sle hym, for two 160

136 **her felishep**, their company. 137 **reden**, rode. 144 **juyse**, justice. 146 **hardely**, boldly. 150 **ne wolde**, had not wished. 154 **wetith**, know. 155 **devynour**, diviner. 158 **apertly**, openly. 160 **will²**, wish.

Vortiger's Tower

of oure felowes beth thereas he is."

"Yef ye," quod the kynge, "will take upon youre lyves that he shall telle me whi my toure fallith, I will not that he be deed." "We will undertake it," quod thei. "Than go fecche hym," quod the kynge.

165 The messagers yede their wey and the kynge rode after hem. When Merlin saugh the messagers he seide to them, "Ye have plegged me upon youre lyves that I shall have no drede of deth." And thei ansuerde, "Thou seiste trewe, for [we] hadde lever a be in grete aventure than thou sholdest dye, and that oon moste us nedes do." "I shall waraunte yow," quod Merlin, "of that ye have undertake."

170 Thus thei rode forth till thei mette with the kynge, and anoon Merlin hym salued and seide, "Sir kynge, lete me speke with yow in counseile." Than the kynge drough apart and called hem that he hadde brought with hym.

175 "Sir," quod Merlyn, "thow haste do seche me for thi toure that may not stonde and comaundeste me to sle, be counseile of thy clerkes that seide the toure sholde holde by vertu of my blode. Thei have not seide the trouth. But yef thow wilte graunte me to do to hem the same that thei wolde do to me, I will telle the cause whi it falleth, and also I shall teche thee how thow shalt make it to stonde and endure."

180 And Vortiger ansuerde, "Yef thow do as thou seiest, I will do with hem as thou wilte." "Than," quod Merlin, "go we thideras this toure is in makyng, and make the clerkes be brought theder, and I shall axe hem whi the toure doth falle, and so mayst thou hier ther ansuere." Than thei wente to the place ther the toure sholde be made, and the clerkes were sente fore and come before the kynge.

185 And whan thei were come, Merlyn made oon to axe of hem whi that that toure fill; and thei ansuerde, "We knowe no cause whi it fill, but we can telle what shall make it for to holde." And then seide the kynge, "Ye tolde me a merveillouse thynge, that I sholde do seche a childe born withouten fader, and I wote not how he myght be founden."

190 Than spake Merlyn and seide to the clerkes, "Sirs, ye holde the kynge a fole, that thus make hym seche a man that is born withouten fader, and ye no do it nothyng for his profite. But ye dide it for this, that ye fonde in youre sorte that ye

161 **thereas**, where. 168 **lever a be**, rather have been; **aventure**, uncertainty. 169 **waraunte**, protect. 170 **salued**, hailed. 173 **do seche me**, saught me. 174 **sle**, be slain. 180 **thideras**, where. 189 **fole**, fool. 191 **fonde**, found; **sorte**, divinations.

Prose Merlin

shulde be deed thourgh hym, and for drede therof have ye do the kynge to understande that I sholde be slain, and my blode be putte in the foundement of the toure, and that sholde make it to laste and holde. Thus ye thought to sle hym
195 be the whiche ye sholde be brought to the deth as be youre sorte.”

When thei herde the childe telle hem that thei supposid no creature hadde knownen, thei weren abasshed and wiste wele that thei sholde dye. Than Merlin seide to the kynge, “Now may ye knowe whi these clerkes wolde have me slain: nought for to holde youre toure but for theire sorte seyde thei sholde dye for me.
200 Now axe hem yef this be true, for thei sholde not be so hardy before me to make yow no lesynge.”

“Seith he trewe?” quod the kynge. “Sir,” seide the clerkes, “ye, truly. But we merveile wherby he myght this knowe. Wherfore we beseke yow graunte us to live, that we may see that he shewe the trouth whi the toure fallith, and yef he can tell the remedye.” “Certes,” quod Merlyn, “have ye no drede to dye before ye se
205 the cause that the toure doth falle, and that the werke may not laste.”

“Sir kynge,” quod Merlin, “understonde, and I shall telle thee. Under this erthe is a grete water, and under that water be two dragons that see no sight. So is that oon reade and that other white. And above them is two grete flat stones, and when
210 thei fele that the werke peyseth hevy upon them, they turne hem, and the water maketh so grete bruyt that all that is made aboven it moste nede falle. Now lete loke yef this be trewe or no. And yef it be founde that this be [the] cause that the werke stondeth not, lete my plegges be quyte, and the clerkes in blame, that of all this ne knewe nothinge.”

“Certes,” quod Vortiger, “yef this be as thou seist, than art thou the wisest man of the worlde. Now telle me how this erthe may be hadde awey.” And Merlin seide, “In cartes and on mennes nekkes.”

Anoon the kynge made come laboreres, and Merlin comaunded that the clerkes sholde be wele kepte. And so wrought the laboreres that thei hadde awey the erthe, and fonde the water, and dede it to laden oute, and lete the kynge wite how thei hadden don. The kynge come thider gladly and brought with hym Merlin. When he com thider, he beheilde the water that was grete, and cleped two of his counsellers and seide, “This childe is right wise that knewe this to ben heere, and

192 **do**, caused. 200 **make**, tell. 201 **lesynge**, lie. 209 **reade**, red. 210 **fele**, feel; **peyseth**, weighs (presses). 211 **bruyt**, turmoil. 213 **plegges be quyte**, pledges be fully paid.

Vortiger's Tower

225 yet seith that ther ben two dragons under, and I will knowe the soth, whatsoever it coste."

Than the kynge cleped Merlyn and seide, "How shall we have this water awey?" Quod Merlyn, "Lete make goteres into the ditches." Than were the ditches made, and the water to renne oute. And Merlyn come to Vortiger and seide, "As soone as these dragons felen togeder, thei will fighten strongly, and that oon shall sle 230 that other. Therfore, send after alle the gode men of thi londe to se the bataile, for it hath grete significacion."

Than sente Vortiger after alle the worthy men of his londe, clergie and other. And when thei were alle comen, Vortiger tolde hem the merveiles that Merlin hadde shewde and of the two dragons how thei shulde fight. Than seide oon to another, "It is gode to be seen." And they axed the kynge yef he knewe whiche 235 sholde have the better. And the kynge seide he hadde not yet tolde.

Whan the water was all voided, thei saugh the two stones that were upon the two dragons. The kynge axed how thei myght be hadde awey, and Merlyn seide, "Full wele, for they will never meve till eche of hem fele other, and than shull thei 240 fight till that oon muste dye." The kynge axed, "Whiche shall have the victorie?"

"In the fightynge," quod Merlyn, "is grete signifiance whiche I may not telle, but gladly I will telle thee before three worthi men." Than Vortiger cleped thre men that he moste truste inne, and Merlyn axed, "Be these thre men wele of thi counseile?" And he ansuwerde, "Ye." "Than may I telle before them that thou 245 demandest. I do thee to wete," quod he, "that the white shall sle the reade. But first shall he have grete peyne, and in that he shall sle hym is grete tokenyng to hym that can it understande. But I will sey no more till the bataile is at an ende."

Then yede the peple to oon of the stones and leften it up and founde the white dragon. When the peple saugh hym so grete and hidouse thei hadde grete drede. Than wente thei to the tother ston and drough it awey; and than thei were more 250 aferde than before, for it was moche greter and semed more feirce. And as Vortiger semed, he moste overcome that other. And Merlin seide to the kynge, "Now lete my plegges be quyte." "So be thei," seide the kynge.

Tho spongē up the two dragons and foughten togeder with teeth and feet, and
227 **goteres**, gutters, drains. 229 **felen togeder**, collide. 245 **do thee to wete**, want you to know. 246 **tokenyng**, meaning. 252 **semēd**, thought. 253 **plegges be quyte**, promises be kept. 254 **Tho**, Then.

Prose Merlin

255 never herde ye of so stronge bataile betwene two bestes, ne so crewell fight. And so thei foughten to mydday, and the peple semed that the reade sholde overcome the white, till that the white threwe so moche fiere and flame that he brente up the reade, and so was he deed. Than the white leide hym down to reste for werynesse, and ne lived after but thre dayes. And thei that this syen seyde that never so grete
260 merveile hadde be seyn beforne.

And Merlin seide to the kynge, "Now mayste thou make thi toure as grete and large as thou wilte, for it shall no more falle." Than comaunded Vortiger the werkemen to make up the toure the strengest that myght be devised. And often axed Vortiger of Merlyn the significance of the two dragons. And he seid, "It was
265 the tokenyng of thinges that were don and also of thinges that were to come, and yef thou wilte ensure me that thou shalt do me noon harme heere in audience of this peple, ne suffer noon other to do me harme in thy reame, I will telle the significacion." And Vortiger made hym soche suerté as he wolde.

Quod Merlin, "Bringe hethir thy counsell and the clerkes that sorted of this toure." The kynge dide as he comaunded. When thei were come, Merlyn spake to the clerkes and seide, "Ye were foles in youre art, that wolde not aquite yow as trewe men; and therfore ye be worthi to have as ye have deserved. And ye sawgh wele how I was bore. And he that shewed yow that made yow semblance that ye sholde be deed for me; and that dide he for sorowe that he hadde loste me, and therfore he wolde that ye hadde me putte to deth. But I have soche a goode Lorde
275 that He shall me deffende yef it be His plesier, and I shall make hym a lyer, for ye shull never for me be deed, yef ye will me graunte to do that I shall yow sey."

And when they herde hym sey that thei sholde be respited fro deth, thei were gladde and seiden, "What that thou comaundest we shall do it, for we se well that thou arte the wisest man that liveth." Quod Merlin, "Ye shull swere never to entermete of that arte, and I will that ye be confessed and take youre penaunce so that youre soules be not dampned." And thei hym thankeden and seide thei sholde don his comaundement. Thus delyvered Merlin the clerkes whiche made hym to be sought for to be putte to deth.

256 the peple semed, it seemed to the people; **reade**, red. **257 brente**, burned. **267 reame**, realm. **268 suerté**, promise. **269 sorted**, made divinations. **273 made yow semblance**, showed you. **274 for**, because of. **278 respited**, saved. **281 entermete**, practice; will, wish. **283 delyvered**, saved.

Vortiger's Tower

285 Vortiger com to hym and seide, "Telle me the significaunce of the two dragons." "The reade dragon," quod Merlin, "betokeneth thee, and the white dragon signifieth the sones of Constance." When Vortiger herde this, he was ashamed. And Merlin seide, "Yef thou wilte, I will sey more, with that thou conne me no magré."

290 Vortiger seide, "Here ne is no man but of my privé counsell. And therfore I will thou telle me all the trouthe." "I tolde thee," quod Merlin, "that the reade signifieth thee, and I shall telle thee how the children of Constance were yonge and tender, after the deth of their fader. And yef thou were soche as thou oughteste to have ben, thou sholdeste have kepte hem and even hem counseile ageins alle erthly men. And well thou knowest that thou haste their heritage wrongfully; for when thou knewest the peple loved thee, thou drowest thee abakke for to helpe them in their nedes. And when eny of the londe complayneth to thee for the kynge's innocence, and seiden thei wolden thou sholde take upon thee to be kynge to defende the reame fro their enmyes, thou ansueredest covertly, and seidest thou myghtest not while Kynge Moyne was livinge. And thei that thou seidest this to undirstoden wele that thou woldest have hym deed. And therfore thei slowen their kynge. But thei lefsten two brethern, the whiche fledde into straunge londe for drede of thee. And so were thou made kynge, and yet thou holdest their heritage with wronge. And when thei hadden kylde the Kynge Moyne, thei come before thee. Thou madest hem to be distrowied, to shewe semblaunce as thou hadde forthought the kynges deth."

300

305

310 Vortiger undirstode wele that Merlyn hym tolde and wist wele that he tolde hym the trouth, and seide, "I se well that thou art oon of the wisest men of the worlde. Wherfore, I pray thee to yeve me counseill in this cas, and also telle me on what deth I shall dye."

Quod he, "Yef I telle thee that I wil not sey the betokenyng of the two dragons. I do thee to wite that the reade dragon signifieth thee; in that he was so grete and hidouse, betokeneth thee and thy grete power. And the white dragon betokeneth the two childeeren that be fledde for drede of thee. And that thei foughten so longe togeder, betokeneth that thou haste so longe kepte their herytage with wronge. And that the white dragon brente the redde dragon betokeneth that the two brethern

315

288 with, provided that. 288–89 **conne me no magré**, bear me no grudge. 304 **kylde**, killed. 305 **shewe semblaunce**, make it seem. 312 **do thee to wite**, caused you to know.

Prose Merlin

shull brenne thee with their power. And therfore I ne trowe not that this toure
shal be thy warante, but that thou shalt dye by hem."

When Vortiger undirstode this, he gan to wrathe and axed hym, "Where ben
these children?" Quod Merlyn, "Thei be in the see, with grete strengthe of peple,
and come into heir londe to take vengaunce on thee. For thei seyn thou dedist
their brother to be slain. And wite it wele that thei shall aryve withinne thre monthes
withoute eny faile."

318 **warante**, protection. 320 **see**, sea. 321 **heir**, their; **dedist**, caused.

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

[Summary. Vortiger leads his forces to Winchester to face the sons of Constance, and Merlin goes to Blase, who records what Merlin tells him in his book. When Pendragon and Uther arrive with their army, most of the people desert Vortiger and hold with the brothers. Vortiger retreats to his tower, pursued by the brothers. They set fire to the tower, killing Vortiger and his followers.

Pendragon, having been made king, wages war against the Danish invaders. Hearing of the wondrous boy Merlin, Pendragon sends for him. Merlin amazes the messengers, who fear they have spoken with the devil. Pendragon goes himself to see Merlin, leaving Uther in command. Merlin also amazes Pendragon with his prophetic and shape-shifting abilities. Merlin informs Pendragon that Uther has just slain Aungier, the leader of the Danes. Pendragon asks Merlin to return with him, and Merlin says he will come in eleven days. Merlin then goes to see Blase.

On the eleventh day Merlin appears at court, disguised as a messenger from Uther's mistress. When Merlin reveals who he really is, the brothers are delighted. They promise to follow Merlin's advice, and Merlin says he will come whenever they want him. Pendragon asks Merlin how to defeat the Danes. Merlin says to offer them safe-conduct if they will leave Britain. Ulfin and other knights carry the message to the Danes, who attempt to bargain; Merlin refuses to negotiate. The Danes finally agree, and they leave Britain.

An envious baron tries to trick Merlin into making erroneous predictions. Merlin predicts that the man will die by a combination of breaking his neck, hanging, and drowning. This comes about when the baron is thrown from his horse while crossing a bridge. The people say that anyone who disbelieves Merlin is a fool; they begin recording his prophecies in a book. Fols. 13v (line 33)–18r (line 10).]

Than began Merlin to speke so mystily, wherof the *Boke of Prophesyes* is made. And after come Merlin to the kynge and to Uter his brother and seide to hem pitously, “I love moche yow and youre wurship. Have ye no mynde of the sarazins that ye drive oute of the londe after the deth of Aungis?” And thei seide, “Yesse,

1 mystily, obscurely. 3 mynde of, concern with. 4 drive, drove.

Prose Merlin

5 full wele. But why sey ye?" Quod Merlin, "I sey for this: that they sey thei shull never fenisshe till thei have avengid the deth of Aungis. And thei have assembled a grete power, and wele to conquerre this londe be force."

When the kinge and his brother herde this, thei merveiled gretly and axed of Merlin, "Have thei so grete power to holde party ageyn oures?" And he ansuerde ageyn, "Every man that ye have defensable, they have tweyne. Therfore, but ye be wisely ruled, ye shull be distroied and lese youre reame." Quod the kynge, "We wil be ruled be youre counseile." And than he axed, "When trowe ye that they shull come?" And Merlin seide, "The eleventh day of Juyne; and noon ne shall this knowe saf ye two; and I deffende yow to speke therof, but do as I shall yow counseile. Sende after alle youre peple and make hem the grettest joye and feste that ye may, and comaunde hem to be the laste day of Juyn on the playn of Salisbury."

Than seide the kynge, "Shall we suffer hem to aryve withoute deffence?" And Merlyn seide, "Ye, yef ye will do my counseile; and suffer hem to come as fer as ye may fro theire arivage. And so shall ye kepe hem two dayes, and thei shull have grete dissesse for lakke of water. And the thirde day ye shull with hem fighten. And yef ye do thus, ye shull have the victorye."

Than seide the two brethern, "I pray yow telle us yef eny of us shall dye in that bataile." And Merlin ansuerde, "Ther is nothyng that hath begynnyng but it moste have endynge. Ne no man ought to be dismayed of deth, to resceyve it as he oweth to do. And therfore I will that ye bringe the hiest reliques that ye have, and ye shull bothe swere to do as I shall sey yow, for yowre profite and youre worship; and than shall I boldly telle yow how ye shul be governed."

And thei swore as Merlin dide devise. And when they were sworn, Merlin seide unto hem, "Ye have sworne that in this bataile ye shull be gode men and true, agein God and youreself. Ne noon may be trewe to hymself but he first be trewe to God. And loke ye be trewly confessed for that ye shull fight ageyn yowre enmyes. And after, have no doute to overcome theym, for thei have no bileyve in the Trinité. And wite ye wele that seth Cristendom come first into this ile, was never so grete bataile, ne never shall in youre tyme. And also, knoweth wele that ther oon of yow two moste nede passe in this bataile. Therfore eche man ordeyne for his

6 **fenisshe**, desist. 7 **wele**, wish. 14 **deffende**, forbid. 20 **arivage**, landing place. 21 **dissesee**, discomfort. 31 **agein**, between. 34 **seth**, since.

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

moste worship that he can, ageins that he cometh before his Lorde. And [knoweth] that oon of yow moste go to Hym. And therfore goth in soche wise that ye may have His love when ye come to His presence."

40 Thus ended the counseile of Merlyn. And the two brethern understande what he hadde seyde, and sente after alle the estates of theire londe. And when thei weren alle come, thei yaf hem grete yeftes. And the kynge hem prайд to make hem garnysshed of theire armes and of horse; and also the laste weke of Juyn to be redy, in the entré of the playnes of Salisbury, upon the river of Tamise, to diffende
45 the reame. And thus it lefte till the day that was somowned. And the two brethern ageyn their burghes and townes made gode ordenaunce, as Merlin dide hem counseile.

50 And at Pentecoste thei heilde courte upon the rivere, and ther were many riche festes. Ther thei were so longe till thei herden that the Danoyse weren arived. Than the kynge sente to prelates of the Churche that every man of the oste sholde be confessed, and every man to foryeven other and be in charité and clene lyf.

55 Than seide Pendragon to Merlin that tydinges were come: the Sarazins weren arived. And Merlin seide it was trewe. Than the kynge axed what was his counseile to do. And Merlin seide, "Ye shall morowe sende thedir that oon half of youre peple; and when they be come from their arivage, than go betwene hem and the aryvage. And youre peple shulde holde hem so shorte that ther ne shall be noon of hem but thei wolde fayn be theras thei come fro. And thus shull ye do two dayes. And the thirde day, whan ye se a dragon all reade fleynge up in the ayre, than boldly fight with hem, for ye shall have the vyctorye."

60 At this counseile were no mo but Pendragon and Uter. And when thei hadde herde this thei were gladde. And than seide Merlin, "I will go; and be ye right sure of this that I have yow seide. And thenke to be gode men and gode knyghtes."

65 Thus thei departed, and Uter made redy his felishep to go betwene hem and the ryver. And Merlyn come to hym and seide, "Thenke to do wele, and have no drede, for thou shalt not dye in this bataile." When Uter herde this, he was gladde in herte. Than Merlin went to his maister Blase in Northumbirlonde and tolde hym many thinges that he wrote in his boke.

Uter and his peple rode till thei come betwene the Danes and theire shippes,

41 estates, social classes. 43 garnysshed, prepared. 44 entré, entry. 45 somowned, named.

46 ordenaunce, plan. 50 oste, host.

Prose Merlin

and kept hem two dayes that thei myght never ryde. The thirde day the kynge
70 come so nygh that that oon myght se that other. Whan the sarazins saugh the two
hostes, thei were gretly dismayed, and sye wele that thei myght not repaire to
their shippes withoute grete bataile.

Than shewde the sign in the ayre that Merlin hadde seide, and than the Danes
hadden grete drede. And the kynge seide to his peple, “Now upon hem in all that
75 we may.” And whan Uter saugh the kynges bataile, and the Danes assembled, he
sette upon hem as vigorously or more. In that bataile was grete mortalité on bothe
parties, but the hethen peple hadde moche the warse.

And ther Pendragon did merveloise knyghthode amonge his enmyes, and so
dide Uter, but I may not telle alle their well dedis. But Pendragon was ther deed,
80 and many another gode baron, wheroft was grete pité and losse to the Cristen partye.
And as the boke witnessith, Uter venquysshed the bataile, and ther ne ascaped
noon of the sarazins but that thei weren deed or taken.

And thus ended the bataile of Salisbury wheras Pendragon was deed. And so all
the londe [was] lefte hoill to Uter his brother. He made geder alle the Cristen that
weren deed, and made hem to be beried in a place bi themself, and areised his
85 brothers tombe moche hier than eny of the tother, and lete write upon eche beryinge
place his name that lay under. But on his brother wolde he noughe write, for he
seide who that them behelde myght wele undirstonde that he was chief lorde.

Than Uter wente to Logres and alle the prelates of the Cherche, and ther was he
90 sacred and crowned. And thus was Uter kynge of the londe after the deth of his
brother Pendragon. And the quynsynne after that, Merlyn come to courte, and
grete was the joye the kynge made to hym. And than seide Merlyn to Uter, “I will
that thou have surnonn of thi brother name. And for love of the dragon that appered
in the ayre, make a dragon of goolde of the same semblaunce.”

95 And the kynge dide do make this dragon in all the haste he myght, like to the
dragon that sewde in the ayre. Than he lete sette it on a shafte instede of a baner,
and lete it be born before hym in every bataile at alle tymes when he sholde fight.
And thus was ever after he cleped Uterpendragon. And Merlyn abode with hym
longe tyme after, till on a day that Merlyn hym axed, “Ne shall thou do no more
70 sarazins, heathens. 71 sye, saw. 75 bataile, army. 79 well, gallant. 84 hoill, wholely.
90 sacred, consecrated. 91 quynsynne, fifteenth day. 93 surnonn, surname. 96 sewde,
showed. 99 Ne shall thou, Will you not.

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

100 to the place in the playn of Salesbury wheras thy brother is buried?"

And the kynge ansuerde, "What wilt thou that I do, for I will do even as thou wilte devise?" Quod Merlin, "I will that thou ordeyne ther soche a thinge as shall endure to the worldes end." And the kynge seide, "Telle me in what wise, and I will do it with gode will." Than quod Merlin, "Sende after the grete stones that ben in Irlonde, and make hem to be brought in thy shippes, and I shall go to shewe them whiche I will have that thei shull brynge."

Than Uterpendragon sente vesselles grete plenté, and Merlin hem shewde the stones that were grete and longe, and seide, "Lo, these ben the stones whiche ye ben come fore." And when they hem saugh, they it helden for a grete merveile, 110 and seide it was a thynge impossible to charge, they were of soche gretnesse and wight. And in their vessellis they seiden sholde they not come, yef God wolde. And so thei returned to the kynge and tolde the merveile, and the kynge than seide, "Suffer till Merlyn come."

And when Merlyn was come, the kynge hym tolde like as his men hadden seide, 115 and Merlin seide, "Sith it is so that they may not hem hider bringe, I shall aquyte me of my promyse." And than Merlin made by crafte of his arte to bringe the stones that weren in Irlonde to the playn of Salesbury. And the kynge and moche peple wente to se the merveile. And when thei saugh the grete stones, thei seiden that all the worlde ne myght not hem remeve. And Merlin badde they sholde be dressed upright for thei sholde seme feyrer so than liggyng. And the kynge seide 120 that myght no man do, saf only God. Than seide Merlyn, "Let me worthen therwith, and I shall aquyte me of the covenaunt that I made." And so all the labour [was] lefte to Merlyn. And he dressed [hem] as thei ben yet over the beryinge place of Pendragon, and ben yet cleped the Stonehenges.

125 And than come Merlin to Uterpendragon, and hym served longe tyme and moche hym loved. And so on a tyme he toke the kynge in counseile and seide, "Sir, I moste discure to yow the hiest counseile that ye herde ever, and that thinge that I shall of speke shall be right straunge. And I requyre yow that ye it not discure to no man lyvynge." And the kynge graunted his requeste.

130 Than seide Merlin, "I will that ye wite that the knowinge that I have cometh be
110 charge, carry. 111 wight, weight. 113 Suffer, Wait. 115 aquyte, fulfill. 120 liggyng,
lying. 121 worthen, go. 123 dressed [hem], arranged them. 127 discure, disclose. 130
knowinge, wisdom.

Prose Merlin

the enmy by nature, and oure Lorde that is almyghty above alle thynge hath yove
me witte and memorye to knowe grete partye of thynges that be to come. And by
this sovereyn vertu, the enmye hath me lorn that with the plesaunce of God they
shull never have power over me at her volunté. And sir, now ye knowe fro whens
135 I have this power. And I will telle yow a thinge that God will that thou shalt do.
And whan ye knowe what it is, loke ye performe it to His plesier. Sir, ye ought
well to knowe that God come in to erthe to save mankynde, and also, as ye well
knowe, He made a soper, and seide to Hys apposteles, ‘Oon of yow shall me
betrayen.’ Sir, many povertees and grete suffraites suffred oure Lorde her in erthe
140 for oure sake, and many shames that the Jues Hym diden. And after that, He suffred
bitter deth for us upon the Crosse, and a knyght axed His body when He was deed
upon the seide Crosse. And it was graunted hym of Pilate in lower of his servyse.

“Sir, it fill after that, this knyght whiche hadde taken oure Lorde down of the
Crosse, that he was in a waste contree full of diserte, and moche of his lynage.
145 And sir, upon hem fill a grete famyne and hunger, and thei complayned to the
knyght that was thier maister. And he prayde oure Lorde to shewe His mercy to
hem, and to shewe some demonstraunce that they myght be conforted of their
grete disese. And oure Lorde hym comaunded to make a table, in the name of that
table at the whiche He was sette in the house of Symond leprouse, and bad hym
150 take the vessell whiche that he hadde and sette it upon the table; and cover the
table with white cloth, and also the vessell, all save the parte toward hym. Sir, this
vessell was brought to this seide knyght by oure Lorde Jhesu Criste whyle he was
in prison forty wynter, hym for to comforte. And, sir, by this holy vessell were
departed the company of gode and evell. And also at this table was ever a voyde
155 place that betokeneth the place of Judas theras he satte at the soper, whiche he
lefte whan [he] herde that oure Lorde seide that worde for hym, whan He seyde
that he that ete with Hym sholde Hym betrayen. Thus lefte Judas the place voyde
till that oure Lorde set ther another that hight Matheu. This Matheu was sette in
that place to fille up the nombre of twelve apostles.

160 “Sir, this place that was voyde at the table of Joseph betokeneth the place that

131 enmy by nature, i.e., fiend; **yove**, gave. **133 lorn**, lost. **134 her volunté**, their desire.
139 suffraites, hardships. **140 Jues**, Jews. **142 seide**, this same; **lower of**, reward for. **144**
diserte, desolation. **148 disese**, suffering. **154 departed**, divided; **voyde**, empty. **158 hight**,
was called.

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

Matheu fulfilde, and sir, thus be these two tables convenable. And thus hath oure
Lorde filled the werke of man. And sir, the peple that were therat cleped this
vessell that thei hadden in so grete grace the Graal. And yef ye do my counseile,
165 ye shall stablisshe the thirde table in the name of the Trinité. And I behote yow,
yef ye do this, therby shall come to yow grete honour and grete profite of youre
soule. And also, it shal be a thynge that moste shall be spoken of thourgh the
worlde."

Thus seide Merlyn to Uterpendragon, wherof he was well plesed. And [he]
seide to Merlin, "I will that oure Lordes wille be performed in all that is in me, in
170 all thynge that be to His wille. And all I putte in youre ordenaunce." And than
was Merlyn gladde, and seide, "Sir, loke where ye plese beste that it be sette."

175 "Certes," quod the kynge, "whereas thou wilte, and theras thou rowest it be
moste oure Lordes wille." And Merlyn seide, "It shall be at Cardoll, in Walys,
and make ther thy feest at Pentecoste. And array thee to make gode chere and to
yeve grete yeftes. And I shall go before and make the table, and whan thou arte
come, I shall setten them that owen therat to sitten."

161 **convenable**, alike. 164 **behote**, promise. 170 **ordenaunce**, control. 176 **owen**, ought.

[Uther and Ygerne]

All as Merlyn devised dide the kynge, and warned thourgh all his reame to be at Cardoell in Walys at the Pentecoste. And thus he lete crye thourgh all his reame, and Merlyn dide ordeyne all that longed to the table. The weke afore Witsontyde come the kynge to Cardoell. And whan he was come, he axed Merlin how he hadde spedde, and he seide, "Wele." Quod the kynge, "What men shull ye chese to sitte at this table?" And Merlyn seide, "Ye shull se tomorou that ye wende never to seen, that I shall chese fyfty of the beste knyghtes of this londe. And whan thei be ones sette, thei will have no grete desire to returne into their contrees. And thus ye may knowe whiche were gode men and worthy, whan ye se the signifiaunce of the voyde place."

Thus Merlyn on the Witsonday chese fifty knyghtes and comaunded hem to be sette at that table to mete; and thei so diden with gode chere. And Merlyn, that full of stronge arte was, yede hem aboute, and cleped the kynge as they weren sette, and shewed hym the voyde place. And many othir it syen, but they ne knewe not the tokenyng, ne why it was voyde.

When Merlyn hadde don all thus, he badde the kynge that he sholde go sitte; and thus thei diden, alle eight dayes. And the kynge yaf grete yeftes to lordes and to ladyes and to dameseles. And when they departed, the kynge come to the fyfty knyghtes and axed how hem lyked. And thei seyde, "Sir, we have no talent to remeve fro hens, and therof we have merveile what it maketh, for we be entred as brethern; and therfore we will never departe till deth us departe." When the kynge herde hem thus sey, he hadde grete merveile and comaunded hem to be served and kepte as his owne body. And thus departed the grete prese.

1 warned thourgh, announced throughout. 3 dide ordeyne, arranged; longed to, concerned. 5 spedde, fared (prospered); chese, choose. 6 that, what; wende, thought. 8 ones, once. 10 voyde, empty. 12 mete, dine. 13 yede, went; cleped, named them to; sette, seated. 15 tokenyng, meaning. 17 yaf, gave. 19 hem lyked, they felt; talent, desire. 23 prese, company.

Uther and Ygerne

And than the kynge come to Merlyn and seide, “Truly, thow seidest me soth
25 that oure Lorde wolde that this table sholde be stablished; but I wolde praye thee
to telle me yef thow knowe who shall fulfille the place that is voyde.” And Merlyn
ansuerde, “Wite thow right wele that it shall not be in thy tyme, ne he that shall
30 accomplesshen it is not yet begeten. But it shall be in the kynges tyme that shall
come next after thee; ne he that shall hym engendere shall not knowe that he shall
hym engendere; and he that shall accomlysshe that sete must also complysshe the
voyde place at the table that Joseph made. And I pray yow therfore that ever
hensforth that ye holde alle youre grete festes in this town.” “Certes,” quod the
kynge, “I will gladly.” And than seide Merlyn, “Sir, I moste go, and of longe
35 tyme ye shull not se me ageyn.” And the kynge hym axed whider he sholde go.
Quod he, “Shall ye not be here at alle tymes when I holde my grete courte?” And
Merlyn seyde, “No.”

Than departed the kynge. And Merlyn yede to Blase and told hym the
stablishement of this table and many other thynges. And thus abode Merlyn thre
40 yere that he come not to courte. They that loved not Merlyn but by semblaunce
come to the kynge on a day as he was at Cardoell, and axeden hym of his voide
place and why ther was not sette some worthy man that the table myght be full.
And the kynge seide, “Merlin tolde me a grete merveile, that seide noon myght it
45 accomplisshe in my tyme, ne yet ne ys he born that shall engendre hym that shall it
complesshen.” And thei lough therat as they that weren full of envye, and seide,
“Sir, trowe ye that ther shal be better peple after youre tyme than beth now, and
that ther ne be now as gode men in youre londe as thei shull be?” “Truly,” seide
the kynge, “I wote never.” And thei seide, “Ye do not wele but ye assaye.”
“Certes,” quod the kynge, “I will it not assaie, for I doute that Merlin wolde be
wroth.”

50 And than they ansuerde, “Yef ye wele yeve us leve, we will assaye it, and for
to preve the grete lesynge.” And the kynge seide, “Ne were the drede I have of
the wrath of Merlyn, ther is nothyng that I desire so moche to assayen.” And
they seide, “Yef Merlyn be livynge and he knowe that we will it assayen, he will
55 come without faile er eny man shall it assayen; but suffre that we may it assaien
at Pentecoste.” And the kynge hem graunted, wherfore they weren gladde. Thus

28 begeten, begotten. **39 semblaunce**, appearance. **47 assaye**, try it. **48 doute**, fear. **51 lesynge**, falsehood; **Ne were**, If it were not for.

Prose Merlin

it lefte till at Witsontyde that the kynge hadde do warne all his barons to be at his feste at Cardoell. And Merlyn, that all thys wiste wele, tolde unto Blase the evell thoughts that they hadden that hadde take this enprise, and seide he wolde not go till he knewe who sholde assay to preve that place, for he hadde lever have it
60 preve by a shrewe than a gode man. Thus suffred Merlyn to the quynsyne of Pentecoste.

Uterpendragon the kynge come to Cardoel and brought with hym grete plenté of peple. And thei that were come for to assay the place made it to be seide that Merlyn was deed, and that he was founden in a wildernes madde, and cherles
65 hym kylde. And so moche peple spake therof that the kynge hymself it leved, and more for that he was so longe awey than for eny thinge elles; and namely he wende in no wyse he wolde not have suffred that eny man sholde have assay the voyde place yef he were lyvynge.

Thus was the kynge on Witson-even at Cardoel, and axed of hem that sholde it
70 assaye whiche of hem sholde it do. And he that all this hadde ordeyned seide, "Sir, I will that ye wete that ther shall noon assay it but I." Than he com to the table whereas the fifty knyghtes weren sette and seide, "I am come to sitte with yow and for to holde yow company." And they ansuerde no worde but full mekely behelde what he wolde do. And the kynge and grete partie of the barons weren
75 ther assembled. This [man] sette hym down in the voyde place; and anoon as he was sette, he sanke down as it hadde be leed, so that noon wiste where he was become. Than the kynge comaunded alle the other gode men to aryse, and they so diden. And than anoon began so grete a noyse and sorowfull crye that all the court was trowbled. And the kynge hymself was gretely abaissched.

Thus they abiden to the quynsyne after Pentecoste that Merlin come to courte.
80 And whan the kynge wiste of hys comynge, he was right joyfull, and wente hym ageins to mete with hym. And anoon whan Merlyn saugh the kynge, he seide he had evell spedde to suffre eny man to sytte in that place. "Trewly," seide the kynge, "I was disceyved thourgh here wordes." "In feith," seide Merlyn, "it falleth often to hem that wolden begile that thei [be] begiled hemself; and that maist
85

59 lever, rather. 60 shrewe, rascal; quynsyne, fifteen-day period. 64 madde, insane; cherles, ruffians. 65 moche, many; leved, believed. 69 Witson-even, Whitsunday Eve. 70 ordeyned, devised. 75 anoon as, as soon as. 76 leed, [molten] lead. 80 quynsyne, fifteenth day. 83 evell spedde, done wrongly.

Uther and Ygerne

thow wele preven be this." After the kynge axed yef he wiste where he was becomen
that set hym in the sege. And Merlin ansuerde, "Therof no force is for to enquire,
ne nougħit it sholde avayle for to wite, but thenke on them that in the other places
90 sitten, and to mayntene that thow haste begonne; and alle thy festes and alle thy
courtes, come holde hem heir in this town for to wurship this table, for thow
knowest by the assay that thow haste seyen that it is of grete dignité. And now I
go; now loke thow do as thow haste seyde."

And thus departed the kynge. And Merlin comaunded the kynge to beilde feire
95 howsynge where he sholde ever after holde his courte and his hye festes. Than the
kynge lete it be knownen thourgh his reame that alle high festes, as Pasch and
Pentecoste and Yole and Halowmesse, sholde be holden at Cardoel. And ageyn
the Feste of Yole he somowned alle his barons in soche maner that everich of hem
shulde bryngē with hem their wyves and doughtres and her neces or susteres. And
the knyghtes so diden alle. I may not telle yow alle tho that ther weren, sef of hem
100 that the tale reherses, oon after another.

Ther was the Duke of Tintagel and Ygrine his wif; and hir the kynge loved
gretly, but therof he made no semblaunce, saf that often he behelde her more than
another, insomoche that hirself it perceyved and knewe that the kynge behelde
her often. And whan she it perceyved, she eschewed to come in his presence, for
105 she was right a gode lady and full of grete bewté and right trewe ageins hir lorde.
And the kynge for her love, and for he sigh she hadde taken hede of his lokynges,
he sente juwelles to every lady that was at the feste. And to Ygerne he sente as he
trowed sholde beste hir plete. And she knewe and sigh wele that he hadde sente to
alle other ladies, and therfore she durste not refuse hirs but receyved hem, and
110 thought wele in her herte that the kynge ne hadde not yeven to other ladyes but for
she sholde not refusen hirs.

Thus hilde the kynge that feeste, that yet is withouten wif, and was so suprised
with the love of Ygerne that he wiste not how to do. And thus departed the court.
But firste the kynge prade alle the barons to be at Cardoel at Pasch, and so he

86 **be**, by. 87 **sege**, seat; **no force is**, is no point. 88 **ne nougħit**, nor anything. 89 **that**,
what. 90 **wurship**, honor. 93 **beilde**, build. 94 **howsynge**, housing. 95 **as Pasch**, such as
Easter. 96 **Yole**, Yule; **Halowmesse**, Allhallows; **ageyn**, before. 97 **everich**, each. 99 **sef of**, except for. 105 **ageins**, to. 106 **sigh**, saw. 108 **trowed**, believed. 112 **hilde**, held; **that²**,
who. 114 **prade**, requested; **Pasch**, Easter.

Prose Merlin

115 prayed alle the ladies, and thei graunted to be ther.

Whan the Duke of Tintagel departed fro courte, the kynge hym conveyed and gretly hym honoured at theyr departyng; and whan he hadde hym a while conveied, he toke leve and yede thourgh the courte in his othir necessitees, till that the tyme of Pasch. And than gan to assemble alle the barons and alle the 120 ladyes at Cardoel. And grete was the joye that the kynge made till it come to the mete tyme, that the kynge made the Duke of Tintagel to be set before hymself and also his wif Ygerne, so that Ygerne ne myght not eschewe but to receve his yeftes, so that she it aparcayved verily that the kynge hir loved, wherof she was right hevy, but ne she mot it suffer. Thus was this feeste holden in grete joye. And the 125 kynge hem prayde to come at alle tymes whan he hem comaunded; and thei seiden so thei wolden as to their sovereign lorde. And thus departed the courte.

And so endured the kynge in grete mysese for love of Ygerne. And at laste he complayned hymself to tweyne that he moche trusted, of grete angwysshe that he suffred for the love of Ygerne; and they seiden, "What will ye that we shull do?" 130 Quod the kynge, "I wolde have youre counseile how I myght have her company." And they seide, "Yef ye go in to the courte theras she is, the peple shull it aperceyve, and so myght ye be in blame." And he seyde, "What counseile yeve ye me thanne?" "The beste counseile," seid thei, "that we se therinne is that ye somowne a grete courte to be at Cardoel and that ye make hem all to wite that it shall holde to the 135 quynsine, and that eche come arайд to abide fifteen dayes, and everiche man to brynge with hym his wif. And thus may ye have longe the company of Ygerne and have grete counfort of youre love." And the kynge was plesed wele with her counseile, and sente to alle the barons to be at Pentecoste at Cardoel, and every baron to brynge with hym his wif. And as the kynge hem comaunded thei diden. 140 And at that feeste the kynge bar crowne and yaf grete yeftes to alle astates, as hym semed beste sittynge.

Gretly was the kynge at that feeste, and joyfull and mery. And he spake to oon of his counseile to whom he hadde moste truste of eny other, and his name was Ulfyn. And the kynge hym tolde of the grete peyne that he was inne for the love

116 **conveyed**, attended. 121 **mete**, dinner. 122 **eschewe**, avoid. 123 **aparcayved**, realized. 127 **mysese**, discomfort. 128 **tweyne**, two. 131 **theras**, where. 133 **somowne**, summon. 134 **holde to**, be held until. 135 **quynsine**, fifteenth day; **araide**, prepared. 140 **astates**, estates. 141 **beste sittynge**, appropriate. 142 **Gretly**, Exuberant.

Uther and Ygerne

145 of Ygerne, that so hym constrainyd that he myght nother ete ne slepe ne go ne ride, and that he wende verily to dye whan he was oute of her sight, and that he myght not longe lyve but he hadde other counseile of her love. And Ulfyn seide, “Sir, it is a wonder thynge that for the delyte of a woman ye wene to dye. And I am but a pore man, and yef I loved a woman so strongly as ye, I sholde not wene therfore to dyen. Who herde ever speke of eny woman, yef she were wele requereth, but ye sholde have of her youre volunté; with that to yeve her gret yefitis and juwels and to hem that ben abouten hir. I ne herde never speke of woman that cowde hir diffende ageyn this; and thow that arte a kynge, dismayest thee so of feynt herte!” And the kynge seide, “Ulfyn, thow seyst right wele, and thow knowest wele what longeth to soche mystere. I pray thee helpe me in all maners that thow can or may, and take of my cofres what thow wilte, to yeve to alle that ben hir abouten, and speke so to hir as thow knowest is for my spedē.” Quod Ulfyn, “Be of gode counfort, for I shall do all my power.”

160 And thus undirtoke Ulfyn to helpe the kynge. And so all the fifteen dayes hilde the kynge grete feste, and every day hadde the duke in his company and yaf hym a grete juwell, and also to his compers. And Ulfyn spake with Ygerne and tolde hir many thinges that he myght, as he trowed beste her plese; and many tymes he brought her a preciouuse juwell. But Ygerne wolde noon, till on a tyme that Ygerne hilde Ulfyn in counseile and seide, “Ulfyn, wherfore that ye wolde me yeve alle these juwelles and these riche yeftes?” And Ulfyn seide, “Madame, for youre grete wisdome and your grete beauté and faire contenaunce I may noght yeve yow, for all erthely gode is yours and alle the londe of Logres and alle the mennes bodyes at your plesier to do your volunté.” And she ansuerde, “How?” “How?” quod he; “for ye have the herte of hym to whom alle moste obbeye.” Quod she, “Whos herte is that ye of speken?” And Ulfyn seide, “Of the kynge.”

170 And she lifte up hir hande and hir sayned and seide, “A, mercy God, shold eny kynge be traytour so as he maketh semblaunce to myn husbonde of love and so shamefully wolde me diffoule? Ulfyn, now be right well ware that thow never speke to me more of these wordes, for wite thow wele I shall telle my lorde; and

145 ne, nor. **148 wonder**, wondrous. **151 volonté**, desire. **153 dismayest thee so**, do you despair. **155 longeth to soche mystere**, concerns such matters. **157 spedē**, success. **161 compers**, companions. **163 wolde noon**, would [have] none. **164 hilde**, kept; **wherfore**, why [is it]. **168 volonté**, wishes. **171 hir sayned**, crossed herself.

Prose Merlin

175 yef he it knowe, thow moste dye." And Ulfyn ansuerde, "That were to me grete wurship, yef I sholde dye for my lord; ne never lady that refused a kynge in soche wyse as do ye, that loveth yow more than eny other thynge. And I trowe ye do but jape. But for Goddes love, haveth pité of the kynge that is youre lorde, and also upon youreself, for yef ye have no mercy of this thynge, witeth wele that therof may come grete harme; ne ye ne youre lorde may not yow diffende ageyn the kynges wille." And Ygerne ansuerde, wepynge, "I shall therfore me right wele diffende, for I will never come in place wheras he may me seen."

180 185 And so departed Ygerne. And Ulfin come to the kynge and tolde hym like as she hadde seide. And the kynge seyde so sholde a gode lady ansuere, for ther was never gode lady that lightly wolde be overcome; and therfore he ne cessed not of prayinge.

190 And on the eleventh jour of Pentecoste the kynge satte at mete and with hym the Duke of Tintagel. And the kynge hadde a riche cowpe of goolde; and Ulfyn kneled before the kynge and seide, "Sir, sende this cuppe to Ygerne, and praye the duke to bidde hir to take it and drynke for your love." And the kynge cleped the duke and badde hym sende that cuppe to Ygerne, his wif, and sende hir worde to drynke for his love. And the duke ansuerde as he that thought noon evell and seyde, "Sir, gramercy." The duke cleped a knyght of his owne that he loved well; "Bretel, take this cuppe and bere to thy lady, and sey her that she drynke for the kynges love." 195 And Bretel cam in to the chamber where Ygerne sat at mete amonge othir ladyes and kneled before hir and seide, "Madam, the kynge sente yow this cuppe, and my lorde comaundeth that ye sholde it take and also to drynke for the kynges sake."

200 Whan the lady undirstode these wordes, she wax all reade for shame, but she durste not refuse the comaundement of hir lorde but toke the cuppe and dranke and wolde have sente it ageyn be the same knyght. And he seide, "My lorde sente yow worde ye sholde it kepe, for so the kynge hym prayde." When she sye that, she sigh wele that nedes she muste kepe the cuppe. And Bretell com agein and thanked the kynge on Ygernes behalfe, that therof hadde seide no worde. And glad was the kynge that she hadde resceyved his yefte. And Ulfin wente into the

176 **wurship**, honor. 178 **jape**, jest. 180 **ne ye ne**, neither you nor. 181 **me**, myself. 182 **diffende**, protect. 187 **jour**, day. 188 **cowpe**, cup. 192 **noon evell**, no evil. 193 **gramercy**, great thanks; **cleped**, called. 195 **mete**, dinner. 198 **wax**, turned; **reade**, red. 200 **be**, by. 202 **sigh**, saw.

Uther and Ygerne

205 chamber to se what semblaunce she made, and he fonde hir pensif and angry. And whan she saugh Ulfyn, she cleped hym to hir for the bourdes weren up, and seide, “Ulfyn, thourgh grete treson thy lorde hath here sente me a cuppe, but therby shall he gete litill wurschip er tomorrow day, for I will telle my lorde of the treson that ye betwene yow two have purposed.” And Ulfyn ansuerde, “Bewar therof, that it
210 yow never passe.” And she seide, “Mysaventure have that it kepeth eny counseile.”

With that departed Ulfyn from hir. And be than the kynge hadde waisshe, and was right mery and gladde, and toke the duke be the hande and seide, “Gowe, se these ladyes.” Than they yede to the chamber wheras Ygerne hadde eten; and she knewe wele that he come for noon othir cause but for hir. And so she suffred all
215 the day till the nyght, and than she wente hom to hir loigynge. And when the duke come, he fonde hir wepynge and makynge grete sorowe; wherfore he was right hevy, and toke hir in his armes, as he that moche hir loved, and axed whi she made soche sorowe. “Trewly,” quod she, “ther [is] nothyng that I will kepe from yowr counseile, for ther is nothyng that I love so moche as yow. The kynge, that is my
220 lorde and yowr, seith that he loveth me. And alle these courtes that ye se hym holde, and alle these ladyes that he sendith fore, it is nought elles but for me, and that ye sholde bryng me with yow. And these othir tymes I parceyved it wele inough, and I me kepte both fro hym and from his yeftes. And so hiderto I have me
225 wele deffended that I have nought taken of his. And now have ye made me to take a cuppe, and sente me that I sholde drynke for his love. And therfore I wolde I were deed, for I may never have reste for hym and Ulfyn hys counsellor. And now I have tolde yow all as it is, I knowe wele that therof muste come more anger, wherfore I beseke yow, as I ought to do my lorde, that ye bryng me to Tintagel,
for I will no lenger abide in this town.”

230 Whan the duke, that moche loved his wif, herde this, he was als wroth as eny man myght be. Than he sente after his men thourgh the town, and when they were come, he seide to hem prevely, “Make yow redy for to ride in all haste, so that no man of the town it wyte; and axe not the cause why till I telle yow.” And thus the

205 **semblaunce**, appearance. 206 **bourdes weren up**, tables were put away. 210
Mysaventure, ill luck; **counseile**, secret. 211 **be than**, by then. 212 **Gowe, se**, Let us go see. 214 **suffred**, waited. 215 **loigynge**, lodging. 225 **wolde**, wish. 228 **beseke**, beseech.
230 **als**, as.

Prose Merlin

duke and his knyghtes lepe to horse and rode home to his contré, and ledde with
235 hym his wylf.

On the morowe whan the kynge wiste the Duke was thus igon, he was hevy and sorowfull for that he hadde ledde awey Ygerne. And [he] sente after his counseile and shewde hem the shame and the dispite the duke hadde hym don. And they seide they merveyled ther gretly, and that [the Duke] hadde don grete folye. Thus
240 seide they that wiste not why he was gon. And the kynge seide, "As ye have sen alle, I have do to hym more wurship than to eny othir." And they seiden it was soth; "wherfore we gretly merveyle why he hath don so grete outerage." And the kynge seide, "Yef it be youre rede, I will sende after hym that he come ageyn and amende this forfeit, and that in the same wise as he is gon that he come agein, for
245 that me semeth is right." And the counseile therto assented.

On this massage was sente two worthy men fro the kynge, and rode till they come to Tintagell, and ther they fonde the duke and tolde hym their message as they weren charged. Whan the duke herde that in the same forme he moste come ageyn, he undirstode wele he sholde bringe with hym Ygerne. And than he seide to the messagers, "I ne will not come at his courte, for he hath so don to me and to myne that I owe hym neyther to truste ne to love." And thus departed the messagers withouten other ansuere.

And than the duke sente after alle the worthy men of his counseile and seide hem the cause why he was come fro Cardoel, and the untrouthe and the shame that the kynge hadde hym purposed. And they therof merveileden gretly, and seide that sholde never betyden, with Goddes grace, and wele oughten he to have shame that this shame hath purposed to his liege man. Thanne seide the duke, "I pray yow and requyre be the feith that ye me owen, that ye helpe me to diffende my londe yef he me assawte with werre." And thei ansuerde that so wolde they do to put alle ther lyves and godes in jepardye. Thus the duke counseiled with his men.
255

And the messagers come to Cardoel and fonde the kynge and his barons, and tolde as the duke hadde yeve hem ansuere; and they seiden alle, thei merveiled of the duke that was wonte to be so wise a man and so had him ruled. The kynge praid his barons and hem requyred as his liege men that thei wolde hym helpe to redresse that forfeit and avenge the shame that he hadde hym don. And they seiden
260

236 **wiste**, knew. 238 **dispite**, insult. 242 **outerage**, insult. 243 **rede**, advice. 244 **forfeit**, offence. 248 **forme**, manner. 256 **betyden**, happen. 259 **assawte**, assault. 260 **godes**, goods.

Uther and Ygerne

that they myght not that refusen; but thei seiden yef it were hys plesier to sende, knowynge that he hym diffied forty dayes before, er he hym assailed. And the kynge seide that wolde he do; but the kynge hem praideth at the ende of forty dayes they be redy assembled ther he hem assigned, arayed for to osteye.

270 The kynge sente his messagers for to diffie the Duke of Tintagel. And when the duke herde that he hym diffied at the ende of forty dayes, he seide he sholde hym diffende yef he myght. And than he sente to his peple and shewde hem the diffiaunce of the kynge, prayinge hem to helpe hym in that grete mister. And they seide thei sholde hym helpe with all their power. And than the duke counseiled 275 with his peple and seide, "I have but two castelles that agein the kynge may holde." But the tweyne wolde he holde as longe as he hadde lyf. And he devised to leve his wif at Tintagel, and with hir ten knyghtes, for he knewe that castell hadde no doute of no man; and hymself wente to another castell that was of lesse strengthe, and it stuffed in the beste wise that he myght, and seide that he myght not his 280 other londes agein hym diffende.

285 The messagers that hadde the duke diffied come to the kynge and seide how the duke wolde hym diffende. Thanne the kynge sente to somowne his barons and his peple, and made hem alle to assemble in the duke's londe in a grete medowe upon a rivere. Whan the barons were assembled, the kynge to hem rehersed the grete dispyte of brekyng of his courte, and the barons seiden it was reson that the forfet were redressed. Thus the kynge lefte in the duke's londes, and tok his castelles and his townes and distroyed all the contré. And than the kynge herde seyd that Ygerne was at Tintagel and the duke in another castell; and than the kynge axed of his counseile whiche castell he sholde firste assaile. And the barons yaf hym 290 counseile firste to assaile the duke, and therto the kynge graunted. And so thei rode to the castell that the duke was ynne; and than the kynge seide to Ulfen, "What may I do whan I ne may not se Ygerne?" And Ulfen seide, "The thinges that a man may not have, he muste nede suffer; and therfore ye must put to grete besynesse to take the duke, for after that ye shall well to purpose bringe the 295 remenaunt."

267 **diffied**, challenged. 269 **ther**, where; **arayed**, prepared; **osteye**, make war. 275 **agein**, against. 278 **doute of no man**, fear of anyone. 279 **stuffed**, provisioned. 282 **somowne**, summon. 285 **dispyte**, insult; **reson**, reasonable. 286 **forfet**, insult; **lefte in**, occupied. 294 **besynesse**, effort.

Prose Merlin

Many assaute made the kynge at the castell, but he cowde it in no wise gete,
wherfore he was full of sorowe and right irouse. And on the tother side he was
300 sore distreined with the love of Ygerne, that on a tyme as he was in his pavilyon
he gan to wepe. Whanne his peple saugh hym wepe they weren hevy, and hem
withdrawen and leften hym alone. And whan Ulfín it wiste therof, he come anoon
and axed the kynge why he wepte. And the kynge seide, "Thow knowest wele
wherfore, for thow woste wele that I dye full of love of Ygerne, for I have loste
bothe mete and drynke and all reste that a man ought to have." And whan Ulfyn
305 this undirstode he seide, "Ye be of ful febill herte whan ye thynke to dye for oon
sole woman; but I shall sey yow gode counseile." "What is that?" seide the kynge.
"That ye wolde sende to seche Merlin that he myght come to yow; and it myght
noon otherwise be but that he sholde yeve yow some gode counseile that sholde
yow profite. And ye shull hym yeve what he will desire."

And than seide the kynge, "Ther is no thynge that is possible to a man but that
310 he can it do; but I wote wele Merlin of my distresse knoweth, and so I am in drede
that he be wroth for the voide place of the table that I suffred to be assaide. And longe tyme it is passed sethe he was in place whereas I myght hym se. And also, I
trowe he is not well plesed that I love the wif of my liege man; but trewly, I may
not do therto ne I ne may not therfro me deffende. But I have well in mynde that
315 he badde I sholde not sende hym for to seche." And Ulfín ansuerde, "I am in
certeyn of oon thynge, that he farith well and is in hele. Yef he love yow as he was
wont to do, he knoweth what distresse that ye beth ynne, and it shall not be longe
er ye here of hym tydynges." Thus Ulfyn counforted the kynge and counseiled
hym to sende for his meyné to hym, and that sholde cause hym to foryete a grete
320 partie of his sorowe. And the kynge seyde so he wolde do; but his love myght he,
ne his sorow, in no maner wise forgete. Thus the kynge peyned to conforte hymself
and his peple, and made the castell to be assailed. But take it they myght not in no
wise.

And on a day, as Ulfín rode thourgh the oste, he mette with a man that he nothinge

297 **irouse**, angry; **on the tother side**, at the same time. 298 **sore distreined**, sorely upset;
that, so that. 299 **hevy**, sad. 303 **reste**, sleep. 304–05 **oon sole**, one single. 311 **suffred**,
allowed. 312 **sethe**, since. 314 **do therto**, do anything about it; **ne¹**, nor. 316 **hele**, health.
319 **meynē**, retinue. 320 **partie**, portion. 321 **ne**, nor; **maner wise**, fashion. 324 **oste**, host.

Uther and Ygerne

325 kenned. And he seide, "Ulfín, I wolde fain speke with thee." And thanne they yede oute of the hoste, the man on his fete and Ulfyn on horsebak. And Ulfín light down on foote to speke with this man, and hym axed what he was. And he seide, "I am an olde man, as thow maist se, and som tyme in my yowthe I was holden wise; and now of moche thinge that I sey, men sein that I dote. But I sey to yow in
330 counseile that I was at Tintagel not longe sithe, and ther I was aqueynted with a gode man that tolde me that youre kynge loveth the duke's wif, and that is the cause that the kynge distroyeth his contré, for that he brought his wif fro Cardoel. And yef ye and the kynge will wele quyte my nede, I shall make yow aqueynte with a gode man that shall make yow speke with Ygerne, and that shall wele
335 counseile the kynge of his desir."

When Ulfyn herde this man so say, he merveled who that hym sholde have tolde, and prayde hym that he wolde teche hym to that man that cowde counseile the kynge of his desires. And the olde man seide, "I will first here what rewarde the kinge will yeve." Quod Ulfyn, "Where shall I yow fynde when I have spoke with the kynge?" The olde man seide, "Ye shull finde me or my messenger betwene this and the hoste." And so he hym comaunded to God, and bad hym come on the morowe, and hym wolde telle soche tydinges as sholde hym plese.

340 And Ulfín com to the kynge as hastely as he myght and told how the olde man hadde seide. And whan the kynge hadde herde these wordes, he lowgh and made feire semblaunce and seide to Ulfín, "Knowest thou ought the man that thou spake with?" And he ansuerde, "It is a man right olde and feble." And the kynge seide, "Whan shull ye mete efté togeder?" And Ulfyn seide, "In the morowe, for he badde me wite of yow what he shulde have to rewarde." And the kynge seide,
345 "Lede me thider as thou shalt mete with hym." And Ulfín seide, "With gode will." "And yef thou speke with hym withoute me, profer hym what he will desire of myn." Thus thei leften till on the morowe; but that nyght was the kynge merier than he hadde ben eny tyme before.

350 The morowe after masse the kynge and Ulfyn rode forth as Ulfín wolde hym guyde; and as thei issued oute of the hoste, thei sye a crepell that semed blinde. And as thei passed forth by hym, he cried with an high voyce, "Sir kynge, so God

324–25 **nothinge kenned**, knew not at all. 333 **quyte**, satisfy. 335 **counseile**, satisfy (provide for). 338 **here**, hear. 344 **lowgh**, laughed. 345 **ought**, at all. 347 **efté**, again. 354 **crepell**, cripple.

Prose Merlin

acomplexhe thyn hertys desire of that thou desirdest moste to have, so yeve me som thyng that I may conne thee thanke fore." And the kynge beheilde Ulfyn and seide lawghynge, "Ulfyn, do that I shall comaunde thee for my grete profite and for my love and for to compleisshe my grete desire." And Ulfyn seide, "Ther is nothinge that I desire so moche as for to do that myght accomplisshre youre desire." And the kynge seide, "Hast thou nought herde what the crepell axed, that I sholde remembre the thinge that I beste loved in this worlde, and that I am moste desiraunte? Go and sette thee adown by hym and sey that I have sente thee to hym, and ther is nothinge in this worlde that I have in possession but that I wolde come to yeve it hym, yef I durste come to se hym."

And Ulfin, withoute eny grucchynge, yede and yaf hymself to the crepill, and sette hym down by hym. And whan the crepill felte Ulfyn, he axed what he was and what he was come for to seche. And he ansuerde, "The kynge hath sente me to yow, and that I sholde ever be youres." And whan the crepill that herde, he lowgh and seide to Ulfyn, "The kynge is sone perceyvinge, and me knoweth better than do ye. I will that thou wite that the olde man that thou spake with yesterday sente me to thee; but I will not telle thee what he seyde. Go to the kynge and sey he wolde do a grete thyng for to have his desire, and that I sende hym worde that sone he is parceyvinge, and he shall sped the better." And Ulfin seide, "I dar nought aske what ye ben." "Aske the kynge," quod the crepill, "and he shall telle thee wele inough." And Ulfyn lepe on horse and priked after the kynge.

And whan the kynge saugh hym come, he drough aside and seide, "Ulfyn, is it that thou art come after me? Ne have I not yove thee to the crepill?" Quod Ulfin, "He seith that ye be sone aperceyvaunte of hym, and that ye sholde telle me what he is, for he wolde not telle me, but seide ye sholde telle wele inough." Than seide the kynge, "Wost thou what olde man that was that spake with thee yesterday? That same is this that thou haste seyn a crepill." And Ulfyn seide, "May this be true, that oo man may hymself thus desfigure? And what is he than that thus hym disfigureth?" And the kynge ansuerde, "Knowe it verily it is Merlin that thus hym

357 **conne**, give. 366 **grucchynge**, complaining. 370 **sone perceyvinge**, quick to understand. 371 **will**, wish. 375 **what ye ben**, who you are. 376 **priked**, hastened (galloped, pranced). 378 **yove**, sent. 379 **aperceyvaunte of hym**, aware of who he is. 383 **oo**, one; **than**, then. 384 **hym**, himself.

Uther and Ygerne

385 kepeth fro yow. And whan he will, he will make yow wele to knowe that it is thus."

Thus they passed forth thourgh the feilde. And Merlin come in his right semblaunce into the kynges teynte, and asked where was the kynge. And a messanger come to the kynge and seide Merlin was come. And than was the kynge
390 so gladde that he myght not ansuere, but in all haste returned and cleped Ulfyn and seide, "Now shalt thou knowe yef it be so as I have seide, for Merlyn is comen, and I knowe wele that he doth not seke me for nougth." And than seide Ulfyn, "Now shall it be sene yef ever he were ought wroth, and yef ye can other do well or sey to his plesir of alle thinges; for ther is no man that may yow helpe
395 so wele to have the love of Ygerne." And the kynge seide, "Thow seiste soth, and ther is no thyng that he doth comaunde me but I shall it gladly performe."

Thus thei rode till thei come to the teynte whereas thei fonde Merlin. And the kynge hym made grete joye and mery chere, and ran hym agein with armes spred abrode and hym halsed, and seide he was the man in all the worlde that was moste to hym welcome. And than he seide, "Wherto sholde I me complayne unto yow, for as ye it knowe as myself, and ther was never man that I longed so sore after; and I pray yow and requyre, telle me of that ye knowe my herte desireth so." And Merlin seide, "Of that ye me asken, I shall not speke withoute Ulfyn." Than made the kynge to clepe after Ulfin, and droughen hem aside in counseile. Than seide the kynge to Merlyn, "I have tolde Ulfin of that ye comaunded, and that ye were the olde man that he sigh yesterday, and also the crepill this day." And Ulfyn
400 beheilde hym strongly and seide, "May this be trewe that the kynge seith?" And Merlin seide, "Ye, it is trewe withouten faile; and as sone as I saugh he sente thee to me, I wiste well he hadde me perceyved." And than Ulfyn seide to the kynge,
405 "Sir, now sholde ye speke of youre gref, and not wepe whan ye ben soill."

And the kynge seide, "I wote not what to sey ne preyen. He knoweth well my corage, and I may not make hym no lesynge, but he it knowe as wele as I. But I pray hym hertely to helpe me to have the love of Ygerne, and he ne shall devise nothinge that is to me possible but that I shall it gladly don." And Merlin seide,
410 "Yef ye will graunte me that I shall aske, I shall purchace yow hir love and make

390 **cleped**, called. 393 **ought wroth**, at all angry; **other**, either. 398 **agein**, toward. 399
halsed, embraced. 406 **sigh**, saw. 407 **strongely**, probingly. 409 **perceyved**, recognized.
410 **soill**, alone. 412 **corage**, desire; **lesynge**, lie. 415 **purchace**, obtain.

Prose Merlin

yow to ly in here chamber and in hir bedde, bothe naked." And [whan] Ulfyn that herde, he lough and seide, "Now shall I se what a mannes herte is worth!" And the kynge seide to Merlin, "Ye can not aske me nothinge that be founden in this worlde but I sholde it yow yeven." And Merlin ansuerde, "How may I hereof be sure, but yef ye be sworn, and also lete Ulfyn swere, that I shall have that I aske on the morn that ye have leye with Ygerne, and don with hir your beste?" And the kynge seide that wolde he do with gode will. And Merlin asked Ulfyn yef he wolde swere, and Ulfyn seide, "That me forthinketh, for I was never yet sworn in no tyme."

425 When Merlin herde that worde he lough and seide, "Whan youre othes be made, I shall telle yow how it shall be." Than the kynge made be brought the hiest seintewaries that he hadde and the best reliques, and theron they dide swere as Merlin dide hem devyse, and thei seiden thei sholde it feithfully holde withouten fraude or mal engyn. After the kynge swore Ulfyn, and thus hath Merlin take their
430 othes. And than seide the kynge, "Merlin, now I requere yow sone to helpe myn hertes desire, as the man of all the worlde that moste therafter longeth to have it complisshed."

And than seide Merlyn, "Ye muste be wisely demened, for she is a trewe lady and full wise, and trewe to God and to hir lorde. But now shall ye se what power
435 I have hir to begile, for I shall make yow semblaunce of the duke so wele that ther is no man that yow doth sen but he shall wene it be the duke. And [there are] two knyghtes that ben moste privy with hym that noon ne knoweth so moche of his counseile, not Ygerne hersilf; and that oon hight Bretell and that other Jordan. And I shall have the semblaunce of Bretel and Ulfin shall be like Jordan, and so
440 shall I make hem to open the gates of the castell, and we shall alle thre ly withinne. But full erly on the morow we moste gon oute, for er we departe thens we shall here straunge tidinges. And therfore aray youre oste and your barons and comaunde hem to make gode wacche to diffende hemself, and that noon of hem ne go towarde the castell till that ye be come ageyn. And be well ware that ye telle no creature
445 wheder that ye shall go."

416 here, her. **418 be founden,** exists. **423 me forthinketh,** I regret. **426–27 hiest seintewaries,** most holy relics. **429 mal engyn,** evil purpose, deceit. **433 demened,** conducted. **435 semblaunce,** appearance. **436 wene,** think. **437 privy,** trusted. **438 hight,** is called. **440 ly,** lodge. **445 wheder,** where.

Uther and Ygerne

And Uterpendragon dide as Merlin hadde devised, and anoon com agein and seide that he was redy, and Merlin seide how he was also redy: "Ther is not ellis but to sped us forward." And so thei wenten forth alle thre till thei com ner at Tintagell; and than seide Merlyn to the kynge, "Abyde ye here, and I and Ulfyn shall go this wey." And than eche drough aside by hymself; and whan thei were dissevered and Merlin hadde don his art, he toke an herbe and brought it to the kynge and seide, "Frote youre visage with this herbe, and youre handes." And the kynge toke the herbe and rubbid his handes and his visage and his feet; and anoon as he hadde thus idon, he hadde aperteliche the semblaunce of the Duke. And than seide Merlyn, "Have ye eny mynde that ever ye saugh Jordan?" And the kynge seide, "Ye, I knowe hym wele." And Merlyn com to Ulfyn and transfigured hym to the semblaunce of Jurdan, and than sente hym to the kynge. And whan the kynge saugh Ulfyn, he hym blissed and seide, "Mercy God! How may eny man make oon man so like another?" And than he seide to Ulfyn, "How semeth thee be me?" And Ulfyn seide, "I knowe yow nougnt but for the duke." And the kynge seide he was verily like unto Jurdan. And as thei stoden so, thei behelde Merlyn, and thei semed verily it was Bretel. And thus thei speken togeder and taried till it was nyght. And in the evenyng thei come to the castell gate.

And Merlyn, that wele resembled to Bretel, cleped the porter. And the peple com to the gate and saugh apertly the duke, as hem seemed. And thei seide, "Open — lo, here the Duke!" And thei thought it was Bretel and Jurdan. And whan thei weren entred, Bretel diffended that no man in the place sholde not wite that the duke was comen. Inowe ther were that yede to telle the duchesse. And Merlyn toke the kynge in counseile and seide that he sholde contene hymself myrily. And anoon alle thre thei come before the chambir where Ygerne that yet was in her bedde; and in all haste that thei myght, thei mad their lorde redy.

And so he yede to bedde to Ygerne. And that nyght he gat upon hir the gode kynge that after was cleped Arthur. The lady made grete joye of the kynge, for she wende verily it hadde ben the duke hir lorde, that she loved moche with a trewe herte. Thus thei lay togeder till on the morowe.

451 **dissevered**, separated. 452 **Frote**, Rub; **visage**, face. 455 **mynde**, recollection. 459–60 **semeth thee be me**, do I look to you. 462 **semed**, thought. 464 **cleped**, called. 465 **apertly**, clearly; **hem semed**, it seemed to them. 467 **diffended**, ordered; **not wite**, know. 468 **Inowe**, Enough. 469 **contene**, enjoy. 472 **gat**, begat.

Prose Merlin

In the dawenynge, the tidinges com into the town that the duke was dede, and also his stewarde itake. And than thei com full previly in; and when these other tweyn that tho were arisen herde these tidynges, thei ran theras their lorde lay and seide, “Aryse up and go to youre castell, for ther be soche tydinges come hider that oure peple wene that ye be deed.” And he lepe up and seide, “It is no merveyle though they wene so; for I yede oute of the castell that no man knewe therof no worde.” Anoon he toke leve of Ygerne, and hir kiste, seynynge hem alle at her departyng. And thus they departed oute of the castell in all the haste they myght, that never oon ne knewe but it was the duke.

And whan they weren oute, thei weren right gladde. And Merlyn seide to the kynge, “Sir, I have kept wele the covenante. Now loke thou kepe as wele myne.” And the kynge seide, “Ye sey trewe, for ye have don me the beste servise that ever man dide to another; and therfore youre covenantes shall I well holde.” And Merlyn seide, “I hem aske now and will that they be holden.” And the kynge seide, “I am redy hem to performe.” And than seide Merlyn, “I will that thou knowe that thou hast engendred an heyre male on Ygerne, and that hast thou me yoven. And therfore I shall write the houre and the day in the whiche it is begeten, and so shalt thou knowe yef I sey soth.” Quod the kynge, “As thou hast seide, I have sworn; and I yeve it thee with gode will.”

Thus they rode till they come to a rivere, and ther Merlyn did hem waisshing, and than hadde thei semblaunce as that thei hadden before. And than the kynge rode forth as faste as he myght; and as sone as he was come, his barons and his peple gedered abouthe hym. And he hem asked how the duke was deed. And thei hym tolden: “The day when ye were departed, the oste was stille and koye; and therby the duke undirststode that ye were not in the oste, and dide his peple to arme and come upon us, and dide us grete damage er we myghten ben armed. The cry arose and the noyse, and oure meynee hem arayde and set on hem, and drof hem ageyn, even before the yate. And ther the duke abode and dide many maistries in armes. And ther was his horse slain and the duke overthrowe. And ther was he deed amonge oure peple on foote that hym nought knewen. And we driven the

482 seynynge hem, blessing them. **486 covenante**, bargain. **488 covenantes**, promises. **490–91 will that thou knowe**, want you to know. **491 an heyre male**, a male heir. **492 yoven**, given. **496 semblaunce**, appearance. **499 koye**, quiet (coy). **502 meynee**, company. **503 maistries**, great deeds.

Uther and Ygerne

remenaunt in at the yates, that sympilly hem deffended whan they hadde loste their lorde." And the kynge seide that he was right sory for the deth of the duke.

[Summary. After the death of the Duke of Tintagel, the barons harbor no ill feelings toward King Uther, who acts generously toward the duke's kindred. Merlin reminds Uther of his bargain concerning the child, suggesting that Ygerne would be ashamed to raise the child herself. Uther makes peace with Ygerne and restores her lands. The council of barons suggests that the king and the duchess should marry, and Uther is happy to accept their advice if Ygerne assents. She does, and their wedding occurs on the twentieth day after Arthur was conceived. Also on that day Ygerne's daughters are wed to King Lot and King Ventres. Morgan, the illegitimate daughter of the duke, is sent to school in a religious house where she learns the art of astronomy; as a result she becomes known as Morgan le Fay.]

Ygerne, now noticeably pregnant, tells Uther what happened on the night Arthur was conceived. Uther never reveals that he was the man who visited her, but he asks her to give him the child and she agrees. Merlin arranges for the child to be raised by a good man named Antor. Ygerne weeps and grieves when the child is taken away. Antor's wife nurses the child herself, and her own son is turned over to a wet-nurse. Antor is not told the child's identity, but he has the child baptized and names him Arthur.

While Uther is stricken with gout, the invading Danes defeat Uther's army. Merlin tells Uther he must lead his army against the Danes while being carried on a litter; he also tells him that he will not live long after the Danes are defeated, and that he must give away his worldly goods for his soul's sake. Uther asks about the child, and Merlin assures him the child is flourishing. The king leads his army against the Danes and defeats them, and then he does many alms deeds. As Uther lies on his death bed, Merlin whispers to him that his son Arthur will be the next king and that he shall complete the Round Table that Uther had begun. Uther hopes that Arthur will pray for his soul; then he dies. Uther is buried with honor, but he leaves the kingdom without an heir. Fol. 26r (line 18)–31v (line 13).]

506 *sympilly, weakly.*

[Arthur and the Sword in the Stone]

Whan he was come before hem they seide, “Merlyn, we knowe well thow art wise and haste alwey loved wele the kynges of this reame. And thow knowest wele that this londe is lefte withouten heir, and a londe withoute a lorde availeth litill. Therfore we pray thee and requere to helpe us to chese soche a man as myght the reame governe to the profite of the peple and savacion of Holy Cherche.”

And Merlin seide, “I am no soche man that owe to entermete of soche counseile, ne that I sholde chese a man to be a governoure. But yef ye acorde to myn awarde I shall telle yow; and yef I sey not wele, accordeth not therto.” And thei seide, “Alle to the welfare and profite of us alle oure Lorde sende grace!” And Merlin seide, “I have moche loved this reame and the peple therinne, and yef I wolde telle yow whom ye sholde make youre kynge, I ought wele to be beleved, and it were right. Bot oon faire aventure is yow befallen, yef ye will it knownen. The kynge is now deed sithe Martinmasse, and fro hens to Yoole is but litill space. And yef ye leve my counseile, I shall yeve yow gode and trewe, bothe ageyn God and the worlde.” And thei seiden alle at ones, “Sey what thow wilte, and we shall it holden.”

And he seide, “Ye knowe wele that now cometh the feste that oure Lorde was inne ibore, and He is Lorde of alle lordes. And I will undirtake, yef ye and alle the peple comynyally pray to oure Lorde for His grete pité for to sende yow a rightfull governour, as He thourgh His grete humylité at this feste cleped Yoole liste to be born of a virgyn, and Kynge of alle kynges, that He at this feste chese yow soche

1 **hem**, them (i.e., the barons). 3 **availeth**, thrives. 4 **chese**, choose. 6 **no soche man**, not the right man; **owe**, ought; **entermete of**, be involved in. 7 **acorde**, agree; **awarde**, advice. 8 **yef**, if. 12 **faire aventure**, good fortune. 13 **is now deed sithe Martinmasse**, has now been dead since November 11; **Yoole**, Yule, Christmas. 14 **leve**, believe; **ageyn**, towards. 18 **will undirtake**, suggest that. 19 **comynyally**, together. 20 **as**, just as; **liste**, chose.

Arthur and the Sword in the Stone

a man to be youre kynge and lorde, that the peple may rule and governe to His plesir; and that He shew soche demonstraunce that the peple may se and knowe that it is be His eleccion, and that he that so is chosen be kynge withoute eny other eleccion. And wite ye well, yef ye thus do, ye shull se the eleccion of oure Lorde Jhesu Criste." Than they ansuerde alle with oon assent and seide, "We acorde with this counseile, and ther is noon ertly man but that he ought therto acorde."

Than thei prade alle bisshopis and archebisshopes to comaunde thourgh all the cherches that the peple to praye as ye have herde. And alle the lordes were sworne oon to another to holde the awarde of Holy Cherche, in that God wolde hem shewen. In this maner be thei accorded to the counseile of Merlin. And Merlyn toke leve of hem, and thei hym prade to be with hem at Cristemasse, to se yef it were soth or no that he hadde hem taught. And Merlyn seide, "I shall not be ther, for ye shull not se me till the eleccion be made." Thus wente Merlin to Blase and tolde hym alle these thinges.

Than alle the worthy men of the reame of Logres, thei come unto Logres at the Yole. Thus was this thinge don and abiden to the Yole. And Antor, that hadde this childe norisshed till he was a moche man of fifteen yere of age, he hadde hym trewly norisshed so that he was faire and moche; and he hadde never soken other mylke but of his wif, and his sone he hadde made to be norysshed of another woman. Ne Antor wiste not whether he loved better, ne he cleped hym never but his sone; and he wende verily that he hadde ben his fader. At Halowmasse Antor made hys sone knyght, and at Yoole he come to Logres, as did the other knyghtes of the londe, and brought with hym his two sones.

On Yoole Even was assembled alle the clergie of the reame, and alle the barouns that weren of valoure and wele hadde don as Merlin hadde seide. And whan they were alle come, thei ledde alle symple lif and honeste. Thus thei abode all the Yoole Even and weren at messe at mydnyght, and made mekely theire orisouns to oure Lorde, that He of His grace sende hem soche a man that myght profitably meyntene hem and the Cristen feith.

Thus they abode the messe of the day, and so ther were many that seide thei

23 demonstraunce, demonstration. **24 eleccion**, choice. **38 norisshed**, raised; **moche**, grown. **39 moche**, large. **41 wiste not whether**, knew not which. **42 he²**, i.e., Arthur. **45 Yoole Even**, Christmas Eve. **47 symple**, plain. **48 orisouns**, prayers. **51 abode**, awaited.

Prose Merlin

were foles that trowed oure Lorde wolde put his entente to chesinge of her kynge.
And as thei were in this talkynge, thei roung to messe of the day, and so thei
yede to servise. Whan thei were alle assembled, ther was oon of the holiest men
55 of the londe araied to singe the messe. But er he yede to messe, he spake to the
peple and seide, "Ye be assembled for thre thinges for youre profite, and I shall
say yow whiche thei be: first of all, for the savacion of youre soules; and for the
wurship of God; and the myracle and high vertu that He thys day shall shewe
60 amonge us, yef it be His plesir to yeve us a kynge and chiefteyn that may save
and mayntene Holy Cherche, that is the sustenaunce of alle trewe Cristen peple.
We be come to chese oon of us; we be not so wise to knowe who is moste profit-
able of alle this peple. And for that we ne knowe, we owe to praye to the Kynge
65 of kynges that is Jhesu Criste oure Saveoure, that He shewe us verry tokenyng
to His pleasaunce, as He was bore on this day. So every man praye in the beste
wise he can."

And thus they did as the gode man hem counseiled. And he yede forth to masse,
and he com to the gospell and that thei hadden offred. Some of the peple yede
oute of the cherche where ther was a voyde place. And whan they com 70 ute of the
cherche, thei sawgh it gan dawe and clere, and saugh before the cherche dore a
grete ston foure square, and ne knewe of what ston it was — but some seide it
was marble. And above, in the myddill place of this ston, ther stode a styth of iren
that was largely half a fote of height. And thourgh this stithi was a swerde ficchid
into the ston.

When thei sye this that firste weren come 75 ute of the chirche, thei hadde gret
merveile and yede agein into the chirche and tolde the archebisshop. And whan
the gode man that sange masse herde this, he toke haly water and caste upon the
stith. And the archebisshop lowted to the swerde and sawgh letteres of golde in
the stiel. And he redde the letteres that seiden, "Who taketh this swerde out of
80 this ston sholde be kynge by the eleccion of Jhesu Criste." And when he hadde
redder these letteres, he seide to the peple what it ment.

Than was the ston delivered to ten worthi men to kepe, and to two clerkes.

52 trowed, believed; **her**, their. **55 araied**, ready; **er**, before. **61–62 profitable**, qualified. **62 owe**, ought. **63 verry tokenyng**, true sign. **64 as**, because. **67 and that**, after. **68 voyde place**, open space. **69 dawe**, to dawn; **clere**, brighten. **71 styth**, anvil. **72 ficchid**, fixed. **77 lowted to**, bent over. **80 this**, these. **81 delivered**, assigned; **kepe**, guard.

Arthur and the Sword in the Stone

Than thei seiden that oure Lorde hadde hem shewed feire myracle, and yeden
agein into the mynistre to heir oute the masse and to yelde oure Lorde graces. And
thei songen “*Te Deum Laudamus.*” And whan the gode man was come to the
85 awter, he turned to the peple and seide, “Feire lordes, now may ye se that some of
yow be goode men, when thourgh youre prayers and orisouns oure Lorde hath
shewde this grete myracle. Wherfore I praye and reqire yow above alle vertues in
this erthe, for highnesse ne ertly richesse that God hath yoven in this worlde, that
noon be agein this eleccion that God hath us shewde the demonstraunce. And the
90 surpluys He shall us shewen at His volunté.”

Thanne the gode man sange forth the masse. And whan it was fynished they
assembled abouthe the ston, bothe oon and other who that myght take oute this
swerde firste. And than thei seiden and acorded alle that thei sholde assaien it as
the mynistres of Holy Cherche wolde assigne. To this ther was grete discorde
95 amonege the higheste men and moste puyssaunt. And thei that hadde force seide
they wolden asseyen firste. So ther were many wordes that ought not to be rehersed.

The archebisshop spake that alle myght heren and seide, “Sirs, ye ne be not so
wise ne so wele avised men as I wende. And I will wele that ye alle wite that oure
Lorde hath oon ichosen, but I knowe not whom. And thus moche may I say to
100 yow, that gentilnesse ne richesse shall have no power agein the wille of Jhesu
Criste, but truste so moche in Hym that yef he that is therto chosen were yet unbore,
it shall never be taken oute of the ston till he come that it is ordeyned the honour.”

Than acorded alle the noble men and wise, and seide that he hadde seide soth.
And the wise men and the high barouns toke their counseile and acorded to stonde
105 the ordenaunce of the archebisshop, and [thei] com agein and seiden heringe alle
the peple. And than made the bisshop grete joye and dide wepe for pité and seide,
“This humylité that is in youre hertes is of God. And I will that ye knowe after
myn entente shall be to the volunté of God and profite of Cristen feith, so that I
shall have no blame yef God will.” This parliament was before high messe of the
110 assay of the swerde, till that high messe was saide.

Than seide the archebisshop to the peple and shewde hem the gret myracle that

83 mynistre, minster. 84 *Te Deum Laudamus*, see note. 85 awter, alter. 88 highnesse,
high rank. 90 surpluys, remainder; volunté, desire. 95 puyssaunt, powerful; force, power.
98 wende, thought; wite, know. 100 gentilnesse, nobility; richesse, wealthy. 104–05 stonde
the ordenaunce, follow the plan. 105 heringe, in the hearing of. 107 is of, comes from.

Prose Merlin

God hadde don for hem at this eleccion: “And whan oure Lorde sette justice in
erthe, He sette it in the styth and in the swerde. And the justice over the lay peple
ought to be the swerde, for the swerde at the begynyng was take to thre orderes
115 to diffende Holy Cherche and mayntene rightwisnesse. And oure Lorde hath now
made eleccion be the swerde. And wite it wele, alle that this have seen and beholde,
to whom He will the justice yeve. And lete no man be to hasty for to assaye, for it
shall never be drawen oute for richesse ne for pride. Ne the poure peple be not
120 displeased though the lordes and the high astates assaye before, for it is right and
reson that the lordes assaien firste. For ther ne is noon of yow but he ought to
have his kynge and his lorde the beste and moste worthy man that he kowthe
knowe be his reson.”

Thus thei acorded to the archebisshop with gode herte and withouten evyll
will, that he sholde chese hem that he wolde to assaye firste. Thus thei graunted
125 alle to holde hym for hir kynge to whom God wolde shewe his grace. Thanne the
archebisshop chese oute one hundred fifty of the hiest and moste worthi lordes
and made hem go to the assaie. And whan they hadde alle assayed, than he
commaunded alle other to assaye. And than they assayden alle they, oon after
130 another, that assaye wolde. But ther was noon that myght it taken oute. And so it
was comaunded to be kept with ten noble men, and thei were charged to take
goode hede who com to assaien, and yef eny ther were that myght drawnen out of
the ston.

Thus was the swerde assaied alle the eight dayes, and alle the barouns were at
high messe. And the archebisshop hem preached and shewde as hym semed beste.
135 And than he seide, “I tolde yow wele that all be leysere myght he come that was
ferthest fro the assaye of this swerde. Now may ye verily knowe that never noon,
saf he that oure Lorde will, ne shall it not oute take.” And than thei seiden alle
that thei wolde not out of the town till thei westen to whom God wolde graunte
that honoure.

140 In that maner thei abiden oute the messe, and after thei wente to their hosteles
to mete. And after mete, as they were used that tyme, yede the barouns and the

113 **styth**, anvil. 114 **take**, entrusted. 118 **poure**, poor. 120 **reson**, proper. 121 **kowthe**,
could. 129 **assaye wolde**, wished to try. 130 **kept with**, guarded by. 135 **all be leysere**, all
by leisure, i.e., later on. 137 **will**, wishes. 138 **westen**, knew. 141 **mete¹**, dine; **mete²**,
dining.

Arthur and the Sword in the Stone

145 knyghtes to boorde in a feire pleyn, and the ten men that were ordeyned to kepe this swerde yede also to se this bourdise. And when the knyghtes hadde turneyd awhile, thei toke their sheldes to their squeres so that the peple of the town yede to arme them. And Antor hadde made his eldeste sone knyght at the Halowtide before Yoole. And whan the medlé was begunne, Kay called his brother Arthur and seide, “Go faste to oure oste and fecche my swerde.”

150 And Arthur was goode and servisable and seide, “With gode will.” And than [he] smote the hors with the spores and rode forth to his ostell for to fecche his brothers swerde, or ellis some other, yef he myght eny fynde. And he fonde noon, for the hostesse hadde sette it in hir chambir. And so he turned to hem agein. And whan he saugh he myght noon fynde, he gan to wepe for grete anger. And as he come before the mynster ther the ston was, he saugh the swerde whiche he hadde never assaide, and thought, yef he myght it gete, to bere it to his brother.

155 And as he com therby on horse bakke, he hente the swerde be the hiltes and drough it oute, and covered it with his lappe. And his brother that abode after withoute the towne saugh hym come, and rode agein hym and asked his swerde. And Arthur seide he myght not have it, “but I have brought heere another,” and drough it oute from undyr his cote and toke it to his brother. And anoon as Kay saugh this swerde, he knewe it wele that it was the swerde of the ston and thought he wolde be kynge, and seide he wolde seche his fader till he fonde hym; and than he seide, “Sire, I shall be kynge. Lo, here is the swerde of the ston.”

160 Whan the fader it saugh, he hadde merveile how he it gatt. And he seide he toke it oute of the ston. Whan Antor herde that he leved it not but seide he dide lye. Than thei yede to the mynster ther the ston was, and the tother squyre after. Whan Antor sigh the ston and the swerde not therynne he seide, “Feire sone, how hadde ye this swerde? Loke ye do not lye; and thow do lye, I shall it knowe wele and never shall I thee love.”

165 And he ansuerde as he that was sore ashamed, “I shall yow lye no lesyng, for my brother Arthur it me brought whan I badde hym to go fecche myn. But I wote never how he it hadde.”

142 boorde, play; **pleyn**, field. **143 this bourdise**, these games; **turneyd**, tourneyed. **144 toke**, gave. **146 medlé**, melee. **147 oste**, hostel. **149 spores**, spurs. **155 hente**, seized. **156 lappe**, surcoat; **abode after**, waited. **159 cote**, coat; **anoon as**, as soon as. **164 leved**, believed. **165 ther**, where; **the tother squyre**, i.e., Arthur. **167 and¹**, if.

Prose Merlin

Whan Antor herde this he seide, “Sone, yeve it me, for ye have therto no ryght.” And Kay it delivered to his fader. And he loked behynde hym and saugh Arthur and cleped hym and seide, “Come hider, faire sone, and take this swerde and put it theras ye it toke.” And he toke the swerde and put it in the stith, and it heilde as wele or better than it dide before. And Antor comaunded his sone Kay to take it 175 oute. And he assaied, but it wolde not be. Than Antor cleped hem bothe and seide to Kay, “I wiste well that thou haddest not take the swerde oute.”

Thanne he toke Arthur in his armes and seide, “Feire dere sone, yef I myght 180 purchase that ye be kynge, what gode sholde I have therfore?” “Fader,” quod he, “I may nother have that honour ne noon other goode but that ye be therof lorde, as my lorde and my fader.” And he seide, “Sir, youre fader I am as in norture, but certes, I dide yow never engender, ne I wot never who dide yow engender.”

Whan Arthur saugh that Antor hym denyed to ben hys fader, he wepte tenderly 185 and hadde grete doel and seide, “Feire sir, how sholde I have this dignité or eny other whan I have failed to have a fader?” “A fader muste ye nede have. But feire dere sir, yef oure Lorde will that ye have this grace and I helpe yow it to purchase, telle me what I shall be the better.” And Arthur seide, “Sir, so as ye will youreself.”

Thanne Antor tolde hym what bounté he hadde hym don, and how he hadde 190 hym norisshed, and how he put awey his sone Kay and made hym to be norisshed of a straunge woman. “Wherfore ye owe to yeve my sone and me guerdon, for ther was never man more tenderly norisshed than I have yow. Wherfore I praye yow, yef God yeve yow this grace and I may helpe yow therto, that ye guerdon me and my sone.” And Arthur seide, “I pray yow that ye denye not me to be my fader, 195 for than I sholde not wite whether that I sholde go. And yef ye may helpe to purchase this grace, and God will that I have it, ye can nothinge sey ne comaunde but I shall it do.”

And Antor seide, “I shall not aske thi londe; but thus moche I will praye yow, that yef ye be kynge, that ye make my sone Kay youre stywarde in soche maner 200 that for no forfeit that he do to yow, ne to man of youre londe, that he lese not hys

180 **purchase**, arrange; **gode**, benefit. 181 **nother**, neither. 183 **certes**, indeed; **ne I wot never**, nor do I know. 187 **purchase**, obtain. 188 **what**, how; **so as**, just as; **will**, desire. 189 **bounté**, kindnesses. 191 **owe**, ought; **guerdon**, reward. 195 **wite whether**, know where. 199 **stywarde**, steward. 200 **forfeit**, offence; **lese**, lose.

Arthur and the Sword in the Stone

office. And yef he be fool or fell or vilenis, ye owe better to suffre hym than eny other. And therfore I praye yow to graunte hym that I yow demaunde.” And Arthur seide he wolde it do with gode will. And than he ledde hym to the auter and swore that he sholde this trewly performe. And whan he hadde sworne, he com before
205 the mynster; and the turnement was ended, and the barouns com to hire evesonge.

Than Antor cleped alle his frendes and com to the archebisshop and seide, “Sir, lo, here is a childe of myn that is no knyght, that prayeth me that I wolde helpe that he myght assay the aventure of the swerde, and that it pleseth yow to clepe the barouns.” And so he did, and thei assembled abouthe the ston. Than Antor bad
210 Arthur take outhe the swerde and delyvere it to the archebisshop. And Arthur toke the swerde be the hiltes and withoute more taryinge yaf it to the archebisshop. And anoon he toke Arthur in his armes and seide, “*Te Deum Laudamus*,” and so brought hym into the mynster.

And the barouns and high men that this hadde seyn and herde were angry and
215 sorowfull for this, and seiden it myght not be that soche a symple man of so lowe degré sholde be lorde of hem alle. Therwith was the archebisshop displesed and seide, “Sirs, oure Lorde knoweth beste what every man is.” And Antor and his frendes abode by Arthur, and alle the comen peple. And alle the barouns were ageyn them and ageyn Arthur.

220 And thanne seide the archebisshop wordes of grete hardynesse: “I do yow to wite thaugh alle thei that ben in the worlde wolde be agein this eleccion, and oure Lorde will that this man be kynge, he shall be it withouten faile. And I shall shewe yow how and what affiaunce I have in oure Lorde Jhesu Criste. Now, feire brother Arthur, go put the swerde ageyn in the same place that ye toke it fro.”

225 And Arthur put the swerde ageyn in the selve place, and it hilde as faste as byfore. And than seide the archebisshop, “So feire eleccion was never sene. Now go ye riche barouns and lordes and assay yef ye may take outhe the swerde.” Than yede alle for to assaye, but noon it myght remeve fro the place that it was inne. Than seide the archebisshop, “Grete folye do ye that be ageyn oure Lordes wille — for now ye se well how it is.” And thei seide, “Sir, we ne be not agein oure
230

201 fool, foolish; fell, cruel; owe better, ought more. 208 and, if. 212 *Te Deum Laudamus*, We praise thee, O Lord. 218 abode by, stood by. 220 hardynesse, boldness. 221 and, if. 222 will, wishes. 223 affiaunce, trust. 225 selve, same.

Prose Merlin

Lordes wille, but it ys grevouse thinge to us to have a garcion to be lorde over us alle.” And the archebisshop seide, “He that hath hym chosyn knoweth beste what he is.”

235 Thanne the barouns prайде the bisshop to lete the swerde be stille in the ston
tille Candelmesse; and by that tyme, men of ferther contrees myght come to assayе
the aventure. And the archebisshop hem graunted. Than come oute of every contree
and asseyde, who that wolde. And whan they hadden assaied, the archebisshop
seide, “Arthur, yef it be pleser to oure Lorde Jhesu Criste that thow be kynge, go
forth and bryngе that swerde.” And Arthur yede to the swerde and toke it oute as
240 lyghtly as nothinge hadde it holden. Whan the prelates and the comen peple saugh
this, thei gunne to wepe for joye and pité and seiden, “Sirs, is ther yet eny man
that seith agein this eleccion?” And the barouns seide, “Syr, we pray yow that the
swerde be suffred yet in the ston to Passh, but eny man come by that terme that
may take it thens; and ellis we will obbey to this. And yef ye will not suffre so
245 longe tyme, every man do the beste he may.”

And the archebisshop seide, “Yef so be he abide to Passh, and noon other come
that may parforme this aventure, wele ye than obbey yow to this eleccion?” And
thei seide alle, “Ye.” Thanne the archebisshop seide to Arthur, “Sette the swerde
agein in the ston, for yef God will, thow shalt not faile of the dignité that he hath
250 thee promysed.” And Arthur did as he comaunded. And ther was ordeyned to
kepe the ston ten men and five clerkes; and in this maner thei bode to Pasch.

And the archebisshop that hadde take Arthur in warde seide, “Wite ye right
well ye shall be kynge and lorde of this peple. Now loke that ye be a gode man,
and fro hensforth cheseth soche men as shull be of youre counseile and officers
255 for youre housolde, even as ye were now kynge, for so ye shall be with the helpe
of God.”

And Arthur seide, “I put me holly in God and in Holy Cherche and in youre
gode counseile. Therfore chese ye as ye seme be moste to the plesaunce of Jhesu
Criste. And I praye yow clepe to yow my lorde my fader.” Than the archebisshop
260 cleped Antor and shewde hym the ansuere of Arthur. Thanne chose they soche

231 **garcion**, boy. 234 **be stille**, remain. 238 **be pleser**, pleases. 241 **gunne**, began. 243
Passh, Easter; **but**, unless; **terme**, time. 244 **thens**, thence; **ellis**, then; **obbey**, agree; And
yef, Or if; **suffre**, wait. 250 **ordeyned**, assigned. 251 **kepe**, guard. 252 **in warde**, in his
care. 258 **seme**, think.

Arthur and the Sword in the Stone

counsellers as thei wolde; and be counseile of the archebisshop and certein of the barouns, Kay was made stiwarde. And of alle othir thinges thei abode to Pasch, and than thei assembled at Logres.

Whan thei were alle assembled on the Ester Even, the archebisshop drough hem alle to his paleis and rehersed hem the grete wisdom and the gode condicions that he fonde in Arthur. And the barouns seide, “We will not be agein Godes ordenaunce; but it is unto us a mervelouse thynge that so yonge a man, and of so base lyngnage, sholde be lorde and governour of us alle.” The archebisshop seide, “Ye do not as Cristen men thus to be agein Cristes eleccion.” And they seide, “We be not ther agein; but ye have seyn his condicions, and we ne have not don so. And therfore we praye yow to suffre us to knowe his condicions and the manere of hys governaunce that he will ben of hereafter.” The archebisshop seide, “Will ye thus delaye his coronacioun?” And they seide, “We wolde that his sacringe and coronacion be respite to Penticoste. Thus we alle pray and requere.” And the archebisshop it graunted.

Thus departed alle the counseile. And on the morowe whan high messe was seide, Arthur yede to the swerde and toke it oute as lightly as he hadde don before. Than thei seiden alle that thei wolde have hym to their lorde and governoure, and thei praid hym to sette ther the swerde agein. And Arthur ansuerde to the barouns full debonerly and seide he wolde do their requeste, or eny thinge that thei wolde of hym desire. Thanne they ledde hym into the mynster to speke with hym and to assayle his condicions and seide, “Sir, we se well that God will that ye be oure kynge and lorde over us, wherfore we will do to yow oure homage and of yow holde oure honoures. And we beseke yow to respite youre sacringe into Pentecoste, ne therfore shull ye nothynge be interupt but that ye shull be oure lorde and oure kynge. But to this we praye yow to seye us what is your volunté.”

Quod Arthur, “Of that ye sey ye will do to me youre homages and holde youre honoures of me, I may it not receyve, ne I ne ought not to do so, for I may not to yow ne to noon other yeve noon honoures till I have receyved myn. And ther ye sey ye will that I be lorde of yow and of the reame, that may not be byfore that I be sacred and receyved the honoure of the empere. But the respite that ye desire I it

265 **condicions**, personal conduct. 268 **lyngnage**, lineage. 273 **sacringe**, consecration. 274 **respite**, delayed. 280 **debonerly**, courteously. 282 **will**, desires. 283 **of**, from. 284 **respite**, delay. 286 **volunté**, desire. 289 **ther**, where.

Prose Merlin

graunte yow with gode will, for I will not be sacred, ne nothinge that therto aperteneth, ne I may not withouten Godes will and youre volunté."

295 Thanne seide the barouns amonge hemselfe, "Yef this childe live, he shall be right wise; and wele he hath us ansuerde." And than thei seide, "Sir, us semeth with youre advice that ye be crowned and sacred at Pentecoste, and by that terme we shull obby to yow at the comaundement of this archebisshop." Thanne thei made be brought juellis and alle othir richesse and yaf it to hym to se whedir he wolde be covetouse and cacchynge. And whan he hadde alle these yeftes resceyved,
300 the booke seith he departed it: to knyghtes, the stedes and coursers and fresshe robes; and to hem that were joly and envoisies, he yaf the juwellis; and to hem that were averouse, golde and silver; and to sadde wise men, he yaf soche thinge as hym thought sholde hem plese. And with hem he heilde companye and enquired in the contré what myght hem beste plese.

305 Thus departed he the yeftes that were yoven hym, for to knowe of what condicion that he wolde be of. And whan thei sawgh hym thus demened, ther was noon but that hym gretly preyed in theire hertes, and seide that he sholde be of high renon, and that thei cowde not in hym espie no poynte of covetise. But as sone as he hadde the grete avers, he besette hem in soche manere that every man seide that noon cowde have do better, everych astate and degré. Thus thei assaide Arthur
310 and nought cowde fynde in hym but high vertu and grete discretion.

And so thei abiden to the Witsontide, and than alle the baronage assembled at Logres. And ther thei assaide agein at the swerde alle that assaie wolde, but never was ther founde man that it myght remeve fro the ston. And the archebisshop hadde ordeyned redy the crowne and septre and all that longed to the sacringe. On Witson Even, be comen counseile of alle the barouns, the archebisshop made Arthur knyght. Alle that nyght dide he wake in the chief mynster till on the morowe day. And whan it was day, alle the baronye come to the mynster. The archebisshop seide, "Sirs, lo, here is the man that God hath chosen to be youre kynge, like as ye have seyn and knowe. And lo, here is the crowne and the vestementis rioall, ordeyned by youre avys and alle the comen assent. And yef ther be eny of yow
315

299 **cacchynge**, greedy. 300 **departed**, divided. 301 **envoisies**, lively. 302 **averouse**, avaricious; **sadde**, serious. 306 **demened**, behaved. 309 **avers**, properties; **besette**, assigned. 310 **assaide**, tested. 311 **nought**, nothing. 312 **Witsontide**, i.e., Pentecost. 315 **longed**, pertained. 316 **be comen**, by common.

Arthur and the Sword in the Stone

that to this elecccion will not assent, lete hym now sey."

And they ansuerde and seide, "We acorde that in Godes name he be sacred and anoynted with this, that yef ther be eny of us that he be with displesed of that we have be ageyn his coronacion, that he pardon us alle into this day." And therwith
325 thei kneled alle at ones to Arthur, askynge hym mercy. And Arthur for pité gan wepe and seide to hem, "That Lorde whiche hath graunted me to have this honoure mote yow pardon; and as moche as is in me, I make yow quyte." And therwith thei risen up and toke hym bytwene their armes and ledde hym to the vestymenis
330 rioall. And whan he was araied, the archebisshop was redy to synge masse and seide to Arthur, "Now go fecche the swerde wherewith ye shull kepe justice, to deffende Holy Cherche, and mayntene right and the Cristin feith to youre power."

And so they yede in procession to the ston. Thanne seide the archebisshop to Arthur, "Yef thou wilt swere to God and to oure Lady Seint Marye and to oure
335 Modir Holy Cherche and to Seint Petir and to Alle Seyntes, to save and to hold throuth and pees in the londe, and to thy power kepe trewe justice, com forth and take this swerde wherby God hath made the elecccion upon thee."

Whan Arthur herde this, of pité he gan wepe, and so dide many other. And he
340 seide, "As verily as God is Lorde over alle thynge, so He of His grete mercy graunte me grace and power this to mayntene like as ye have rehersed, and I have it well undirstonde." And than he sette hym on his knees, holdinge up his hondes, and than toke oute the cuerde lightly withoute grevaunce, and so bar it upright. And thei ledde hym to the auter, and ther he leide the swerde. And than thei hym
345 sacred and anoynted and dide that longed to a kynge. And after all the servise was ended, thei yede oute of the mynstir and come by the place theras was the ston. And no man cowde knowe where it was become. Thus was Arthur chosen to kynge, and heilde the reame of Logres longe in pees.

324 of that, because. 328 mote, must; quyte, forgiven. 331 wherewith, with which. 333
yede, rode. 342 lightly, easily.

[The Barons' Revolt]

[Summary. In August Arthur convenes his royal court at the city of Carlion, with all the barons in attendance. Arthur honors the barons and offers them gifts; but the barons insult Arthur, refuse his gifts, and order him to leave the country or be killed. Eluding them, Arthur takes refuge in the fortress of Carlion. After fifteen days Merlin arrives on the scene and announces his support for Arthur. He tells the barons that Arthur is not Antor's son but is actually Uterpendragon's son, and Ulfen verifies Merlin's account of Arthur's birth. But the barons, continuing their opposition to Arthur, declare that no bastard will ever be their king; they prepare themselves for battle. Arthur has only a few knights on his side, but the townspeople offer their support. Merlin then confronts the assembled barons. Fols. 35v (line 27)–37v (line 16).]

And as thei spake thus, com Merlin to hem and seide, “Sirs, what is that ye purpose to do? Y do yow to wite ye will gete yourself the werse and shull lese theron more than ye shull wynne; for God will shewe soche wreche that ye shull be full rebuked and foule shamed, the moste quyente of yow alle. For ye beth agein hym with wronge of the eleccion that the archebisshop hath made, like as ye have seyn.”

“Now hath the enchauntor well spoken!” seide the barouns, and begonne for to jape oon to another. And whan Merlin saugh thei made japes of his wordes, he returned anoon agein to Kynge Arthur and bad hym he sholde nothinge be dismayed, for he sholde not drede hem alle; for he wolde hym helpe so that the moste hardy of hem in the oste, er it were nyght, sholde wiesshe to be at home in his owne contree. Than Arthur toke Merlyn and ledde hym aparte, and the archebisshop and Antor and Kay and Ulfyn and Bretell; these seven were prevely in counseile.

And than seide Arthur to Merlin: “Dere frende Merlin, I have herde say that ye loved well my fader Uterpendragon as longe as he was lyvinge; and therfore I

2 do yow to wite, want you to know. **3 wreche**, vengeance. **4 foule**, foully; **quyente**, cunning. **8 jape**, mock.

The Barons' Revolt

praye yow, for the love of God and for norture, that ye will me counseile in this matere, as ye knowe well these barouns do me grete wronge. And I wolde fayn and it plesed yow to be with me as ye were with my fader; and knowe it for trouthe that I shall never do thinge that ought yow to dispiese to my power; and ye have me holpen in my yowthe and in my tendirnesse, and therfore I praye yow helpe to mayntene and to strengthe me to kepe my londe; for by yow and by my fader the archebisshop, and Antor that hath me norisshed, am I come to this that I am atte. And therfore, at the reverense of God, have pité of me and of the mene peple that alle shull be distroied but God sette remedye.”

“Now dismaye yow nothinge, sir,” seide Merlin, “for ye shull not have no fere of hem. But as soone as ye be deliverid of these barouns that beth here now come for to assaile yow, do that I shall yow rede and counseile. This is the trouthe, that the Knyghtes of the Round Table that was stablissched and founded in the tyme of Uterpendragon youre fader — on whos soule God have mercy — thei be gon to sojourne to their owne contrees, for the grete untrouthe that thei syen in this reame. This is in the reame of Kynge Leodegan of Tamalide, that is an olde man and his wif is deed, and of alle his childeren is lefte but oon doughter, to whom the reame shall falle after his deth. And the Kynge Leodegan hath grete werre agien the Kynge Ryon, that is kynge of the londe of gaeautes and of the londe of pastures, wherin dar noon inhabite for diverse aventures and merveiles that ther fallith bothe day and nyght.

“This Kynge Rion of whom I speke is right myghty of londe and of peple, and full of high prowesse, and is right a crewell man. And he hath conquered by force twenty kynges crowned, fro whom he hath taken alle their berdes by force and in dispiste, and sette hem in a mantell whiche he maketh every day a knyght to holde afore hym atte mete at alle tymes whan he holdeth courte rioall; and he hath sworn that he shall never finyssh till he have conquereth thirty kynges. This kynge werreth upon Leodegan and in his londe doth grete damage. This Leodegan marcheth to thy reame, and yef he lese his londe, thow shalt lese thyn after. And

16 for norture, for instruction. **17 fayn**, be glad. **18 and¹**, if. **20 tendirnesse**, inexperience. **21 mayntene**, support. **23 mene**, common. **24 but**, unless. **26 deliverid of**, freed from. **27 rede**, advise. **30 untrouthe**, dishonor. **33 werre**, war. **34 gaeautes**, giants. **39 berdes**, beards. **39–40 in dispiste**, as an insult. **40 mantell**, mantle, cloak. **43 werreth**, makes war. **44 marcheth to**, borders on.

Prose Merlin

45 undirstonde well that he sholde have loste his londe longe er this tyme, ne were
the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table that mayntened his werre, for he is now in
grete age. And therfore I rede that thou go and serve hym a while, the Kynge
Leodegan, and he shall yeve thee his daughter to be thy wif, to whom the reame
longeth after his deth. And she is right feire and yonge, and the wisest lady of the
50 worlde of so yonge age. And of thy londe have thou no doute, for eche of these
barouns that now werreth upon thee, thei shull have so moche to do that litill shull
thei forfete in thy londe, but passinge thourgh the playn contrees.

“But er thou go, do garnysshe thy forteresses of every citee and every castell
with vitayle and men and stiffe of other artrye. And the archebisshop shall a-
55 curse alle tho that in thy londe eny thinge forfete agein thee or in thy contree. And
the archebisshop hymself shall shewe the cursynge in sight of alle the barouns
that now ben here, and comaunde alle the clergie to do the same in heringe of hem
alle. And soone after ye shall se soche thinges, by the helpe of God, that the
60 proudest of hem shall be affraide. And wite ye well that I will be redy with yow in
every grete nede. And whan I crye to yow, ‘Now upon hem,’ set forth boldely and
smyte in amoneg hem, and wite it verily that thei shull be so abaissched that litill
thei shall yow disese, but alle thei shull be fayn to fle as discounfite.” “Sire,”
seide the kynge, “gramercy.” And than thei departed.

And the archebisshop wente upon the walles on high, and the Kynge Arthur
65 dide his peple make hem redy; and [thei] lepe on horse and in that manerwise thei
abide longe tyme. And Merlin made to Kynge Arthur a baner wherein was grete
significacion, for therin was a dragon which he made sette on a spere, and be
semblaunce he caste oute of his mouth fire and flame. And he hadde a grete taile
70 and a longe. This dragon no man cowde wite where Merlin it hadde, and it was
merveilouse light and mevable. And whan it was set on a launce thei beheilde it
for grete merveile. Than toke the kynge the dragon and yaf it to Kay his stiwarde,
in soche forwarde that he be chef banerer of the reame of Logres ever while his lif
doth dure.

45 ne were, if it were not for. **48 yeve**, give. **49 longeth**, will belong. **50 doute**, worry. **52**
forfete, injure; **but**, except; **playn contrees**, open countryside. **53 garnysshe**, provision.
54 vitayle, food; **artrye**, weapons. **61 wite**, know; **abaissched**, surprised. **62 disese**, harm;
discounfite, defeated. **69 it hadde**, got it from. **72 forwarde**, agreement.

The Barons' Revolt

75 Thus arraigned thys mayné the Kynge Arthur, and abode in soche maner on horsbak before the yate before the paleis. And the barouns made picche her teynte and Paveloun斯 through the medowes that were large and faire. And whan the archebisshop that saugh, he asked what thei were come to seche so armed. And thei seide that thei were come to take the maister toure, which thei wolde no man sholde be inne but by hem.

80 Than the archebisshop yaf the scentence full dolorouse, and cursed of God and with all his power alle tho that in the londe dide eny forfeit, or were agen the Kynge Arthur. And the barons seide that for eny cursinge, thei wolde not cesse till thei hadde dryve the kynge oute of the londe. And yef thei myght hym take, thei lete hym knowe that he sholde not escape withoute the deth. And whanne 85 Merlin undirstode their bobaunce, he caste his enchauntement so that alle their logges and pavilouns were alle on fire afame. And thei therof were so abaisshed that hem thought longe er thei myght gete oute into the medowes fro the fyre. But er thei myght come ther thei caught grete harme, and foule were thei skorched with the fier. Merlin ran to the kynge and seide, "Sir, now hastely upon them!"

90 And thei spongé oute at the yate as moche as theire horse myght renne, the speres on their asseles, theire sheldes before her bristes. And thei were so abaisshed and affraide that the moste hardy of hem wolde fain have be thens, for thei wende not that ther hadde be so moche peple withinne. For thei withoute were sodenly many of hem born down with speres, and moche peple slain; for thei were so 95 astoned with the hete of the fier that theire deffence was but symple. Ther was grete slaughter of men and horse. Ther dide Arthur merveillouse dedes of armes that gretly he was beholden, bothe on that oon part and on the tother. He overthrew knyghtes, bothe horse and man, with stroke of spere and of swerde. And therto hadde the princes and barouns grete envye, and assembled hem togeder, and seide 100 that it were grete shame yef he so escaped. And thei were noble knyghtes and hardy, and full of high prowesse, and many of hem carnell frendes.

74 **mayné**, army. 78 **wolde**, wished. 80 **yaf**, gave; **dolorouse**, grievous. 81 **forfeit**, damage. 82 **for**, despite. 83 **yef**, if. 85 **bobaunce**, proud boasts. 86 **logges**, lodges, tents. 90 **moche**, fast; **horse**, i.e., horses. 91 **on their asseles**, under their armpits; **bristes**, breasts. 92 **be thens**, been thence. 92–93 **wende not**, had not thought. 95 **astonished with**, overcome by; **symple**, meager. 97 **gretly**, widely; **beholden**, observed. 100 **yef**, if. 101 **carnell frendes**, blood-relatives.

Prose Merlin

Than seyde Kynge Ventres of Garlot that he wolde hem delyvere in short tyme,
for yef Arthur oonly were deed, the werre of the remenaunt were soone fynysshed.
“Goth on,” seide the othir prynces, “and yef ye have myster we shall yow socoure.”
105 Therwith departed the Kynge Ventres and his company, that was a moche man of
body, and a gode knyght and yonge, of prime barbe. And he was mervelouse
stronge, and he helde a shorte grete-growen spere, sharp grounden, and rode agein
Arthur.

Whan Arthur saugh hym come, he dressed agein hym his horse hede, and griped
110 a grete aisshon spere, the heede sharp trenchaunt of stiell, than smote the horse
with the spores that it ran so faste and so briaunt that alle hadden merveile that it
behelden. And he afficched hym so in the sturopes that the horse bakke bente; and
[thei] smote togeder so hetely upon the sheldes that thei preced thourgh. The Kynge
Ventres brake his spere upon Kynge Arthur, and Arthur smot hym agein so sore
115 that he bar hym over the horse crompe, and his legges upright, that the erthe re-
bounded; but he hadde noon other herte. And whan the Kynge Loth of Orkanye
saugh the Kynge Ventres overthrowen, he was wroth and sorrowfull, for thei were
bothe cosin germains, and also thei hadde wedded two sustres.

Than smote he the horse with spores agein Arthur, that yet hadde he his spere
120 hoill. And whan he saugh the comynge of Kynge Loth, he come agein with grete
hardinesse, as he that of hym hadde no dowte. And [thei] mette togeder on the
sheldis so that the horse ne myght not passe ferther till the tymbres were broken.
And on the passinge forth thei hurtelid togeder so fiercely with sheldes and with
125 her beyes and her helmes that the Kynge Loth was so astonyed that he fley over
his horse crowpe.

Than aroos grete noyse and cry on the oon part and the tother. Ther began a
grete stoure and merveillouse. The knyghtes that were with Kynge Ventres peyned
hem sore to socoure their lorde, and so dide the knyghtes of Kynge Loth. And
Arthur’s knyghtes peyned hem sore to helpe Arthur, and to take and holde these

104 **myster**, need; **socoure**, aid. 105 **moche**, large. 106 **prime barbe**, first beard. 107
grete-growen, thick. 109 **dressed agein**, directed towards. 111 **briaunt**, well. 112 **afficched**,
affixed. 113 **hetely**, heartily; **preced**, pierced. 115 **crompe**, flanks. 115–16 **rebounded**,
shook. 118 **cosin germains**, first cousins. 120 **hoill**, whole. 121 **dowte**, fear. 122 **tymbres**,
spears. 123 **hurtelid**, rushed. 124 **beyes**, mail; **astonyed**, overcome. 125 **crowpe**, haunches.
127 **stoure**, battle.

The Barons' Revolt

130 other two kynges. And so began the medlé on bothe parteis crewell and fellenouse. But with grete peyne were these two kynges rescowed and horsed agein.

Whan Arthur was releved, he drowgh his swerde oute of skabrek, whiche was so cler and bright shynyng, as thei semed that it behelden, that it glistred as it hadde be the brightnessse of twenty tapres brennynge. And it was the same swerde 135 that he toke oute of the ston; and the letteres that were write on the swerde seide that the right name was cleped Escaliboure, whiche is a name in Ebrewe that is to sey in Engliss, "kyttynge iren, tumber, and steill." And the letteres seide trewe, as ye shall heeren hereafter.

Whan the Kyng Arthur hadde drawen oute his swerde, he smote into the prese 140 theras he saugh thikkest, and smote a knyght on the sholder so that he made it descendir from the body. The stroke was grete and the swerde trenchaunt, so that he slyt asonder the sadell and the chyne of the horse, that bothe the knyght and the horse fill on an hepe. And than he smote aboute hym grete strokes, bothe on the lefte syde and on the right side, and made so grete occision aboute hym that all 145 that it syen helde it grete merveile, and ne durst not abide his strokes, but made wey and voided place for drede of his swerde and of his fell strokes.

Whan the seven kynges saugh the damage and the grete losse that they hadde thourgh hym, thei were wroth and right sorowfull, and seyde eche to other, "Now let us alle sette on hym attones and bere hym down to the erthe, for elles may we nothyng conquer." And to this thei acorded. Than thei henten speres grete and rude, and ronnen agein hym with as grete ranndon as their horse myght hem bere, and smyten hym on the shelde and on the haubrek; but [it] is so stronge and sure that no mayle ne perced. But thei bar to hym so harde that Arthur was throwe to erthe, bothe he and his horse on oon hepe.

155 And whan Kay and Antor and Ulfín and Bretell and other of Arthur's frendes syen this, Antor hasted hym to Kynge Carados and met hym so hedylyche with a

130 **medlé**, melee; **fellenouse**, fierce. 131 **peyne**, effort. 132 **skabrek**, scabbard. 133 **semēd**, thought. 134 **tapres brennynge**, burning torches. 136 **Ebrewe**, Hebrew. 137 **kyttynge**, cutting. 139 **prese**, crowd. 141 **descendir**, fall. 142 **chyne**, spine. 144 **occision**, slaying. 146 **fell**, fierce. 149 **attones**, all at once; **for elles**, or else. 150 **henten**, took. 151 **ranndon**, force. 152 **haubrek**, hawberk, mail shirt. 153 **no mayle ne perced**, the mail was not pierced; **bar to hym**, rushed against him. 156 **hedylyche**, headlong.

Prose Merlin

grete spere that bothe the tymbir and stelen heede shewed thourgh his shuldre, and
threw bothe hym and his horse to the erthe, and [he] lay longe in swowne. And
160 Ulfin and Kynge Ventres of Garlot mette so sore togeder that ether bar other to the
grounde, and the horse upon hem. And the Kynge Ydiers and Bretell brake their
spers that oon upon the tother, withoute more harme doyng.

And alle the tother barouns abode upon the Kynge Arthur that yet lay at the
erthe all stonyed, and thei smote on his helme grete strokes and pesaunt, so that
165 thei made hym moche more astonyd. And whan Kay saugh that the kynge was at
so grete myschef, he griped his swerde and come ther the kynge was overthrownen,
and smote the Kynge Loth upon the helme that he made hym stoupe on the arson
of his sadell, and leyde on hym so grete strokes that Loth all astonyed fill to the
grounde. Than come thei to the rescowe, bothe on the oon and on the tother.

170 Ther was grete bataile and stronge stour and grete slaughter, bothe of men and
horse. And so peyned thei that were with Kynge Arthur that thei have hym re-
mounted on his horse. But firste hadde thei grete Payne and traveile and grete
losse, for the meene peple of the town were come oute with all wepen that thei
175 myght have deffensable. And the cry and the noyse rose thourgh all the contré, so
that alle the commons hasted thider all that myghten, and seiden that thei wolden
alle be deed on the same grounde er that Kyng Arthur hadde eny greef, as longe as
thei myghten hym deffende. Than they smyten in amoneg the preesse of the seven
kynges that many they dide sle and wounde, and so put hem to flight whether they
wolde or noon. And so thei yede discounfit. But thei seiden thei sholde never have
180 gladnesse till they were venged, and that they wolde not take of Arthur but his
heed.

The Kynge Arthur, that was full wrothe, and Kay hem chased ferclly before
alle other. And so fill it that Arthur overtoke Kynge Ydiers and wende to smyte
185 hym on the helme, but the horse bar hym to faste, so that the stroke descended on
the horse and slyt hym even asondre behynde the sadill; and Ydiers and his horse
blusshet to the erthe, wherefore his men were gretely affraied leste he hadde be

157 **tymbir**, wood; **stelen heede**, steel head. 162 **abode upon**, surrounded. 163 **stonyed**,
stunned; **pesaunt**, heavy. 164 **astonyd**, stunned. 166 **stoupe**, stoop, droop; **arson**, bow.
169 **stour**, fighting. 172 **meene**, common. 178 **wolde or noon**, wished to or not; **yede**
discounfit, departed in defeat. 179 **not**, nothing. 180 **heed**, head. 182 **fill it**, it happened.
184 **even asondre**, in two. 185 **blusshet**, fell.

The Barons' Revolt

190 slain, and returned hym to rescowe. Ther began the stour grete and merveillouse, for that oon part peyned to withholde and to take Kynge Ydiers, and on the tother syde thei peyned hym to rescowe; and so was ther do more damage and harme than hadde be all the day before. For ther was neyther horse ne man that myght endure agein the swerde of Arthur that was cleped Calibourne, that was all blody of brain and blode so that his armes were so steyned that nought was sein but all reade.

195 Nevertheles, so peyned Ydiers men that they have hym remounted on horsebak; and so ben thei departed discounfited, and the chase lasted longe tyme. And so the seven kynges losten inough, for of all the harneys that thei hade brought thider, thei hadde not with hem the valew of two pence, that all ne was brente with the fier that Merlin made discende amonge theire tentes and pavelouns, saf only the vessels of golde and silver and the money.

186 **stour**, battle. 191 **steyned**, stained. 192 **reade**, red. 195 **harneys**, equipment. 196 **valew**, value; **brente**, burned.

[The Grand Tournament at Logres]

[Summary. After defeating the seven kings, Arthur assembles a huge army, provisions his cities and castles, and goes to his chief city of Logres where he knights many men. For Arthur's benefit, Merlin rehearses much of the recent history of Britain. He tells Arthur about Blase, the hermit who helped Merlin and his mother; about Vortiger and his tower; about Uterpendragon's great love for Ygerne; about Ygerne's daughters and their husbands; and about the five sons of King Lot, revealing that Arthur himself fathered the last one. Merlin also tells Arthur about two kings in Little Britain named Ban and Bors, whose help he should seek. Then Merlin says that he must go to the forest but will return when Arthur needs him.]

Arthur sends Ulfín and Bretell to Little Britain to request the help of Kings Ban and Bors, who are at war with the villainous Cladas de la deserte. Ulfín and Bretell meet Elein, the young wife of King Ban, and they have a fierce encounter with several of Cladas's knights. At last they find King Ban and King Bors and convey Arthur's message. The kings agree to postpone their own concerns and help Arthur. They travel to Logres, where Arthur greets them warmly. Fols. 40r (line 18)–44r (line 33).]

Than these lordes entred into the citee of Logres, began the caroles and the daunces of the ladies and damsels and the tурнemente of yonge bachelers, that all the day dured till the nyght. And the town was thourgh hanged with clothes of silke, and it was feire wedir and clere, for it hadde not yet nothir reyned ne snowed ne frozen, but was as stille as aboute August. And the stretes were strowed with small grasse, and incense and myrre in fires in the stretes thikke. And in the wyndowes [were] many lightes, and so swote savoured thourgh the cytee that fer
men shulde fele the odour.

5

1 **Than**, When. 2 **bachelers**, young knight-aspirants. 3 **thourgh**, completely. 4 **wedir**, weather; **nothir reyned ne**, neither rained nor. 5 **strowed**, strewn. 7 **swote**, sweet. 7–8 **fer men**, men far off. 8 **fele the odour**, smell the fragrance.

The Grand Tournament at Logres

Thus come the lordes togeder into the maister mynster, and whereas the pro-
10 cession hem abode and receyved hem fro fer with humble reverence. That day
songe the archebisshop masse; and whan it was ended, they yede up into the grete
paleyse whereas the mete was arraide with all the coriouse ordenaunce that myght
be don. And the thre kynges were sette togeder at oon table, and the archebisshop
15 and Antor that hadde norischid Arthur. And Kay served at tables as was reson,
and two yonge knyghtes of grete prowesse and were sones to two casteleins —
that oon was cleped Lucas the Boteler, and that other Gifflet, the sone of Doo of
Cardoell, which hadde be maister forester to Uterpendragon. And thei served with
the stiwarde, and with Ulfin and Bretell, that wele cowde hem enforme so that thei
were well served and richely.

20 After mete was the quyntayne reyed, and therat bourded the yonge bachelers.
And after they begonne a turnemente, and departed hem in two partyes, and were
well on eyther syde seven hundred and three hundred of the reme of Benoyk, that
kepte hem togeder in oon partie. And whan the turnemente was assembled redy
25 to smyte togeder, the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Boors and her brother that was a
mervilouse clerke of astronomye — noon in that tyme [was] so expert saf Merlin
— these were lenyng eute at wyndowes, and Arthur and the archebisshop with
hem, and Antor that thei wolde not leve, behelden the turnement on bothe partees;
and [they] saugh the signes, and the stedes to neye and crye and to praunce under
knyghtes and bacheleres, that the hilles and the medowes resounded all abowte.

30 And whan thei were so nygh assembled, than departed oute of the renge a knyght
that was cleped Gifflet, the sone of Do of Cardoell, that satte upon a grey stede
that merveilously was swyfte. And on that other part com agein hym a knyght of
Benoyk that was cleped Ladynas, and he was of grete renoun; and he sette agein
35 Gifflet as faste as the stedes myght renne, theire sheldes aboute their nekkes,
gripynge the speres. And thei smote togeder in the sheldes so grete strokes that

9 maister mynster, main cathedral; **whereas**, there. **10 abode**, waited. **11 songe**, sung;
yede, went. **12 mete**, food; **coriouse ordenaunce**, elaborate arrangement. **13 and**, along
with. **14 norischid**, raised; **reson**, fitting. **15 and¹**, along with; **and were**, who were;
casteleans, castle constables. **17 welche hadde be**, who had been. **18 cowde hem**, could
them. **20 quyntayne reyed**, tilting-board raised; **bourded**, sported. **21 departed hem**,
divided themselves. **22 well**, at least. **24 her**, their. **27 leve**, leave behind. **28 signes**,
banners; **neye**, neigh. **30 oute of**, out onto; **renge**, range, field.

Prose Merlin

bothe brake theire speres, for bothe were they gode knyghtes and covetouse to
gete worship. And they mette so togeder with helmes and sheldes so fiersly that
they semede the yen fill from theire hedes. So eche bar other to the erthe, and
theire horse aboven hem, and bothe lay longe in sowowne that thei semed deed.
40 And every man seide that thei saugh never so crewell incountre betwene two
kynghetes. With that they renged hem on that oon part and on that other for the
rescewe of the two knyghtes.

At the metyng of this turnement was sein many justinges that gladly were
beholden; and some ther were that threw other to the erthe, and some that brake
45 their shaftes withoute fallynge to grounde. Whan the speres were broken, thei
drough oute swerdes and began the turney grete and huge. And ther was oon knyght
that dide many maystries of arms with his body, of whom was moche spoken and
preysed thourgh the contree; and [he] was cleped Lucas the Boteler and [was]
50 cosin germain to Gifflet that hadde the grete encountir. This Lucas smote down
knyghtes and horse and began soche dedis of armes that noon myght his strokes
endure. He arached helmes fro hedes and sheldes fro nekkes, and began to do so
well that it was merveile hym to beholde. And the thre kynges preysed him moche,
and so dide many other.

Grete was the turnement in the medowes by Logres upon the Ryver of Temse,
55 and longe it endured that noon ne wiste who sholde have the better. For on bothe
sides were many worthi men, and longe it was er the two were relieved that hadden
the grete encountre. And whan thei were horsed, thei smeten into the turnemente,
and tho gan Gifflet to do soche dedes of armes that he and Lucas the Botiller, that
thei gate place upon hem of Benoyk and put hem fer bakke in the playn feilde.
60 And than com hem to helpe the three hundred knyghtes of Benoyk that yet ne
hadde no stroke smyten, and on that othir syde come also three hundred all fressh.
And so eche ran to other. Ther was grete stour and merveillouse and harde strokes
smyten, and whan the speres were broken, thei leyde honde to swerdes and began
the chaple so stronge and dured longe tyme. Ther men myght se many feire

36 covetouse, desirous. 38 semede, looked [as if]; yen fill, eyes fell. 41 With that, Then;
42 renged hem, formed themselves. 46 drough, drew. 49 cosin germain, first cousin. 51
arached helmes, knocked off helmets. 54 Temse, Thames. 55 noon ne wiste, no one
knew. 56 er, before. 57 smeten, charged. 58 tho gan, then began. 59 thei gate place,
they gained the advantage; playn, open. 62 stour, fighting. 64 chaple, engagement.

The Grand Tournament at Logres

65 chevalries don on bothe parties, for ther were many yonge bachelers that dide right wele. But above alle other Gifflet the sone of Do of Cardoell and Lucas the Botiller, these tweyn were preised of prowesse above alle other.

70 Whan the turnemente hadde longe indured and they were somdell wery for traveyle, than lept Kay the Stywarde ute of his enbusshement that yet hadde no stroke smyten, he and other five felowes that were well horsed, and theire shildes aboute her nekkes, theire launces in their hondes; and whan thei aproched the renges, thei smote in amoninge hem as faucouns amoninge starlinges, and bar the firste that thei mette to grounde. And when theire speres were broke, thei drough 75 ute swerdes and begonne to do soche maistryes and dedes of armes that Kay hadde the prys and the wurship of the turnemente on that oon part, and on that other part Gifflet and Lucas the Boteller. And the beste after hem was Marke de la Roche, and Guynas le Bleys, and Drias de la Foreste Savage, and Belyas the Amerouse of Maydens Castell, and Blyos de la Casse, and Madyens le Crespes, and Flaundryns le Blanke, and Grassien the Castelein, and Placidas le Gays. These 80 dide so well whan thei come to the turnement that noon myght agein hem endure.

85 But after that the felowes of the reame of Benoyk dide so well that they made all the turnement resorte bak to theire firste place, for the felisship of the table of Logres were gon ute for to chaunge helmes that weren tohewen and rente. And whan thei saugh theire party turned to disconfiture, thei hem hasted and henten speres and come into the turnemente as faste the horse myght hem bere, and smote 90 in amoninge the grettess presse. And Kay cam before alle his felowes as he that was desirouse to shewe his knyghthode, and griped a grete-growen spere. And he was a merveillouse gode knyght yef he ne hadde not be so full of wordes; for his evell speche made hym to be hatid of amoninge his felowes and also of straungers that herden of hym speke, that after refuseden to go in his felisshep to seche aventure in the reame of Logres; that after endured longe tyme, as this boke shall reherse hereafterwarde.

This tecche hadde Kay take in his norice that he dide of sowke, for he hadde it

65 **chevalries**, noble deeds. 68 **somedell**, somewhat. 69 **enbusshement**, hiding place. 75 **hadde the prys**, received the most honor. 82 **for**, because. 83 **tohewen and rente**, hacked and torn. 84 **disconfiture**, defeat; **hasted**, hurried; **henten**, grabbed. 86 **presse**, crowd. 87 **grete-growen**, thick. 93 **tecche**, fault; **in**, from; **norice**, nurse; **sowke**, suck.

Prose Merlin

nothyng of norture of his modere, for his moder was right a gode lady and wise
95 and trewe. But of what Kay seide, his felowes that knewe his costomes ne rought
never; but he was full of myrthe and japes in his speche, for [he] seide it for noon
evyll will of no man, and therat lough thei gladly that knewe his maners. And on
the othir syde, he was oon of the beste felowes and myriest that myght be founde.

Whan he was come to the turnement, as ye have herde, he mette with Lydonas
100 that wele hadde do all the day. And moche he and his felowes peyned to dryve
hem of Logres oute of the feilde. And so thei were nygh at disconfiture. And
whan Kay saugh this he was sory and wroth. Than he smote into the presse and
mette Lydonas in the shelde so sore that he perced thourghoute, and the spere
105 poynte stynte at the haubrek. And he shof so harde that he caste hym to the
grounde upright. And with the same course he smote Grascien of Trebes that he
overthrewe hym and his horse. Than he leyde honde to his swerde and cride
“Clarence,” the signe of Kynge Arthur. And they beheilde hym and saugh the
socour that he brought, for they wende they hadde all loste. Than they returned
and begonne to do so well that they hadde not do so well all the day before.

This justynge that Kay hadde don saugh well the Kynge Arthur and the Kynge
110 Ban and the Kynge Boors his brother; and they preyed moche Kay and seide he
was wight and delyver, and thei beheilde hym gladly. And whan Lucas the Botyller
saugh Kay hadde don so well, he smote the horse the spores into the grettest presse
and smote Blios so harde that he fill to the grounde and the spere fly on peses.
115 Than he pulde oute hys swerde and spronge in amonqe hem and began to yeve
grete strokes and to do so well that moche he was preyed; and so began the
turnement newe to enforce for the rescewe of theire felowes.

Than com Gifflet freschely armed, his spere in fewtre, as faste as his horse
120 myght hym bere, and saugh Blioberes and two of hys felowes that leyde on Kay
the Stiwarde with here swerdes, and heilde hym so short that he hadde grete nede
of helpe, for thei were thre and he was but alone. And also they were thre the
beste of all the turnement. And Placidas hadde hitte Kay on the helme that he

94 **of norture**, from the nursing. 95 **rought**, cared. 96 **japes**, jokes. 97–98 **on the othir syde**, in addition. 101 **nygh at disconfiture**, close to defeat. 104 **stynte**, stopped. 105 **upright**, on his back. 108 **wende**, thought. 110 **saugh**, saw. 112 **wight and delyver**, swift and agile. 114 **fly on**, flew into. 117 **enforce for**, achieve. 118 **fewtre**, its spear-rest. 119 **leyde on**, attacked. 122 **that**, so that.

The Grand Tournament at Logres

lened on his sadill bowe. And whan Gifflet sye this he forthought it sore, and he smote Blioberis so harde that he fill to the erthe, bothe he and his horse, and the spere fly on peces; and [he] leide honde to his swerde and smote Placidas on the helme that he bowed over the arson of his sadell, and after leyde on hym so grete strokes that he was so astooned that he fill to the erthe upright. And Kay hym dressed, that grete nede hadde of that socoure, and after he beheilde and knew that it was Gyfflet that so hadde hym delyvered, and thought to quyte hym that bountee
125 yef he myght. And so he dide withynne short tyme, as ye shall heren heirafter; and for that thei felishiped first togeder, and woned well togeder longe tyme after of
130 grete love, alle the dayes of her lyf.

Whan Gifflet hadde delyvred Kay, as ye have herde, he loked abouthe hym and saugh Jeroas, that moche hadde greved in that stour. Than he griped his swerde and ran upon hym for ire and yaf soche a stroke that the fire fley oute, and ther-with he kytte a pece of his helme; and but the swerde hadde swarved, he hadde ben deed for evermore. The stroke descended upon the lifte sholder that he fill to the erthe all blody. Than arose the noyse and the crye, for well wende thei that this syen that he hadde be deed withoute recover. Than come his felowes to the
135 rescowe, and on that other parte com the felowes of Kay the Stywarde.
140

Than began the medlé grete and hidouse, that many were wounded and overthrownen er that other was rescowed and sette on horse. And the fyve felowes that were before rehersed, whan thei saugh the medlé so begonne, thei smot so five of the first that thei metten that thei blushit to the erthe. Than thei smyten in
145 amoneg hem and began to do so well that alle hadde merveile how they myght it suffre or endure.

Ther began agayn the turnement on bothe partyes, and well thei dide in armes on that oon part and that other, till it drough towarde evenesonge, that the thre kynges descended from the paleise and com into the place whereas was the turnement, and saugh that thei heilde hem even like, that noon ne wiste wele whiche
150

123 **sye**, saw; **forthought it sore**, regretted it greatly. 126 **arson**, bow. 127 **astooned**, stunned; **upright**, on his back. 127–28 **hym dressed**, observed him. 129 **quyte**, repay. 131 **for that**, as a result; **felishiped**, became friends; **woned will**, were bound well. 134 **moche**, many; **greved**, injured; **stour**, battle. 136 **kytte**, cut; **but**, if; **hadde swarved**, had [not] swerved. 137 **lifte**, left. 139 **syen**, saw. 141 **medlé**, melee. 144 **blushit**, fell. 150 **heilde hem even like**, performed very evenly; **noon ne wiste wele**, no one knew clearly.

Prose Merlin

hadde the better.

Than com the thre kynges and hem departed and seide it was tyme to cesse, for it was to late eny more to turney. And so were they departed, and eche yede to his ostell to resten, for therto hadde thei nede and gret myster, for many were ther hurte. And the kynges yede to here evesonge, and than thei yede to soper, and after begonne the carolles and to speke of the turnemente, and asked oon of another how hem semed of whom that hadde don beste. And thei seide that the Kynge Ban hadde fifteen knyghtes that hadde don alther beste more than eny other; and on that other part were eight that hadde don merveiles in armes, and gretly hadde they traveylled and peyned, and moche were thei to alowe. Thus heilde they here tales longe, and alwey they yaf the loos and the pris to Kay the Stiward and to Lucas the Boteller and to Gifflet the sone of Do. These were the thre that beste hadde don, and oft tymes justed and in every nede were redy.

Whan the tables were up, arisen the thre kynges and the archebisshop and Antor and Guynebans, that was brother to the two kynges. Than thei yede into a chamber that was besyde the halle, towarde the gardyn up the River of Temse, and with hem yede tweyne that ne ought not to be foryeten — that was Ulfín and Bretell. And so thei pleide and spake togeder of many thinges.

Than [King Arthur] behelde Ulfín and Bretell, and than he gan to laugh, for he bethought hym on the wordes that Merlin hadde hym tolde, whan thei were gon on his message, how thei were assailed in the deserte of seven knyghtes, and how thei dide hem deliver. Than the kynge cleped hem bothe and comaunded hem be the feith that thei hym oughten, that thei sholde hym telle all the trouthe, how thei hadde spedde in theire message. Whan thei herde the kynge thus speke, that oon loked on the tother and begonne to smyle. And Bretell ansuerde the kynge, that thought well he it knewe thourgh Merlin, and seide, “Sir, wherto sholde we telle you oure spedé in oure journey, for as wele ye do it knowe as we oureself, thourgh hym that hath it tolde, and therfore it were but speche loste.”

Than seide the Kynge Ban, “Who is that that hath hym this tolde?” “Certein,

152 departed, separated. **154 ostell**, hostel; **myster**, necessity. **157 semed**, thought. **158 alther beste**, best of all. **160 alowe**, praise. **161 here tales**, their discussion; **loos**, honor; **pris**, praise. **163 nede**, situation. **164 tables were up**, dinner was over. **166 Temse**, Thames. **171 of**, by. **172 cleped**, called; **be**, by. **173 oughten**, owed. **178 speche loste**, wasted words.

The Grand Tournament at Logres

180 sir, the wisest man of the worlde.” “And where is he?” quod Ban, “and what is his name?” “Sir,” quod Bretell, “it is Merlin, and he resteth in my chamber hereynne, and by his counseile hath my lorde sente after yow.” “Sir,” quod Kynge Ban, “lete hym come hider, for we have moche disired hym for to see, for the merveiles that we have herde of hym spoken.”

185 And Arthur seide that so wolde he do with gode will. And than he sente Ulfen for hym, and therwith anoon entred Merlin into the chamber agein Ulfen and seide “returne”; and so thei wente before the kynge and asked wherfore he hadde sente hym to seche. And the Kynge Ban blissed hym for the merveile that he hadde, how he myght knowe these thingis, and Merlin seide, “Theroft no forse, for hereafter ye shull wite inough.”

190 Than he began to telle a party of his lif; and than com forth Guynebande the clerke and opposed hym of dyverse thynges, for he was a profounde clerke. And Merlyn hym answerde to alle the questiouns that he asked, the very trouthe as it was; and so indured longe the disputacion betwene hem tweyne. And at laste Merlin
195 seide that all for nought he traveylede, “For,” quod he, “the more thou sechest, the more shalt thou fynde.” And than seide Merlin to hem that were aboute hym that he hadde never founde no clerke that ever hadde spoke to hym of so high clergie — ne not Blase that was so holy a man — ne cowde not so moche enquere. Wherto sholde I make yow longe tale? But longe thei spake togeder so that the
200 toon was well aqueynted with that other, and well thei loved togeder.

205 And whan the disputaciouns were don, Merlin com to the two kynges that were his brethern and seide, “Lordynges, ye be worthi men and of high renoun, and also ye beth right feithfull and trewe. And lo, here the Kynge Arthur that ought to be youre lorde, and of hym sholde ye holde youre londes and do hym homage. And he ought to helpe yow and to socoure agein alle men, yef ye have nede.” And thei seide, “Merlin, now telle us how he was chosen to be kynge, and wherfore, and yef Antor knowe whether he be the sone of Uterpendragon.” And Merlin seide, “Ye, withoute faile.” Than he tolde hem alle the thinges like as was befalle, so that the archebisshop and Ulfen it recorded.

210 “Merlin,” quod the Kynge Ban, “we will that thou make us sure of oon thinge

186 agein, toward. 187 returne, come with me. 189 no forse, have no concern. 191 party, portion. 198 clergie, learning; ne not, not even; ne cowde not, nor could. 200 toon, one. 205 agein, against. 208 was befalle, occurred.

Prose Merlin

that we shall aske, for so moche we knowe in yow that ye will not to us sey no
lesynge for all the londe that longeth to the crowne.” “A ha!” quod Merlin, “ye
desire to have me sworn that it be trewe that I sey.” And thei begonne to laugh and
seide that ther nas noon so wise as was he in no reame. And Merlin seide, “I
215 graunte youre requeste and youre desire.” And so thei toke respite till on the morn.

Thus ended their parliament, and [they] departed and yede to bedde; and the
thre kynges and the archebishop lay in oon chamber, for they wolde not departe
on sondre. And moche Guynebande aqueynted hym with Merlin, that taught hym
many grete maistries and many feire pleyes. And Guynebande well hem undirstode,
220 as he that was wise and a grete clerke, so that he wrought somme of the craftes
ofte in the Bloy Breteyne that longe tyme after endured, and as it shall hereafter
reherse.

Whan these thre kynges weren abedde and at her ese that nyght, the storie seith
that they lay till on the morn that thei ronge to messe right erly, for it was a litill
225 afore Halowmesse. Than com Merlin and awoke hem, and opened the two
wyndowes towarde the gardyn, for he wolde that thei hadde lyght therynne. And they hem clothed and arayed and yede to the mynster, and the archebisshop sange
the messe. And than Merlin dide swere before the kynges that Arthur was the
230 sone of Uterpendragon, and that he was begeten on the Quene Ygerne that nyght
that the Duke was slain, and that he was the moste rightfull heire that the londe
myght holde.

After that swore Ulfin that, so God hym helpe and alle seyntes, that it was trewe
all as Merlin hadde rehersed. Whan the two kynges hadde take the oth of these
235 two, anoon thei dide to Kynge Arthur their homage full debonerly as was right;
and the kynge hem receyved with gode herte and sympilliche with wepynge, and
than thei kiste with gode herte for grete love. And than was the joye more than
before. And than thei yede up into the halle to mete, and thei were served as high
men ought to be. And after mete, Arthur and Merlin wente togeder to counseile,
and the two kynges that were brethern, and Ulfin and Bretell and Kay the Stywarde.

240 Thanne seide Merlyn, “Feire lordynges, ye be alle worthy men and trewe, and I
212 lesynge, falsehood. **214 reame**, realm. **219 maistries**, marvels; **pleyes**, skills. **220 wrought**, worked. **221 Bloy Breteyne**, Little Britain (Brittany). **222 reherse**, be told.
223 her ese, their ease. **224 messe**, mass. **232 seyntes**, saints. **234 debonerly**, courte-
ously. **235 sympilliche**, humbly.

The Grand Tournament at Logres

knowe yow alle as wele or beter than ye do youreself. And lo, here youre lorde the Kynge Arthur that is right a worthi man, and a gode knyght shall he be of his honde. And ye knowe well that grete wronge that is do to hym by his barouns of his londe, that will not resceyve hym for their lorde ne do to hym homage as thei
245 ought to do of right, but besy hem to greve hym with all her power. And therfore I pray yow do as I shall yow counsell, and knowe it well that it shall be the beste counseile that I may yow yeve."

And they seide thei wolde do like as he wolde devise, and he [hem] thanked debonerly. And than he seide, "Lordynges, se here the kynge that hath no wif; and
250 I knowe a mayden that is kynges daughter and quenes and of right high lynage, and also she is right feire and of grete valour that no lady ne may have more. And that is the daughter of Kynge Leodegan of Carmelide, that is now an olde man and hath no mo children but this daughter, whos name is Gonnore, to whom the
255 londe moste falle after his discesse. And he hath grete werre agein the Kynge Rion that is of the lynage of geauntes, and he is right riche and right puyssaunt, and yef it happe that he conquerere the reame of Carmelide that marcheth to the reame of Logres that is Arthures, wite it well that Arthur ne shall not longe kepe his londe in pees. And alle the dayes of his lif he shall have werre on alle partees.

"And ne were the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table, that deffende the reame of Kynge Leodegan agein the geauntes, thei sholde have all his londe wasted and distroied. And therfore I counseile yow that ye take with yow certein of youre peple and go with Arthur and abide with the Kynge Leodegan a yere or two, till
260 that ye be with hym well aqueynted. And ye shull but litill while be ther but he shall love yow better than theym that with hym now [be] ther. And knowe it wele that he shall profer Arthur his daughter to be his wif, and therby shall he have his
265 reame all quyte. Ne never after that the geauntes knowe that he hath her wedded shull they not be so hardy to abyde in the contré ne nygh it by a journey."

245 **besy hem**, busy themselves. 254 **discesse**, death; **werre agein**, war against. 255 **geauntes**, giants; **puyssaunt**, powerful. 256 **marcheth to**, borders on. 258 **partees**, sides. 259 **ne were**, if it were not for. 263 **but**, until. 266 **quyte**, saved. 267 **journey**, a day's travel.

[The Battle of Bredigan Forest]

[Summary. Merlin assures King Ban that assisting Arthur against the rebelling barons will work to Ban's advantage in Benoyk later, and Merlin predicts that Ban will win control of that realm. Ban agrees to help, summons his forces, and sends them off to rendezvous with Arthur at Bredigan Forest. Meanwhile, the barons swear vengeance against Arthur and recruit several new allies. A brief digression follows, on Brutus's founding of Britain and on the origin of the placenames Logres, Bloy Bretaigne, and Cornwaile. Then Merlin and the army from Little Britain arrive at Bredigan, joining forces with Arthur. Merlin tells Arthur that he must win the support of the people with gifts, and Merlin amazes Arthur and his friends by telling them that a great treasure lies buried in the ground beneath them. Then Arthur's troops, and those of Ban and Bors, are deployed in companies and prepare for the battle. While this is going on, the Danes invade the barons' lands in the north of Britain. Fols. 47v (line 21)–51v (line 10).]

5

10

The boke seith that while Kynge Arthur and Kynge Ban of Benoyk and Kynge Boors of Gannes ordeyned her batailes in this wise as ye have herde, that nyght the eleven kynges ne toke noon hede to sette no wacche in thayr hoste, but wente to their bedde and slepte as thei that nothyng knewe that her enmyes were so nygh. But oon feire fortune thei hadde, that alle the eleven kynges lay in the kynges teynte that was cleped Roy de Cent Chivaliers, and thei ne wende not to have no dred of no man. And as thei thus were slepyng, befill that Kynge Looth was in a ferfull dreme, for hym semed that he saugh so grete a wynde arise that it caste down howses and stepelis of chirches, and after that ther come a thounder so grete and merveilously sharpe that hym thought all the worlde trembled for fere and drede; and after that com a water so sharply that drof down the howsynge

2 ordeyned her batailes, deployed their troops; **wise**, fashion. **3 ne toke noon hede**, did not bother. **5 feire fortune**, bit of good luck. **6 ne wende not**, did not expect. **11 a water**, i.e., a flood; **drof down**, destroyed; **howsynge**, buildings.

The Battle of Bredigan Forest

and a grete parte of the peple, and hym semed how hymself was in grete pereile to drowne.

15 And as the Kynge Loth was in this affray, he dede awake and hym blissed and was sore abaissched of this dreme that he was in; and [he] aroos and apaireiled hym and yede to his felowes and hem dide awake and tolde hem his avision. And thei asked hym fro whiche part com the water; and he seide from the foreste com all the rage and the tempeste, as hym semed. And thei seide thei knewe verily that thei sholde hastily have bataile, and that merveillouse. And therwith thei arisen 20 and awoke alle the knyghtes therynne, and comaunded hem to serche all the contré environ that thei were not supprised of no peple. And thei armed hem right wele, and lepte on ther horses and rode serchynge the contrey. And the eleven kynges hem armed and araide in the beste maner that thei cowden.

25 And than Merlin began to haste Arthurs peple, that well knewe the governaunce of the tother party; and thei com so faste on that thei toke noon hede till thei were even fallen on hem that the contrey serched. And whan thei saugh hem armed, thei hadde grete drede and asked Merlin that mette with hem formeste what peple thei were. And Merlin seide it was the Kynge Arthur that was come to chalange 30 his londe agein alle hem that therwith wolde be greved.

35 Whan thei herde these wordes, thei turned bakke and smote the horse with spores; and whan thei come into the hoste thei cryde, “Treson, treson. Now as armes, lordes, gentill knyghtes, for ther was never so grete nede; for lo! here cometh Arthur even at youre teyntes.” And thei ronne to here armes, that yet were in her beddys, and hadde no leyser hem to clothe; and that was yet a fair happe for hem that her horses were redy sadellyd. But yet for all that thei myght hem hasten, thise other were upon hem er thei myght be half araied of her harneyse.

12 **hym semed**, he thought. 14 **affray**, state of fright; **hym blissed**, crossed himself. 16 **yede**, went; **hem dide awake**, awakened them. 17 **fro whiche part**, from what direction. 19 **hastely**, soon. 20–21 **contré environ**, surrounding country. 21 **that**, so that; **were not**, would not be. 23 **araide**, prepared; **cowden**, could. 24 **governaunce**, actions. 25 **toke noon hede**, i.e., did not stop. 25–26 **were even fallen on hem**, encountered them. 26 **thei**, i.e., the scouts of the eleven kings. 28 **chalange**, i.e., protect. 29 **agein**, against. 30 **spores**, spurs. 31 **as armes**, to arms. 33 **even at**, near to. 34 **a fair happe**, lucky. 36 **araied of her harneyse**, ready with their equipment.

Prose Merlin

And therwith hem fill a grete encomberaunce that Merlin sente hem soche a wynde and tempeste that her tentes fill upon their hedes; and amonge hem was soche a truble that unethe myght eny of hem se other ne heren. And that was a
40 thynge that gretly hem distrubled in her armynge, and therynne thei caught grete damage, for Arthurs peple smote in amoneg hem and overthowe and slowgh all that thei myght areche. But the eleven kynges were departed and desevered, and yeden oute into the playn feldes withoute the tentes, and made blowe a trompe
45 high and clere. And that was don for that all theire men sholde drawe towarde hem.

And thei dide so, as many as myght aschape fro hem that of hem hadde no pyté, for ther was of hem so many slain in that grete myschef that of the thirde parte thei were well delyvered; and therto thei saugh hem of so grete puyssance that thei turned to flight towarde her baner whereas thei herde the trompe sowne, for
50 the kynges were stynted at the entré of the forest by a river, and ther assembled alle her peple that thei myght have. And so thei encresed litill and litill, till thei were 20,000 that fledde, some heere and some there, that ne myght not come to here baner but with harde peyne. And so were thei sory and wroth for theirre grete damage and losse, and sore thei compleyned theirre grete annoye. And 10,000 [were]
55 lefte liggyng in the felde, what dede and wounded, that no power hadde hem to diffende ne for to greve noon other.

Whan the Kynge Arthur saugh that all the herbegage was to hym belefte, than he com to Merlin and asked hym how he sholde do. Quod Merlin, “I will telle yow what ye shall do. Ye shall go here before to the passage at the forde whereas be
60 gadered 20,000 men, and ye shall fight with hem and make hem entende to yow. And the Kynge Ban and his brother shull go abowte and come on the tothir syde of hem and come on hem fro the foreste. And thei shull so be astoned that in hem shall be but litill defence.”

Than thei departed the toon fro the tother. And the kynge yede thedir as the
37 fill, befell; **encomberaunce**, difficulty; **that**, because. 39 **unethe**, scarcely; **ne heren**, nor hear. 41 **slowgh**, slew. 42 **areche**, reach; **departed**, separated. 43 **playn**, open; **withoute**, beyond; **trompe**, trumpet. 46 **aschape**, escape. 48 **well delyvered**, i.e., destroyed; **puyssance**, might. 49 **sowne**, sound. 50 **stynted**, stationed. 57 **herbegage**, i.e., encampment. 58 **how**, what. 60 **entende**, submit. 62 **astonied**, surprised. 64 **toon**, one; **yede**, went.

The Battle of Bredigan Forest

65 barouns were abidyng, that ne wende to have no drede of noon other saf of hym. And of hym thei ne drede but litill, for thei trowed hem wele to diffende agein gretter peple than ther was with hym. And the Kynge Ban torned towarde the foreste, and Arthur rode with his company till he com theras the eleven kynges were togeder assembled.

70 Whan thei come to the passage of the forde, ther sholde ye have seyn speres perce thourgh sheldes and many knyghtes liggyng in the water, so that the water was all reade of blode. And Kay heilde so the pas with the baner and payned that his company gate over. And whan the eleven kynges saugh so small a peple, hem thourgh preced and rushed, for thei were but 4,000, and thei were more than 20,000; 75 thei hadde therof grete dispite and shame, and diffended hem apertly.

[Summary. A fierce battle ensues in which Ulfen and Bretell and Kay and Gifflet do bold deeds. When the barons begin to get the upperhand, Arthur enters the fray and does many marvels, including unhorsing the King de Cent Chevaliers and rescuing Kay and Gifflet. Fols. 52v (line 6)–54r (line 8).]

Whan the Kynge Arthur saugh this nede, he turned that wey as wroth as a lyon and leide aboute hym on bothe sides and slow all that he raught with a full stroke, so that thei voyded hys strokes and made hym rome. And Kay and Gifflet pressed to the kynges, that moche hem hadde greved and with hem sore foughten. And on the tother side faught Bretell and Ulfen and Antor with the Duke Escam of Cambenyk and ageyn Tradilyvaunt and ageyn Clarion of Northumberlonde and ageyn Carados that was a noble kyngh; so thei made hem to blenche thider as Kynge Arthur faught, that dide merveilouse prowesse of werre. Ther thei stynte, that oon agein the tother, for ther was the maister baner. And ne hadde be the 80 Kynge Arthur hymself, alle thei hadden be discounfited, for these kynges were odde noble knyghtes, and more peple be the toon half than on Arthurs syde; and 85

65 ne wende, did not expect. **66 trowed hem wele to diffende**, believed themselves capable of defending. **68 theras**, where. **73 gate**, crossed; **small**, few. **74 thei**, i.e., Arthur's men. **75 dispite**, insult; **apertly**, boldly. **77 leide**, struck; **slow**, slew; **raught**, struck. **78 voyded**, retreated from; **rome**, room. **78–79 pressed to**, attacked. **81 ageyn**, against. **82 blenche**, move. **83 stynte**, stood. **84 ne hadde be**, had it not been for. **85 hadden be discounfited**, would have been defeated. **86 odde**, brave.

Prose Merlin

therfore it myght no longe endure withoute grete damage.

Than com upon hem the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Boors from the foreste,
where thei wende to have no drede of no man lyvinge. And whan thei were come
90 and thei hem sye, thei yaf ascry that all the foreste and river resounde; and thei
saugh well that the losse and the damage moste nede falle upon hem. Thanne the
princes and the barouns drowen apart togeder in the medowes and devised among
hemself what thinge that thei myght do.

[Summary. The barons devise a strategy enabling them to address the separate attacks of Arthur's forces and those of Ban and Bors. The heavy fighting that follows is fairly even until King Ban begins to do impressive deeds. When several of the rebels set upon Ban together, Arthur comes to his aid. Fols. 54r (line 24)–55v (line 34).]

Than fill it that the Kynge Arthur fonde the Kynge Ban on fote in myddell of
95 the presse, his swerde in his fiste, that hym deffended so vigerously that noon ne
durst hym aproche. And he was a moche knyght and a stronge out of mesure. And
he lepe upon hem thourgh the presse; and whan he neyghed ner thei made hym
wey, for so thei douted his strokes that ther was noon so hardy that durst hem
abyde. Therwith com the Kynge Arthur brekyng the presse, gripynge his swerde
100 all besoyled with blode of men and of horse, for he dide many merveilles of armes
with his body. And whan he saugh the Kynge Ban at so grete myschef, he wax
wode for ire. Than he rode to a knyght that [was] richely horsed, and Arthur lifte
up the swerde and smote hym thourgh the helme soche a stroke that he slyt hym
to the teth, and he fill to grounde. Than he toke the horse be the reynes and ledde
105 it to Kynge Ban and seide, “Frende, lepe on lightly, for in evell tyme ben oure
enmyes entred; anoon shall ye se hem forsake the felde.”

Whan the Kynge Ban was horsed be the helpe of Kynge Arthur, he was gladde
of that hadde hym founden. And than thei two smyten in amonge her enmyes.
And whan the tother perceyved the grete damage that the Kynge Arthur and the

89 **thei²**, i.e., the barons. 90 **sye**, saw; **yaf ascry**, gave a shout. 95 **presse**, throng. 95–96 **noon ne durst**, no one dared. 96 **moche**, large. 97 **neyghed ner**, came near. 98 **douted**, feared. 99 **brekyng the presse**, breaking through the crowd. 101 **myschef**, trouble. 101–02 **wax wode for ire**, became enraged. 106 **anoon**, soon.

The Battle of Bredigan Forest

110 Kynge Ban hem dide her peple that were so loste and discounfited, and that thei
hadde loste all talent of wele doyng and turned the bakkes. And thei hem chased to
the wode; but ther were many slain and defouled. So were thei distreyned betwene
the wode and the river. Ther thei stalled and abode, and knewe well yef thei hadde
be in the playn thei hadde be in pereyle of deth. Than the Kynge Loot and the
115 Kynge Ventres and the Kynge de C. Chivalers and the Kynge Carados and the
Kynge Urien and the Kynge Ydiers and the Kynge Brangore and the Kynge of
Northumbirlonde helde hem togeder. Whan Marganors hem seide and badde hem
suffre and abide while thei myght, for to socour theire peple: “for yef thei be thus
disconfite, oure peple shull be all loste and distroied.”

120 Thus chased hem the Kynge Arthur and the Kynge Ban before alle other till thei
come to a grete water and a depe, whereas thei that fledde hadde made a brigge of
tymber and of plankes. And thei passed over the water after the tother, and so
enchased hem the Kynge Arthur and the Kynge Boors that thei come to that brigge
that was so made and wolde passe over after hem. And than com Merlin and seide,
125 “Kynge Arthur, what wilt thou do? Haste thou overcome thyn enmyes? Go into
thi londe and lede with thee thy frendes that thou haste brought with thee, and
hem serve and worshipe at theire pleiser, for I moste go into the wode for to my
distynee aboute Blase, that right moche is my frende.”

130 Anoon he departed from Arthur and entred into the forest and fonde Blase, that
longe after hym hadde desired. And than he asked hym where he hadde so longe
abiden. And Merlin tolde hym how he hadde be aboute the Kynge Arthur for to
counseile hym. And Blase seide he dide but foly to abide so moche abowte hym,
saf only for to counseile the crowne royall. Than Merlyn tolde hym alle thynges
135 that were falle to the Kynge Arthur seth he departed fro hym, and how he yede for
to fecche socour in the Litill Breteyne. And than he tolde hym how the hethen
peple were entred into the londes of the barouns and how thei werred. And Blase
wrote alle these thinges that Merlin hym tolde and sette hem in his boke, and

110 **discounfited**, defeated. 111 **talent**, desire. 112 **defouled**, slaughtered; **distreyned**,
trapped. 113 **yef**, that if. 117 **Whan**, Then; **Maganors**, the King de Cent Chevaliers's
steward; **seide**, addressed. 117–18 **badde hem suffre**, told them to persevere. 119
disconfite, defeated. 124 **wolde**, wished to. 125 **what wilt thou do**, what do you wish to
do; **Haste thou**, Have you. 131 **be aboute**, been with. 134 **were falle to**, had happened
to; **seth**, since; **yede**, went. 136 **werred**, fought.

Prose Merlin

therby have we the knowleche therof. But now leveth the tale to speke of Merlyn
and of Blase, and speketh of Kynge Arthur and of the twey other kynges that ben
140 in his company.

Now seith the boke whan that Kynge Arthur hadde discounfited hys enmyes
and the eleven kynges and a duke, by the counseile of Merlin that was gon to
Blase his maister in Northumberlonde, than he returned gladdé and joyfull of that
oure Lorde hath yove hym the victorye of hys enmyes. Than he com to the logges
145 wherof the walles layn at the erthe, as Merlin hadde beten hem down. Than thei
leged and pight teyntes and pavilouns and hem rested, and lete the hoste be
wacched. And Leonces and Pharien hadde the governaunce of the wacche, and
Gifflet and Lucas the Botiller. Pharien and Leonces kepte towarde the wode, and
Gifflet and Lucas towarde the medowes, and alle the tother lay and rested hem till
150 day. And than thei ete and dranke grete plenté, for thei hadde inough of vitaile.

In this manere rested the hoste till in the morowe, till the Kynge Arthur made
be leide on an hepe all the wynynge and the richesse that ther was geten. And
when thei hadde herde messe, thei com agein theras the tresour was leide togeder.
And the thre kynges it departed aboue to soche as hem semed was for to do, to on
155 lesse and to another more, after that the persones were of astate or degré. And so
thei departed to pore knyghtes and squeres that never after were pore, insomoche
that thei kepte not to hemself the valew of a peny.

And after thei departed stedes and palfreyes and clothes of silk, and yaf all
160 while ther was ought to departe, and sente agein alle knyghtes and squyres and
sergeautes and other meyné, saf forty that sholde go with hem into Carmelide.
Thus yede Pharien and Grassien and Leonces, lorde of Paerne, and ledde with
hem her peple for to kepe her londe and her contrey, that the Kynge Claudas ne
dede hem no stade. Whan these barouns were come into theire contrey, thei

138 **therby**, thus. 141 **discounfited**, defeated. 143 **of that**, because. 144 **yove**, gave.
146 **leged**, lodged; **pight**, pitched. 147 **wacched**, guarded. 150 **vitaile**, food. 152 **on an
hepe**, in a pile; **wynynge**, winnings; **richesse**, valuable things. 153 **theras**, where. 154
departed aboue, distributed; **as hem . . . do**, as they thought fitting; **on**, one. 155 **after
that**, according to. 157 **hemself**, themselves. 158 **departed**, bestowed; **stedes**, steeds,
warhorses; **palfreyes**, fine riding horses. 159 **ought**, anything; **sente agein**, sent away.
160 **meyné**, retainers. 161 **yede**, went. 162 **that**, so that. 162–63 **ne dede hem no stade**,
did not harm them.

The Battle of Bredigan Forest

165 boughten londes and rentes, wherwith thei leved after in grete honour with the aver that was departed that made hem after riche.

170 And the Kynge Arthur lefte in his contrey the two kynges with hym, as ye have herde. So thei sojourned at Bredigan that was in the marche of Breteyne the Grete and in the marche of Carmelide. And ther thei abode Merlin that sholde come to hem thider. And on the morow whan Arthur sholde departe his peple, and that he hadde made hem grete feste and grete joye at Bredigan and the kynges hadde dyned, they yed up into the loges that were upon the ryver for to se the medowes and the gardynes.

175 And as thei behelden, they saugh come a grete karl thourgh the medowes by the ryver with a bowe in his honde and his arowes under his girdell. And in the brooke were wylde gees that hem dide bathe as theire kynde is to do. The karll drough his bowe, and with a bolte smote oon in the nekke that it brake in sondre. Then he shette another bolte and slowgh a malarde. Than he toke hem and henge hem be the nekkes at his girdell, and yede towarde the loges whereas the thre kynges were lenyng and hadde well seen the shotte of the karll. And whan he com nygh 180 the loges, he shette another bolte and whowped to the Kynge Arthur.

185 And whan the karll com nere, the kynge asked yef he wolde selle the briddes. And the cherll seyde, “Ye, with gode will.” Quod the kynge, “How wilt thou yeve hem?” And he ansuerde no worde. And the cherll hadde on grete boysteis shone of netes leder and was clothed in cote and hoode of rosset, and he was girde with a thonge of blakke shepes skyn. And he was grete and longe and blakke and rowe rympled. The cherll also seemed to be crewell and fell, and seide to the kynge, “I ne knowe nought of the kynge that loveth tresoure and is regrater and a

164 **rentes**, properties. 165 **aver**, wealth. 166 **lefte**, kept. 167 **in the marche**, on the border. 168 **abode**, waited until. 169 **and that**, after. 171 **yed**, went. 173 **grete karl**, huge rustic. 174 **girdell**, belt. 175 **gees**, geese; **kynde**, nature; **drough**, drew. 177 **shette**, shot; **slowgh**, slew. 178 **yede**, went. 180 **whowped**, cried out. 181 **yef**, if. 182–83 **How wilt thou yeve hem**, What do you want for them. 183 **cherll**, churl. 183–84 **boysteis shone**, rough shoes. 184 **nete's leder**, cow's leather; **rosset**, russet (homespun cloth). 185 **grete**, large; **longe**, tall; **blakke**, dark (from the sun). 186 **rowe rympled**, rough-bearded, shaggy, unkempt; fell, fierce. 187 **I ne knowe nought of the kynge**, i.e., I have never heard of a king. 187–88 **regrater and a wyssher**, i.e., one having a monopoly on goods.

Prose Merlin

wyssher, that dar not make a pore man riche that myght hym do gode servyse.”

Quod the cherll, “I yeve yow these briddes, and yet have I no more than ye se.

190 And ye have not the herte for to yeve the thirde parte of youre gode that in the erthe doth rote er ye have it uptaken, and that is nether youre profite ne worship.”

Whan these kynges herde the wordes of the karll, thei beheelde the oon the tother; and than thei seiden, “What devell! Who hath tolde this cherll?” Than the Kynge Ban cleped the karll and asked hym what he seide; and the karll ne ansuerde no worde but bad the Kynge Arthur to do take the briddes and than he wolde gon hys weye. “Now by thy faith,” quod Kynge Ban, “telle me who hath tolde thee that the Kynge Arthur hath tresour in the erthe.” Quod the cherll, “A wylde man tolde me that is cleped Merlin. And also he tolde me that he sholde this day come to yow for to speke with yow.”

200 In the tyme that thei spake thus togeder, come Ulfin oute of a chamber and come thider as the kynge spake to Merlin. “Go forth thy wey,” quod the kynge; “how may I thee trowe that thou haste spoke with Merlin?” Quod he, “Yef ye will, leve me; and yef ye ne will, leve ne nougnt. For I ne leve yow nougnt, and so be we quyte.” And whan the cherll hadde seide thus, and after Ulfin a while hadde listened, and than he began to smyle and wiste wele it was Merlin. And whan Merlin saugh Ulfin he seide, “Sir stiwarde, take these briddes and do dight hem for youre kynges soper, that hath not the hardynesse to make a man riche that myght hym well guerdon, and to hym that this day hath spoke with the man that hath hym tolde of the grete riches unther the erthe.”

210 Than began Ulfin to lawgh right harde and seide, “Sir, yef it plese yow, come with me here above, for I wolde speke with yow of many thynges.” And he seide he wolde go with gode will. And the kynge beheilde Ulfin and saugh hym laugh hertely, and than he required hym to telle why he dide laugh so sore. And he seide

188 that dar not, that would not. **190 gode**, wealth. **191 that is nether . . . worship**, that works neither to your profit nor to your honor. **192–93 beheelde the oon the tother**, they stared at each other. **193 What devell**, What the devil. **194 cleped**, called. **195 bad**, asked. **198 sholde**, should. **202 trowe**, believe. **202–03 Yef ye . . . leve ne nougnt**, If you wish to, believe me; and if you do not wish to, then do not believe me. **203–04 For I ne leve . . . so be we quyte**, For I do not believe you at all, and so we are even. **205 wiste**, knew. **206 dight hem**, prepared them. **207 hardynesse**, courage. **208 guerdon**, reward. **210 yef**, if.

The Battle of Bredigan Forest

that he sholde wyte another tyme.

215 Than yede the cherll, so araide as he was, and mette with Kay the Stiward and
seide, "Holde here, sir seneschall, now may ye plume; and as gladly mote the
kynge hem ete as I it hym yeve."

220 With that com Bretell, and hadde wele herde that Merlin hadde seide and also
that Ulfín hadde seyd to hym, that better semed a cherll than eny that was in the
worlde. And whan he hadde herde hem awhile speke, he perceyved that it was
Merlin and began to lawgh undir his mantell right harde. And the kynge herde
hym and badde hym telle the cause why that he lowgh. And he tolde he wolde
telle hym yef the carll wolde assente. And the cherll than began to laugh lowde
and seide to Ulfín, "Tell on, for I will that thow do so."

225 Than seide Ulfín to the Kynge, "Sir, ne knowe ye not youre frende Merlin and
ne sholde not he come to speke with yow today?" And the kynge seide, "Yesse.
Wherefore sey ye?" "Sir," quod Ulfín, "I sey for that ye knowe hym not so wele
as I wolde that ye dide. For ye se somme two tymes or thre, and yet ye ne knowe
hym not, and therof I merveyle." Whan the kynge undirstode Ulfyn, he was gretly
230 dismayed that he wiste not what for to ansuere. "Certes," quod Ulfín, "ye have
seyn hym many tymes, and that I knowe well." Than seide the kynge, "Telle me,
what is this cherll?" "Sir," quod Ulfín, "sholde ye ought knowe Merlin yef ye
myght hym se?" "Yee, trewly," seide the kynge, "right wele." "Thanne beholde
this worthi man, and loke yef ye have ever hym seyn."

235 And the kynge hym behelde and seide that he hadde hym never seyn beforne.
"Trewly," quod Ulfín, "he may sey that evell hath he besette his servise on yow.
For it is Merlin that so moche hath don for yow and loved so moche and holpen of
all that he myght do or sey agein alle tho that upon yow do werre." And whan the
Kynge Arthur undirstode this, he blissed hym for merveile. And also the two kynges
240 were sore amerveiled and seide, "How may this be Merlin? Is it thus? Never dide
we se yow in soche habite." And he seide that myght well be so.

214 *wyte*, know. **215** *araide*, dressed. **216** *plume*, pluck; **mote**, might. **217** *yeve*, give.
218 *and hadde*, who had; *that*, what. **221** *mantell*, cloak. **225** *ne knowe ye not*, do not
you know. **225–26** *and ne sholde not he*, i.e., and that he intends to. **227** *for that*,
because. **228** *wolde*, wished. **232** *what*, who. **236** *evell*, poorly (evil); *besette*, given;
on, to. **238** *agein*, against; *tho*, those. **239** *blissed hym*, crossed himself. **241** *habite*,
clothing.

Prose Merlin

“Sirs,” seide Ulfín, “dismaye yow not, for he shall shewe yow the same semblaunce that ye saugh hym in firste.” And thei seide that thei wolde that fayn se. “Now,” quod Ulfín, “come with me into this chamber, for I wolde speke with yow.” And thei com in. And than seide Ulfín, “Sirs, no merveile nought of Merlins dedes, for he shall shewe yow semblaunces inowe. And at alle tymes whan he will, he chaungeth hym by forse of his art whereof he is full. And Gynebans the clerk it witnesseth wele. And wyte ye well that ye shall hym se yet many tymes that ye shull not knowe that it is he. And for that he chaungeth hym so ofte he is dowted of many a man, for ther is many oon in this londe that full gladly wolde se hym deed. Now lete us go in this chamber, and ye shull se hym in the same semblance that ye saugh hym firste whan he aqueynted hym with yow.”

And whan thei come agein, they fonde Merlin in the halle in the same semblaunce that thei hadde seyn hym in firste. Than thei ronne to hym and embraced hym and made hym grete joye, as thei that hym loved with gode herte. Than thei satte and japed and pleyde with hym alle togeder, and of the shetynge that thei hadde seyn, and of the wordes that he hadde seide to the kynge. And than seide Arthur, “Merlin, now I knowe that ye love me, whan with so gode chere that ye have yove me these fowles, and that I sholde ete hem for youre love.” And Merlin began to laugh. Thus thei abode in joye and solace till the Lenton.

And so it fill that by the love of Merlin Arthur aqueynted hym with a mayden, the feyrest that myght be founden. This mayden was cleped Lysanor and was daughter to the Eirll Sevain that was deed; and [she] was heyr of the Castell of Campercorenyn. This maide was come to do homage to the Kynge Arthur, and with here other barouns that dide homage as soone as he hadde conquerid these eleven kynges. For thei doubted that he sholde bereve hem of her londes, and also thei thought that thei myght no better lorde have than hym. And some ther were that come with gode will, and some for drede of more losse.

And this mayden that was feire com to Bredigan whereas the kynge sojourned, and was at hoste with a riche burgeys. And so be the helpe of Merlin he spake

243 **semblaunce**, appearance; **fayn**, happily. 245 **no merveile nought**, do not marvel at. 246 **inowe**, enough; i.e., aplenty. 247 **will**, wishes; **forse**, the power. 248 **wyte**, know. 249 **for that**, because. 250 **dowted of**, feared by. 254 **ronne**, ran. 256 **japed**, joked; **shetynge**, shooting. 258 **yove**, given. 260 **abode**, continued; **the Lenton**, the time of Lent. 266 **douted**, feared; **bereve hem of her**, deprive them of their. 270 **at hoste**, lodged.

The Battle of Bredigan Forest

with her previly and lay with her anyght; and that nyght upon her was begeten Hoot, that after was a full noble knyght and was also a felowe of the Rounde Table. This Hoot was of right high prowesse, as ye shull heren hereafter.

275 And at myd-Lenten the kynge toke leve of the damsell, and he and the other two kynges toke their wey into Tamelide, hymself the fowrtithe. But of hem now ne speketh not the tale no more now at this tyme, but returneth to speke of the eleven kynges that were disconfited, and telleth where thei be com and whider thei yeden.

274 **myd-Lenten**, the middle of Lent. 275 **fowrtithe**, the fortieth man [in the company].
277 **disconfited**, defeated; **yeden**, went.

[The Young Squires]

Now seith the story that full of sorowe and hevynesse were the barouns of
theire disconfiture and losse, and [thei] riden forth playnyng and regretinge their
grete damage; ne thei ne ate ne dronke of all that nyght, and no more ne hadde thei
don of all the day before, for the bataile hadde endured all the day. And it was full
5 colde weder and grete froste, and therfore thei were at more disese for hunger
and for grete colde.

Than thei com to a citee that was cleped Sorhant and was a town of the Kynge
Uriens. And a nevew of the kynges resceyved them with grete joye, and his name
was cleped Bandemagu. Ther thei rested and esed hem in the town as thei that
therto hadde grete nede, for many of hem were hurt and wounded that abode
10 stille till thei were heled. But thei were not ther thre dayes whan the messagers of
Cornewaile and of Orcanye com to hem and tolde hem the losse and the distruxion
of the sarazins that dide thourgh ther londes and were at a sege before the Castell
Vandeberes, and hadde filde the londe full of here peple, and seide how thei sholde
15 never be remeved ne driven oute of the londe. And whan the lordes [herde] these
tidynges, ther ne was noon of hem but their fleishe trymbled for this aventure that
was hem befallen, for well thei knewe that thei were distroyed; and than thei
wepte full tenderly.

[Summary. King Brangore summons the rebel leaders to a consultation and tells them they can expect no help from others in addressing the Saxon invasion. The kings decide to garrison several of their cities and to defend those strongholds against the Saxons. One of the strongholds is King Ydiers's city of Naunes, and a second one is King Ventres's city of Wydesande. Fols. 58v (line 9)–60r (line 34).]

2 **disconfiture**, defeat; **playnyng** and **regretinge**, lamenting. **3** **ne thei . . . dronke of**,
they neither ate nor drank. **3–4** **no more . . . don of**, i.e., nor had they eaten. **5** **more**
disese, great discomfort. **12** **Orcanye**, Orkney. **12–13** **distruxion of**, destruction caused
by. **13** **dide**, i.e., moved.

The Young Squires

[Kynge Ventres] hadde a sone be his wyf, a yonge bacheler of sixteen yere of
20 age, that was of merveilouse grete bewté. And the wif of Kynge Ventres was
suster to Kynge Arthur on his moder side, Ygerne, that was wif to Uterpendragon,
and wif also to Hoel, Duke of Tintagell, that begat Basyne, the wif of Kynge
Ventres. And upon this Basyne begate he his sone that was so gode a knyght and
hardy, as ye shall here herafter, and how he was oon of the two hundred fifty
25 Knygthes of the Rounde Table and oon of the moste preyed; and his right name
was Galashyn, the Duke of Clarence, that the Kynge Arthur hym yaf after he
hadde wedded his wif Gonnore.

This Galashene of whom I speke, whan that [he] herde tidinges how the Kynge
30 Ventres his fader hadde foughten with Kynge Arthur his oncle, and he herde the
grete prowesse and the grete debonertee that was in hym, he com to hys moder
Basyne and seide, “Feire moder, ne were not ye daughter to Duke Hoel of Tintagell
and to the Quene Ygerne that after was wif to Uterpendragon, that begat, as I
herde sey, thys kynge that is cleped be his right name Arthur, that is so noble and
worthi a knyght that eleven princes hath disconfited with so small a peple as he
35 hadde, as I have herde sey? I pray yow, telle me the trowthe yef ye can how it is,
for I may not trowe that he sholde be of soche herte as is recorded of hym but yef
he were sone unto Uterpendragon, that in hys tyme was oon of the beste knyghtes
of the worlde.”

Whan the moder undirstode here sone that so here aresoned, hir yen begonne
40 to water that the teers wette her chekes and hir chyn; and [she] seide, sighyne
and wepinge as she that was hevy and tender for her brother that hir sone
remembred, “Feire sone,” quod she, “knowe this truly that he is youre uncle and
my brother, and cosin to youre fader on the modir side of Uterpendragon, as I
have herde my moder sey many tymes whan she here complayned prively in her
45 chamber for her sone, that the Kynge Uterpendragon made it to be delyvered to a
cherll as soone as it was borne; and how all the matere hath sethe be discovered
of Antor that hym hath norisshed before the barouns to whom that Merlin tolde
the trouthe; and how that Ulfen dide witnesse this thinge for trewe, that so wele

19 **bacheler**, knight-aspirant. 20 **bewté**, beauty. 24 **here**, hear. 30 **debonertee**, courtesy.
31 **ne were not ye**, were you not. 34 **disconfited**, defeated. 36 **trowe**, believe; **soche herte**, such courage; **but yef**, unless. 39 **yen**, eyes. 46–47 **sethe be discovered of**, since
been revealed by. 48 **that²**, who (i.e., Ulfen).

Prose Merlin

50 was trusted of Uterpendragon, and how he ordeyned the mariage of my moder and the kynge. But the barouns of this londe ne will not knowe hym for her lorde; and oure Lorde that is so mercyfull hath hym chosen thourgh His high myracle that He hath shewed many sithes." And than she tolde hym of the ston and of the swerde and alle the aventure as it was befallen.

55 And whan Galashene undirstode his moder, he prayed God that thei sholde never wele spedē that hym were ageyns. "And," quod he, "God lete me never dye till that he hath made me knyght. Ha! Now God yeve me grace to do so moche that he may me girthe with my swerde; and I shall never departe fro hym while I may lyve, yef he will me withholde aboute hym." With that he departed from his moder and yede into a chamber and began to stodye how he myght spedē to go to the Kynge Arthur. Than he bethought hym to sende a messenger to Gaweyn, the sone of Kynge Loot, his cosin, and sende hym worde that he sholde come to speke with hym at Newewerke in Brochelonde as pryvely as he myght, and that he be there the thirde day after Phasche withoute eny faile. Than Galashene com 60 65 ute of the chamber and gat hym a messenger and sente to his cosin Gaweyn. But now resteth the tale of the message of Galashene and speke of the kynges, how thei departed fro Shorhant and wheder thei wente, and telleth of the aventres that to hem befillen.

Now seith the boke that after that Kynge Ventres of Garlot was departed fro the citee of Sorhant and the other barouns also, as ye have herde, that than the Kynge Loot wente to the citee of Gale with three thousand knyghtes and fightynge men, of hem that were lefte in the bataile where thei hadde be discounfited. And whan he com thider the cetizenis made of hym grete joye, for gretly thei were affraied of the Saisnes that eche day rode and ronne thourgh the contrey and toke prayes and putte fire in townes and vilages all abowte as thei wente and dide grete damage. And whan the kynge was come thider, he sente and somowned all the peple that he myght, bothe fer and nygh, of sowdiers; and withinne a monethe he hadde assembled mo than eight thousand on horse and on fote alle defensable, withoute hem of the citee, whereof were four thousand for to kepe the citee.

52 **sithes**, times. 55 **wele spedē**, succeed. 58 **withholde**, keep. 59 **spedē**, manage. 62 **pryvely**, secretly. 63 **Phasche**, Easter. 69 **than**, then. 73 **Saisnes**, Saxons; **prayes**, live-stock. 76 **sowdiers**, soldiers. 77–78 **withoute hem**, not including those.

The Young Squires

And he kepte right wele the citee and the contré environ that noon that entred
80 ne myght but litill it mysdo. And ofte tymes he faught with the Saisnes whan that
he herde telle that thei come to forrey; and ther wan the pore bacheleres that ther-
to hadde grete myster. And ther the Kynge Loot ne toke never thinge fro hem that
thei dide wynne, but frely yaf hem all, and therthorugh encresed his grete loos
85 that the peple hym yaf. And therfore com to hym moo than three thousand men
for the grete bounté that thei herde of hym speke, whiche ne wolde never have
hym seyn but for the high renoun that was of hym spoken, and that he was manly
and wise and full of largesse; and therof shewed wele his sones after hym, but
oon yet more than another, after the gode lynage that thei were come of, and I
shall telle yow how.

90 This is trouthe that the wife of Kynge Lotte was suster to Kynge Arthur by his
moder side, in the same manere as was the wif of Kynge Ventres. And of the wif
of Kynge Loot com Gawein and Agravayn and Gaheret and Gaheries. These four
were sones to Kynge Loot. And of hir also com Mordred that was the yonghest,
95 that the Kynge Arthur begat. And I will telle yow in what manere, for so moche is
the storye, the more clere that I make yow to undirstonde in what wise he was
begeten of the kynge, for moche peple it preyse the lesse that knowe not the
trouthe.

100 Hit befill in the tyme that the barouns of the reame of Logres were assembled at
Cardoell in Walys for to chese a kynge after the deth of Uterpendragon. And the
Kynge Loot brought thider his wif, and so dide many another baroun. Hit fill so
that the Kynge Loot was loigged in a faire halle, he and his meyné. And in the
same loigynge was Antor and his sone Kay and Arthur, in the pryste wise that
he myght. And whan the kynge knewe that he was a knyght, he made hym sitte at
his table, and Kay that was a yonge knyght.

105 And the Kynge Lotte hadde do made a cowche in a chamber where he and his
wif lay. And Antor lay in myddell of the same chamber, and Kay and Arthur hadde

79 **kepte**, protected; **contré environ**, surrounding countryside. 80 **mysdo**, harm. 81
forrey, forage; **wan**, won. 82 **myster**, need. 83 **loos**, praise. 85 **bounté**, goodness. 87
largesse, generosity. 88 **oon**, one (i.e., Gawain). 94 **moche**, important. 95 **more clere**
that I make yow, more clearly must I make you. 96 **moche**, many. 101 **loigged**, lodged;
meyné, retinue. 103 **he²**, i.e., Antor. 105 **do made a cowche**, made a couch (i.e., a bed).

Prose Merlin

made her bedde atte the chamber dore of Kynge Loot in a corner, like as a squyre
sholde ly. Arthur was a feire yonge squyer, and he toke grete hede of the lady and
of hem that were abouten hire. And he saugh that she was feire and full of grete
110 bewté, and in his herte he covetted her gretly and loved. But the lady ne knewe it
not, ne toke therof noon heede, for she was of grete bounté and right trewe to hir
lorde.

Hit fill that the barouns hadde take a counseile for to speke togeder at the Blak
Crosse. And whi it was cleped the Blake Crosse ye shall here herafter, and the
115 names of the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table, but yet the tyme is not come to speke
therof more. At this crosse the barouns toke a day for to assemble erly on a
morowe. And so it fill that on the nyght before that the Kynge Loot sholde go to
this counseile, and he comaunded that previly his horse were sadeled aboute
120 mydnyght and his armes were alle redy. And thei dide all his comaundement so
secretly that noon it perceyved, ne not the lady herself. Thus aroos the kynge
aboute mydnyght, that his [wif] it ne wiste ne aperceyved it nougnt. And he
wente to the parlement to the Blake Crosse, and the lady lefte alone in the chamber
in her bedde.

And Arthur, that of all this toke gode kepe, sawgh well how the kynge was gon.
125 And he aroos as stilliche as he myght and yede to bedde to the lady, and lay
turnyng and wendynge that noon other thynge durste do, leste the lady sholde
hym aperceyve. And hit fill so that the lady awoke and turned hir toward hym, and
toke hym in her armes as a woman slepyng that wende verely it hadde ben her
lorde. And that nyght was begete Mordred, as ye have herde. And whan he hadde
130 don his delite with the quene, anoon after she fill on slepe. And Arthur aroos sleyly
that he was not aperceyved till on the morowe, that he hymself it tolde at the
dyner whan he served her at table knelynge.

And so it happed that the lady seide, “Sir squyre, arise up, for longe inough
have ye be knelynge.” And he ansuerde softly and seide that he ne myght never
135 deserve the bountees that she hadde hym don. And she hym asked what bounté it

108 **toke grete hede of**, observed closely. 109 **saugh**, saw. 110 **covetted**, desired. 111
bounté, goodness. 116 **toke**, i.e., planned. 120 **ne not**, i.e., not even. 121 **wyste**, knew.
124 **kepe**, notice. 125 **stilliche**, quietly; **yede**, went. 126 **turnyng and wendynge**,
tossing and turning; **noon**, no; **durste**, dared. 130 **anoon**, soon. 131 **that²**, i.e., when; **it tolde**, i.e., told it to her. 135 **bountees**, goodness.

The Young Squires

was that she hadde hym don. And he ansuerde he wolde not in no wise telle it here, but yef she hym ensured that she sholde hym not discover to no persone, ne purchase hym no blame ne harme. And she seide that it sholde not hir greve, and ensured hym with gode will, as she that of this thyngne ne toke noon kepe. And
140 than he tolde hir how he hadde leyn by her that nyght; and than hadde the lady grete shame and wax all rody, but noon ne knewe the cause. And than the lady lefte her mete utterly.

And thus lay Arthur by his suster, the wif of Kynge Loot; but never after it fill her no more. And so the lady undirstode that she was grete by hym; and the childe
145 that she hadde at that tyme was of hym withoute faile. And whan the childe was born, and also the tidynges spredde abrode that he was the sone of Uterpendragon, she loved hym so moche in her herte that no man myght it telle; but she durst make no semblant for the Kynge Loot hir lorde. And she was sory for the werre that was betwene hym and the barons of the reame.

150 Upon a day Gawein com fro huntyngē, and [he was] clothed comly in a robe that was warme as a robe for the wynter, and ledde in honde a leeshe of grehounds and ledde also two brace folowinge hym. And it becom hym full wele all thyngne that he dide. And he also was of the feirest makynge that eny man myght be as of his stature. But the tale ne of hym deviseth no more here saf only of a tecche that
155 he hadde, that whan he aroos that he hadde the force and myght of the beste knyght that myght be founde; and whan he com to the houre of pryme he doubled, and at the houre of tierce also. And whan it come to mydday, he com agein to his firste strength that he hadde at the houre of tierce; and whan it come to the houre of noone he doubled, and alle hours of the nyght. And in the morowe he com agein to his firste force. This was the custome of Gawein.
160

Whan Gawein entred the halle, as ye herde, his moder lay in a chamber by a chymney wher eyne was a grete fiere, and she was right pensif for her brother

137 but yef, unless; **ensured**, promised; **discover**, reveal. **139 ne toke noon kepe**, had little concern. **141 wax all rody**, blushed. **142 lefte her mete utterly**, left her food untouched. **143–44 it fill her**, it befell her. **144 grete**, pregnant. **146 also**, as; **he**, i.e., Arthur. **148 for^l**, because of; **werre**, war. **149 hym**, i.e., Arthur. **151 leeshe**, a set of three. **152 brace**, pairs. **154 tecche**, characteristic. **155 whan he aroos**, i.e., in the very early morning; **force**, strength. **156 pryme**, 9 a.m. **157 tierce**, 12 a.m.; **mydday**, 3 p.m. **159 noone**, 6 p.m.

Prose Merlin

the Kynge Arthur, and for the barouns that were departed fro hym in evyll will,
and of the grete mortalité of peple that was come by the foly of the barouns of the
165 londe, and also of the Saisnes that were entred into the londe, wherfore thei were
in aventure to be distroide. And ther was she sore dismayed.

And whan the lady saugh Gawein, that was so feire a yonge squyer and moche
of his age, and thought it tyme for hym to be a knyght. And than she began to
wepe, and that hevied moche Gaweine, and [he] asked wherefore that she dide
170 wepe; and she ansuerde and seide, “Feire sone, that I have grete cause, for I se
yow and youre bretheren that spende youre tyme in foly, that fro hensforth ye
oughten to be knyghtes and bere armes; and ye sholde be at the court of Kynge
Arthur, for he is youre oncle and is the beste knyght of the worlde, as it is seide;
and ye sholde hym serve and purchase the pees betwene hym and youre fader.
175 For it is grete damage of the evell will betwene hem and the other barouns of the
londe that sholde hym love and serve, but for their pride thei deyne not hym to
knowe for her lorde. And wele it sheweth that it displeseth oure Lorde, for more
have thei loste than wonne in here stryf. And on the tother side, the Saisnes be
180 entred into the londe that us will distroye but yef God us helpe. And ne we ne shull
no helpe have of hym that sholde hem alle enchace oute of this londe that is the
Kynge Arthur. And therfore ar ye moche to blame and youre bretheren, for now
sholde ye bere armes and seche to acorde of youre oncle and of youre fader by
what wey thei myght be made frendes; and ye do nought elles every day but hunte
185 after the hare thourgh the feldes and so lese ye youre tyme; and therfore me
semeth ye ought to have blame.”

Whan Gawein undirstode his moder he seide, “Moder, sey ye for trouthe that
this Arthur that now is kynge, that he be youre brother and myn oncle?” “Feire
sone,” seide she, “ne doute yow nought, for youre oncle is he trewly.” And than
she tolde hym, fro the begynnyng to the ende, all how it was. And whan Gawein
190 hadde all undirstonde he seide full debonerly, “Feire moder, ne be not therfore so

163 **evyll will**, enmity. 164 **mortalité**, slaughter; **by**, because of. 166 **aventure to be**, in
danger of being; **ther**, therefor. 167–68 **moche of**, large for. 169 **hevied**, grieved. 171
foly, frivolous things. 174 **purchase**, obtain; **pees**, peace. 176 **deyne**, deign. 178 **here**,
their. 179–80 **ne we ne shull no helpe have**, nor shall we have any help. 182 **acorde of**,
make peace between. 183 **nought elles**, nothing else. 184 **lese**, waste. 184–85 **me semeth**,
it seems to me. 188 **ne doute yow nought**, doubt it not at all. 190 **debonerly**, courteously.

The Young Squires

195 pensif, for be the feith that I owe onto yow, I shall never be girde with swerde ne
bere helme on myn hede till that the Kynge Arthur make me knyght, yef in me be
so moche valoure that he will me adubbe; and we will go to courte for to feeche
oure armes and helpe to mayntene his lordship agein alle tho that hym will greve
or anoye."

196 "Feire sone," than seide the lady, "for me shull ye never be letted, for grete
gladnesse sholde it be to me yef oure Lorde wolde graunte that ye myght do so
muche that youre fader and youre oncle were gode frendes, for than sholde I have
gladnesse at myn herte, and I ought wele above alle other." "Dame," quod Gawein,
200 "cesseth now at this tyme, for wete it well, by I ones oute of my fader house, I
will never returne ne entre therynne agayn till that my fader and myn oncle be
acorded, though that I sholde do right moche agein my fader will." "Feire sone,"
seide the moder, "God graunte yow grace this to performe."

205 In the tyme that Gawein and his moder spake thus togeder, com in Agravayn
and Gaheret and Gaheries and com before theire moder, that heilde stille her talkynge
with Gawein. And than seide Agravain to Gawein, "Ye be more to blame than eny
other, for ye be oure eldeste brother, and ye ought to lede us forth, and that we
sholde be knyghtes and serve hym that all the worlde of speketh that abouthe hym
repeire. And we ne do but as musardes, and ne awayte noughe elles but whan we
210 shall be take as a bridde in a nette. For the Saisnes be but a journé hens, that all the
contré robbe and distroye. Ne we ne have not peple to chase hem hens but by the
prowesse of the Kynge Arthur. But lete us take oure armes of hym and helpe to
defende his londe agein his enmyes. For that is the beste that I can se, for here ne
may we noughe gete. And therfore, better it were for us to do some prowesse in
215 his servise, yef we myght be of soche valoure, than here to be take to prison as
cowardes and lese oure tyme of oure ages." And whan Gawein undirstode the
speche of his brother, he hadde of hym hertely joye and moche he hym preyed
and ansuerde that so wolde he do. "And therfore, in haste lete us apairele us, for
we will meve hens withynne fourteen dayes."

191 **pensif**, sad. 194 **tho**, those. 196 **letted**, held back. 200 **wete**, know; **by**, be. 202
agein, against. 205 **heilde stille**, continued. 209 **repeire**, abide; **musardes**, dullards,
idlers; **ne awayte noughe elles**, await nothing else. 210 **take**, caught; **bridde**, bird; a
journé hens, a day's journey away. 214 **noughe gete**, nothing achieve; **prowesse**, valor-
ous deeds. 216 **lese . . . ages**, i.e., waste our youth. 218 **apairele us**, prepare ourselves.

Prose Merlin

220 And whan the moder saugh that hadde this undertaken, she was full of joye and thanked God hertely. And to hem she seide, "Dismay yow nought of nothyng, for I shall ordeyne yow horse and harneys." And therof were thei gladde and merye. But now here resteth the tale of the moder and of the childeren, and speketh how the kynges departed fro Sorhant, that be yet sorowfull and wroth for theire
225 discounfiture and losse, and also for the Saisnes that be entred into her londes and contrees.

[*Summary. Just as King Ventres and King Lot had done previously, other rebel kings — Clarion of Northumberland, the King de Cent Chevaliers, Tradylyvans of North Wales, and Brangore of South Wales — return to their chief cities and prepare them for war with the Saxons. Fols. 63r (line 6)–63v (line 13).]*

230 This Kynge Brangore hadde a gentill lady to his wif that was doughter to Kynge Adryan, the emperor of Constantynenoble, that was myghty and riche. And he hadde no mo childeren by his wif but two doughteres, whereof the Kynge Brangore hadde oon and the tother was in Costantynnable. In that tyme ther was a riche lorde and a myghty that was Kynge of Blagne and of Hungré; but he deyde withinne five yere after he was wedded and lefte a sone, the feirest creature of man that was formed. And this childe dide wex moche and semly and right wise and hardy. And at that day that Kynge Brangore was departed fro Sorhant, he was so well
235 waxen that he was able to be a knyght. And his right name was Segramore. This Segramore that I of speke dide afterwarde many high prowesse in the reame of Logres, whereof the tale shall declare yow hereafter, and I shall tell yow how it fill.

240 Renomee, that thurgh all the worlde renneth, yede so thourgh every londe so that every contrey spake of the Kynge Arthur and of his grete largesse. And so his renoun spredder thourgh every contré so that in Costantynnable it was in every mannes mouthe, so that Segramore herde therof speke, and was but fifteen yere of age and was oon of the feirest men of the worlde, and of large stature and beste shapen of alle membres, and therto hardy and wise. And whan he herde tidynges
221 **hem**, them (i.e., her sons); **Dismay**, Worry. 222 **ordeyne yow**, arrange for you. 227 **gentill**, noble. 230 **hadde oon**, i.e., married one. 231 **deyde**, died. 233 **moche**, large. 236 **high prowesse**, great deeds. 239 **Renomee**, Renown; **yede**, went. 240 **largesse**, generosity.

The Young Squires

245 of the Kynge Arthur, he desired gretly to se the day and the houre that he myght
be made knyght of hys honde, and seide often to hem that were of his counseile
that whoso myght take ordere of chivalrye moste in evry wise be a gode knyght.
And whan his grauntsire, the Kynge Adrian, that tho was livynge, counseiled hym
to take the ordere of knyghthode, for he was the next heire male to the empere
250 after his deth. And he hym ansuerde that he wolde never be knyght till that Arthur,
the kynge of Grete Breteyne, hadde made hym a knyght with his owne hondes.
And so hereof spake thei day be day till that the Kynge Adrian appareiled Segramore
and sente hym to the Grete Breteyne richely arayed. But now cesseth of hym to
speke more at this tyme, and turneth to telle how these other kynges departed fro
255 Sorhant.

[*Summary. Three more of the rebels — King Carados, King Aguysans of Scotland, and Duke Escam — also return to their chief cities and prepare for the Saxons. Fols. 64r (line 5)–64v (line 4).]*

Thus departet the eleven barouns fro Sorhant. And the Kynge Urien lefft in his
citere and sente thourgh every londe and contrey aboue; and sowdiours [cam] so
that he hadde togeder nine thousand, withoute the peple of the citree wherof were
wele six thousand; and the sege was thens but a journé.

260 And so thei fought togeder many tymes, and loste and wonne as is the fortune
of werre. And thus this stryfe lastid longe tyme, so that the contrey was wasted
and made pore so sore that in five yere therin was nougnt to gete. And in the
contrey they lived by nougnt elles saf by that oon myght take of another bytwene
the Cristen men and the Saisnes, but yef eny ship by aventure arived at eny port in
265 the londe. In this manere were thei sustened that otherwise ne laboured not, but
werrd that oon agein that other right harde. And the Saisnes ronne thourgh the
londe of Kynge Arthur and thereinne dide grete damage, for ther was noon that
hem dide lette, till that by aventure, as God wolde, he sente feire yonge squires
266 of², by. 247 whoso, whoever; **moste in evry wise**, must in every respect. 248 tho,
then. 252 **appareiled**, readied. 256 **lefft**, remained. 258 **withoute**, without counting.
258–59 **were wele**, were at least. 259 **sege**, i.e., invading Saxons; **journé**, a day's
journey. 260 **thei**, the barons and the Saxons. 262 **so sore**, so severely; **nought to gete**,
nothing left. 263 **nought elles saf by that**, no other means except by what. 264 **but yef**,
unless; **by aventure**, by chance. 268 **lette**, hinder.

Prose Merlin

270 and gentill it to socoure. And I shall telle yow what thei were that so longe kepte
the londes of Kynge Arthur till that he com ageyn oute of the londe of Tamelide,
so that the Saisnes loste more, and the barouns that were his enmyes, than dide
Arthur. And now returneth the tale agein to Galashyn, the sone of Kynge Ventres.

[Summary. Galashin, the son of King Ventres, sends a message to Gawain, urging Gawain and his brothers to meet him at Newerk. When the cousins are assembled together, Galashin asks Gawain what he intends to do. Gawain says he will seek the most worthy knight of the world — King Arthur — against whom their fathers and the other barons are making war “with great wrong.” The cousins agree to summon as many knights and squires as they can find, and to go to Logres and place themselves at King Arthur’s disposal. Fols. 64v (line 34)–65r (line 34).]

[The Deeds of the Young Squires]

Now seith the boke that abouthe the entré of May, in the tyme whan these briddes
syngith with clier voys and all thyngre rejoyseth, and than these wodes and medowes
beth florished grene, and these medowes full of newe tendir erbys and entermedled
with dyverse colours that swote be of odoures, and these amerouse yonge lusty
peple rejoysse because of the lusty seson, it befill that Gawein and Agravayn and
5 Gaheret and Gaheries and Galashyn, and thei that become in here compayne, ben
risen erly for the heete that dide hem grete anoye on the day, as they that wolde
ride in the cole of the mornynge that was feire and stille and a softe weder. And
thei were yonge and tender to suffre grete travayle, and thei were wele armed and
hadde on hattes of stile as squyres used in tho dayes, and their swerdes hangyng
10 at the pomell of theire sadeles before; for the contrey was not sure for the Saisnes
that rode and ronne thourgh the contrey for vitaile and for to robbe and distrye
the londe that was so plenteuouse and riche er the mysbelevynge peple were
entred, wherof was grete pité that so goode a londe sholde be distroyed for synne
15 and for myslyvinge, as God hath ofte sithes chastysed diverse remes.

The thirde daye that thise childeeren rode togeder, lyke as that ye have herde,
thei mette the Kynge Leodobron and the Kynge Segagan and the Kynge Mandalet
and the Kynge Sernagut of the londe of Yroys, that hadde the contré abouthe Logres
20 brent and wasted, and ledde with hem grete plenté of vitaile, so that the hoste for
longe tyme was refresshed of brede and wyne and of flessh. For thei hadde so
piled and robbed thourgh the contrey and the portes where the shippes were aryved,
and the marchaundise was so grete, that five hundred someres were charged, and

1 entré, beginning. 2 than, when. 3 erbys, plants; entermedled, mixed. 4 swote, sweet;
lusty, lively. 7 for, because of. 9 travayle, hardship. 11 sure for, safe because of; Saisnes,
Saxons. 12 vitaile, food. 13 er, before; mysbelevynge peple, the pagan Saxons. 15 ofte
sithes, many times. 16 childeeren, youths. 19 brent, burned. 21 piled, pillaged. 22
someres, pack horses; charged, loaded.

Prose Merlin

twenty-five cartes and seven carres; and the cariage and the multitude of peple
was so grete that the duste arose so huge that unnethe oon myght knowe another;
25 and also the fiere and the smoke so grete in the contrey that half a journey aboue
men myght knowe what peple ther were. And whan thise childeeren approched to
this chyvachie, and herde the playntes and the cryes that the mene peple made for
the Saisnes that hem so destroyed, that were well ten thousand of horsemen, withoute
the putaile that ronne up and down and robbed the peple and brente the vilages as
30 thei passed thourgh the contrey.

Whan the childeeren saugh this doloure and this sorowe, thei asked of hem that
passed by that thei saugh so affraied, where that Kynge Arthur was. And they
seyde he was gon into Tamalide at myd-Lenton, and hadde wele garnysshed alle
35 the forteresses of his londe that noon ne myght not gretly forfete. And thei were so
doilfull that the sarazins so distroied the londe, as ye have herde. And whan the
childeeren herde that the kynge was not in the contrey, thei seide thei wolde
[deffende] the londe and the contrey for her oncle, and also the pray that the Saisnes
ledden, and that thei wolde kepe the londe and it deffende till here oncle were
40 come home. And whan the peple of the contrey herde hem speke thus, thei asked
of hem what thei were that so wolde deffende the londe of Kynge Arthur as thei
seiden. And thei lete hem beknownen what thei were. And whan the peple knewe
what the childeeren weren, thei hadde grete joye, for by hem thei trowed that the
Kynge Arthur sholde be lorde of all the reame of Logres. And the love of the
45 fadres he sholde have thourgh the childeeren that ther were come with these five
cosins and with other that were ryche mennes sones, as castelleins and vavasours
of the londe, that after were of grete prowesse in the house of Kynge Arthur, and
of soche as were moste preyed.

And as soone as the childeeren saugh the grete damage, theire hertis begonne to
ryse and [they] cried, “As armes, gentill squyers, for now shall it be sene how is

23 carres, wagons; **cariage**, baggage train. **24 unnethe**, scarcely. **25 journey**, a day's travel. **27 chyvachie**, foraging expedition; **playntes**, complaints; **mene**, ordinary. **28 withoute**, not counting. **29 putaile**, rabble. **33 garnysshed**, provisioned. **34 forfete**, harm. **34–35 so doilfull**, very sorrowful. **37 pray**, livestock. **38 kepe**, guard. **40 what**, who. **41 beknownen what**, know who. **42 trowed**, believed. **45 castelleins and vavasours**, i.e., protectors and overseers. **49 As**, To; **how**, who.

The Deeds of the Young Squires

50 goode and hardy and worthy to bere armes, for we be in oure heritages; and therfore we sholde deffende oure right agein these mysbelevynge peple that thus this londe robbed and wasted." Hastely ronne these squyers to armes and lepen to horse and hem renged and distreyned as the knyghtes hem taughthen, whereof were twenty-four that were noble men and right gode knyghtes and trewe. And
55 whan the peple of the contré saugh that thei hadde socoure, ther com to hem more than five hundred, what on horse and on fote. And than thei yede togeder as starlynges, and mette first the cariage and the vitaile that the Sasines ledden towarde the hoste, and were moo than three thousand with the cariage.

And as the storye seith, it was passed myd-day and was right hote weder, and
60 the duste arose so thikke that scantily a man myght se fro hymself the caste of a stone. And as soone as that the childeren saugh theire enmyes, thei lete theire horse renne; and [thei] overthrew and slowgh alle that thei ateyned that ther ne ascaped oon ne other. That day Gawein slowgh many a Sarazin of the Saxouns,
65 more than eny of his felowes, so that he was all blody, bothe he and his horse. And he heilde an axe in his honde, and he was so crewell and fiers that whom he
araught a full stroke, neded hym no salve. And his other bretheren dide also right
wele, so that noon of hem ne durste abide of hem a stroke. And Galashyn was all
day with Gawein that merveilously dide wele, for ther myght noon endure his
70 strokes that he ne smote of arme or legge or heede or other membre. But above alle othir, it was merveile to se the martire that Gawein made, for agein his strokys
ne myght not endure iren ne style ne no mannys body, were he never so myghty
ne stronge.

And so the childeren smyten up and down aboute hem that of three thousand
that ledde the pray towarde the hoste, ne ascaped not thirty. And ten of hem that
75 ascaped returned unto her chivachie that were comyng after with seven thou-

50 in oure heritages, i.e., in lands belonging to our kin. **51 oure right**, i.e., what is rightfully ours. **52 ronne**, ran. **53 hem renged and distreyned**, i.e., arranged and ordered themselves. **55 socoure**, help. **56 what**, counting those; **yede**, went. **57 cariage**, baggage train. **60 scantily**, scarcely. **62 ateyned**, reached. **62–63 ne ascaped oon ne other**, neither escaped one or another. **63 slowgh**, slew. **66 Araught**, struck. **67 ne durste abide**, were able to withstand. **69 of**, off. **70 martire**, slaughter; **agein**, against. **71 style**, steel. **73 that**, so that. **74 pray**, livestock. **75 chivachie**, foraging party.

Prose Merlin

sand. But thei were not wele armed, for thei hadde made it to be trussed for the
grete hete that hem greved. And whan the ten that fledden com into the hoste, thei
cryed that all was deed that were lefte with the cariage. Whan thei herde that all
was loste, thei ronne to theire armes, alle they that eny hadden, and hem armed in
80 the beste wise that thei myght. And the thirde part of hem ne myght not come to
their armoure, for theire squyers were gon before with the cariage that the childeren
hadde wonne, and let it be ledde to Logres, and lete it be condited by men of the
same contrey that ther were dwellynge and weren fallen into theire company; and
after thei pursude the Saisnes, that fledden into the tyme that thei were fallen in
85 amonge the rerewardre.

Ther than was fierce bataile and stronge stoure and harde and crewell that
merveille it was to have seyn. Ther Gawein slowe the Kynge Noas of Iselonde,
for he smote hym with an axe with bothe hondis that he cleft hym to the briste
bon. And Galashyn smote so the Kynge Sarnagut with a swerde trenchaunt that he
90 made his heede fle into the feilde. And Agravayn, that was plunged into the presse,
smote on bothe sides hym aboute and began yeve so grete strokes that sore thei
hym douted. And Gaheries hadde chased Gynebande the length of a bowe draught
from his felowes, for that he hadde smyte down his brother Gaheret with a spere,
but he hadde noon other harm; and therfore wende well Gaheries he hadde be
95 slain, and therfore he pursude upon hym with swerde drawnen as fiercely as a
wilde boor.

Whan Guynebans saugh Gaheries so fiercely come, he turned to flight for he ne
durste not abide for the grete merveilouse occision that he hadde seyn hym do.
And withoute faile he was of merveilouse prowesse, for as the story rehersith, it
100 failed but litill that he was even like of bounté to Gawein his brother whan he com
to his right age and was knyght. And whan Gaheries saugh the Sarazin thus fleynge,
he swore be God that he sholde never cesse ne leve hym, for playn ne wode, till he
were avenged of his brotheres deth. And so he hym chased as faste as his horse

76 **trussed**, packed away. 78 **cariage**, baggage train. 80 **wise**, manner; **come to**, get at.
82 **condited**, conducted. 84 **after**, afterwards; **into**, until. 85 **rerewardre**, rear guard. 86
stoure, fighting. 87 **slowe**, slew. 88–89 **briste bon**, breast bone. 89 **trenchaunt**, sharp.
90 **plonged**, plunged; **presse**, crowd. 91 **yeve so**, to give such; **sore**, greatly. 92 **douted**,
fear; **draught**, shot. 94 **wende**, thought; **he²**, i.e., Gaheret; **be**, been. 98 **occision**, killing.
100 **bounté**, ability. 102 **be**, by; **wode**, wood.

The Deeds of the Young Squires

myght hym bere till he hadde lefte his felowes behynde the space of an arblaste.
105 And so he hym overtoke amonge the meyné of Guynebans that com redy to fight,
and gladde were they of the pray that thei hadde so ledde.

Whan Gaheries hadde overtake Guynebans, he stroke hym so sore upon the
helme that he kutte awey a quarter, that he made hym to stope; and the swerde
110 swarved betwene the shelde and the nekke and kyutte the gyge of the shelde with
all the arme, so that he dide it falle into the felde. And whan this kynge saugh
hymself so dismembred, he fill in swowne. And than Gaheries was gladde of the
vengaunce of his brother and turned his horse hede. But the Saisnes that this stroke
hadde sein ne concented not to lete hym passe. And than thei hem renged by
115 hundredes and by thowsandes, and closed hym in on alle partyes, and smote upon
hym with theire speres at ones, and overthrew hym and his horse. And whan the
tymbir of theire speres were broken, he lepe upon his feet vigerously, as he that
hadde inough of breth and myght that ther nas noon so hardy that durste put to
hys honde hym to take; and [they] launched at hym fro fer speres and swerdes
120 and knyves, that thei made hym falle on his knees two tymes or thre. But so
myght he not longe endure but that he sholde have be take or deed.

Than a squyer that saugh hym chase so the hethyn kynge com cryinge and
betynge his hondes togeder and rendinge his heer to Gawein that hadde remounted
Gaheret upon another horse, that hadde smeten down the Kynge Sernage fro. Than
the squyer cried, "Ha, Gawein! Where aboute arte thou? For thou hast loste thy
125 brother Gaheries but thou hym socoure delyverly. For he chased a Saisne that he
hath overtake in this derke valey, and hath hym smetyn down; but the sarasins
have besette hym on alle partyes and have hym overthrownen, and slain his horse,
and made hym falle upon his kne I wote not how often. And yef ye hym thus lese,
it is grete doel and grete damage."

Whan Gawein undirstode hym that made soche doel for his brother, he seide,
"Ha! Seinte Marie Virgin and Moder to Jhesu Criste, ne suffre not that I lese my

104 **arblaste**, cross-bow shot. 105 **meynē**, retinue. 106 **pray**, animals. 108 **stope**, bend over. 109 **kyutte**, cut; **gyge**, handle. 109–10 **with all**, along with. 110 **dide**, made. 111 **swowne**, swoon. 113 **ne concented not**, were not willing; **hem renged**, arranged themselves. 114 **partyes**, sides. 116 **tymbir**, wooden shafts. 117 **durste**, dared. 118 **fro fer**, from afar. 122 **rendinge**, tearing; **heer**, hair. 123 **that**, i.e., Gawain. 125 **but**, unless; **socoure delyverly**, help quickly. 128 **wote**, know; **yef**, if. 129 **doel**, sorrow.

Prose Merlin

brother, for than myn herte shall never be gladde. And yef I hym thus lese, shall ther never shelde hange aboute my nekke." Than he asked of the squyer whiche
135 wey it was. And he shewde hym the valey be the wodeside. And he cryed to his felowes with high voys, "Now shall it be sein who that shall me sewe."

"Feire cosin," quod Galashyn, "whider will ye go in so grete haste shall noon abide from yow; and therfore set forth smartly, for I drede leste we tarye to longe." Than the childeren hem renged and priked as faste as quarelles of arblast; and [Gawein] perced the presse with his gode horse and heilde an axe in bothe
140 handes wherewith he made soche martire and soche slaughter that thei fly from hym on alle partyes. And it lasted the space of a myle aboute of the peple that thei hadde leide to grounde. And thei sought up and down till thei founde Gaheries, that was lyggynge at erthe upright. And thei hadde pulled of his hatte of stiell and his coyf of mayle for to smyte of his heed, but thei thought to have take hym quyk
145 and lede hym to Bernage, the Kynge of Saxon. Than thei fillen upon hym at ones and wolde bynde hys hondes behynde hys bakke.

Than com Gawein prikinge, gripynge a spere, and sprange in amonge hem so full of ire and maltelent for that he sawgh his brother so vileinliche araide that ny
150 he yede oute of witte. And than he leide aboute hym so grym strokes and rude that noon durste hym abide but disparbled abrode fro hym as from a wode lyon in rage. Whan that thei that heilde his brother saugh the merveile that he dide, thei ne durste not abide ne holde his brother no lenger but yef thei wolde have receyved the deth, but turned to flight and made hym wey. Whan Gaheries saugh his brother
155 Gawein, he lept upon his feet and sette on his heed his hatte delyverly, and hente agein his swerde and appareiled hym to diffende. And Agravayn hym brought an horse and seide, "Brother, now lepe up lightly, for grete foly have ye do to go so fer oute of oure company, for full nygh hadde ye more loste than wonne." Whan

135 **sein**, seen; **sewe**, follow. 136 **Feire**, Fair; **whider will ye go**, wherever you wish to go. 136–37 **shall noon abide**, no one will depart. 138 **hem renged**, arranged themselves; **priked**, rode; **quarelles**, bolts; **arblast**, cross-bow. 140 **martire**, torment; fly, flew. 141 **partyes**, sides. 143 **lyggynge at erthe upright**, lying on the ground face up. 144 **coyf**, hood; **take**, capture; **quyk**, alive. 148 **maltelent**, wrath; **vileinliche araide**, shamefully arrayed. 149 **yede**, went; **rude**, furious. 150 **noon durste**, no one dared; **disparbled**, dispersed; **wode lyon**, crazed lion. 152 **but yef**, unless. 154 **delyverly**, swiftly; **hente**, seized. 155 **appareiled**, prepared. 156 **do**, done. 157 **full nygh**, very nearly.

The Deeds of the Young Squires

Gaheries saugh hymself hooll and sounde and that he was agein ihorsed and delyvered, he was right gladde.

160 Than the bretheren drough hem togeder to relied her peple. And the Saisnes blewe hornes and trumpes and armed hem and assembled hem thourgh all the contrey, and ordeyned theire batailes. But now cesseth awhile to speke of thise childderen and of the Saisnes, and speke of the men of the contrey that ledde the pray that the childderen hadde conquered, and the cariage, to the cité of Logres.

165 Here seith the storye that full gladde were the peple of the contrey of the wynnynge that the childderen hadde geten; and [they] wente joyfull and mery with the vitaile for thei were but two Scottissh myle fro the town, and therfore thei peyned hem faste to come to the cité saf, for well thei knewe that the Saisnes were to moche peple to fight ageyn the childderen and her feliship. And therfore thei 170 douted that the pray sholde be rescued and take agein be strength, and therfor thei hasted to come tymely to saf garde. And whan thei that kepte the cité saugh come the riche pray, thei asked how it was geten. And thei tolde how Gawein, the Kynges sone Loot, and his bretheren and Galashin, the Kynges sone Ventres, that 175 is cosin to Gawein, be come to helpe the Kynge Arthur and have lefte theire londes and theire contrey; and [they] sey thei will never faile the Kynge Arthur while that thei be lyvinge, "For thei be come with twenty-seven felowes, and mette with thre thousande forayoures that this pray ledden, and foughten with hem till thei have hem alle slain and discounfited, and sesed us with the pray to brynge to this citee saf. And therfore open the yates and receyve it in, and after we shull returne 180 hem for to socoure, for grete pité it were yef thei were deed or taken in so tendre age, for thei ben of high valoure and grete worthynesse."

Whan the cetezeins undirstode these wordes of the childderen that were come in soche manere, anoon after thei opened the gates and receyved hem into the citee. And after thei seiden that a parte of hem sholde go helpe the childderen. Thanne thei lete blowe an horn in the maister toure, and than ronne to armes thourgh the

159 **delyvered**, rescued. 160 **relied her**, rally their. 162 **ordeyned**, arranged. 164 **pray**, livestock; **conquered**, i.e., recovered; **cariage**, baggage train. 168 **peyned hem**, took pains. 169 **to moche**, too many; **her feliship**, their companions. 170 **douted**, feared; **pray**, animals. 176 **mette with**, encountered. 177 **forayoures**, foragers. 178 **discounfited**, defeated; **sesed us with**, i.e., have given to us. 180 **socoure**, aid; **yef**, if. 182 **cetezeins**, citizens. 183 **anoon**, soon. 184 **seiden**, said; **parte**, portion. 185 **toure**, tower.

Prose Merlin

town. Anoon they were armed with grete spedē and issed oute at the maister gate, and than abode the Castelein of Cardoell, that was a noble man and a trewe. And whan he was come, he fonde oute of the town seven thousand; and than he seide, “Sirs, it were no wisdom to leve the town ungarnysshed of peple, for we knowe
190 not what shall falle ne what peple we shall mete.” And than thei ansuerde that he seide well, ne thei wolde not go but soche as he wolde have. Than he toke oute five thousand, and two thousande he lefte for to kepe the town that it were not suprised.

195 Than thei rode forth and renged close that wey whereas the childeren foughten full sore, for the Saisnes were no mo than seven thousand in a flote. And as soone as thei hem saugh, thei ne douted nothinge so small a peple that were so ynge. And ther was of hem but twenty-four knyghtes, and five squyers and twenty that were not yet adubbed, and three hundred men what on horsebak and of fotemen of
200 peple of the contrei that were falle to hem; and [they] seide thei wolde rather be deed than thei wolde forsake her compayne.

But Madelans and Guynehan hadde departed her men in two partyes, and eche was four thousande, for alle the Saisnes were assembled to hem two. Than com Guynehan first with a grete spere, for he was myghty and stronge and moche 205 oute of mesure and therto right hardy; and [he] ran upon hem so fiercely as he hymself alone all wolde have confounded. And Gawein, that was before his felowes, heilde an ax trenchaunt and com agein hym fiercely. And Guynehan, that com formest, ran agein hym and smote Gawein so harde with his spere that it fley all to peces, for the haubreke was so stronge of dubble maile and the squyer so full of prowesse
210 that he ne meved not for the stroke, but yaf Gynehans soche a stroke with his ax upon the helme that he bente over his horse croupe. And the stroke of the ax glenched and smote the horse bakke asonder that thei fill to grounde bothe upon oon heepe.

186 Anoon, Soon; **issed**, issued. **187 abode**, they awaited. **189 ungarnysshed of**, unprotected by. **191 but soche**, unless. **192 that**, so that. **194 renged**, followed. **195 flote**, group. **196 thei hem saugh**, the Saxons saw them; **douted**, feared; **ynge**, young. **198 adubbed**, knighted; **what**, including those. **201 departed**, divided; **partyes**, groups. **203–04 moche oute of mesure**, immensely large. **204 as**, as if. **206 agein**, against; **formest**, foremost. **208 haubreke**, mail shirt; **the squyer**, i.e., Gawain. **209 yaf**, gave. **210 croupe**, hind quarters. **211 glenched**, glanced.

The Deeds of the Young Squires

Whan the Saisnes saugh that stroke, thei shodered abouthe hym, for thei wende
that the Kynge Guynehan hadde ben deed; and than thei pressed faste to the
rescowe. And Gawein smote amonge hem, and thei smote hym with theire speres
and slow his horse under hym. And he lept lightly upon his feet and yaf so grete
strokes that noon durste hym aproche. Than com the socours on bothe sides and
ther began the bataile abowte Gawein, fell and longe lastinge, for the Saisnes
coveyted to remounte Gynehans and for to take Gawein, and his felowes so hym
defended that it was merveile for to beholden.

Whan Gawein saugh that thei desired so hym to take and holde, he griped hys
axe and com to a Saisne that hadde made Agravayn to stoupe in his sadill, and
moche he hym payned for to smyten of the heed. And whan Gawein saugh this, he
wax ny wode for ire. Than he threste thourgh the presse to that Saisne, and for to
yeve hym a gret stroke he reyzed his ax. And the Saisne saugh he myght not voyde
the stroke and caste his shelde ther ageins; and Gawein hym hitte so harde that he
slytte the shelde in two partyes; and the stroke descended on the lifte shulder so
grete that he slyt hym to the girdill, and than he fill to grounde. Than Gawein
sesed the stede and lepte into the sadill, and than he cryed to his felowes, "Now
shewe youre hardynesse, that these sarazins not us ascape, and that nother wode
ne playn hem shall warante, for ye shall se my strokes and my prowesse double."

Than he smote the stede and rode in amoung hem and made of hem soche martire
that thei lay upon hepes in the feilde, as hey in a medowe. But for all that, the
Saisnes have horsed Guynehans. And whan he was remounted amoung the Saisnes,
he hente a stronge spere and a rude and com to Agravayn, that hadde his nevewe
slayn before hys iyen. And he hitte Agravayn with his spere so sore that it preced
two folde thurgh his haubreke, and therto he shof theron so harde that Agravayn
fill to the erthe, bothe he and his horse on an hepe.

Whan Gaheries and Galashin saugh Agravayn falle, thei hadde grete drede that

213 **shodered**, crowded; **wende**, thought. 217 **socours on**, aid from. 218 **fell**, terrible.
219 **coveyted**, desired. 222 **stoupe**, slump. 223 **moche**, greatly; **of**, off. 224 **wax ny wode
for ire**, grew crazed with anger; **threste**, broke; **presse**, throng. 228 **girdill**, belt. 229
sesed, seized. 230–31 **nother wode ne playn hem shall warante**, neither wood nor plain
shall protect them. 232 **stede**, steed; **martire**, slaughter. 233 **hepes**, heaps; **as hey**, like
hay; **medowe**, meadow. 235 **hente**, grabbed; **rude**, rough. 236 **iyen**, eyes. 237 **two folde**,
i.e., very far.

Prose Merlin

240 he were slain. And Galashin come formest and smote Guynehans with his swerde upon the helme that he made hym enclyne on his sadill bowe; and Gaheries smote hym with his swerde upon the arme that it fly into the feilde; and Gaheriet smote hym betwene the nekke and the shulders as he was stopynge, that he made the heed fle into the playn; and Galashin with his fote spurned his body to grounde
245 and laught the steede and ledde it to Agravayn that sore hym deffended on fote. And whan Agravayn hadde the horse, he lepte up as soone as he myght; and than began the meddelynge amonge hem full crewell and fell. But of Gawein knewe thei no tidynges, for he was so depe in amonge the Saisnes that it was no light thyng hym for to fynde.

250 Whan the Saisnes sawgh the Kynge Gynehans deed, thei were so amasid that thei wiste not what to do, but turned to flight upon the bataile of Kynge Madelen that was theire chief lorde, and there recovered thei that fledde. And Gawein, that hadde gon here and there, that nothyng cowde here of his bretheryn and wiste not whether thei were discounfited or noon, he hovid stille till he saugh his felowes
255 comynge, and whan that he knewe it were thei, he was gladde. And thei renched hem aboute Gawein, for of hym thei hadde be in grete feere, and Madalen rode with grete plenté of peple, and were six thousand; and it ne myght not longe endure but that Gawein sholde have ben loste, whereof it hadde ben grete damage and harme to all the londe of Logres, but as the socoure com oute of the citee,
260 and were five thousand men of armes. Whan the childeren saugh the socour that com oute of Logres and the baner that Doo of Cardoell brought, the men of contrey that were with the childeren badde hem be of gode counforte, for “Loo! Heere cometh the citee of Logres yow for to helpe and to socoure.”

Whan the childeren undirstode that thei of Logres were come hem for to helpe, thei were gladde and joyfull. Than thei refresshed theire horse and girde hem newe agein and lepten up and hem renched, and after rode streyte and close. And

241 enclyne on, slump over. **242 fly**, flew. **245 laught**, took; **sore hym**, with difficulty himself. **247 meddelynge amonge**, fighting about. **248 light**, easy. **250 amasid**, stunned. **251 bataile**, company. **252 recovered thei that**, were rescued those who. **253 cowde here of**, could hear about; **wiste**, knew. **254 discounfited**, defeated; **noon**, not; **hovid stille**, waited. **255–56 renched hem aboute**, arranged themselves around. **256 be**, been; **and**, for. **259 but as the socoure com**, if not for the aid that came. **262 badde hem**, told them to. **265 refreshed**, readied; **girde**, saddled. **266 streyte**, tight.

The Deeds of the Young Squires

the Saisnes com hem ageins full irouse and crewell for the deth of Guynehans. Than thei braste theire speres in theire counterynge upon sheldes and helmes, and began a bataile full fell and merveillouse whiche myght not be withoute grete losse on bothe partyes. Than com in amonge hem the socour that com oute of Logres as faste as theire horse myght renne, and ther sholde ye have herde grete crasinge of speres. And than thei drowgh oute swerdes and begonne ther a stronge bataile and mortall, for ther was shedde so moche blode that it ran like stremes doun the valey.

Full grete was the stour and the medlé in the playnes before Logres of the childeren and the socoure that com oute of Logres, and of the Saisnes; and [it] dured all the day till it was nyght. Ther dide Gawein soche merveiles in armes that wondirfully was he beholden of hem of Logres, for he smote down men and horse and slow so many that noon ne durste hym no stroke abide. Than fill it that he mette with the Kynge Madelen that hadde overthowre Doo of Cardoell, that was the captein of Logres, and heilde hym be the helme at the erthe, and peyned sore hys heede of to smyten. And therwith com Gawein; but ther tho was grete stoure and hidouse, for that oon part bisied for the rescew and the tother hym for to sle or withholde. But the kynge ther myght thei not take, for he hadde so grete plenté of peple. And therwith Gawein smote so grete strokes amonge hem that he made hem alle to dissever. And it fill so that Madalen com in his wey, and he smote hym so with bothe hondes with his axe upon the helme that he slitte hym to the brayn, and he fell ded to the erthe.

Whan the Saisnes saugh the Kynge Madalen deed, thei were so mased that they turned to flight, oon here and another there, and toke the wey to Valdesbires ther the sege lay. Than aroos the duste and the powder so grete that unnethe oon myght knowe another, ne noon ne abode his felowe. But there were many overthrownen in that chase, for as soone as Doo was remounted, he hem chased vigerously. But the childeren were ever to foren, that made soche martirdom upon

267 **irouse**, wrathful. 268 **braste**, burst. 269 **fell**, fierce. 271 **crasinge**, crashing. 275
stour, battle; medlé, melee. 277 **dured**, lasted. 278 **beholden**, regarded. 279 **Than fill it**,
Then it happened. 282 **of**, off; **tho**, then. 283 **stoure**, battle; **oon part bisied**, one side
worked. 285 **so**, such. 286 **dissever**, disperse. 289 **mased**, startled. 290 **ther**, where.
291 **sege**, siege; **unnethe**, scarcely. 292 **ne noon ne abode**, nor could one wait for. 294
to foren, before [the others]; **martirdom**, slaughter.

Prose Merlin

295 the Saisnes that fyve myle lay the wey full of hem that were wounded and caste to
grounde. And thourgh the helpe of God and of hem that come oute of the citee,
thei slough of hem so many that of twelve thousand ne ascaped not thre thousande
that ne were deed or wounded. And thus were the Saisnes discounfited, and the
chase endured till nyght. Than thei turned gladde and joyfull to the citee, whereas
300 thei founde merveilouse richesse that thei hadde rescued fro the Saisnes of that
thei hadde robbed and piled thourgh the londe and the contrey, whiche was all
ledde into the cité of Logres.

Whan the childeeren were alle come to Logres, the citee made of hem grete joye
whan thei hem knewe. Than thei brought before theym all the riche prise that thei
305 hadde geten and seide unto Gawein that thei heilde for the chief lorde that he
sholde it departe at his voluntee. And he ansuerde that he wolde therof medle in no
manere before Doo of Cardoel; “For,” he seide, “he can it beter departe and yeve
than can I, for he knoweth beste the pore and the suffretouse; and therfore do his
310 volunté.” Whan the citezins herde Gawein thus speke, thei hym comended and
preyed moche and seide he myght not faile to be a worthy man. And thei hym
loved hertely above alle thynges and preised the grete gentilnesse that thei in hym
founden.

Thus restede the childeeren and sojournede in the citee of Logres, that the Saisnes
ne dide hem no forfeite. But now cesseth the story of the childeeren at this tyme that
315 ne speketh a gret while, and returneth to Kynge Arthur and Kynge Ban and Kynge
Boors and her compayne that be gon into the reame of Tamelide for to serve the
Kynge Leodogan.

296 **thourgh**, through. 297 **ascaped**, escaped. 298 **discounfited**, defeated. 301 **piled**,
pillaged. 304 **prise**, goods. 305 **heilde for**, held to be. 306 **departe at his voluntee**,
distribute it as he saw fit. 306–07 **medle in no manere**, not involve himself. 307 **yeve**,
give. 308 **suffretouse**, needy. 308–09 **do his volunté**, follow his wishes. 314 **forfeite**,
harm. 314–15 **that ne speketh**, i.e., will not speak of them.

[Arthur at Tamelide]

Right here seith the Frensch Booke that whan the Kynge Arthur was departed
fro Bredigan, he and the Kynge Ban of Benoyk and the Kynge Boors of Gannes
his brother, that thei rode so her journés till thei com to Tamelide and after to
Toraise, whereas the Kynge Leodogan sojourned upon the Pasche Even. And whan
thei entred into the citee, Merlin rode with hym upon a grete stede, as he that
wolde not hym leven in no manere.

Than thei com to the paleise and fonde the Kynge Leodogan gretly affraied,
for the Kynge Ryon was entred his londe upon hym with fifteen kynges crowned
and hadde hym discounfited and dryven oute of the feilde. And thei were loigged
5 at a seige before a citee cleped Nablaise, that was a grete town and a riche and
plenteuouse of alle goodes. Of this thynge was the Kynge Leodogan gretly abaissched
and dismayed, for his enmyes hadde brought upon hym soche a grete puyssaunce
10 of peple, and he ne kowde no counseile how he myght his londe deffende agein
the Kynge Ryon, for he hadde not peple in his reame sufficient to areyse hem fro
the sege ne to chase hem oute of his reame; and so therof he counseilled with his
15 kyngthes that were with hym belefte and asked of hem counseile and her advys.

In the while that Kynge Leodogan toke thus his counseile of his knygthes,
entred in the Kynge Arthur and his companye into the paleise and com before the
Kynge Leodogan, holdynge eche othir be the honde, two and two togeder. And the
storye seith that with Arthur were forty, and hymself and Merlin made forty-two;
20 and thei weren alle right wele clothed and richely arrayed, and alle yonge bacheleres
at pryme barbe, excepte the two kynges that yede before that somdell were in age,

3 **her**, their. 4 **whereas**, where; **sojourned upon**, abided until; **Pasche Even**, Easter Eve.
6 **leven**, depart from. 7 **paleise**, palace; **fonde**, found. 9 **discounfited**, defeated. 11
abaissched, upset. 12 **puyssaunce**, force. 13 **kowde**, knew; **agein**, against. 14 **areyse**
hem, free themselves. 16 **belefte**, remaining. 22 **at pryme barbe**, in early manhood; **yede**,
went; **somdell**, somewhat more.

Prose Merlin

and thei were feire knyghtes and semely. And thei were behoden of grete and smale of alle that were therinne, for thei were of freissh aray and riche atire. And whan thei com before the Kynge Leodogan, anoon he aroos and yede hem ageins,
25 for hym semed thei weren high men and of grete astate.

Than spake the Kynge Ban first and salued the Kynge Leodogan as soone as he myght; and the kynge seide thei were welcome yef thei come for goode. “Certes, sir,” seide he, “for noon evell ne be we not entred into youre reame, but we be
30 come to serve yow with this condicion — that ye desire not to knowe oure names into the tyme that we lete yow wyte of oure volunté. And but it plese yow in this maner, we commaunde yow to God that He yow deffende from all evell and disese,
35 for we shulde fynde inowe that us will resceyve in soche forme as we yow demaunde; but we have herde sey that ye withholde alle the sowdioures that to yow will come. Now sey us youre pleysier.”

Than ansuerde the Kynge Leodogan that he wolde avise hym by his counseile and besekyng hem therwith not to be displesed; and thei ansuerde agein to be at his leiser. Than cleped the Kynge Leodogan the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table and asked how hem semed of that the knyghtes hym demaunded, and what was
40 her counseile. And thei ansuerde that to withholde hem myght he have no damage, for thei semede to be of grete worthynesse; “And resceyve hem in Goddes name, and pray hem as soone as thei may to sey what thei be and to make hem to be knownen.”

Than departed the kynge fro the counseile and com into the halle where the barouns hym abiden. And than he seide to hem, “Feire lordynges, me merveileth gretly of that ye have me requered, that ye will not that noon knowe what ye be ne what be youre names, and of soche thynge herde I never speke. But by youre semblaunce ye seme alle worthi men, and therfore I will in no wise withsey that

25 **yede hem ageins**, approached them. 26 **hym semed**, he thought. 27 **salued**, greeted.
29 **noon evell ne**, no evil purpose. 31 **into**, until; **wyte**, know; **volunté**, own volition; **but**, if. 32 **disese**, suffering. 33 **inowe**, enough; **in soche forme**, on such terms. 34 **withholde**, support; **sowdioures**, soldiers. 35 **sey**, tell; **pleysier**, desires. 37 **besekyng**, urged. 37–
38 **be at his leiser**, do his bidding. 38 **cleped**, called. 39 **how hem semed**, what they thought; **demaunded**, asked. 40 **her counseile**, their advice; **withholde hem**, retain them.
41 **worthynesse**, worthiness. 46 **will**, wish; **noon**, anyone; **what ye be**, who you are; **ne**, nor. 48 **semblaunce**, appearance; **withsey**, deny; **that**, what.

Arthur at Tamelide

ye requere; and be ye right welcome, and I yow withholde as my lordes and
50 felowes in soche forme that ye shull me ensure to helpe me feithfully and trewly
while that ye be in my compayne. But thus moche I will yow hertely prayen, that
as soone as ye godely mayen, ye will lete me wite what ye be. And I shall telle yow
wherfore, for ye may be soche that I sholde have shame that I have yow not
served as ye ought for to be, for paraventure ye be of higher astate than am I.”
55 And thei ansuerde that he ne sholde to hem do nothyng but thei wolde it gladly
take in gré. And the Kynge Ban hym graunted for to telle her names as soone as
tyme requered; and than thei made theire suerté to the Kynge Leodogan hym trewely
for to serve.

Than thei departed from the kynge and wente into the town for to take the beste
60 loiggyng that thei myght knowe. And Merlin hem ledde to the house of a vavasour
that was right a gode man and a yonge bacheler; and the herberowe was right
godely and esy, and the wif was right a noble woman and a feire and goode to God
and to the worlde. The lorde of the house was a worthy man and of gode livynge,
65 and his name was Blaires and his wif Leonell. And whan thei com before the place,
Blaires lepe oute hem agenis and seide thei were welcome, and thei hym thankeden.
Anon thei lighten and yede up into the halle that was right feire and wel beseyn,
and the yomen dight her horses well at ese.

Thus thei sojourned in the town eight dayes full, and nothinge dide but ete and
dranke and made hem mery and wente to the courte even and morowe whan thei
70 wolden. And the Kynge Leodogan hem served and wurshiped in all that he myght,
and yet he will more whan he knoweth what thei be; he will not holde his travayle
nothinge loste. And moreover, the Kynge Leodogan somowned his peple thourghhoute
his reame, alle tho that armes myght bere, that at the Ascencion thei sholde be at
Toraise, redy armed hemself to deffende in bataile agein theire enmyes. And alle
75 tho that ne wolde not com, he lete hem well wite that thei sholde have as streyte

49 **withholde**, retain. 51 **thus moche**, this much. 52 **godely mayen**, are able; **wite**, know.
54 **paraventure**, perhaps. 56 **take in gré**, accept; **graunted for**, agreed. 57 **suerté**,
pledge. 60 **loiggyng**, lodging; **vavasour**, lesser nobleman. 61 **herberowe**, lodging. 62
esy, pleasant. 65 **lepe**, rushed; **hem agenis**, to them. 66 **lighten**, alighted; **yede**, went.
67 **yomen dight**, yeomen put. 70 **wurshiped**, honored. 71 **holde**, think. 71–72 **travayle**
nothinge loste, efforts were wasted. 72 **somowned**, summoned. 73 **tho**, those. 75 **wite**,
know; **streyte**, strict.

Prose Merlin

justice as longed to thevis and traytoures. And also the Kynge Leodogan sente
after hys frendes and sowdiours over all where he myght hem gete for golde or
silver, and ther com so grete plenté of oon and other that thei were assembled on
the Ascencion Even in the medowes undir Toraise and loigged in teyntes and
80 pavilouns, forty thousand what on horse bakke and on fote, withoute hem that
were in the town, whereof ther were six thousand; but the story seith that in tho
dayes fyve hundred was cleped a thousande.

In the tyme that Kynge Leodogan hadde somowned so his peple, it befill on a
Tewisday at even, in the entreynge of May, that the Kynge Ryalent and the Kynge
85 Phariouns of Irelonde and the Kynge Senygres and the Kynge Serans were de-
parted fro the hoste with fifteen thousande men of armes, and ran thourgh the
contrey for vitaile whereof thei hadde grete nede. And it befill that thei com
wastyng the contrey toward Torayse, where the Kynge Leodogan of Tamelide
sojourned and abode his peple that he hadde sente after.

90 Than herde the kynge the noyse of hem that gadered togeder the pray and robbed
the londe and the contrey aboute Torayse. And thei of the town hem perceyved,
and than thei closed the gates; and the knyghtes that were withynne at sojourne
ronne to theire armes and lepe to theire horse and assembled hem togeder with-
ynne the yates. Than were alle the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table armed, and the
95 governaunce of hem hadde Hervy the Rivell and Males ly Bruns; and thei were
two hundred and fifty that alle were noble gode knyghtes and trewe, and were so
worthi in armes that under sonne men myght fynde noon better. These were alle in
a wynge by hemself, for thei wolde not be medled amonge noon other. And on the
tother side the knyghtes and the peple of the citee arayed hem, and thei were four
100 thousand, and of these hadde the stiward the governaunce hem to lede that was
cleped Cleodaldis.

This Cleodaldis was wonte to bere the chief baner of the kynge, but ever after
that the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table were come, Hervy the Rivell it bar; but he

76 longed to thevis, deserved thieves. 77 sowdiours, soldiers. 80 what on, counting
those; withoute hem, excluding those. 84 entreynge, beginning. 87 vitaile, food. 89
abode, awaited. 90 pray, livestock. 92 at sojourne, at their ease. 97 sonne, the sun. 98
medled amonge noon, mixed with any. 99 arayed hem, prepared themselves. 102 was
wonte to bere, used to carry. 103 he, i.e., Cleodaldis.

Arthur at Tamelide

bar a smal ganfanon of two smale losenges of goules and the feelde of golde and
105 crownes of ynde; and the grete baner that Hervy bar was of four losenges full of
crownes of golde. Whan thei were well armed, thei renged hem before the portes
and abode the comaundement of the kynge. And whan the kynge was armed, he
lepe on a grete stede of greet bounté and rode to the baner that Hervy bar. And
110 ther he hoved stille till thei saugh come the sarazins, and [thei] were mo than
seven thousande on horsebak.

And on the tothir side was Arthur well armed and alle his compayne, and thei
were alle richely horsed. And Merlin bar that day the baner, and he comaunded
hem alle that as dere as thei heilden her owen bodies, that thei sholde sue that
115 baner all that day in what place that it yede. And thei seide alle that thei so wolden.
Than thei set forth her wey thourgh the town, so fresch and richely armed that no
peple myght be better, and thei were forty-one withoute Merlin that bar the baner,
soche oon that for a grete merveile was behoden of oon and other that day; for he
bar a dragon that was not right grete and the taile was a fadome and an half of
lengthe tortue, and he hadde a wide throte that the tongue semed braulinge ever,
120 and it semed sparkles of fier that srongen up into the heire of his throte.

With that com the geauntes and the sarazins and smote theire speres upon the
yates of the town, and after turned down the medowes, for thei fonde no man that
yaf hem ansuere, and gadered togeder alle the prayes of bestes that were in the
medowes. And Merlin eschuwed alle that were in the stretes of the town and rode
125 thourgh hem even to the yates with his meyné, and seide than to the porter, “Lete
oute, for it is tyme.” And the porter seide thei sholde not oute of the yates till the
kynge hadde comaunded. “What!” seide Merlin, “makeste thou daunger of that I
have as grete power as thou?” Than Merlin caught the flayle of the yate and
plukked it to hym, and yede oute as lightly as it hadde not have ben lokked, and

104 **ganfanon**, standard; **losenges of goules**, diamond-shapes in red; **feelde**, field (background). 105 **ynde**, blue. 106 **renged hem**, stationed themselves; **portes**, gates. 107 **abode**, awaited. 108 **bounté**, excellence. 109 **hoved stille**, waited quietly. 113 **dere**, dearly; **sue**, follow. 114 **what**, whatever; **yede**, went. 117 **soche oon**, such a one. 118 **right grete**, very large; **fadome**, fathom (6 feet). 119 **tortue**, entwined; **braulinge**, fluttering. 120 **heire of**, air from. 121 **With that**, Then. 123 **prayes of bestes**, group of animals. 124 **eschuwed**, avoided. 127 **makeste thou daunger of**, i.e., do you doubt. 128 **flayle**, bar.

Prose Merlin

130 than departed oute, magré how he grucchid.

Whan these forty-two felowes weren oute of the towne, than the gate was as close as it hadde never ben opened at that tyme. And of that merveile blissid the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Boors his brother and alle the tother. And Merlin priked faste his horse till he overtoke a grete company of sarazins that were two thousande or mo that ledde grete plenté of beestes. And Merlin frusht amonge hem with his banere and his companye with hym, and leyde on sore strokes and in her metynge overthrew alle that thei counted. And in lesse than an hour thei hadde hem so slain and chased that thei toke the pray and ledde it to the yates of the town. But thei hadde gon but a while whan thei saugh four kynges com with fifteen thousande men of armes that ledde so grete cariage of robbery that thei hadde piled thourgh the contrey, and were towarde the see. Whan Merlin hem saugh he seide to his felowes, “Suweth me!” and thei so diden. And it fill so that anoon as Merlin hadde caste a charme, there rose soche a wynde and storme so grete that the powder and the duste arose with the wynde and smote in the visages of the geauntes and sarazins that oon myght not right wele knowe another.

And anoon as the forty-two felowes were in amone hem, thei slowe and overthrew so many that it was wonder to thinke. And than comaunded the Kynge Leodagan to open the yates; than issed oute first the stiwarde Cleodales formeste with four thousand men of armes, and fonde the yate close whereas thei yssed oute, that foughten agein fifteen thousand men so harde that it was merveille. Than com Cleodalis with his banere and smote in amone the presse right hidously. Ther sholde ye have herde grete brekinge of speres and grete noyse of swerdes upon helmes and upon sheldes, that the sownde was herde into the citee clerly. Ther was grete defoulinge of men and horse, but ther the forty-two felowes shewed merveiles with her bodies.

Whan these four kynges saugh that these were amone hem medelinge, thei departed her peple in tweyne and left eight thousand fightinge stille; and seven

130 **magré**, despite; **grucchid**, complained. 131–32 **as close as**, as closed as if. 132 **blissid**, crossed themselves. 133 **priked**, rode. 135 **frusht**, rushed. 138 **pray**, group of animals. 140 **so grete cariage**, a large baggage train; **piled**, pillaged. 142 **Suweth**, Follow; **fill so**, happened; **anoon as**, as soon as. 143 **charme**, spell. 144 **visages**, faces. 148 **issed**, issued. 153 **into**, inside. 156 **medelinge**, fighting. 157 **departed**, divided.

Arthur at Tamelide

thousand rode agein the banere of Kynge Leodogan that thei saugh come oute of the town. And the ton rode agein the tother full fiercely; and whan thei neighed

160 nygh, thei lowed ther speres and yaf togeder so grete strokes upon sheldes that thei perced haubrikes and dismailed, and many ther were throwen to grounde sore bledyng with stroke of speres. And many ther were that passed thourgh withoute fallinge. Whan the speres were broken, thei leide honde to swerdes and begonne the bataile grete and merveilouse. But ther sholde ye have seyn the
165 Knyghtes of the Rounde Table do wondres, and thei were but two hundred and fifty, and thei that were fightinge with hem were seven thousand; and so were the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table at gret myschief, for thei behoved to disparle, whethir thei wolde or noon, and voyde the place. But thei heilde hem togeder so close and streite that noon myght hem perce ne entr in amone hem.

170 Whan the Kynge Riolent and the Kynge Placiens saugh that so litill a peple withstode so grete a power as thei were, thei hadde therof grete merveile and grete disperte. Than thei cried their ensigne and swore that never oon of hem sholde ascape. Than thei yaf hem a grete shoure and a felonouse, for at that shofte thei overthrewe mo than forty, and moche thei hem peyned hem to diffoule and to
175 maymen; but her felowes were upon hem arrestynge, and hem deffended from their enmyes with her swerdes with all their myght.

180 And than it fill that the Kynge Leodogan was throwen fro his horse full lothly, and thei token hym with strengthe and ledde hym toward prison with moo than five hundred, into the hoste of Kynge Rion of Irlonde; and thei hym ledde full fiercely, for thei wende wele that alle here werre hadde be fynysshed. And so thei ledde the Kynge Leodogan in all the haste that thei myght. And whan the Kynge Leodogan saugh hym so mysfallen and that his enmyes hadde hym taken, he sowowned often tymes and made grete sorowe. And thei that hym ledden spedden hem so faste that thei were fro the town two myle.

158 agein, against. **159 ton**, one; **tother**, other. **159–60 neighed nygh**, drew near. **161 dismailed**, pierced mail. **167 at gret myschief**, in great trouble; **behoved**, were forced; **disparle**, retreat. **168 wolde or noon**, wished to or not; **voyde**, leave. **169 streite**, tight.
170 litill, few. **172 disperte**, anger; **ensigne**, battle-cry. **173 shoure**, rush; **shofte**, push. **174 diffoule**, injure. **175 maymen**, maim; **felowes**, i.e., opponents; **arrestynge**, i.e., fighting back. **177 lothly**, badly. **180 wende**, thought; **alle here werre**, all their fighting. **183 sowowned**, swooned.

Prose Merlin

185 Full grete was the noyse of the seven thousand and the two hundred fifty
Knyghtes of the Rounde Table that were full hevy and wroth for the kynge that
thei hadde loste; and than [thei] seide amonge hem and assured togeder, seth it
was com therto and that thei saugh all sholde be loste, that thei wolde avenge her
shame and deth as longe as they myght lyven. Than thei sette her bakkes eche to
other, and hem deffended merveilously and [made] soche slaughter of men and
horse aboute hem withoute remevynge oute of place; and so moche peyne and
traveile thei suffred that thei that were at the wyndowes of the palise that saugh
the merveile wepte for pité. And Gonnore, the daughter of Kynge Leodogan, whan
she saugh her fader ledde amonge his enmyes, she made so gret sorowe that nygh
195 she slowe hirself for doell. But now lete us cesse to speke of hem till tyme cometh
agein and speke of the Kynge Arthur and his felowes, how that thei have spedde
in the bataile agein the seven thousande with the stiwarde Cleodalis of Tamelide.

Now seith the storie that stronge and crewell was the stour theras the bateile
was, whereas the forty-two felowes and the four thousand that were with Cleodalis
200 the stiwarde that foughten agein the seven thousand sarazins. And many ther were
slayn that lay grennyng on the grounde. And whan thei hadde longe tyme fought
togeder, Merlin rode a grete walop oute of the bataile and cried to his felowes that
thei sholde sue hym; and thei so dide in grete haste and rode as faste as the horse
myght hem bere, till that thei were passed all theire peple. And than thei encresed
205 her pas gretter and rode towarde the siege the right wey theras the geauntes and
the sarazins were, till that thei come in a valey that was right depe; and ther thei
overtoke the five hundred sarasins that ledde the Kynge Leodogan. And as soone
as Merlin hym saugh he cried, "Now, lordinges, upon hem! For ye be bytrayed
and deed yef eny of hem ascape!"

210 Than thei drive in amonge hem as tempest of thunder and kilde and slough all
that thei raught a right stroke in her comynge; and ther ne was noon of the forty-
one but he slowe or maymed whom that he mette. Ther sholde ye have seyn soche
martirdom and soche slaughter of men and of horse that noon ne myght ascape, so
were thei surprised and astonyed, saf oonly fyve that ascaped, fleinge thei rought

194 **nygh**, nearly. 195 **slowe**, slew; **doell**, grief. 198 **stour**, fighting; **theras**, where. 201
grennyng, grinning. 202 **walop**, gallop. 203 **sue**, follow. 205 **pas**, pace; **theras**, where.
210 **drive**, drove; **slough**, slew. 211 **raught**, struck. 213 **martirdom**, death. 214 **rought**,
cared.

Arthur at Tamelide

215 never what wey.

Thus have thei rescowed the Kynge Leodogan. And whan the kynge saugh the grete martire and the occision that so fewe peple hadde don agein so many, he merveyled gretly what thei myght be. Than he beheilde and knewe it was the dragon that Merlyn bar. Than knewe he wele that it were the sowdiours that he hadde withholden, and than he thanked God of the socoure that He hadde hym sente. Than com Merlin to hym, and than he rested. Whan [he] saugh the Kynge Leodogan bounden, he alight, and so dide Bretell. And [thei] hym unbounden, and right his armoure, and sethen made hym to lepe on a steede that was stronge and swyfht. And the kynge hem thonkeden hertely of the servise thei hadde hym don.

225 Than cried Merlin, “Gentill kynghetes, what tarye ye heere so longe? Suweth me!” Than he rode a grete raundon towarde the town where the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table were at gret myschief, that of two hundred and fifty ne were but twenty on horsebak, but deffended hem on fote as wilde bores. And Merlin bar the baner before and rode as faste as he myght, and his felowes also that theirre horses swetten. And the dragon that Merlin bar caste oute gret flames of fiere that it spakeled up in the ayre, that thei upon the walles of the town saugh the clernessee of the light half a myle longe.

235 Whan thei of the citee saugh the kynge that was her lorde and saugh it were the forty-two felowes and with hem the Kynge Leodogan that thei hadde rescued, thei hadde grete joye. And whan Gonnore this saugh, she spronge for joye and merveiled what the kynghetes were that com in that company. And thei com as faste as thunder so harde amoneg her enmyes, and in her comynge ech threwe oone to grounde. And as soone as the forty-two felowes were smyten in amoneg hem, ther began a grete bataile and soche slaughter of men and horse that the maiden that was lenyngre oute at the wyndowes of the paleise herde the grete strokes.

240 Ther yaf the Kynge Ban of Benoyk many strokes with Corchense, his gode swerde; for whom he arafte a full stroke, ther waranted hym neither shelde ne

217 martire, slaughter; **occision**, killing. **218 beheilde**, looked. **219 sowdiours**, soldiers. **220 withholden**, retained; **socoure**, aid. **221 rested**, stopped. **223 right**, readied; **sethen**, then. **225 what**, why; **Suweth**, Follow. **226 raundon**, pace. **227 at gret myschief**, in great danger. **231 that**, so that; **clernessee**, brightness. **232 longe**, away. **235 spronge**, jumped. **235–36 merveiled what**, wondered who. **241 yaf**, gave. **242 whom**, whomever; **arafte**, struck; **waranted**, protected.

Prose Merlin

haubreke ne noon armure that he kutte all thourghoute at oon stroke. And many
245 sithes he smote bothe horse and man to grounde at a stroke, and so dide hys
brother, the Kynge Boors of Gannes. And the sarazins hem beheilde for grete
merveile that thei saugh hem do. And the Kynge Arthur dide soche merveiles with
Calibourne, his gode swerde, for ther agein myght noon armure endure were it
never so stronge, for what he Araught was at his endyng forever.

Grete was the bataile before the towne of Toraise theras the two hundred fifty
250 Knygthes of the Rounde Table and the forty-two felowes [foughten] agein the
sarazins; but thei have so foughten that of the seven thousand beth lefte but five
thousand; wherfore thei beth sory and wroth for this Kynge Canlent that thei have
lost. And than fill it so that the Kynge Ban mette with Kynge Clarion that was
255 the moste man of the hoste of alle the geauntes. And the storye seith that the
Kynge Ban was a moche knyght of body and a stronge, and coragous and hardy.
The kynge heilde Corchense, his gode cuerde, and smote the Kynge Clarion so
sore upon the helme that he slit it dowon to the eere; the stroke fill upon the lifte
shulder that he slitte hym to the girdell. And the Kynge Boors so smote Sarmedon
260 the ganfanouer that he kutte of the arme with all the sheilde, and the baner fill to
the erthe. This stroke saugh the Kynge Leodagan and seide, "Now be there no
knygthes but these that so well conne helpe at nede."

And whan the geauntes saugh their lord deed and her baner fallen, thei turned
to flight, oon here, another there. And than com oute of the town knygthes and
sergeauntes two thousands and begonne the chase upon hem that turned to flight.
265 But Merlin turned not that wey as thei fledde, but wente to the bataile theras
Cleodalis faught fercely with four thousand men agein eight thousand. Whan Merlin
com to the bataile, he fonde Cleodalis was on fote fightinge and heilde yet the
baner upright, and his men aboute hym renged, that well hym deffended as wor-
thy men. But thei were at grete myscheif and in poynte to have hadde grete losse
270 in short tyme, whan Merlin com drivinge amonge hem with his dragon and his
forty-one felowes, of whiche ye have herde that in her comynge ferde as tempeste;

244 **sithes**, times. 248 **what**, who; **araught**, struck. 249 **theras**, where. 254 **moste**,
largest. 255 **moche**, large. 257 **eere**, ear; **lifte**, left. 258 **girdell**, belt. 259 **ganfanouer**,
standard-bearer; **of**, off; **with all**, along with. 261 **conne**, can. 265 **theras**, where. 268
renged, arranged. 269 **in poynte**, about. 271 **ferde**, moved.

Arthur at Tamelide

and therto thei were alle so well horsed that no men myght be better, and the
Kynge Leodogan was ever with hem that in no wise wolde hem leten. And whan
these forty-two felowes were in amonge the geauntes, ther was soche marteleise
275 and soche noise as so many carpenteres in a wode.

Ther was stronge stour and fell and dolorouse, for ther sholde ye have sein
knygghtes and sergeauntes falle as thikke as it hadde be reyn. Ther sholde ye se
stedes and horse renne maisterles, their reynes trailynge undir fote, wheroft he
280 sadeles were all blody of knygghtes that theynne hadde be slain. Ther sholde ye
have herde soche bruyt and soche noyse and cry that it was merveile and grete
doel to here. Ther dide the forty-two felowes so well that it was spoken of longe
tyme after her deth in that contrey. And the storye seith thei mangled and slow so
many that by the traces oon myght have sued half a day every wey of the dead
bodies and horse that thei hadde wounded, as thei that nougth ne cessed ne rested.
285 And therfore me semeth reson to reherse the names of tho worthi men.

The first was Kynge Ban of Benoyk, and the seconde was Kynge Boors of
Gannes, and the thirde was Kynge Arthur, and the forthe was Antor, the fifth was
Ulfin, the sixth was Bretell, the seventh was Kay, the eighth Lucas the Botiller,
290 the ninth was Gifflet, the tenth Maret de la Roche, the eleventh Drias de la Forest
Savage, the twelfth Belias de Amerous of Maydons Castell, the thirteenth
Flaundryns le Bret, the fourteenth Ladynas de Benoyk, the fifteenth Amoret le
Brun, the sixteenth Anticolas le Rous, the seventeenth Blois del Casset, the eight-
eenth Blioberis, the nineteenth Canade, the twentieth Meliadus le Bloys, the twenty-
first Aladan the Crespes, the twenty-second Placidas ly Gays, the twenty-third
295 Leonpadys of the Playn, the twenty-fourth Jerohas Lenches, the twenty-fifth
Christofer de la Roche Byse, the twenty-sixth Ayglin de Vaus, the twenty-sev-
enth Calogревaunt, the twenty-eight Aguysale de Desirouse, the twenty-ninth
Agresiaux the nevew of the Wise Lady of the Foreste Withoute Returne, the thir-
tieth Chalis the Orpheyn, the thirty-first Gires de Lambal, the thirty-second Kehedin
300 de Belly, the thirty-third Meranges de Porlenges, the thirty-fourth Gosnayus Cadrus,
the thirty-fifth Clarias of Gaule, the thirty-sixth the Lays Hardy, the thirty-sev-
enth Amadius the Proude, the thirty-eighth Osenayn Cors Hardy, the thirty-ninth

273 leten, leave. **274 marteleise**, hammering. **276 stour**, fighting; **fell**, cruel. **278 renne**
maisterles, run riderless. **280 bruyt**, sounds. **281 doel**, grief; **here**, hear. **283 traces**,
remains; **sued**, followed. **284 nougth ne**, neither; **ne**, nor. **285 tho**, those.

Prose Merlin

Galescowde, the fortieth Gales, the forty-first Bleoris the sone of Kynge Boors, the forty-second was Merlin; and the forty-third was the Kynge Leodogan, that in
305 no wise wolde hem leve.

These forty-three worthi knyghtes wente to the resc ew of Cleodalis, the Stiwarde of Tamelide, that was a noble knyght and right trewe and full of grete hardynesse; and well it shewde that for noon unkyndenesse that the Kynge Leodogan hadde
310 don agein hym, he wolde hym not forsake ne leve hym in his myscheif in no nede that he was in; but therynne he dide moche more than many other wolde have
315 don, and I shall sey yow the cause why.

This was the troweth, that the Kynge Leodogan hadde a wif, a lady of grete
bewté and of high lynage; and whan he hadde brought here into Tamelide out of
her fader londe after that he hadde her wedded, this lady brought with hire a
315 mayden that was of grete bewté. This maiden loved the stiward so moche that on
a day he asked hir of the Kynge Leodogan for to have her to his wif, that many a
day hadde hym served; and the Kynge hym graunted for his gode servise. And
whan thei were maried and she satte at the table amonge other ladyes and she was
richely arayed, the kynge liked moche hir bewté; and soche a fantasie fill in his
320 herte that he cowde not it remeve, and he hym covered in the beste maner that he
cowde; and she was withoute faile oon of the feirest of the worlde. Till it fill on a
Feste of Seint John that the kynge sente Cleodalis upon a journey agein the Saisnes
that upon hym werred that tyme, and the lady that was lefte with the quene for
companye that moche her lovid with grete love.

325 Hit fill on a nyght that the Kynge Leodogan lay by the quene, and that nyght
upon hir he begat a daughter that was cleped Gonnore whan she was baptised, the
whiche after was of merveilouse bewté and the wif of Kynge Arthur. And this
lady that was wif to Kynge Leodogan was a goode lady and holy of livinge and
hadde an usage to arise on nyghtes and go to chirche to sey Matyns and to heere
330 all servyse to messe. That nyght that the quene hadde conceyved Gonnore her
daughter, she yede to Matyns and com by the stiwardes wif and fonde her slepyng

305 **leve**, leave. 308 **for noon unkyndenesse**, i.e., for despite whatever unkindness.
309 **ne leve**, nor leave; **myscheif**, troubles. 312 **troweth**, truth. 320 **cowde**, could. 321
faile, doubt; **Till it fill**, It happened. 322 **agein**, against. 325 **Hit fill**, It befell. 326
cleped, called. 327 **bewté**, beauty. 329 **an usage**, a habit. 330 **servyse to messe**, the
services until mass. 331 **yede**, went.

Arthur at Tamelide

and wolde not her awake; but wente and lefte her lyngre aslepe, and wente forth alone to the cherche that was faste by, with hir sawter in her hande. And the kynge, that longe hadde desired to speke with that lady, arose as soone as the
335 quene was gon, and dide oute the taperes that were brennyngre and than wente to ly by the stiwardes wif. And whan the lady felte oon lyngre by her, she asked what he was, all affraied; and than he answerde how it was he, and bad hir be stille, and seide yef she made eny noyse she sholde be deed. The lady her deffended inowgh as with speche, but she durste not crye ne make no noyse; but litill availede her defense for the kynge by hir lay; and on hir he gat a doughter, the same nyght that he hadde geten Gonnore on his wif.

And whan the quene was delyvered, ther was founde upon the childe reynes a litill crosse like a crowne for a kynge; and as soone as the quene was delyvered, the stiwardes wif began to traveyle, and hadde a doughter of feire bewté, and
345 [she] was so like the quene's doughter that oon cowde not knowe oon from another but by the crosse upon her reynes. And eche of hem hight Gonnere in bapteme; and [thei] were norrisshed and brought up togeder till that the quene was deed. And the kynge yet was not keled of the love of the stiwarde's wif, and he her toke and shet her in a castell, for he wolde not the stiwarde sholde speke with hir.

350 In soche maner he heilde her more that five yere, till that the stiwarde's frendes spake unto hym; and he seide he wolde not faile the kynge while he hadde werre, and yet the same tyme that Kynge Arthur com for to serve, he hir heilde in the selve maner; and yet for all this the stiwarde never feyned to serve. But now lete us retourne to speke of the stiwarde ther he is fightynge on fote amonge the
355 gyauntes, for all betyme we shull speke of the twey Gonnores whan the mater fallith therto.

[Summary.] A lengthy battle against King Rion's forces ensues. Both Arthur's group of Forty-two Knights and the Knights of the Round Table do many valiant deeds,

333 sawter, psalter. **335 dide**, put; **brennyngre**, burning. **336 what**, who. **338 deffended**, resisted. **341 geten**, begotten. **342 reynes**, loins. **344 traveyle**, be in labor. **345 oon cowde**, one could. **346 reynes**, loins; **hight**, was named; **bapteme**, baptism. **348 keled**, cooled. **349 shet**, shut. **350 he^l**, held. **351 he^l**, i.e., the steward. **353 never feyned**, i.e., was always glad. **354 ther**, where. **355 all betyme**, in time; **twey**, two. **355–56 mater fallith**, story turns.

Prose Merlin

including rescuing Cleodalis the steward from the enemy's grasp. Merlin remains in the thick of the battle with his dragon banner; and while the ladies of Tamelide look on, Arthur wields his sword Calibourne with great success. King Rion's troops are finally put to flight, but Rion vows he will not leave the land until King Leodegan has been captured. Fols. 73v (line 34)–77v (line 10).]

Now seith the booke that gladde and joyfull were thei of the town of Toraise for
the discounfiture of the Saisnes that were chased of so small a peple, for thei were
at the bygynnyng but six thousand and three hundred, and the Saisnes were more
360 than fifteen thousand; and [thei] were discounfited be the counseile of Merlin that
moche hem helped, and by the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table, and also of the
forty-two sowdioures. And as the booke seith, whan thei hadde chased the Saisnes
unto nyght, that than thei returned to Toraise gladde and mery, and fonde the
kyng in the town that his men hadde remounted and sette on horse. And whan he
365 knewe that the sowdiours com, he wente hem ageins and made of hem the grettest
joye that eny man myght, and fonde Antor and Gifflet and Kay and Lucas the
Botiller and alle the other felowes hool and sounde, of whom thei hadden had grete
drede that thei hadden be deed or elles taken. And ther was founde grete wynnynge,
and the kynge made it to be take and presented to the sowdiours that he hadde
370 withholden. And he seide he myght it no better employe for thei hadde it all wonne.
“And myself,” seide the Kynge Leodogan, “have thei rescued fro deth and fro
prison.”

And whan thei saugh the grete worschip that the kynge hem dide, thei thanked
hym hertely and seide that thei wolde it not, for in tyme comynge thei [wolde]
375 resceve his yeftes and take of hym other fee. And the kynge seide seth thei wolde
it not resceyve that thei sholde it departe and yeve theras thei wolden. Than com
Merlin to the thre kynges and bad hem take it. And thei it token and yaf it theras
Merlin hem assigned, that thei ne lefte not to hemself the valewe of a peny. And
thei that it hadden, thanked and preised moche the sowdiours, alle tho that hem

358 **discounfiture**, defeat; **small**, few. 360 **discounfited**, undone. 361 **of²**, by. 362
sowdioures, soldiers. 363 **fonde**, found. 365 **hem ageins**, to meet them. 367 **hool**, whole.
368 **wynnynge**, booty. 370 **withholden**, retained. 373 **worschip**, honor. 374 **wolde**,
wished. 375 **yeftes**, gifts; **seth**, since. 376 **departe**, distribute; **yeve**, give. 379 **hadden**,
received; **tho**, those.

Arthur at Tamelide

380 knewen, and also thei [that] knewen hem nothyng. And that so moche were thei beloved in the contrey for her largesse be the counseile of Merlin that nougnt was spoken of in the contrey but of the sowdiours. And the Kynge Arthur yaf so moche to his ooste and to his wif of horse and palfreyes and robes that alle ther lyves after were thei riche.

385 Whan the Kynge Arthur hadde departed the richessee that was wonne of the Saisnes, thei entred into the town; and the Kynge Leodogan wolde not suffre hem in no wise to alight but at his paleise with hym, ne never after wolde he lete hem be oute of his companye, and with the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table. And whan thei were unarmed, the Kynge made his doughter to aray hem in riche robes and
390 made her take warme water in basyns of silver and bare to the thre kynges and hem serve. But Arthur wolde not take her servyse till that the Kynge Leodogan and Merlin comaunded hym and made hym to take it. And the maiden hersilf wosh his visage and his nekke and dried it full softly with a towaile, and than after to the tother twey kynges.

395 And the tother Gonnore that was of the stiwarde's wif and the other maydenes served the othere knyghtes; and whan the kynge's doughter hadde served the thre kynges, than she served hir fader. And whan thei were waisch, the maiden put on ech of hem a mantell aboute her nekkes. And the Kynge Arthur was right feire, and the maiden hym beheilde moche, and he her. And she seide softly to herself
400 that well were that maiden that so feire a knyght wolde requere hir of love, and namely so gode a knyght as is this. And well ought she to be shamed ever after that hym denied.

Anoon were the tables set, and whan the mete was redy thei satte alle the knyghtes therynne; but the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table seten with the sowdiours at table be hemself. And the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Boors sette the Kynge Arthur betwene hem two and dide hym grete honour as affiered to so high a man. And therof toke the Kynge Leodogan goode hede, that by hem satte side by syde at the heede of the table, and thought well in his corage that by the honour and the reverence that thei to hym bar that he was lorde over alle, and merveiled sore

380 **nothyng**, not at all. 381 **largesse be**, generosity by; **nought**, nothing. 383 **ooste**, host (i.e., Blaires). 385 **departed**, distributed. 387 **alight**, stay. 390 **bare**, carry. 404 **the sowdiours**, i.e., Arthur's forty knights. 406 **affiered**, belonged. 409 **hym**, i.e., Arthur.

Prose Merlin

410 what he myght be, and grete desire he hadde for to knowe the trowthe what he was, and thought in his herte that, "And it were plesyng to God that he hadde my daughter spoused, for trewly I can not thynke that so high prowesse myght be shewed in soche a childe but yef he were come of right high lynage; other elles I 415 trowe that it be som spirituell man that God hath me sente for to deffende this reame, nought for me but for Cristynté and Holy Cherche to mayntene." And thereto he seide ne yede he not oute of this towne withoute leve of the porter.

At this soper the Kynge Leodogan satte stille in a grete stodye, and lasted longe; and it fill in his mynde how that he hym rescued in the depe valay with the forty-one felowes agein five hundred knyghtes that ledde hym to prison, and remembrede 420 alle the prowesses that he hadde sein hym do; and so sadly he sat in that thought that alle thei were troubled and lefte theirre mete. Of this was war Hervy de Ryvel and was therfore sory in his herte, and aroos and yede to hym full wroth to the heede of the table and seide, "Sir, I saugh never yow so mystake youreself, ne never I saugh yow so abaisshed, for ye ought well to make joye to these worthi men; and ye thenke as that ye were in a dreme, and I merveile moche of youre 425 grete wisdome where it is become."

Than the kynge yaf a grete sigh and loked on Hervy and seide, "Hervy, frende, I thought upon the moste worthi man of the worlde, fro the whiche I myght not me withdrawe; and yef thou knewe what my thought were, thou woldest not me blame." And he seide, "Sir, it may well be so; but now at this tyme cesseth till eftesones, for this is no place now therto, but maketh joye to these barouns and disporte yow, for ye have at this tyme to moche yow mystaken save youre honoure." "Gramercy, feire frende," seide the Kynge, "I knowe well that I have mysdon." Then Hervy yede and sat down by his felowes. And the kynge tho spake to the 435 barouns merily.

And the maiden that was the daughter of Kynge Leodogan served Arthur upon her kne of wyne with hir fader cuppe. And Arthur hir behelde full debonerly, and [it] plesed hym wele that he saugh hir so nygh, for she was the feirest lady that

410 **what¹**, who. 411 **And**, If. 412 **spoused**, wedded. 413 **but yef**, unless; **other elles**, or else. 415 **nought**, not. 418 **fill in his mynde**, came to mind. 420 **prowesses**, deeds. 421 **war**, aware. 422 **yede**, went; **wroth**, angry. 423 **heede**, head. 424 **saugh**, saw; **abaisshed**, reserved. 425 **thenke**, appear; **that**, though. 430–31 **cesseth till eftesones**, cease until later on. 434 **yede**, went; **tho**, then. 437 **debonerly**, courteously. 438 **nygh**, near.

Arthur at Tamelide

440 was in all Breteigne in that tyme. And the mayden was fayre and hadde on hir
heede a riche chapelet of precious stones, and her visage fressh and wele coloured,
so entermedled white and redde so naturally that it nedde nother more ne lesse;
and her shulderes streyghte and even and merveylously well shapen of body, for
she was sklender abouthe the flankes and the haunche lowe and comly well sittynge,
and of alle fetures the feirest shapen that myght be founde in eny londe; and yef
445 she hadde grete bewté therto, she hadde as moche bounté of valour, of curtesie,
and nurture.

Whan Arthur saugh this mayden that hadde so grete bewté, he behelde her
with a gladde chere, and saugh her pappes smale and rounde as two smale appellis
that were harde; and her flessh whitter than snowe and was not to fatte ne to
450 sklendir; and he coveyted her gretly in his herte that he waxe all pensif, and lefte
his mete and turned his chere another wey, for he wolde not the two kynges ne
noon other hym aperceyved. Than the mayden profered hym the cuppe and seide,
“Sir, drynke, and dispiese yow not though I clepe yow not be youre name; and be
ye not abaissched at youre sopere, for at armes ye do not faile at no nede, and well
455 it shewed this day where ye were beholden of five thousand that nothyng yow
dide knowe but by sight.”

And he turned and seide, “Feire lady, with goode will, and gramercy of youre
servyse. And God graunte me power that I may yow this guerdon yelde.” “Sir,”
seide she, “ye have quyte it double more than I may deserve, for ye have rescued
460 my lorde my fader, ye and youre compayne, that was amonge so many of his
enmyes that ledde hym to prison.” And he satte stille withoute ansuere. “And,”
quod the lady, “was ther moche more, for here before the yates at the brigge-foote
ye shewed well sembelant that it yow greved, and that ye were sory for his anoye
theras he was unhorsed amonge his enmyes and his horse under hym slain. For
465 ye slow hym that hym dide overthowe, and ye youreself were in aventure of deth
hym to rescuen, and so wele ye dide that thei were fayn to leve the feelde.”

440 **visage**, face. 441 **entermedled**, mingled; **nother**, neither. 444 **fetures**, features; **yef**,
if. 445 **bounté**, goodness. 448 **pappes**, breasts; **appelis**, apples. 450 **pensif**, melancholy.
451 **chere**, face; **wolde not**, did not want. 451–52 **ne noon**, nor any. 452 **aperceyved**,
observed. 453 **clepe**, call. 454 **abaissched at**, frightened by. 455 **were beholden**, sus-
tained. 458 **guerdon yelde**, debt repay. 459 **quyte**, repaid. 463 **sembelant**, the appear-
ance; **greved**, saddened. 465 **aventure**, danger. 466 **fayn**, glad.

Prose Merlin

Thus spake the daughter of Kynge Leodogan to Arthur, but he spake no worde
agein but toke the cuppe and dranke with goode will and after comaunded the
mayden to arise, for to longe hadde she kneled; but the kynge her fader ne wolde
not. Thus were thei served right highly of alle thynges that man myght devise.
470 And whan the clothes sholde be taken up, the Kynge Ban seide to Kynge Leodogan
that satte nexte by hys side, "Sir," seide the Kynge Ban, "I have grete merveile of
yow that be so wise and worthy a man that have not maried youre doughter to som
high pryncie that myght yow helpe in youre werres, for she is now wele woxen
475 and therto right wise; and as me semeth, ye have no mo heyres to whom youre
londe shall descende after youre deth; and therfore ye sholde here before have her
sette to some noble pryncie."

"Certes, sir," seide Leodogan, "I have be letted by the werre that me sore hath
greved and longe dured, for it is seven yere passed that the Kynge Rion of
480 Denmarke and of Irelonde ne cessed never upon me to werre; ne never seth com
ther no man in this londe to whom I ought hir to yeve. But so helpe me God, yef
I myght fynde a yonge bacheler that were a worthi man of armes that myght wele
endure peyne and travayle to meyntene my werre, to hym wolde I yeve my doughter
485 yef he wolde her take, and alle my londe after my desesse, that never shall I spare
for high lynage ne grete richessee of lordeschip. And that it plesed oure Lorde
Jhesu that it myght ben he that I thynke now in my mynde, and trewly than sholde
she be maried withynne these thre dayes unto a feire yonge bacheler that is full of
high prowesse; and trewly, I suppose in my corage that he be of hiher astate than
490 am I." And Merlin beheilde the Kynge Boors and began to smyle and made hym a
signe that it was seide for the Kynge Arthur; and withoute faile, for hym was it
seide.

Than begonne thei to speke of many thynges and turned her tales other weyes,
for more wolde thei not speke therof at that tyme. That perceyvede well the
Kynge Leodogan that thei heilde no cure to maytene that tale, and therwith he yaf
495 a sore sigh, for fayn he wolde that oon hadde hym more therof aresoned. And so

469–70 ne wolde not, did not wish [her to]. **471 clothes**, table cloth. **474 werres**, wars;
wele woxen, well grown. **475 heyres**, heirs. **476 here before**, before now. **478 letted**,
prevented; **werre**, war. **480 seth**, since. **481 yeve**, give; **yef**, if. **484 desesse**, death. **488**
corage, heart. **494 cure**, desire. **495 fayn he wolde**, gladly he wished; **aresoned**, dis-
cussed.

Arthur at Tamelide

he heilde his pees and herkened yef he myght eny thyng aperceyve in eny manere what thei were and of what londe, and saugh the joye and the honoure that the worthi men made to Arthur; and that was a thyng that brought hym more mysese, and so moche the worthy men of the Rounde Table more than the forty felowes
500 that were of her companye, that alle that it saugh hadde therof merveile and weren abasshed. But above alle, hym coveyted the kynge's daughter; and right hertely she hym loved and mused hereon so moche that she was sore troubeled, and fayn wolde she have hym to be her lorde and make above alle tho that ever she hadde seyn before.

505 And the storyes seyn that she was the wisest lady of all the Bloy Breteyne, and the feirest and the beste beloved that ever was in the londe or in the contrey, saf only Helayn that was withouten pere, that was the daughter of Kynge Pelles of Lytenoys of the Castell of Corbenyk, that was nece to the Kynge Pesceor and of the seke kynges wounded, wherof the name of the ton was cleped Alain de Lille in
510 Lytenoys. This Kynge Alain was seke of the woundes of the spere vengeresse, wherof he was cleped Mehaignyes, for he was wounded thourgh bothe thyghes with that spere; and his right name was Kynge Alain, and the Kynge Pellynor was his brother germayn; and this maiden of whom I speke was theirne nece and daughter to Kynge Pelles, brother to these two kynges that I have yow named.

[*Summary.* After dinner, Merlin tells Arthur, Ban, and Bors what has been happening in Logres during their absence, particularly extolling the deeds of the Young Squires in defending Arthur's land against the Saxons. During this same time that Arthur has been helping Leodegan and the Young Squires have been protecting Logres, the rebel kings have been fighting the Saxons in their own homelands. Another group of Young Squires — including Sagremor, the nephew of the emperor of Constantinople; Ewain of the White Hands and his half-brother Ewain Avoutres, sons of King Uriens; Dodinell the Savage, son of King Belynans of South Wales; and Kay Destranx and Kehedin — having heard of the deeds of Gawain and his brothers, set off toward Logres to meet the other Squires and to be knighted by Arthur. Fols. 79v (line 16)–90r (line 11).]

496 *pees, peace; herkened yef, watched if; aperceyve, learn.* **497** *what¹, who.* **498** *hym, i.e., Arthur; mysese, discomfort.* **501** *abasshed, surprised; hym coveyted, he desired; hertely, truly.* **502** *fayn, gladly.* **503** *make, husband; tho, those.* **509** *seke, sick; ton, one; cleped, called.* **510** *vengeresse, vengeful.* **511** *cleped, called.* **513** *nece, niece.*

[Merlin and the Young Squires]

Full grete was the joye that thei ledde in the town of Toraise for the victorie and the wynnynge that thei hadde upon their enmyes; and thei abode their peple that assembled every day on every part. And the Kynge Arthur ther was full richely served and honoured of the Kynge Leodogan and of his daughter, that moche her
5 peyned be the comaundement of hir fader.

And upon a day as the Kynge Arthur was moche worshiped and in grete ese,
than Merlin com and toke the thre kynges apart and seide, "Sirs, I moste go into
the reame of Logres, for ther is now grete nede of counseyle and of helpe, nought
for that the londe hath eny pereile, but that it shall well be deffended from evell
10 doers. And I do yow to wite that the princes and the barouns beth moche greved
with the Saisnes that to many have in her londes; and thei have besieged two citees
thourgh her pride, wherof that oon is Vandesberes and the tother is Clarence. And
ther be assembled the peple of moo than forty dyverse regiounys, and yet thei
encrece every day more and more."

15 And than he hem tolde how that the Saisnes were departed, and how that oo
parte yede upon the Kynge of Cornewaile, and the tother upon the Kynge Loot,
and the thirde upon the Kynge Clarion and the Duke Escam. And after that he
tolde hem alle the tidinges and alle the batailes and all the trouble that hadde i-be,
and all the discounfitures betwene the Saisnes and Cristin kynges, and the grete
20 parliament that the Saisnes heilden for to asege the two townes; and how Ewein
the Grete and Ewein the Avoutres were departed fro Kynge Urien her fader; and
how Dodinell the Savage and Kay Destranx and Kehedin Lebeus com on the tother

1 **ledde**, experienced. 2 **abode**, waited upon. 4 **of**, by. 5 **be**, by. 6 **ese**, ease. 7 **moste**, must.
8–9 **nought for that**, not because. 9 **pereile**, peril. 10 **do yow to wite**, want you to know;
beth, are. 11 **to many**, too many [invaders]. 12 **her**, their. 13 **moo**, more. 15 **departed**,
divided; oo, one. 16 **yede upon**, went against. 18 **hadde i-be**, had occurred. 19
discounfitures, fierce encounters. 20 **asege**, besiege.

Merlin and the Young Squires

side toward Logres to abide ther with Gawein, and seide how thei wolde never be cleped knyghtis unto the tyme that the Kynge Arthur hem girde with her swerdes.

25 “And I do yow to wete that thei may not endure but thei have other counseile than her owne, for the Saisnes be so spredde aboue though the londe that thei shull be take but thei have better counseile than hemself. And that is the cause that I will go. And loke that ye be mery and well at ese and resteth yow, that ye go nothir hider ne thider till that ye se me. And I shall not longe tarye.”

30 “Ha, feire frende,” seide the Kynge Ban, “ne abide not longe, for than sholde we alle be deed and distroied; yef ye us now forsake, we myght sey that ye hadde us alle betraied.” “How is that, feire lordes? Have ye doute that I sholde not come agein? Now bewar that never ye it thinke, for than have ye loste my love.” “Sir,” seide the Kynge Ban, “I thenke it for noon evell that I have to yow, but for to have your companye that I so moche love.” “Now lete it be,” quod Merlin, “for ye shull me have here agein with yow er than ye have bataile in this reame. And therfore I yow comaunde to God, for I may here no lenger tarien.” And with that he departed so sodeynly thens that thei knewe not where he was become.

40 And than he com the same nyght to Blase his maister in Northumbirlonde, that grete joye hym made whan he hym saugh, as he that loved moche his companye. And Merlin tolde hym alle these aventures that were befallen in the reme of Tamelide seth that he departed; and after that he tolde hym alle thinges that were fallen to the kynges of the reame of Grete Bretaigne, that noughe he lefte untolde. And he wrote in hys booke worde for worde like as he hym tolde; and by hym have we the knowinge therof into this tyme. And whan he hadde alle these thinges writen, thanne he tolde hym for what nede he hadde lefte the thre kynges in the reame of Tamelide. And the same nyght that Merlin spake thus with Blase was Orienx and his meyné logged upon the river of Humbir, enteringe into the londe. But now resteth the processe of Merlin and of Blase a while, and of the Saisnes, 45 and speketh of Seigramor that is departed fro Costantynoble with thre hundred felowes for to be made knyghtes of Kynge Arthurs honde.

50 **24 cleped**, called. **25 do yow to wete**, want you to know; **but**, unless. **27 be take but**, be defeated unless. **29 nothir hider ne thider**, neither here nor there, i. e., nowhere. **31 yef**, if. **34 noon evell**, no ill will. **36 er than**, before. **37 comaunde**, commend. **38 thens**, thence. **39 than**, then. **42 seth**, since. **42–43 were fallen to**, had befallen. **48 meyné**, army; **logged**, encamped.

Prose Merlin

Now seith the booke of Blase that so hath Seigramor hym spedde seth that he departed fro the riche citee of Costantynoble, that he com to the port of Hucent, that thei arived at the port of Dover. And whan thei were alle come to the londe,
55 thei were right gladde, and trussed theire harneys and lepe on their horse and toke theire wey toward Kamelot, and journeyed so as thei that knewe not the weyes ne fonde not of whom to aske after the Kynge Arthur, and fonde also the contrey brent and wasted as the Saisnes hadde passeth thourgh. And the childe
60 ren ne wiste no worde till sodeinly thei blusshed upon a grete partie of Saisnes that Orienx hadde dessevered on a companye; and [thei] were twenty thousand and wente robbingre aboute Norhant that noon hem ne letted of the pray that their peple hadde gadered.

Whan these childe
65 ren aproched the Saisnes withynne a myle, thei mette with
peple of the contrey that fledde to the wode for drede, for in the londe was grete sorow and desese in tho dayes. Whan the childe
70 ren hem mette, thei asked what hem eiled; and thei hem tolde that thei fledde for the Saisnes that all the contrey distroied. And than Seigramor asked, "Where is the Kynge Arthur?" And thei ansuered that he was gon into the reame of Tamelide. "And who is than in this londe?" quod Seigramor. Than seide the men of the contrey that the sones of Kynge Loot of Orcanye, that were nevewes of Kynge Arthur, were come for to serve for to take theire armes of Kynge Arthur. "And where ben thei?" quod Seigramor. "At Camelot," seide thei. "But for Goddes love, feire gentill knygthes, ne go not ferther, for than shull ye alle be slain and distroied."

"Now," quod Seigramor, "telle us what wey stondeth Camelot." "Trewly," seiden
75 thei, "ye be right well in the wey, yef it ne were for these false sarazins that here be comynge; and therfore fleeth, or ye be alle deed." "How fer is it hens to Camelot?" quod Seigramor. "Sir, it is six mile unto a plain that dureth wele two myle fro
them."

Whan Seigramor undirstode that he hadde but eight myle, he cried to his felowes
52 seth, since. 54 that, [and then] that. 55 trussed theire harneys, readied their gear.
56 so as thei, just like those. 57 fonde not of whom, found no one. 58 brent, burned. 59
ne wiste no worde, knew nothing; blusshed, came. 60 dessevered on, separated into. 61
noon hem ne letted of the pray, no one stopped them from taking the booty. 63 childe
ren, young warriors. 65 tho, those. 66 eiled, ailed. 68 than, then. 74 what wey stondeth,
which way is. 75 right well, perfectly. 77 dureth wele, i.e., stretches for.

Merlin and the Young Squires

80 and seide, “Gentill squyers, now as armes, for now shall be sein who is noble and worthi; and loke that thise mysbelevinge Saisnes that thus distroioith the Cristin feith ne bere nought awey of youres be force but it be dere soldē; for yef we may passe hem thourgh and gete betwene hem and Camelot, we shull than come thider be strengthe of oure horse yef we have grete mystere.”

85 Than alight the squyters and hem armed. Ther sholde ye have sein hem do on fressh newe hauberkes, bright shynynge as fin silveir; and thei hadden hattes of fin steill above their coiffes of iren upon their heedes. And than thei lefte theire palfreyes and lepe upon stedes covered in maile that thei hadde ther, so goode and so feire that no man neded to seche better in no londe. And than thei hem renged 90 clos on a sop as starlinges, and rode forth toward the Saisnes that saugh hem comynge. But now a litill resteth of hem and speke of Merlyn that was in Northumberlond with Blase.

95 Whan Merlin hadde tolde to Blase alle the merveiles of the londe as thei were fallen seth he departed from hym, in the morowe erly he com before the town of Camelot. And he com in the semblaunce of an olde man and hadde on a russet cote, torne and all thredbare; and he was moche and longe and courbed and brode sholdered and leene for age, and the heer of his heede entermedled white and broun, and longe berde, and bar a grete staff on his nekke, and drof gret foysone of beestes before hym.

100 And whan he com before the town, he began to make grete sorow and cried high and clear that thei withynne upon the walles myght wele it here how he yede, seyinge, “Ha! Lorde God! How grete pitē is it that so feire children shull thus be slain and alle tohewen with wronge and grete synne! A-Ha! Kynge Arthur! Goode sir, whiche frendes thou shalt lese this day that moche thee sholden helpe, yef thei myght lyve, thi londe to mayntene! Ha! Seigramor! Gentill squier, fre and deboneir, that thou shalt thus suffre angwisshe deth! Now oure Lorde God yow

80 as armes, to arms. 82 bere nought, take nothing; be, by; dere soldē, dearly bought. 83 hem thourgh, through them. 84 be, by; mystere, skill. 85 do on, put on. 87 coiffes, hoods of mail. 89 seche, seek. 89–90 renged clos, gathered closely. 90 on a sop as starlinges, as starlings on a piece of bread. 93–94 were fallen seth, had occurred since. 96 cote, coat; moche, tall; courbed, bent over. 97 entermedled, mixed. 98–99 drof gret foysone of beestes, drove a great many beasts. 101 here, hear; yede, went. 104 whiche, what; lese, lose.

Prose Merlin

110 socoure and helpe that ye be not slain; and yef that ye be ded, He have the sowle
of yow that it be never turmentid in the peynes of Helle, as He is a very God and
man full of mercy and grace, and also to save and helpe yowre felowes in the
manere that thus dispitousely shull be martired for defaute of socoure.”

115 These wordes that the carl seide undirstode well Gawein and his bretheren that
were upon the walles of the towne. And [thei] were alleredy armed and behelde
the fier and the smoke of the Saisnes as thei brente the contrey aboute, for he was
come to Camelot for to kepe the town as soone as thei wiste the Saisnes were
120 entred the contrey, and were gon upon the walles to see yef the Saisnes come for
to assaile the town. And Gawein hadde wele herde and undirstonde the wordes
that the karll hadde seide. Than Gawein hym cleped with an high voyse and seide,
“Man! Man! Com hendir and speke with me and tell us what thow aylest and whi
thow makest this sorow; and telle us who is that that thow goist thus regratynge
and bemonynge.”

125 And the carll leide to the deef ere and smote his staff on the grounde as he
hadde ben oute of his mynde for grete sorow that he hadde at his herte. And than
he lenyd hym upon his staff and began to make grete sorowe. And whan he hadde
thus hym longe waymented, he drof agein his bestes as though he wolde have
fledde to the forest. And than he seide agein with an high voyce, “A-Haa! Chivalrie
of Logres, where art thow become? For withynne these eight dayes men seide
ther was come into this contrey all the socoure of the worlde, and I herde sey that
the nevewes of Kynge Arthur sholde defende this contrey. Certeys, evell it sheweth
whan he suffreth to be slain the merveile of the worlde.”

130 Whan that Gawein undirstode these wordes, he was right angwisshouse for to
knowe whi the carll hadde this seide and whi he so waymented, and cleped hym
agein with a lowde voyce thre or foure tymes and seide, “Howe, karll, howe!
Speke to me and telle me what thow eilest.”

107 **sowle**, soul. 108 **very**, true. 109 **man**, one. 110 **dispitously**, pitifully; **martired**, put
to death; **defaute**, lack. 111 **carl**, rustic fellow. 113 **he**, i.e., Gawain. 114 **kepe**, protect;
wiste, knew. 117 **karll**, rustic; **cleped**, called; **high**, loud. 118 **hedir**, here; **thow aylest**,
troubles you. 119 **regratynge**, lamenting. 121 **leide**, put his hand; **as**, as if. 124
waymented, lamented; **bestes**, animals. 128 **Certeys**, Surely. 130 **angwisshouse**, anx-
ious. 131 **waymented**, lamented. 132 **Howe**, Stop.

Merlin and the Young Squires

135 And ever he turned the heed in travers and made semblant as he hadde hym not
herde. And Gawein hym cleped eftesoones, and than he lefte up his heed that was
lothly and rivelid and loked on high to hym with oon eye open and another clos,
and grennyng with his teth as a man that loked agein the sonne, and ansuered,
“What wilt thou?”

140 Quod Gawein, “Come a litill nerre and speke with me.” And he drough ner till
he com undir the walles of the town upon the diche and seide, “Now maist thou
sey what thou wilt, but sey hastely, for my bestes gon.” “I will,” quod Gawein,
“that thou telle whi that thou wepest, and what he is that thou hast thus regreded,
and whi thou hast so blamed the chyvalrie of this contrey.” “Yef thou wilt graunte
me that thou shalt do thi power to delyver hym, I will telle thee.” “I thee graunte,”
145 quod Gawein, “as I am trewe squyer that I shall therto do all my myght that I have
in the worlde.”

150 And whan the karll herde that Gawein was so desirouse for to wite whi he was
come thider, he seide to Gawein, “Feire sir, what be ye?” “My name,” quod he,
“is Gawein, the nevew of Kynge Arthur.” “Treuly, I have grete pitee of a compayne
of yonge gentilmen that beth high mennes sones that beth fightinge at the ende of
this launde ayen the Saisnes, that never so fewe men contened so longe agein so
moche peple, for thei [be] but thre hundred that fighten agein thre thousande.”
“And what be thei,” quod Gawein, “and what go thei for to seche?”

155 Quod the karll, “Thei sey that the lorde of hem is cleped Seigramor, the nevew
of the emperor of Costantinnoble, that is come into this contrey for to take his
armes of the Kynge Arthur. Now have I seide all that I knowe; but I knowe it well
that ye will not hym socoure, and so I have loste my laboure, for I knowe well
that ye have not the herte ne the hardynesse for to go thider. Netherdeles, yef ye
160 go thider and ye may hym socoure, ye may yow avaunte that ye have wonne a
feire emprise and a riche.”

Whan Gawein undirstode the wordes of the karll that so hym cleped cowarde,

134 **in travers**, the other way; **as**, as if. 135 **eftesoones**, again; **lefte**, raised. 136 **lothly**,
ugly; **rivelid**, shriveled. 138 **wilt thou**, do you want. 139 **nerre**, nearer. 140 **diche**, dry
moat. 141 **will**, wish. 142 **whi that**, why; **what**, who; **regreded**, lamented. 143 **graunte**,
promise. 144 **delyver**, rescue. 147 **wite**, know. 148 **what**, who. 151 **ayen**, against;
contened, fought. 153 **what be thei**, who are they. 158 **ne**, nor; **Netherdeles**, Neverthe-
less. 159 **avaunte**, boast. 160 **emprise**, enterprise.

Prose Merlin

he was ashamed and cried, "Now to horse, gentill knyghtes and gentill felowes, and sue me, for I go!" And as sone as he hadde seide that worde, he lepe to horse and alle his felowes after, and rode oute of the town in all haste; and whan thei
165 were alle oute, thei were four thousand what oon what other. And Gawein com all before and come to the karll and seide, "Lepe upon this horse and lede us ther these childeren fighten." And the karll dide his comaundement that for noon other thinge was come theder, and rode formest theras thei were fightynge.

And whan thei neyhed nygh, thei founde the childeren fightinge merveilously and hadde slain of the Saisnes moo than seven hundred; but ther were so many of hem that thei myght not longe endure. And ther dide Seigramoor the grettest prowesse that eny man saugh ever, for he heilde an axe with bothe hondes and was before his felowes upon a stede that was swyfte and right stronge; for whan thei gan hym assaile, he smote in amonge hem so harde and so depe that he was loste as it hadde be in a see from the sight of his felowes. And the Saisnes hym enclosed on alle sides, and Seigramor, that heilde the ax that was sharp igrunde, thought to perce thourgh to his felowes. He smote so grete strokes on bothe sides that he slowgh all that he raught a full stroke, and thei fledde on every side from hym that knewen his strokes; and noon was so hardy that durst hym abyde but launched to hym sharpe grounde speres and gleyves and other wepnes.
170
175
180

But thus myght thei not longe endure that thei ne sholde have be deed or elles taken but as Gawein com with his companye, for Orienx peyned hym moche hem for to take, that was a noble knyght and a sure. And he sette upon the childeren and kepte hem in so short and streite that noon myght passe, and foughten so felly that the childeren were waxen feble for lakke of breth; and yef it ne hadde be for Seigramor only, ther hadde noon of hem ascaped. But his defence was so grete all aboute hym that merveile it was how he myght it endure; but in the ende availed litill the well-doynge of hym or eny other, ne hadde Gawein come soone with his
185

163 **sue**, follow. 165 **what oon what other**, all told. 166 **ther**, where. 167 **childeren**, youths. 168 **thinge**, i.e., purpose; **formest**, in front; **theras**, to where. 169 **neyhed nygh**, came near. 171 **hem**, them (Saxons). 172 **prowesse**, deeds. 175 **as**, as if; **be**, been; **see**, sea. 177 **perce thourgh**, break through; **so**, such. 178 **raught**, struck. 179 **durst**, dared. 180 **launched to**, hurled at; **gleyves**, lances. 181 **that**, unless. 182 **but as**, except that. 184 **kepte hem**, held them; **short and streite**, tightly together; **noon**, none; **felly**, fiercely. 188 **ne hadde**, had not.

Merlin and the Young Squires

companye of yonge bachelers.

190 And as Gawein com to the stronge stour, the childeren were in gret mischief; and than he and his felowes spongé upon hem so sharply that at the first shofte thei threw of hem to grounde mo than two thousande. And of that was Orienx sorowfull, for never hadde he sein so fewe peple so well hem contene. And he heilde a stronge spere and the heed sharp igrunde, and rode into the renge formest,
195 and seide he wolde be avenged on hem that hadde hym wratthed. And Gawein hadde so smyten aboute hym on every side that he fonde the childeren full wery for travaile; and [he] saugh Seigramor that was afore in the fronte and hielde an axe in bothe handes wherwith he smote grete strokes out of mesure. And he was
200 moche and semly and therto the beste shapen chielde to have sought thourgh eny reame; and whom that he Araught was hitte so harde that it warant neither iren ne stiell ne noon armour that he ne smot thourgh owther arme or sholder or thigh or other member, and shewde merveiles all aboute.

And whan Gawein saugh all this, he asked of the olde man that was by hym what he was. And he seide it was Segramor, the nevew of the emperor of Costantinnoble. “But helpe hym delyverly, for it is grete myster.” Than Gawein renged his companye and lete renne at hem so fiercely that in her comynge thei threwe to grounde of the Saisnes grete plenté, deed and wounded thourgh with sharpe wepenes. Grete was the bataile agein Orienx of the chylderen, but at grete myschief thei were, for on Gaweins side were but four thousand and thre hundred that Seigramor hadde brought; and of the Saisnes were twenty thousand, withoute hem that ronne thourgh the contrey that brente and robbed, of whiche were forty thousand. Whan that Orienx saugh that so small a peple withstode hym so felly, he hadde therof grete dispite and cried to his men and swor that in evell tyme sholde eny ascape he caught; and [he] com drivinge agein Agravain that oon of his nevwes
210 hadde slain before his iyen.
215

And whan Orienx saugh that, he spored his steede and smote Agravain upon

190 **stour**, battle; **mischief**, danger. 191 **shofte**, thrust. 193 **contene**, fight. 194 **renge**, field. 195 **wratthed**, angered. 196 **fonde**, found. 199 **moche**, large. 200 **araught**, struck; **warant**, protected. 204 **what**, who. 205 **delyverly**, quickly; **myster**, need. 206 **rended**, grouped; **lete renne**, charged. 208 **agein**, against; **of**, by. 210–11 **withoute hem**, not counting those. 211 **brente**, burned. 212 **saugh**, saw; **felly**, fiercely. 215 **iyen**, eyes.

Prose Merlin

the shelde that he perced through the plites of his haubreke undir the side, that the spere hede shewed on the tother side; and he shof theron so sore that he bar hym from his horse to the grounde. Whan Gawein saugh his brother falle, he hadde
220 grete drede leste that he hadde be deed; and he heilde a trenchant axe and come to the Saisne that hadde him unhorsed and wende to smyte hym upon the helme. But whan Orienx saugh the stroke come, he it douted and covered hym with his shielde; and Gawein hym smote that the axe bente and slit the sheilde in two, the stroke was [so] grete; and Orienx spored his horse forth. The stroke descended upon
225 the helme and kut the cercle and a quarter of the helme and the mayle of the haubreke behynde and the horse chyne asonder, that he blusht to the grounde. And Gaheries smote so Solunant thourgh the heed with an axe that ded he drof to the erthe; and Gaheret smote Vabibre thourgh the helme that he slit hym to the teth; and Galashin smote Pinadoos that the heed fley into the feilde.

230 Whan the Saisnes saugh Orienx lye at the grounde, thei hadde grete drede that he hadde be deed, and shof alle to the rescewe ther aboute hym environ, and bar hym oute of the presse into the feilde. But he was stonyed of the stroke that he myght not stonde on his feet ne meve no membre that he hadde; and therto he made so lothly chere and so hidouse semblant that alle wende he hadde ben deed,
235 and made amoneg hem grete doell and wepyngne that all the bataile lefte.

And the childeren have Agravain taken up ther he was fallen and set hym on horse. And the karll that hadde brought thider Gawein hadde chaunged his forme to another and hadde take the semblance of a knyght armed, and than com to Gawein and to his other bretheren and seide, “Feire lordes, yef ye do be my
240 counseile, lete us take the wey now right towarde Camelot while these Saisnes entende to make this sorowe.”

Whan Gawein undirstode these wordes, he wiste wele his counseile was wise and withoute trecherie. And [he] com anoon to Seigramore and seide he was right welcome and his compayne; and he agein hym salvde as deboner and curteys.

217 plites, folds. **221 Saisne**, Saxon; **wende**, intended. **222 douted**, feared. **225 cercle**, helmet band. **226 chyne**, backbone; **he**, i.e., Orienx; **blusht**, fell. **227 drof**, fell. **229 heed fley**, head flew. **230 at, on**. **231 environ**, around. **232 presse**, fray; stonyed of, stunned from. **233 ne meve no membre**, nor move any limb. **234 lothly chere**, terrible looks; **so hidouse semblant**, such a hideous appearance; **wende**, thought. **235 doell**, mourning.
239 yef, if; **be**, by. **242 wiste**, knew. **244 salvde**, greeted; **deboner**, gracious.

Merlin and the Young Squires

245 And than he seid, “Ha! Seigramor, feire frende, it is tyme now that we go and lede with us the peple that is us belefte, for inough have we wonne seth that saf and sounde we repeyre.” Than Seigramor asked what he was that so spake unto hym. And he seide, “My name is Gawein, the nevew of Kynge Arthur, and the sone of Kynge Loot of Orcanye; and [we] kepe the londes of myn oncle, I and my bretheren, 250 till he be come from Tamelide. And we be come hider for not elles but yow for to helpe and to socoure, for in the morowe it was tolde how ye were assailed of the Saisnes right sore.”

Than com forth the knyght that hadde spoke to Gawein and cried, “A! Gawein, feire sir, what abide ye that ye come not forth youre wey? Se not ye that all the worle of peple cometh upon us, wherefore we may not ascape yef ye abide?” Whan Gawein herde hym so haste to garison, he beheilde and saugh come so grete plenté of Saisnes and so grete foison that all the feilde was covered. And thei were alle armed and com rydinge fiercely and made soche noyse and soche murmur that a myle of lengthe it myght have ben herde. And whan that Gawein saugh 260 the Saisnes come in soche maner he seide to Seigramor, “Sir, and hit plesse yow, go we hens.” And he hym ansuerde and seide, “With goode will.” And thei than rode forth toward Camelot clos togeder and streite that ye myght have caste a glove over her hedes covered undir steill.

And the Saisnes yet entended to Orienx, makynge doell and sorowe. But withynne a while aroos the Saisne fro disturbison, and saugh hem aboute hym made grete sorowe and hevynesse. Than he asked a newe helme and sheilde and spere, for he was of grete herte and a goode knyght and hardy as of his age. And he swore yef he myght with hym that yaf hym that acooley whereof he hadde so leyen in swowne at erthe, he sholde it hym wele aquyte. And than he lepe to horse that was stronge and swyfte rennyng, and rode that wey as he wende to have hem founden; but thei were go thens a myle. Whan Orienx saugh hem gon in this maner, he cried his ensigne and seide, “Now after hem!” And than he swore that noon of hem sholde ascape.

246 seth that, since. **247 repeyre**, abide; **what**, who. **250 not elles**, no reason. **254 what abide ye**, why do you tarry. **255 worle**, tumult. **257 so grete foison**, so many. **260 and hit**, if it. **261 go we hens**, [let us] go hence. **262 streite**, tightly. **264 intended**, attended. **265 disturbison**, [his] distress. **268 acooley**, blow. **269 aquyte**, pay back. **270 wende**, thought. **271 were go thens**, had gone hence. **272 ensigne**, flag-bearer.

Prose Merlin

275 Than pressed forth the Saisnes hastily alle that myght, that oon ne abode not another; and the shoute and the noyse aroos so grete that wonder it was to here, and the duste and the powder aroos so thikke that the clier air was troubled; and thei com drivinge on so faste that thei nyghed nygh to atteyne the Cristin.

280 And than the knyght that hadde yeve Gawein this counseile saugh hem come so faste, he hasted sore Gawein and alle the tother for to go faste, and spake unto hem that thei rode a gretter paas; but er thei com to the town of Camelot thei were sore hasted. But the noble Gawein and Agravain and Gaheret and Gaheries and Galaishin and Seigramor were the laste, and sente in theire felowes and her peple and her harneys before, as the heirde driveth his bestes to pasture, and therwhile thei suffred the Saisnes to breke theire speres. And whan thei saugh eny of her felowes over charged, thei hem delyvered at her power as thei that were of high prowesse. And thei dide so well that ther nas Saisne so hardy that durste that wey go wheras as thei were, ne of hem abide a stroke.

290 Than com Orienx with the grete baner and hadde a grete spere whereof the heed is sharp and trenchaunt. And [he] saugh hym that hadde hym smyte to grounde and knewe hym full well, and swoor by his god that he wolde be avenged. Than he spored his horse fiercely; and the chielde saugh hym come, but he made semblaunt as therof he rought litill. And whan he com even at the metynge, Gawein lefte the wey and lete hym passe forth that his horse cowde not restreyne. And Gawein, that was wight and delyver, returned his horse upon hym and smote hym upon the heed with bothe hondes, but it was with the flat for the haste that he hadde hym tosmyte, so that he wiste not how he it heilde. And the stroke was so grete and hevy that the fier sparkeled up in the aire, and astoned hym so sore that he fill flat to the erthe.

300 And Seigramor smote Driant the Rede thurgh the sholder so harde that it dis-severed fro the body. And Galaishin smote so Placidas that his heed he hym be-

274 **oon ne abode not**, one did not wait for. 277 **nyghed nygh to atteyne**, nearly reached; Cristin, Christians. 278 **than**, when; **yeve**, given. 279 **hasted sore**, urged; **tother**, others. 280 **gretter paas**, faster pace. 280–81 **were sore hasted**, had to hurry. 283 **harneys**, gear; **heirde**, herdsman. 285 **over charged**, knocked down. 286 **nas**, was not any; **durste**, dared. 287 **wheras as**, where; **ne**, nor. 291 **chielde**, youth (knight). 292 **rought litill**, cared little. 293 **restreyne**, stop. 294 **wight and delyver**, quick and agile. 295 **flat**, i.e., the side of the ax. 296 **wiste**, knew; **heilde**, held. 297 **astonied**, stunned.

Merlin and the Young Squires

rafte. And Agravain and Gaheret and Gaheries hadde eche of hem caught a short spere, the iren sharp and trenchant, and that oon smote Gynebant and the other Taurus and the thridde smote Fannell, that eche bar his to the erthe from theyre horse all blody; and with the same cours thei smote thre other. And Gawein and 305 Galaishin and Seigramor rested upon Orienx, for thei wolde hym have take yef thei myght. But the Saisnes ne wolde it not suffre, but assembled so thikke aboue tho thre felowes that thei hadde many grete strokes taken and yeven. And thei thre were noble and worthi and slough of hem so many that her armes and her brestes were alle blody, and also their horse heer; and so thei hem stered that noon was so 310 hardy to abyde of hem eny stroke.

Whan the thre felowes saugh thei moste nede forsake Orienx and saugh a worlde of peple that upon hem com drivinge, thei ronne upon Orienx and hym diffouled with theire horse feet till he was all tobrosed. And whan he was all tobrosed and 315 hym diffouled at her lust saf thei have hym not slain, than thei rode after her felowes that be that tyme myght be nygh Camelot, for never seth thei remeved were thei not enchased but wente forth delyverly. And whan the thre felowes saugh her men were withynne the town, thei were gladde and mery; and than thei rode a softe paas.

And the Saisnes abode aboue her lorde that was caste down and so diffouled 320 under horse feet; whereof he was so sorowfull whan he aroos from disturdison that thei be so ascaped, that nygh he was wode for wratthe and ire, and swor yef he myght hem gete in his bailly that he sholde do hem be slain all quyk and drawnen asondre with horse. "Sir," seide his men, "a full fell pawtener is he that twies this 325 day thus hath yow smyten to grounde." "Ye," quod Orienx, "but yef I may have bailly over his body, he shall so be deffouled that ther ne shall nothinge in the worlde hym warantise."

And thei hadde so riden that thei com before Camelot, whereas thei abode stille,
300–01 **berafte**, cut off. 301 **caught**, grabbed. 304 **cours**, charge. 305 **rested upon**, set upon; **have take**, capture. 306 **suffre**, allow. 307 **tho**, those. 308 **slough**, slew. 309 **stered**, conducted. 312 **diffouled**, trampled. 313 **tobrosed**, bruised. 314 **saf**, except. 315 **be, by; seth, since; remeved, departed**. 316 **delyverly**, freely. 318 **a softe paas**, an easy pace. 320 **disturdison**, his distress. 321 **wode**, crazed. 322 **bailly**, custody; **do hem be slain all quyk**, have them skinned alive. 323 **full fell pawtener**, terrible fellow. 325 **bailly**, custody. 326 **warantise**, protect.

Prose Merlin

and asked oon of another where the other thre were become. But ther was noon
that ought cowde sey. Whan Agravain and Gaheret and Gaheries undirstode how
330 that Gawein her brother, and her cosin, and the nevew of the emperoure were
lost, thei turned bakke and seide thei wolde not reste till thei hadde hem founden,
and comaunded her felowes not to remeve till thei saugh hem com agein; and than
alle thre rode agein a walop as thei hadde com. But thei hadde but litill while ride
whan thei mette the karll that satte upon the steede that Gawein hadde hym yoven,
335 the same that hadde brought tidinges of Seigramor. And whan he mette these
three bretheren, he asked whider thei wente; and thei seide thei sought Gawein her
brother and her cosin Galaishin and the nevew of the emperour, for thei wiste not
where thei were becomen.

“Full evell,” seide he, “have ye yow demened, and well sheweth the worthi and
340 noble where thei ben, and loo heere where thei come. But whom it displesse, thei
owe to come yow no thonke of her lyves, for ye lefte hem foulé as cowardes; and
well it sheweth theras thei abode for to socour these other that now ben saf at
garison. And thei have doon many feire chivalries and yoven many grete strokes
345 that thei ought to be comended and preised of all the worlde that therof heren
speke, and to holde yow for soche as ye be. And wele have ye it shewed theras ye
lefte youre felowes at soche nede, and thei ne lefte yow never for deth ne for lif.
And every gentillman that therof hereth speke ought yow to blame be right and
reson and have yow ever suspect in every nede. And wite it well, it shall turne
yow to repress.” With that the cherll departed, that lenger with hem ne wolde
350 talke.

And thei passeden forth all shamefest and mate and sory of the wordes the karll
hadde spoken. But thei nadde but litill wey ride when thei mette the thre felowes
that were so araied that it semed by her armes that thei were come from felon
place. And whan thei mette togeder thei made grete joye. Than Gawein asked
355 tidinges of her other felowes where thei were, and thei seide that thei hem lefte
before the yates of Camelot where thei abide. Than thei rode forth togeder, gladde

332 **remeve**, move. 333 **walop**, gallop. 334 **yoven**, given. 339 **evell**, poorly; **demeded**,
conducted yourselves. 341 **come yow**, i.e., give you; **foulé**, foully. 343 **chivalries**, fine
deeds; **yoven**, given. 344 **that¹**, so that. 345 **theras**, when. 349 **repress**, disgrace. 351
shamefest, ashamed; **mate**, dejected. 352 **nadde**, had not. 353 **felon**, a horrible. 356
yates, gates.

Merlin and the Young Squires

and mery for her newe feliship that be come hem to helpe, and of that thei have hem thus rescewed, and he and his compayne hooll and sounde.

But er thei hade a while riden togeder, thei mette the cherles horse sore affraied
360 that com fleynge, and saugh the arson of the sadell all blody. And whan these felowes that he hadde reprovid saugh the horse, that oon behelde the tother and begonne to laugh. Of that toke hede Gawein and Galashin and asked whi thei lowghen, and thei stynte for to tellen; and thei hem conjured another tyme right
365 harde for to tellen the trouthe. And Gaheries tolde hym alle the wordes that the cherll hadde hem seide. And whan that thei it herde, thei merveiled what it myght be; and than com Gawein to the horse that fledde and toke hym by the bridell and saugh that all the arson was blody, and wend that the karll hadde be slain.

Than he asked of Agravain and of the tother yef thei mette eny of the Saisnes
370 seth thei departed fro Camelot. And thei seide how thei mette neyther man ne woman seth thei departed from their men, saf the cherll that satte upon that horse. Quod Gawein, “I trowe he be slain or wounded sore, or paraventure he is fallen whereso it be to grounde; and therfore lete us hym seche till we may hym fynde. And yef he be alyve, lete us bere hym to Camelot, for it were synne to suffre hym
375 to dye for defaute here in the feilde.” And than thei sought up and down in the feilde and amonge the busshes, but yet thei myght have sought hym into this tyme, for he was come into her hoste in the semblaunce of a knave on foote with a tronchon of a spere in his honde.

And whan Gawein saugh he myght not be founde, thei repeired to Kamelot and fonde her felowes hem abydynge at the brigge foot, that thei were of hem joyfull
380 whan thei saugh hem hooll and sounde. And than thei entred into the town and drough up the brigge and shette the yates, and than wente upon the walles for to loke yef the Saisnes come toward the town it for to assaile. But thei therto hadde no talent, for thei desired not ther so longe to sojourne till thei hadde it taken, for it was right stronge.

385 And the childeren hem unarmed and wente to their loggyngis, and hem esed of all thinge that to mannys body belongeth. And grete joye and feste thei made of

358 hooll, whole. **360 arson**, bow. **363 stynte for**, refused; **conjured**, begged. **365 what** it, who he. **367 wend**, thought. **369 seth**, since. **370 saf**, except for. **371 trowe**, believe; **paraventure**, perhaps. **372 seche**, seek. **373 yef**, if. **374 for defaute**, by default. **376 knave**, youth. **381 drough**, drew; **yates**, gates. **383 talent**, desire.

Prose Merlin

Seigramor whan thei hym knewen. And whan he hadde hem tolde wherfore he was come fro Costantinnoble to Kynge Arthur to take of hym his armes, and than was he moche worshiped and moche preised of oon and other, and seiden that he
390 was of grete herte and hardy, for thei hadde hym sein in bataile, and he was of merveilouse bounté. And moche reverence and worship dide hym the noble gentilmen therinne, and disported and pleide and beheilde Seigramor that was moche and semly and well furnysshed of membres.

And thus thei lyven in disperte and joye thre dayes, that nothinge thei ne herde
395 on noo part but that the Saisnes wente into the Northumberlonde and into the londe of the Duke Escam of Cambenyk, that ther foughten sore bataile at the strayte of the Roche Magot agein the peple of Orienx upon the river of Savarne.

[Summary. The narrative then offers a lengthy description of the struggles of King Clarion and Duke Escam against King Orienx and the Saxon invaders, before returning to describe the deeds of the Young Squires, led by Gawain, against the Saxons who have been ravaging the lands of King Ydiers near the Castle of Arondell. Merlin, in the guise of a yeoman, bears a letter to Gawain, urging him to come to the aid of his cousin Ewain, the son of King Uriens, who is sorely beset by the Saxons. Gawain and the other Squires rescue Ewain and his companions, who are joyfully added to their group. Fighting together, the Young Squires perform gloriously against the Saxons. The Saxons retreat, and the Squires ride toward the Castle of Arondell, which they discover is besieged by yet another group of Saxons. They force the Saxons to lift the siege, and they are welcomed joyfully by those within the castle. The story then shifts to King Lot, Gawain's father, against whom the Saxons have been waging a fierce campaign. Fols. 95r (line 17)–103v (line 29).]

387 wherfore, why. **389 of oon and other**, by everyone. **391 bounté**, ability. **392 moche**, large. **397 agein**, against.

[Gawain's Rescue of his Mother]

Whan the kynge saugh how the Saisnes wasted his londe and distroied and
hadde slain so moche of his peple that he myght not but kepe hym in stronge
place, and than he was full of sorowe and of hevynesse and cursed the hour and
the day that he was at werre with Kynge Arthur, “For by hym have I loste alle my
5 childeren.” And on that other side his citee was all wasted, and he ne loked but
after the hour to be take withynne, for the walles were broke down in many
places; and [he] saugh also how the Kynge Arans was loged all aboute hym, and
he hadde no peple in his compayne that myght eny while hym withstonde, yef the
Kynge Arans wolde eny while sojourne. But he desired it not gretly, but aboode
10 after his men that the contrey wasted and distroied all environ.

Whan the Kynge Loot saugh hymself in soche aventure, he toke counseile what
was beste to do, and his counseile in the ende was this, that at the firste cokke
crowinge he sholde lepe to his horse — he, and his wif, and his litill sone that was
but two yere of age — and lede hem to Glocodon, and sholde have with hym five
15 hundre men well armed; and that other part sholde abide stille that yet were six
thousande of noble men and hardy. And thei hym promyseden that thei sholde
kepe well the citee while there life myght endure.

At mydnyght, the kynge and his compayne toke theire horse and his litill sone
Mordered, that the Kynge Arthur hadde begeten in soche manere as ye have herde
20 devised; and a squyer hym bar in a litill cradell hym before upon his horse nekke;
and [thei] rode oute by a fause posterne of the citee toward the gardins and entred

1 **the kynge**, i.e., King Lot; **saugh**, saw. 3 **and than**, then. 5–6 **ne loked but after**, could
only await. 6 **take withynne**, captured. 7 **loged**, encamped. 8 **he**, i.e., King Lot. 9 **wolde
eny while sojourne**, i.e., would continue the siege; **he**, i.e., King Arans. 9–10 **aboode
after**, accompanied. 10 **all environ**, all about. 11 **soche aventure**, such straits. 14 **hem**,
them. 19 **begeten**, begotten. 20 **bar**, carried. 21 **false posterne**, rear entrance.

Prose Merlin

into a lane, and rode all nyght and all day till noone, that nevere hadde distrubinge. But than was the Kynge Loot sore afluxed, for thei mette Taurus, with thre thousand Saisnes that repaired from Arondell, that condited the pray to the Kynge
25 Arans.

And as soone as thei knewe the Kynge Loot, thei ronne upon hym with grete hete, and ther a while was stronge stour; and full nobly dide the Kynge Loot and the five hundred that were in his compayne; but of well doynges was litill myster, for soone were thei discounfited and chased outh of the feilde, and his wif also
30 itake. Than the squyer fledde towarde Arondell as faste as the horse myght hym bere. But now cesseth a litill of Kynge Loot and returne to Gawein.

Full gladde and mery were Gawein and his felowes at Arondell that nyght, that whan thei were knownen togeder of the squyres that thei hadde rescuwed. And as thei were in this joye and in this feeste, com a knyght right well armed upon a
35 grete steede all forswette — and his shilde all todaisht and hewen with strokes that he hadde resceyved of swerdes above and benethe, and his coverynge cote all torente, and his hauberke torn and broken in many places. And he com before Arondell a grete walop, gripynge his launce; and whan he com before the castell
40 yate he stynte, and saugh the squyres above on the walles that grete joye made oon to another. And anoon he gan to crie yef therynne were eny squyer that were so hardy that durste hym suewen thider as he wolde go, be soche a condicion that he sholde have no drede of no man but of his owne corse.

Whan Gawein it undirstode, he asked what wey he wolde go. Quod the knyght, “What art thou that spekest to me?” “My name,” quod he, “is Gawein, the sone of
45 Kynge Loot.” “Than shall I telle yow,” quod he, “for the aventure aperteneth to yow more than to eny other. And certes,” seide the knyght, “into the entré of this foreste is the prowesse that I of speke. But ye have not that prowesse ne the hardynesse that ye dar me sue; and yet is it oon of the moste honourable aventure

22 that, i.e., and. **23 sore afluxed**, greatly alarmed. **24 condited**, carried; **pray**, booty. **27 hete**, heat; **stour**, battle. **28 myster**, value. **29 discounfited**, defeated. **30 itake**, captured. **32–33 that whan**, when. **33 were knownen togeder of**, became acquainted with. **35 all forswette**, i.e., in a great hurry; **todaisht**, smashed to pieces. **38 walop**, gallop. **39 yate**, gate; **stynte**, stopped. **40 yef**, if. **41 durste hym suewen**, dared follow him; **be**, by. **44 What**, Who. **45 aperteneth**, belongs. **46 entré**, first section. **47 prowesse¹**, adventure; **ne**, nor. **48 me sue**, follow me; **aventure**, adventures.

Gawain's Rescue of his Mother

in this worlde, and that ye sholde moste be preised yef ye myght it acheve. But ye
50 have nother the herte ne the hardynesse that ye durst thider come. And wite it
well, but ye will come, I will go sooll be myself."

Whan Gawein undirstode hym that so cleped hym cowarde, he was shamefaste
and seide that though he sholde dye, he wolde hym compayne. And he began for
to go, that full well knewe his corage. And Gawein cleped hym agein and cried,
55 "Sir knyght, lo! me here all redy to go with yow — but that ye shull me ensure
that for noon evell ye make me it for to do, and that ye shull me helpe at youre
power agein alle tho that will me mysdo."

Whan he herde these wordes, he abode and began to smyle as it were in scorne,
and seide as for that sholde he not lette, but that he wolde make hym the assuraunce.
60 And Gawein asked his armes and armed hym wightly anoon; and he aboode, that
gretly hym hasted. And the felowes of Gawein com to hym and seide, "Sir, what
thinke ye to do? Ne goth not withouten us, for we wote never whether it be for
goode or for evell." And Gawein seide that he wolde well that thei wente with
him, yef the knyght wolde assente. "And we shull hym aske," seide Galashin.

65 Than ran Seigramor to the knyght and asked, "Sir knyght, and it plese yow, ther
ben somme hereynne that fayn wolde go with yow in compayne, and theire feliship
shall yow nought empeire; and therfore thei yow preyen by me that ye will hem
graunte to holde with yow compayne." And the knyght hem ansuerde, and seide
he wolde it well; and well it hym plesed that alle wente that go wolde, "For the
70 aventure is soche that noon shall faile to fynde his aventure that ther cometh"; and
than Seigramor was gladde. And anoon thei armed hem therynne with grete spedē
till thei were seven thousand, that mo thei wolde not lede; but tho were of the
beste and of theym that were beste horsed. And whan thei com oute of the castell,
Gawein toke the assuraunce of the knyght that for noon evell he com not hym for
75 to seche.

49 and that, and; **yef**, if. **50 nother . . . ne**, neither . . . nor. **51 but**, unless; **sooll be**, alone
by. **52 cleped**, called. **53 he³**, i.e., Merlin. **54 that**, a man who; **his**, i.e., Gawain's. **55 but**
that, if. **57 agein**, against; **tho**, those. **58 as**, as if. **59 lette**, refuse. **60 asked**, called for;
wightly, quickly; **aboode**, waited; **that**, the man who. **61 hasted**, prompted. **63 wolde**
well, much desired. **64 yef**, if. **65 and²**, if. **66 fayn**, happily. **67 nought empeire**, not harm.
69 go wolde, wished to go. **70 aventure¹**, undertaking; **aventure²**, excitement. **72 mo**,
more; **lede**, take; **tho**, those. **74 noon evell**, no evil purpose. **75 seche**, seek.

Prose Merlin

Than thei wente ridinge all the day and all the nyght till it com to the dawenyng;
and than thei herde at the ende of a launde a grete crye and a grete noyse of peple;
and as hem semed, ther were many. And than thei mette a squyer that fledde upon
a grete horse that bar a chielde before hym in a cradell. And whan Gawein hym
mette, he asked hym with whom he was and whi he fledde so faste. And he hem
beheilde and saugh that thei were Cristin and seide, "I am with the Kynge Loot
that the Saisnes han discounfited at the ende of this launde towarde that wode;
for he was goynge toward Gloceden and ledde with hym his wif, and now thei
have hir taken and chased hym oute of the feilde. And I am thus fleynge, as ye
seen, with this childe that is hers; for never shall I it lete till I have sette it in soche
place that it shall not have drede of the Saisnes that into this contrey ben entred.
And for the love of God, ne go ye no ferther, feire lordes, for ye shull fynde ther
so grete plenté of Saisnes that ye ne may hem endure."

"Certeis," seide Gawein, "but I shall telle thee what thou shalt do. Thow shalt
go reste thee here in this wode till thow se what shall falle of this bataile; and
after, yef I may ascape, I will thee bringe theras thow ne childe shull have no
drede of noon evell that no man shall yow do." And [he] praidie hym so that he
hym graunted.

With that thei departed that oon from that other, and the knyght wente forth
that moche dide Gawein for to haste, and badde hym sue faste withoute lettinge,
and therwith he rode faste before. And whan Gawein saugh he wente, he spored
his horse after, and so dide his felowes also. And [thei] rode faste till thei were
paste the foreste, and saugh the chase that even tho was begonne after the Kynge
Loot, that fledde to Gloceden with the peple that was hym belefte of the bataile.
And on that other side Gawein beheilde in the myddill of the medowe and saugh a
lady of grete bewté, ne hadde be the doell and the sorowe that she made and the

77 **herde**, heard; **launde**, meadow. 78 **hem semed**, it seemed to them. 79 **chielde**, child.
81 **saugh**, saw. 82 **han discounfited**, have defeated. 85 **lete**, stop. 89 **Certeis**, Indeed.
90 **falle of**, happen in. 91 **theras thow ne childe**, where [neither] you nor the child. 92
praidie, urged. 93 **graunted**, assented. 94 **the knyght**, i.e., Merlin. 95 **sue**, follow; **lettinge**,
stopping. 96 **faste before**, quickly in front; **saugh**, saw. 98 **tho**, then. 99 **was hym belefte**,
remained to him. 100 **beheilde in the myddill**, looked toward the middle. 101 **ne hadde be the doell**, were it not for the grief.

Gawain's Rescue of his Mother

myschief that she was ynne. And she was all dischevelee in her heer, and Taurus
105 hir heilde be the tresses and drough hir after his horse; and hir robe that she was
 in clad was so grete that for combraunce she myght not arise; and she braied and
 cride with an high voyse, "Seint Marie, Blissed Lady and Moder of God, helpe me
 and socour!"

And whan she cried and cled Oure Lady Seint Marie, Taurus smote hir with
his honde armed right sore that she fill down to the erthe even as she hadde be
110 deed. And whan he hadde sette hire upon his horse, she fill agein down to the
 erthe as a woman that was hurte, and cried and braide right lowde and seide that
 she wolde fayne be deed. And he agein sette hir upon horse, and she fill down
115 agein to grounde and seide as longe as she myght lyve, sholde he never lede thens
 for no power that he hadde. And whan he saugh that he myght not hir maistrie, he
 hente hir be the tresses and drough hir towarde the horse trailinge, and smote hir
120 so that she was all covered in blode, what from mouthe and nose. And so he hath
 hir trayned and drawen, that the lady myght no lenger crye ne brayen; she was so
 hoorse and so brethles that on hire feet myght she not stonde ne sustene.

And whan the knyght saugh the lady so evell besein, he seide to Gawayn, "Now,
120 Gawayn, knowest thou not that lady yonder? And yef ever ye hir loved dayes of
 youre lyf, thinke hir to rescowen and to avengen." And as soone as Gawayn saugh,
 he knewe hire wele; than he was so full of angwiss that ner he yede oute of his
 witte; ne he wende never to have sein the hour to have come therto. Than he
 smote the horse with sopores all that he myght, and hielde a grete shorte spere,
 the heed right sharp and trenchaunt. And mydday was somdell passed and the
125 sonne right high, and Gawayn cried to Taurus, "Leff the lady, traitour fitz a putain!
 In evell tyme hast thou so dolorous mette, for never in thi liff didest thou foly

102 **myschief**, plight; **dischevelee**, dishevelled; **heer**, hair. 103 **be**, by; **drough**, drew.
104 **grete**, long; **combraunce**, the hindrance; **braied**, screamed. 108 **honde armed right**
sore, armored hand very painfully; **fill**, fell; **even as**, as if; **be**, been. 110 **braide**, screamed;
lowde, loudly. 111 **fayne**, gladly. 112 **lede thens**, lead [her] thence. 113 **maistrie**, control.
114 **hente**, grabbed; **drough**, drew. 116 **trayned**, dragged; **brayen**, shout. 117
hoorse, hoarse. 118 **evell besein**, evilly treated. 119 **yef**, if. 121 **ner**, nearly. 122 **ne he**
wende never, he never expected. 123 **sopores**, spurs. 124 **somdell**, somewhat. 125
Leff, Leave; **fitz a putain**, son of a whore. 126 **dolorous mette**, unfortunately met.

Prose Merlin

that thou shalt bye so dere."

And whan Taurus saugh hym come that so gretly to hym cried and menaced,
he lete the lady falle, and righted his armes and toke a grete spere and a rude, and
130 lete renne his horse agein hym. And Gawein and he smote togeder as harde as
theire armes myght dure, and Taurus brake his spere; and Gawein smote hym so
rudely thourgh shelde and hauberke that the spere heede shewde thourgh his chyne
an arme lengthe, and he blusshht so harde to grounde that his nekke brake asonder.

135 And Gaheret and Gaheries and Agravain alight down, and oon smote of his
heed, and another thriste hym thourgh with his swerde, and the thirde smote of
bothe his armes, for it was not inough to hem that Gawein hadde don, but made of
hym smale peces. And these other smote in amoneg the Saisnes and made of hem
soche martirdom and soche occision that thei slough mo than ten thousand er thei
lesten. And Gawein slough so many that he was all wete in blode and brayn that
140 his armes dropped down as he hadde be wete in a flode.

145 And whan that the Saisnes saugh the grete occision that upon turned, thei fledden
alle that myght thourgh wode and thourgh playn. And Gawein repeired thideras he
saugh hys moder ly, and alight on foote, and toke hir in his armes and fonde hir
even as deed. And he wepte sore that the teiris ronne down from his iyen as
thikke as water hadde be throwen in his visage, and cried and wrange his handes
and made soche doell and sorowe that alle his felowes were therwith anoyed, and
hadden therof grete pité, that ther nas noon but wepte water with his iyen. And
whan the bretheren of Gawein com thider, ther began the doell and sorowe so
grete that noon earthly man myght devise noon gretter.

150 Whan the lady undirstode the brayes and the cries that the bretheren made aboute
hir, she opened hir iyen and saugh hir sone Gawein that hir heilde in his armes,
and knewe hym wele anoon; and [she] lifte up hir handes joynynge towarde hevene,
and thanked oure Lorde of that socoure that He hadde hir sente. Than she spake as
she myght and seide, "Feire sone Gawein, be stille and wepe no more, for I have

127 **bye so dere**, pay for so dearly. 128 **menaced**, threatened. 132 **rudely**, fiercely;
chyne, back. 133 **blusshht**, fell. 134 **of, off**. 138 **martirdom**, slaughter; **occision**, slaying;
mo, more; er, before. 141 **occision**, slaughter; **that upon turned**, that had come upon
them. 142 **repeired thideras**, returned to where. 144 **even as**, as if. **iyen**; eyes. 146
anoyed, sad. 147 **nas noon**, was not one; **iyen**, eyes. 149 **noon¹**, no; **noon²**, any. 150
brayes, shouts. 151 **iyen**, eyes. 152 **anoon**, immediately; **joynynge**, clasped together.

Gawain's Rescue of his Mother

155 not the harme that I sholde dye fore, but hurte I am right sore."

And than she asked hym where his bretheren were, and anoon thei com before
hir makynge grete doell. And whan she hem saugh she thanked oure Lorde; and in
a while aftere anoon she seide, "Haalas! My sone Mordred have I loste, and my
lorde youre fader, that this day hath suffred grete peyne me for to rescewen and
160 socour; for whan he hadde alle loste his men, I saugh hym fight longe agein five
hundred men, and abode while oon myght have gon half a myle of grounde upon
his feet. And therfore I have grete drede that he be wounded to the deth, for I
saugh hem launche at hym knyves and gavelokkes and dartes soche foison as it
hadde reyned from hevene. Ne never wolde he voide the place ne me forsake till
165 I hym conjured, for that he loved beste in the worlde, that he wolde gon his wey;
and than he dide, so sorowfull that no man myght more."

"Dame," quod Gawein, "of Mordred my brother I can telle yow tidings, for
the squyer that it bar hath hym kept wisely, and us abydeth in this foreste; but of
the kynge my fader I can not sey."

170 Whan the lady undirstode that, it hevied her herte and [she] swowned in Gaweins
armes; and he her kiste and wepte right sore. And whan she com agein from
swownyng, she yaf a sore sigh, and with that the coloure com agein into her
visage. And than she asked Gawein watir to waisshe hir face that was all soilede
175 with blode; and oon it brought in an hatte of stiele, and than she wossh hir visage
as softly as she myght. And than thei ordeyned hir a litier upon two palfrayes,
and leide her therynne fresch gras and erbes plenté and clothes, and than leide her
therynne softly, and than gadered the prayes that thei hadde wonne of the Saisnes,
and wente forth to Arondell a goode spedē.

180 And thei hadde but litill while riden whan the squyer com before hem with the
childe. And than was Gawein gladde, and rode forth with the childe till thei com
to Arondell, whereas thei sojourned eight dayes full till the lady was hooll. And
than thei departed from thens and wente to Logres, the chief citee of the Kynge
Arthur, alle the company togeder. But two hundre squyers thei lefte at Arondell to

155 **dye fore**, die from. 158 **Haalas**, Alas. 161 **abode**, stand firm. 163 **hem**, them;
gavelokkes, spears; **soche foison**, so many. 164 **reyned**, rained; **voide**, leave. 165 **hym conjured**, begged him; **that¹**, the one. 168 **it**, i.e., Mordred's cradle; **abydeth**, awaits.
172 **yaf**, gave. 175 **softly**, gently; **litier**, litter. 177 **prayes**, spoils. 181 **hooll**, healthy.

Prose Merlin

kepe the castell, and ledde with hem the lady and hir litill sone.

185 And the foure bretheren swore that never sholde the Kynge Loot her fader have agein theire moder till that he hadde acorded with Kynge Arthur theire uncle. Of this thinge that thei seide was the lady gladde. And so thei spedde theire journeyes till thei com to Logres, where thei were receyved with grete honoure and reverence. And Doo of Cardoell made to hem grete joye and feeste, and so dide alle the
190 citee. But whan thei parceyved the lady, thei made moche more joye, and hir dide as grete worship as myght be don to eny lady of the worlde. And every man was gladde of the aventure that God hadde hem sente.

And than made Gawein to enquere and serche yef eny man knewe the knyght that hadde hem ledde to socour his moder; but noon cowde telle of hym no tidinge.

195 And so the tidinges ronne up and down that Doo of Cardoell it wiste, that was a noble knyght and a sure and a wise, and thought well in his herte who this knyght myght be. And than he com to Gawein and seide, "Sir, knewe ye never that man that brought yow firste tydinges of Seigramor and also of Ewein youre cosin?" "I never hym knewe ne saugh before," quod Gawein.

200 "Nor hym," quod Doo, "that taught yow where was youre moder, ne knowe ye no hym?" "No, truly," quod Gawein.

205 Than thought Doo anoon what he was, and gan to smylen. And Gawein merveiled moche why he dide aske, and than he hym conjured be the feith that he ought to the Kynge Arthur his lorde, and praied hym dierly also to telle hym whi he asked hym that demaunde and wherfore he lowgh. And than he seide, "Gawein, Gawein, so moche ye have me conjured that I shall telle yow whi. But be well ware that ye lette no man knowe of nothinge that I sey unto yow."

210 And Gawein seide, "Nay," for hym were lever to have his tonge drawen oute. "Knowe it verily," quod Doo, "that he that alle these tidinges hath brought, it is Merlin, that is the beste devynour that is in all the worlde or evere was."

"How, sir," quod Gawein, "speke ye of that Merlin that was so well beloved of Uterpendragon, that was begeten of the devell upon a woman?" "Of that same," seide Doo, "speke I withoute faile." "A! God mercy!" seide Gawein, "how myght

184 ledde with hem, took with them. **190 parceyved**, recognized. **193 yef**, if. **194 noon cowde**, no one could. **195 wiste**, knew. **202 what**, who. **203 hym conjured**, requested him; **be**, by; **ought**, owes. **204 dierly**, dearly. **205 demaunde**, question; **wherfore**, why; **lowgh**, laughed. **206 conjured**, beseeched; **ware**, careful.

Gawain's Rescue of his Mother

215 this be or bifalle that I have seyn hym in so many maner formes, for I have seyn
hym in thre semblaunces." "Wite it well," quod Doo, "how that ever ye have hym
seyn, it is he verily, for he is so full of stronge art that he hym chaungeth into as
many semblaunces as he will."

220 Than Gawein hym blissed for the merveile that he therof hadde, and seide that
he wolde with hym be aqueynteth yef it hym plesed, "For I wote well now that he
us loveth, whan that he entermeteth hym of oure deedes." "Knowe it well," quod
Doo, "yef it plese hym ye shall it wite, for we may nothinge do ne sey but he it
wite."

225 Thus abode the squyres at Logres, gladde and myrry of that oure Lorde hadde
hem assembled togeder. And thei kepte the contrey aboute that the Saisnes ever
more loste than wonne. But now leveth the tale of hem and speketh of the knyght
that ledde Gawein for to socour his moder.

218 hym blessed, blessed himself. **219 yef, if.** **220 entermeteth hym of,** involves himself
in. **222 wite,** know.

[Merlin and Nimiane]

Now seith the storye that whan Gawein and his felowes were medled with the meyné of Taurus, and this knyght saugh that Gawein hadde his moder rescowed, he departed awey so sodeynly that no man wiste where that he be com, and wente into Northumbirlonde to Blaase his maister and tolde hym alle these aventures that hadde be don in the reame of Logres. And Blase of hym was joyfull and gladde, and wrote these thinges that he hym tolde; and by hys booke have we yet
5 the knowynge of the seide aventures.

And whan he hadde be ther as longe as hym liked, he seide he wolde go into the reame of Benoyk, for soone elles myght the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Boors have grete damage while thei ben with Arthur in Tamelide; and that were dedly synne, for thei ben full noble men and trewe. For the Kynge Claudas de la Desert hath don homage to the Kynge of Gaule, and he hath promysed hym to helpe and to mayntene; and on that other side, this Claudas hath so purchased that he hath be
10 at Rome; and he and the Kynge of Gaule have take theire londes to the emperoure
15 be soche covenauant that the Emperour Julius shall sende hym socour and wolde sese the two remes of Benoyk and Gannes.

And thei assemble and somowne on alle partees, and now be meved the Romaynes with an huge peple; and theire lorde and governoure is Pounce and Antony, tweyne of the conseillours of Rome that be two grete lordes and myghty.
20 And also on that other part cometh for love of hem Frolle, a Duke of Almayne, that is right a grete lorde of londe and of richesse and of frendes, and is cosin germain to Antony and to Pounce. And ech of these bringeth twenty thousande at

1 **were medled with**, were involved with. 2 **meyn**, army; **saugh**, saw. 3 **wiste**, knew. 5 **reame**, realm. 9 **soone elles**, otherwise. 13 **on that other side**, furthermore; **purchased**, arranged. 15 **be**, by. 16 **sese**, seize; **remes**, realms. 17 **somowne**, summon; **partees**, sides; **be meved**, are on the move. 20 **on that other part**, in addition; **hem**, them. 21–22 **cosin germain**, first cousin.

Merlin and Nimiane

his baner; and thise of the reame of Benoyk ne knownen it nought, and so sholde thei alle be distroide er thei token hede or were therof war.

25 Whan Blase this undirstode, he began to wepe and seide to Merlin, “For the love of God, have pitee of Cristin peple that thei be not distroied.” And he seide while that he myght lyve he wolde hem helpe with all his counseile. “And yet,” quod Merlin, “it is the londe that I ought moste for to hate, for in that londe is the wolf that the lupart shall bynde with cercles that shall nother be of iren, ne steile, ne tree, ne golde, ne silver, ne lede, ne nothinge of the erthe, ne of the water, ne herbe; and [he] shall be so streite bounde that he shall not meve.”

30 35 “A! God mercy!” quod Blase. “Merlin, what is that ye sey? Is not the leopard more of strength than is the wolf, and more he is to doute?” “Yesse, truly,” quod Merlin. “How may the wolf than have power over the leopard?” quod Blase. “Ye shull no more knowe,” quod Merlin. “But thus moche I will telle yow, that this prophesie shall falle upon me, and I wote well I may me not kepe therfro.”

40 And Blase hym sayned for the merveile; and than he began to aske and seide, “Merlin, now telle me this. Yef ye go now into Benoyk, what shall falle of this londe that the Saisnes thus go destroyinge?”

45 50 “Of this ne care yow nought,” quod Merlin, “for Arthur shall never justise his barouns till that thei be well scoured; and knowe it well, thei shall be driven oute in short tyme. And on that othir side, ne were for the merveillouse leopard that shall come oute of the reame of Benoyk that shall be so grete and so fiers that alle other beestes shall surmounte, bothe of this contrey and of the Bloy Bretaigne. And of hym shall come the grete lyon to whom alle beestes shull enclyne and for whos look the hevene shall open. I wolde not go ne come ther as longe as I myght me holde thens, but I shull synne dedly yef I sholde do agein the ordenaunce of God; wherefore He hath me yove soche witte and discretion as I have, for to helpe accomplissh the aventures of the Seynt Graall that shall be accomplisshed and made an ende in the tyme of Kynge Arthur. But enquere now no ferther, for thou

23 **thise**, i.e., the people. 24 **er**, before; **war**, aware. 26 **that**, so that. 29 **lupart**, leopard; **cercles**, circles; **ne steile**, nor steel. 30 **tree**, wood; **lede**, lead. 31 **streite**, tightly. 33 **doute**, fear. 34 **than**, then. 36 **wote**, know. 37 **hym sayned**, crossed himself. 38 **Yef**, If; **falle of**, happen to. 40 **justise**, i.e., control. 41 **scoured**, cleansed; **thei**, i.e., the Saxons. 44 **surmounte**, surpass; **Bloy Bretaigne**, Brittany. 45 **enclyne**, bow down. 47 **yef**, if; **do agein**, work against. 48 **yove**, given.

Prose Merlin

shalt it [wete] in tyme comynge what this may be, and youreself shull it se at youre yie er ye be deed."

Whan Blase herde Merlin thus covertly speke, he thought longe on these wordes; but ever be putte hem in writinge as he hadde hem seide.

[*Summary.* Merlin goes to Benoyk. There he advises Leonces to prepare for the invasion by the Roman forces, and he tells Leonces what defensive tactics to employ. He also predicts that there will be a great battle before Trebes on the Feast of St. John. Fols. 107r (line 24)–108r (line 7).]

55 Than eche departed from other, and as soone as Merlin was departed fro Leonces, he wente to se a maiden of grete bewté; and [she] was right yonge, and was in a maner that was right feire and delitable and right riche, in a valee under a mounteyne rounde side, beside to the Forest of Briok that was full delitable and feire for to hunte at hertes and at hyndes and bukke and doo and wilde swyn.

60 This mayden of whom I speke was the doughter of a vavasor of right high lynage, and his name was cleped Dionas. And many tymes Diane com to speke with hym, that was the goddesse, and was with hym many dayes, for he was hir godsone. And whan she departed, she yaf hym a yefte that plesed hym wele. “Dionas,” quod Diane, “I graunte thee, and so doth the god of the see and of the sterres shull ordeyne, that the firste childe that thou shalt have female shall be so moche coveyted of the wisest man that ever was erthly or shall be after my deth, whiche in the tyme of Kynge Vortiger of the Bloy Mountayne shall begynne for to regne, that he shall hir teche the moste parte of his witte and connynge by force of nygremancye in soche manere that he shall be so desirouse after the tyme that 65 he hath hir seyn that he shall have no power to do nothinge agein hir volunté. And alle thinges that she enquereth, he shall hir teche.”

70 Thus yaf Diane to Dionas hir yefte, and whan Dionas was grete, he was right a

51 **wete**, know. 51–52 **at youre yie**, with your eyes. 52 **er**, before; **deed**, dead. 57 **maner**, manor. 58 **beside to**, near. 60 **vavasor**, a lesser noble. 61 **Diane**, the goddess Diana. 63 **godson**, godson; **yaf**, gave; **yefte**, gift. 64 **see**, sea. 66 **coveyted of**, desired by. 68 **witte and connynge**, knowledge and skills. 68–69 **by force of nygremancye**, by the power of necromancy. 70 **volunté**, wishes. 71 **enquereth**, asks about. 72 **yaf**, gave; **yefte**, gift; **was grete**, i.e., was a grown man.

Merlin and Nimiane

feire knyght and a goode, of high prowesse of body, and he was moche and longe,
and longe tyme served a Duke of Burgoyne that to hym yaf his nyece to ben his
wif, that was right a feire maiden and a wise.

This Dionsas loved moche the deduyt of the wode and the river while that he
was yonge; and the Duke of Burgoyne hadde a parte in the Foreste of Brioke so
that was his the halvendell all quyte; and that other half was the Kynge Ban. Whan
the Duke hadde maried his nyece, he yaf to Dionsas his part of this foreste and
londe that he hadde aboute grete plenté. And whan Dionsas wente it for to se, it
plesed hym wele, and he lete make a maner to repeire to, that was right feire and
riche by the Vyvier. And whan it was made, he com thider to be ther for the
deduyt of the wode and the river that was nygh.

And ther aboode Dionsas longe tyme, and repeired ofte to the court of Kynge
Ban, [and] hym served with nine knyghtes. And in his servise he yede at many a
grete nede agein the Kynge Cladas, to whom he dide many a grete damage, till
that the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Boors hadden hym in grete love, for thei knewe
hym so noble a knyght and so trewe. And the Kynge Ban to hym graunted his
parte of this foreste in heritance to hym and to his heyres, and londe and rentys
grete foysone. And the Kynge Boors yaf hym also a town and men and londe, for
the grete trouthe that he saugh in hym. And he was so graciouse that alle tho that
aboute hym repeyred loved hym above all thinge.

Thus dwelled Dionsas in that londe longe tyme, till that he gat upon his wif a
doughter of excellent bewté, and hir name was cleped Nimiane. And it is a name
of Ebrewe that seith in Frensch, “ment neu feraï”; that is to sey in English, “I shall
not lye.” And this turned upon Merlin, as ye shall here herafter.

This mayden wax till she was twelve yere of age, whan Merlin com to speke
with Leonces of Paerne. And Merlin spedde hym so that he com to the Foreste of
Brioke, and than he toke a semblaunce of a feire yonge squyre and drowgh hym
down to a welle, whereof the springes were feire and the water clere and the
73 moche and longe, large and tall. **76 deduyt**, pleasure. **77 hadde a parte in**, owned a
section of. **77–78 so that**, that. **78 halvendell all quyte**, an even half [of the forest]. **79**
yaf, gave. **81 maner**, manor; **repeire to**, stay at. **82 Vyvier**, the name of a river? **83 deduyt**,
pleasure. **85 yede**, went. **86 agein**, against. **89 parte**, portion; **heyres**, heirs. **90 foysone**,
plenty. **91 saugh**, saw; **tho**, those who. **92 repeyred**, lived. **94 cleped**, called. **95 Ebrewe**,
Hebrew; **seith**, means.

Prose Merlin

gravell so feire that it semed of fyn silver. To this fountayn ofte tyme com Nimiane
for to disperte; and the same day that Merlin com thider was she come. And whan
Merlin hir saugh, he behilde hir moche and avised hir well er he spake eny worde,
and thought that a moche fole were he yef he slepte so in his synne to lese his
witte and his connynge for to have the deduyt of a mayden, and hymself shamed,
and God to lese and dispiese.

105 And whan he hadde longe thought, he hir salued. And she answerde wisely and
seide, “That lorde that alle thoughtes knoweth, sende hym soche volunté and soche
corage that hym be to profite, and hym not greve ne noon other; and the same
110 welthe and the same honour hym sende as he wolde to other.” And when Merlin
herde the maide thus speke, he sett hym down upon the brinke of the welle and
asked hir what she was. And she seide she was of this contrey, the doughter of a
vavasour, a grete gentilman that was at a manoir therynne.

115 “And what be ye, feire swete frende?” quod she. “Damesell,” quod Merlin, “I
am a squyer traveillinge that go for to seche my maister that was wonte me for to
teche; and moche he is for to preise.” “And what maister is that?” seide the maiden.
“Certes,” quod he, “he taught me so moche that I cowde here reyse a castell; and
120 I cowde make withoute peple grete plenté that it sholde assaile, and withynne also
peple that it sholde defende. And yet I sholde do mo maistries, for I cowde go
upon this water and not wete my feet; and also I cowde make a river whereas
never hadde be water.”

125 “Certes,” seide the maiden, “these be queynte craftes, and fayn wolde I that I
cowde do soche disportes.” “Certes,” seide the squyer, “yet can I mo delitable
pleyes for to rejoise every high astate more than these ben, for noon can devise
nothinge but that I shall it do and make it to endure as longe as I will.”

“Certes,” seide the maiden, “yef it were to yow no gref, I wolde se somme
pleyes by covenauant that I sholde ever be youre love.” “Certes,” seide Merlin, “ye

103 **saugh**, saw; **moche**, greatly; **avised**, studied; **er**, before. 104 **moche fole**, great fool;
yef, if; **slepte**, slipped; **lese**, lose. 105 **deduyt**, delight. 106 **lese**, lose. 107 **salued**, greeted.
108 **volunté**, wishes. 109 **corage**, desires. 112 **what**, who. 113 **vavasour**, a member of the
gentry. 116 **moche**, much. 117 **cowde**, could; **reyse**, raise. 118 **withoute**, on the outside.
119 **mo maistries**, marvels; go, walk. 122 **queynte**, rare; **fayn wolde**, happily would.
123–24 **mo delitable pleyes**, more delightful marvels. 124 **noon**, no one. 125 **will**, wish.
126 **yef**, if; **gref**, grief. 127 **pleyes**, wonders; **by covenauant**, with the agreement.

Merlin and Nimiane

seme to me so pleasaunt and deboneir that for youre love I shall shewe yow a party of my pleyes, by covenauant that youre love shall be myn, for other thinge
130 will I not aske."

And she hym graunted, that noon evell ne thought. And Merlin turned hym apart and made a cerne with a yerde in myddell of the launde; and than [he] returned to the maiden and satte agein down by the fountayn. And anoon the mayden behelde and saugh come oute of the Foreste of Briogne ladyes and knyghtes and
135 maydons and squyres, eche holdinge other by the hondes; and [thei] com singinge and made the grettest joye that ever was seyn in eny londe. And before the maiden com jogelours and tymbres and tabours, and [thei] com before the cerne that Merlin hadde made. And whan thei were withynne, thei begonne the caroles and the daunces so grete and so merveilouse that oon myght not sey the fourthe parte of
140 the joye that ther was made. And for that the launde was so grete, Merlin lete rere a vergier whereynne was all maner of fruyt and alle maner of flowres that yaf so grete swetnesse of flavour that merveile it were for to telle. And the maiden that all this hadde seyn was abaisshed of the merveile that she saugh, and was so at ese
145 that sche ne attened to nothinge but to beholde and entende what songe thei seiden, saf that thei seiden in refreite of hir songe, "Vraiment, comencent amours en joye et fynissent en dolours."

In this maner dured the joye and feste from mydday to evenesonge, that oon myght here the noyse from fer, for it was right high and clere and plesaunt to heren, and it semed to be of moche peple. And oute of the castell com Dionas and
150 man and wif grete plenté, and behelde and saugh the feire orcharde and the daunces and the caroles so feire and so grete, that never hadde thei seyn soche in theire lives. And thei merveilled gretly of the orcharde that thei saugh ther so feire ther noon was before; and on that other side thei merveiled whens alle these ladyes and

129 **party**, portion. 131 **that . . . thought**, who suspected no mischief. 132 **cerne**, circle; **yerde**, stick; **myddell**, middle; **launde**, meadow. 133 **anoon**, soon. 137 **jogelours**, jugglers; **tymbres**, tumblers; **tabours**, i.e., musicians; **cerne**, circle. 140 **for that**, because; **rere**, rear (i.e., rise up). 141 **vergier**, garden; **yaf**, gave. 143 **abaisshed of**, astonished by. 144 **entende**, study; **seiden**, said (i.e., sang). 145 **saf**, except; **in refreite**, in the refrain; **hir**, their. 145–46 **Vraiment . . . dolours**, Truly, love begins in joy and ends in sorrows. 148 **here**, hear. 149 **heren**, hear. 150 **man and wif**, i.e., men and women. 152 **ther²**, where.

Prose Merlin

the knyghtes were come so wele apaireled of robes and juelelles. And whan the
155 caroles hadde longe dured, the ladyes and the maydenys satte down upon the
grene herbes and fressh floures; and the squyres set up a quyntayne in myddes of
the medowes, and wente to bourde a party of the yonge knyghtes; and on that
other parte borded the yonge squyres with sheldes, oon agein another, that never
ne lefte till evesonge tyme.

160 And than com Merlin to the mayden and toke hir be the hande and seide,
“Damesell, how seme ye?” “Feire swete frende,” seide the mayden, “ye have don
so moche that I am all yours.” “Damesell,” quod he, “now holde my covenant.”
“Certes,” seide the mayden, “so shall I with goode chere.” “Also,” quod Merlin,
“be ye eny clerk, and I shall teche yow so many merveilles that never woman
165 cowde so many.”

170 Quod the maiden, “How knowe ye that I am a clerke?” “Damesell,” quod Merlin,
“I knowe it well, for my maister hath me so well taught that I knowe alle
thinges that oon doth.” “Certes,” seide the mayden, “that is the moste connynge
that ever I herde and moste myster were therof in many places; and that I wolde
faynest lerne. And of thinges that be to come, knowe ye ought?” “Certes,” quod
he, “swete love, yee, a grete part.” “God mercy!” quod the mayden, “what go ye
than sechinge?” “Truly,” quod Merlin, “of that ye moste yet abide, yef it be youre
175 plesier.”

180 And while the mayden and Merlin helde this parlement, assembled agein the
maidenes and the ladyes, and wente daunsinge and bourdinge toward the foreste
fro whens thei were come fyrste. And whan thei were nygh, thei entred in so
sodaynly that oon ne wiste where thei were become. But the orcharde abode stille
ther longe tyme, for the maiden that swetly therof hym prade, and was cleped
ther by name the Repeire of Joye and of Feeste. And whan Merlin and the maiden
hadde be longe togeder, Merlin seyde at the laste, “Feire maiden, I go, for I have

155 dured, lasted. **156 quyntayne**, tilting board; **in myddes**, in the middle. **157 bourde**,
sport with. **158 bourded**, sported. **161 how seme ye**, i.e., what do you think. **164 be ye**
eny clerk, i.e., if you are a scholar. **165 cowde**, knew. **169 moste myster**, greatest
wonder. **170 faynest**, most happily. **172 of**, for; **abide**, wait; **yef**, if. **173 plesier**, pleasure.
174 parlement, conversation. **175 bourdinge**, playing. **176 fro whens**, from whence.
177 oon ne wiste, one did not know. **178 cleped**, named. **179 Repeire**, The Abode;
Feeste, Mirth.

Merlin and Nimiane

moche to do in other place than here.”

“How,” quod the maiden, “feire frende, shull ye not teche me firste some of youre pleyes?” “Damesell,” quod Merlin, “ne haste yow not sore, for ye shull know inowe all in tyme, for I moste have therto grete leyser and grete sojour, and
185 on that other side I have yet no suerté of youre love.” “Sir,” quod she, “what suerté wolde ye aske? Devise ye, and I shall it make.”

“I will,” quod Merlin, “that ye me ensure that youre love shall be myn, and ye also for to do my plesier of what I will.” And the maiden her bethought a litill, and than she seide, “Sir,” quod she, “with goode will, by soche forwarde that after
190 that ye have me taught all the thinges that I shall yow aske and that I can hem werke.”

And Merlin seide that so it plesed hym well. Than he asured the maiden to holde covenauant like as she hadde devised, and he toke hir sureté. Than he taught hir ther a pley that she wrought after many tymes, for he taught hir to do come a
195 grete river over all theras her liked, and to abide as longe as she wolde, and of other games inowe, whereof she wrote the wordes in perchemyn soche as he hir devised; and she it cowde full well bringe to ende. And whan he hadde abiden ther till evesonge tyme, he comaunded hir to God and she hym. But er he departed, the maiden hym asked whan he sholde come agein. And he seide on Seint Johnes
200 Even; and thus departed that oon fro that other.

And Merlin wente to Tamelide, where the kynges made hym grete joye whan that thei hym saugh. But now awhile we moste cesse here, and speke of the message that the Kynge de Cent Chivaliers sente to speke with the princes by the counseile of the kynge cleped Tradilyvaunt of North Wales.

183 **pleyes**, marvels; **ne haste yow not sore**, do not be in a hurry. 184 **inowe**, enough; **moste**, must; **sojour**, time to stay. 186 **suerté**, pledge. 187 **will**, wish. 189 **by soche forwarde**, with such agreement. 190 **hem**, them. 193 **sureté**, pledge. 194 **pley**, marvel; **wrought**, worked; **to do come**, to make appear. 196 **inowe**, enough; **perchemyn**, parchment. 197 **cowde**, could. 199–200 **Seint Johnes Even**, St. John’s Eve. 202 **saugh**, saw; **cesse**, cease.

[Arthur and Gonne; and The Battle against King Rion]

[Summary. The rebel barons meet at Leicester and commiserate over the damage done to their lands by the Saxons; King Lot laments the loss of his wife and children. The King de Cent Chevaliers urges them to join forces and engage the Saxons as a united army. They assemble their forces and camp beside the Severn River.

Meanwhile Merlin arrives at the city of Toraise in Tamelide; he tells Arthur, Ban, and Bors how they must assist Leodogan in his forthcoming battle with King Rion. Merlin also makes several prophecies, including one about the engendering of “the gret leopart” (i.e., Lancelot). Fols. 109v (line 23)–111v (line 7).]

5

10

Than spake Merlin to the kynge and seide, “Sir, dismay yow nothinge, for be the feith that I owe unto yow, er that the Kynge Rion from yow ascape, he wolde have ben in hys contré all naked by the condicion that it hadde coste hym the beste citee that he hath. Ne ye be not at soche myschef but that ye have sixty thousande men at armes and moo. But I shall telle yow what ye shall do: sendeth ten of youre beste men for to serche the contrey that ther be neither asspie ne ribaude but anoon he be taken and brought before yow and put in prison, so that youre enmyes may nothinge knowe of youre ordenaunce. And than devise youre wardes and youre bateilles, and loke that ye make ten withoute mo; and in eche of hem ye shall putte ten thousande men. And than meveth on Monday two houres before day, and goth all esely oon after another withoute sore traveile and that we be ther on Wednysday at even.

“And I do yow to wite that on Thursday, a litill before day, we shall hem fynde all slepinge, for into the hoste is come grete plenté of flessh and of wyne and of

1 **the kynge**, i.e., Leodegan. 2 **er**, before; **ascape**, escapes. 3 **all naked**, i.e., vulnerable; **by the condicion**, with the result. 4 **at soche myschef**, in such a plight; **but that**, because. 6–7 **asspie ne ribaude**, spy nor robber. 8 **ordenaunce**, plans; **devise**, arrange. 9 **wardes**, companies; **bateilles**, divisions. 10 **hem**, them. 11 **esely**, slowly; **and**, so. 13 **wite**, know. 14 **flessh**, meat.

Arthur and Gonne; and The Battle against King Rion

15 corne and other vitaile grete foysone; and thei drinke and ete ech day and trouble so
theire braynes that thei sette litill wacche in theire hoste. But towarde the playnes
thei have hemself closed with cartes and charietts, that litill or nought oon may
hem mysdo on that side. And therfore we moste werke wisely, for I knowe a
place whereas thei take litill hede, and that wey ye shull hem alle fynde aslepe. And
20 therfore, yef God will, we shull somwhat have hem at oure wille, and we shull so
chastice hem at this envay that thei shull have litill corage eny more in this londe to
werrye."

Whan the Kynge Leodogan herde Merlin thus speke, he merveiled what he
myght be. And he beheilde hym ententefly that he loked on noon other, and after
25 that he beheilde his felowes, that were stille and koy, that seiden not o worde but
beheilde hym that spake. And whan he hadden hem beholden a longe while, he
yaf a grete sighe and that was right sore. And [he] thought well in his corage that
thei were right high men and gretter of astate than he cowde thinke. And aboute
30 his herte com so grete errour that it wete all his visage with teeres of his yien, that
com from the herte that unethe myght he sowne oute o worde. And he fill down at
her feet as half deed, and cride hem mercy so as he myght, that for the love of God
thei sholde of hym have pitee and of his londe. "For I wote well," quod he, "and
also myn herte telleth me, that I shall all lese yef God and ye be not my warant."

Whan that the Kynge Arthur saugh hym at erthe before hym knelinge, he hadde
35 therof grete pité, and so hadde the other kynges, and caught hym in her armes and
reised hym up and assured hym of all that thei myght. And than thei wente to sitte
down alle five togeder as goode felowes and trewe; and than began Merlin his
reson and seide to the Kynge Leodogan, "Sir sire, ye wolde fayn wite what we
ben and of what peple and of what lynage." And he seide ther was nothinge that
40 he desired so moche to knowe.

15 **vitaile**, food; **foysone**, amounts. 16 **wacche in**, guard on; **playnes**, fields. 17 **closed**,
blocked off; **charietts**, wagons; **oon**, one. 18 **hem mysdo**, harm them. 19 **whereas**, where.
20 **yef**, if; **will**, wishes. 21 **envay**, assault; **corage**, desire. 22 **werrye**, make war. 23 **what**,
who. 24 **beheilde**, studied. 25 **koy**, quiet; **o**, one. 27 **yaf**, gave; **corage**, heart. 28 **right**,
very; **cowde thinke**, realized. 29 **errour**, emotion; **teeres**, tears; **yien**, eyes. 30 **unethe**,
scarcely; **sowne oute o**, say one. 31 **her**, their. 33 **all lese yef**, everything lose if; **warant**,
protection. 34 **at erthe**, on the ground. 38 **reson**, explanation; **fayn wite**, happily know.
38–39 **what we ben**, who we are.

Prose Merlin

"I shall telle yow," quod Merlin, "firste for what we be come to seche. Lo, here
a yonge lorde that is a goode knyght, as ye knowe well inough; and wite ye well
in trouthe, whatsoever he be, he is a man of higher lynage and of londe and
frendes than ye be, and yet ye be a kynge crowned. And he hath no wif, and
therfore we come through londes to seche aventures till that we may fynde some
high prince that his daughter wolde yeve hym in mariage."

"A! Lorde mercy!" quod the Kynge Leodogan. "What go ye ferther than
sechinge? I have a daughter that is holden oon of the feirest of the worlde and the
wiseste and oon of the beste lerned, and for defaute of goode lynage ne of goode
londe ought she not to be refused. And yef it be youre plesier, I yeve hir yow to be
youre wif. And I have no mo heires to whom my londe moste falle after my
discesse." And Merlin ansuerde that he hir not sholde refuse never, yef God will;
and thanked hym the foure felowes right hertely.

Than the kynge hymself wente to fecche his daughter, and made hir to be
appareiled in the richest wise, and ledde hir be the honde into the chambre where-
as the foure felowes dide abide. And after hem com grete route of knyghtes
whereof therynne were grete plenté; and ther also were alle the compayne of the
Rounde Table, and the forty that the storye hath rehersed, and many other of high
astate that were come into the hoste for to socoure the Kynge Leodogan.

And whan the kynge and his daughter entred thourgh the chambre that was
feire and grete, the foure felowes com hem ageyns. And spake the Kynge Leodogan
that he myght wele ben herde and seide, "Gentill sir, cometh forth — for I can not
yet yow namen — and resceive here my daughter to be youre wif, that is so feire
and courteise and therto right wise, with all the honour that to hir appendeth after
my deth. For to a worthier than yow may I not hir yeve, and that knowe well alle
these worthi men hereynne."

And Arthur stode forth and seide, "Sir, gramercy." And the Kynge Leodogan
delyvered hir to hym by the right honde. And that oon graunted to that other full
debonerly; and the kynge hem blissed with his right honde, and the Bisshop of
Toraise was sent fore. And than was the joye grete therynne that never before

43 whatsoever he be, whoever he is. **46 yeve**, give. **47 What**, Why. **48 holden**, consid-
ered. **49 defaute**, lack. **50 yef**, if; **yeve**, give. **51 mo**, more. **52 discesse**, death. **54 fecche**,
fetch. **55 be**, by. **56 route**, company. **61 hem ageyns**, to meet them. **64 therto**, also. **65**
yeve, give. **67 stode**, stepped. **69 debonerly**, courteously.

Arthur and Gonne; and The Battle against King Rion

was ther seyn gretter.

And than com Merlin and spake to the kynge heringe alle that were therynne, “Sir, ye wolde gladly knowe what we be and to whom ye have yoven youre doughter.” And the kynge that it so moche desired that yet wende it not to have knownen, seide certeynly, that gladly wolde he wite yef it were hir plesier.

“Now knoweth wele,” quod Merlin, “and alle tho that it will heren, that ye have yoven youre doughter to Arthur, the Kynge of Breaigne, the sone of Kynge Uterpendragon; and thei owe hym homage, bothe ye and alle the barouns of this reame. Now let hem don it, alle tho that will hym honour. And after shall we go the gladlyer and the more wightly to turneyen agein these sarazins that this londe do werryen and wolde take and distroien; but it shall be otherwise than thei wene. And also I do yow to undirstonde that these two noble men ben bretheren and also kynges crowned, and that oon is cleped the Kynge Ban of Benoyk, and that other the Kynge Boore of Gannes, and [thei] be comen of the heighest lynage that eny man knoweth. And alle these other felowes beth the sones of erles and barouns and castelleynes.”

Whan the Kynge Leodogan and the other felowes undirstode that this was the Kynge Arthur, thei weren so gladde that never hadde thei so grete joye beforne. And the two kynges com first before hym and dide hym homage, and after the Kynge Leodogan and alle the other barouns; and thei made the feste of the mariage so riall that never in that londe was seyn soche. But over alle other was the Quene Gonne gladdie of hir newe lorde.

And that nyght Merlin lete hymself be knownen of the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table withoute eny moo. And whan the Kynge Leodogan hym knewe, he seide that God in this worlde hadde sente hym goode eure that to so noble and worthi man hadde hym yove the love and aqueyntance. “And from hensforth, gode Lorde God, do with me Thy wille, seth my londe and my doughter is be sette in so noble wise to the worthiest of the worlde.” Thus seide the Kynge Leodogan; and than after thei yede to bedde for to reste. And on the morowe the kynge sente the

72 heringe, in the hearing of. **73 yoven**, given. **75 wite**, know. **76 tho**, those. **77 yoven**, given. **80 wightly**, swiftly. **81 werryen**, war upon. **82 do**, want. **83 oon**, one; cleped, called. **86 castelleynes**, constables. **91 riall**, royal; **over alle other**, beyond all others. **94 withoute eny moo**, but to no one else. **95 eure**, fortune. **96 yove**, given. **97 seth**, since. **99 yede**, went.

Prose Merlin

100 knyghtes into tho parties as Merlin hym taught whereas the peple of Kynge Rion sholde assemble, and than devised his wardes of his bataile whereof were ten.

In the firste warde, whereas the dragon was, was the Kynge Arthur and the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Boors and her forty felowes; and so were the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table and so many of other that thei were seven thousand men right well armed. And the seconde warde ledde Guyomar, the kynges cosin, with seven thousand men of armes. The thridde warde ledde Elunadas, a yonge lorde that was nevew to the Wise Lady of the Foreste Saunz Retour. The fourthe bataile ledde Blios, the lorde of Cloadas, a merveillouse castell, and were with hym seven thousand men of armes and horse of prise. The fifth warde ledde Aridolus, a knyght of grete renoun, and weren also seven thousand men. The sixte bataile ledde Belcys le Loys, that was inough riche and puyssaunt, and hadde with hym also seven thousand men of armes well horsed. The seventh bataile ledde Ydiers of the londe of Norwey, to whom the feire aventure fell in the courte of Kynge Arthur of the five ringes that he drough oute of the deed knyghtes honde that asked vengance, that never knyght that was in that court myght have, as the tale shall yow declare hereafter; and he hadde in hys companye seven thousand, and he was a noble knyght and an hardy. The eighth bateile ledde Landons, the nevew of the stiward of Tamelide, that was a full noble knyght of his honde; and he ledde seven thousand in his companye soche as he hadde brought. The ninth bateile ledde Groinge Poire Mole, that was a noble knyght of his body, but he hadde no gretter nose than a cat; this chese oute seven thousand in whom he trusted. And the tenth bataile ledde the Kynge Leodogan and his stiwarde Cleodalys, that right wele cowde hym helpe; and were in her companye ten thousand, what oon and other, that wolde not fle for lif ne lym.

125 Whan these batailes were dissevered that oon from that other and renged by hemself, thei devised whan thei shulde meve. And thus thei acorded that on the morowe after Pentecoste thei shulde move at the firste cok crowyne. And than thei rested all day and on the morn, for on the Witsonday the Kynge Leodogan

100 **tho parties**, those companies; **whereas**, where. 101 **wardes**, divisions; **bataile**, army. 109 **prise**, great value. 111 **puyssaunt**, powerful. 114 **drough**, drew. 121 **this chese oute**, i.e., he chose. 123 **what oon and other**, all told. 124 **lif ne lym**, life nor limb. 125 **dissevered**, separated. 126 **acorded**, agreed. 128 **the Witsonday**, Whitsunday.

Arthur and Gonnore; and The Battle against King Rion

helde court roiall for love of the barouns that ther were assembled.

130 And the thre kynges and Merlin satte togeder at the hede of the deyse; and before hem satte the two Gonnores that were wonder like, saf a litill that oon was heigher and fressher coloured, and that was Arthurs wif; and the better tonge she hadde, for she was of all the worlde the feirest speker and the beste, and also she hadde more heer than the tother Gonnore. But of alle other thinges thei resembled
135 so like that unethe myght oon knowe that oon from that other. And after satte the felowes that Arthur hadde brought with the Knygthes of the Rounde Table for chierté and gret love, for so wolde Merlin and Gynebans the Clerke. And whan thei hadde eten, thei wente to bedde; but litill while thei lay, for thei roos at mydnyght.

140 Whan the armes of Kynge Arthur were brought, Gonnore hym helped for to arme right wele and feire, as she that right wele cowde her therof entermete; and hirself girde hym with his swerde. And whan the kynge was all armed saf his helme, she toke the spores and sette hem on bothe knelinge. And Merlin, that all this behilde, began to laughe and shewde to the two kynges how Gonnore hir entermeted and peyned hym to serve. And hir preised moche the twey kynges.
145 But in the fin, she hadde a riche guerdon whan she loste the kynge hir lorde by mysaventure and by Bertelaux the traitour, as the book shall reherse hereafter.

And while Merlin beheilde the maiden that served hir lorde, he lough and seide to the kynge as he that cowde all goode and full well cowde jape in myrthe and game, “Sir sire, never were ye so verily a newe knyght as ye be now, and ther ne faileth bot o thinge that ye were alle a newe knyght. And well may ye sey whan ye departe hens that a maiden that is a kynges doughter and quenes hath made yow a newe knyght.” “Sir,” seide the kynge, “sey what thinge that is and my lady shall it do, but yef it be to grete a thinge or that she sholde therby have shame.”

130 **deyse**, dais. 131 **hem**, them; **wonder like**, wondrously alike; **saf**, except that. 132 **heigher**, taller. 135 **unethe**, scarcely; **oon**, one. 137 **chierté**, affection; **wolde**, desired. 141 **right wele cowde her therof entermete**, i.e., very much wished to be involved. 142 **saf**, safe. 144 **shewde to**, showed. 144–45 **hir entermeted**, involved herself. 145 **peyned hym to serve**, took pains to serve him. 146 **fin**, end; **guerdon**, reward. 147 **mysaventure**, ill fortune. 148 **lough**, laughed. 149 **the kynge**, i.e., Arthur; **jape**, joke. 151 **sey**, say. 152 **hens**, hence. 154 **but yef**, unless; **to grete**, too hard.

Prose Merlin

155 “Certes, sire,” seide the maiden full wisely, as she that [was] full well lerned, “in nothinge that I do to yow may I have no shame ne vilonye, for I knowe yow so noble and worthy and also curteyse that ye wolde me not requere nothinge that to vilonye shulde turne for the beste castell that ye have.” “Lady,” seide Merlin, “ye sey wisely. Never for nothinge that I have seide shall ye have no reprof ne that
160 sholde turne yow to no shame.”

“What is it, than?” seide the kynge. “I pray yow telle me.”

“Sir,” seide Merlin, “hit is the baisyers, yef to the lady it plese.” “Certes,” seide the kynge, “and for that shall I not leve to be a newe made knyght.” “No,” quod the maiden, “as for that shall I yow not lese, but that ye shull be myn and I yowrs.
165 And why sholde ye therof me preyen, for also well it pleseth me as it doth to yow.”

Whan the kynge herde hir thus sey, he began to laugh. Than the kynge toke hir in armes and kissed hir swetly, as yonge peple that full well togeder loved. And than were the horse apaireled and brought forth. And Gonnore yaf hir lorde an
170 helme of merveillouse bountee, and he sette it on his heed; and than ech comaunded other to God. And rode forth eche warde after other, the ganfanouns folden and the speres lowe, and rode a softe pas as Merlin hym guyded, as he that wele knewe alle the passages. And the ten knyghtes that were gon before hadde taken mo than
175 ten pantoneres that alle weren espies of the Kynge Rion, and bounde hem and sette hem in prison, and kepte so well the passages that thei herde no tidinges.

And so well spedde hym Merlin that the firste warde dide condite that thei come the Wednysday at nyght after the mydnyght into the hoste of Kynge Rion. And the nyght was right clere and stille, but the moone shone a litill trouble. And thei slepte strongeliche in the hoste for the tyme that relented, for on the day was
180 right grete hete in the hoste, and therto thei hadden dronken inough. And Merlin sette in betwene the wode and the river, and comaunded that no man presse into

159 no reprof ne, no blame. **162 baisyers**, kisses; **yef**, if. **163 leve**, fail. **164 lese**, fail; **but that**, so that. **165 preyen**, ask; **also well**, just as much. **169 apaireled**, readied; **yaf**, gave. **170 bountee**, strength. **170–71 comaunded other**, commended the other. **171 ganfanouns folden**, standards furled. **172 a softe pas**, at a slow pace; **guyded**, directed. **173 passages**, backroads. **174 pantoneres**, spies. **175 kepte**, watched. **176 dide condite**, conducted. **178 trouble**, darkly. **179 strongeliche**, deeply; **relented**, remained. **180 hete**, heat. **181 sette in**, placed them; **presse into**, attack.

Arthur and Gonne; and The Battle against King Rion

the hoste till that thei herde an horne blowe. And as the wardes passeden over oon
after another, Merlin abode hem alle and made hem close togeder. And than wente
Merlin to the baner and toke an horne and blewe it so lowde that all the foreste
185 and the river resownnded, that a man myght heere the horne well half a myle.

Than Merlin cried, “Lady Seint Marie, praye to oure Lorde God, thi blissed
Sone, that He now be oure helpe. Now sette on manly,” quod he, “gentill knyghtes,
for now shall it be sein who is noble and worthi; for I do yow to wete that ye be
alle at the deth or at the lif, and noon ne hath no heede but he hit now deffende.”

190 And whan thei herde the horne, anoon thei slaked theire reynes and spored
theire horse and smote into the hoste with grete ravyne. And ther ye sholde have
sein tentes and pavilouns reverse to the grounde, for Merlin by crafte made soche
a trobellion arise that ther lefte nother tente ne pavilon stondinge, but fallen upon
theire heedes that lay withynne. And thei smyten into the hoste on alle parties, and
195 slowgh and maymed what thei myght areche, for ther was made of hem grete
slaughter er thei were aparceyved in the hoste what peple thei were, till that thei
herde the brayes and the dolorouse cries as thei weren slain and mangeled of hem
that of hir deth hadde no pitee.

200 Than comaunded the heigh lordes to theire squyres to make theire horse redy
thourgh the hoste, and thei so dide; and than thei ronne to armes hastely, and
peyned hem harde to be smartly armed and soone. And as soone as thei myght be
armed, thei assembled at the tente of Kynge Rion, and blowen hornes and trumpes
right harde. And the Cristin hadde so hurled amonge hem up and down that mo
than thre thousande thei hadde so arayed that never repeired thens, and [thei]
205 chase the remenaunt to Kynge Rions tente ther thei made hir gaderinge; and ther
thei stalled, for thei were moche peple and stronge. And than armed hem thei that
were not armed, and tho apered the feire day and cleire. And than the wardes
drowen up and appereilled hem in ordre, and eche gadered his peple aboute hym;
and ther thei reised theire baners alofte that flekered in the wynde. And the bright

183 abode, awaited. **188 do yow to wete**, want you to know. **190 slaked**, loosened. **191 ravyne**, rage. **192 reverse**, fall. **193 trobellion**, wind; **nother**, neither. **194 parties**, sides. **195 slowgh**, slew; **what**, whoever; **areche**, find. **196 were aparceyved**, realized. **197 brayes**, shouts. **203 Cristin**, Christians. **204 arayed**, stood. **207 tho apered**, then appeared. **208 drowen up**, were drawn up; **appereilled hem**, arranged. **209 flekered**, flapped.

Prose Merlin

210 sonne smote upon the bright armurs that it glistered so bright that merveile was to behoden.

Whan the Kynge Rion saugh the damage that thei hadde hym don, he was nygh wode for ire, and satte upon a grete horse that was wonder stronge and swight, and hadde an ax hanginge at his sadill before that was grete and hevy of harde stiell, and rode up and down, devisinge who sholde go before and who sholde go behynde. And than he cleped Solynas, a knyght of grete prowesse and right hardy that was his nevew, and seide, "Solinus, thou shalt lede the first bataile with an hundred thousande men of armes of soche peple as ye will; and thou shalt go and avenge my shame and youre harmes." And he seide he wolde well, so that he 215 wolde deserve of hym no blame.

Than departed he that was wight and hardy and merveillouse stronge. And as soone as Merlin saugh hym come, he rode hym ageins with the dragon, and he hym disfigured in soche manere that no man saugh who it bar saf the thre kynges. Whan Merlin saugh that he com nygh, he seide to the Kynge Arthur, "Arthur," 225 quod he, "now shall it be sene how well ye shull do, and loke that the kisse that youre love yow yaf be to somme solde so dere that ever after therof be spoken." And he ansuerde agein and seide that in hym sholde be no feytise; and no more he ne seide. And than approched that oon bataile to that other right nygh, and than thei leide theire speres in fewtre and mette togeder with trenchaunt heedes upon 230 the sheldes that ech hurte other and wounded and bar to the grounde. Ther dide the Kynge Arthur a pointe that moche was behoden.

Whan Arthur saugh bothe parties so nygh approche, he smote the horse with the spores agein Jonap, a grete geaunt and merveillous stronge. And he saugh hym so come, he douted hym but litill, for he semed agein hym but a chielde. Thei 235 com faste and rudely, and Arthur was smyte with Jonappes speres in the shelde so rudely that the shafte passed thourgh his lifte flanke an arme lengthe; and Arthur smote hym agein so sore that thourgh shelde and sholdre he shof the trenchaunt

210 **glistered**, glistened; **bright**, brightly. 212–13 **nygh wode for ire**, nearly mad with rage. 213 **swight**, swift. 216 **cleped**, called. 219 **wolde well**, would. 221 **wight**, able. 222 **hym ageins**, toward him. 223 **hym disfigured**, disguised himself; **it bar saf**, the dragon carried except. 226 **yaf**, gave. 227 **feyntise**, cowardice. 229 **in fewtre**, in their holders. 233 **And**, And when; **he**, i.e., Jonap. 234 **douted**, feared. 235 **smyte**, smitten. 236 **rudely**, strongly; **lifte**, left.

Arthur and Gonne; and The Battle against King Rion

spere; but the sarazin was so proude and of so grete strength that he made no semblaunt of no grevaunce. But [thei] hurteled togeder so rudely with theire bodyes
240 and with the myght of theire horse that eche bar other to erthe, and the horse upon theire bodyes; and ther thei lay a longe while sore astonyed that the ton cowde telle no tidinges of the tother. Than ronne to the rescouse on bothe two sides; ther was many a grete spere crased and stronge stour of swerdes upon helmes and sheldes. Ther loste the geauntes more than the Cristin, but nevertheles, thei
245 traveyled so on bothe parties that bothe were thei relaved and sette on horse; and than began the stoure stronge and merveillouse. Ther dide the Knygthes of the Rounde Table wondres, and the Forty Felowes, for agein hem myght endure noon harneys ne no kynge ne warde ne sheltron, were it never so clos.

[*Summary. A great and lengthy battle ensues between the Christians and King Rion's army. A young knight named Nascien performs deeds of great valor, and the writer notes that later on Nascien becomes a hermit and is the person who records the events of the Grail story, which he writes in a book that is "anexed to the booke that Blase wrote." During the battle Merlin rebukes Arthur for having done little, and shortly thereafter, Arthur spies King Rion among the throng and pursues him relentlessly. Fols. 114v (line 13)–119r (line 14).]*

So longe Arthur enchased the Kynge Rion that he hym atteyned in a depe valey
250 betwene a litill wode and a medowe at a passage of a litill brooke that com rennyng of two welle sprynges of a mountayne; and the sonne was so lowe that for the mounteynes and the wode hit was all derke. And ther overtoke Arthur the Kynge Rion, and than he cried, “Turne thee, cowarde geaunte, or thou shalt dye fleynge,
255 for thou seist well ther is no moo here but thou and I.”

And whan the geaunte undirstode the kynge that so hym maneced, he helde therof grete dispite, for he saugh that he semed ageyn hym but a childe. Than he returned toward hym with his betell in his honde, and put his targe hym beforne

241 **astonyed**, stunned; **ton**, one. 242 **tother**, other. 243 **crased**, shattered; **stour**, clash.
245 **traveyled**, labored; **parties**, sides. 246 **stoure**, battle. 247–48 **noon harneys**, no weapons. 248 **warde**, troop; **sheltron**, company. 249 **he**, i.e., Arthur; **atteyned in**, reached. 254 **moo**, more. 255 **maneced**, challenged. 256 **dispite**, insult; **saugh**, saw.
257 **betell**, club, hammer; **targe**, shield.

Prose Merlin

that was of the bon of an olyfaunte; and the Kynge Arthur helde a shorte spere
with a longe trenchaunt heede of sharp grounde steill. And [thei] ronne togeder
260 wroth and maletalentif that oon agein that other, and that oon desiraunt of pris and
honour, and that other covetouse to avenge hys shame and his harme. The Kynge
Arthur com faste for he was meved from fer, and Rion hym abode with his betill
in his honde; and Arthur hym smote so sore with this spere thourgh the shelde,
though it were never so harde, that the stiell passed through two plites of the
265 hauberke on the lifte side, that the blode lepe oute grete foysen that all the shafte
was covered in blode. But for no myght that he cowde shove myght he not make
hym to remeve his sadill; and the spere splyndered in peces.

And whan the geaunte felte hymselfe wounded, he gnasshed his teth and rolled
his iyen that were grete swollen for ire and malentelent that he hadde; and he lifte
270 up his betill of brasse as he that was merveillouse grete and stronge above alle tho
that eny man knewe in tho dayes; and as the boke seith, he was fourteen foote of
lengthe, and half a palme betwene his browes, and was grete and lene and full of
veynes and senewes, and was also so grym a figure that he was dredefull for to
beholde.

275 Whan Arthur saugh the geaunte lifte up his malle, he douted the stroke and ran
to hym so rudely with the body of his horse that he bar to the erthe bothe Rion and
his horse. But soone was he upon his foote, but first was Arthur garnysshed of his
armes er the geaunt were reised; for Arthur was also fallen to grounde with the
frayinge that thei hurtled togeder. And Arthur was wight and lifly, and yet hadde
280 he not but twenty yere of age; and the Kynge Rion hadde moo than forty-two
largely, and was grete and hevy by the thirde part more than he. And as soone as
thei were up, thei ronne ther togeder; and Arthur griped Calibourne, his goode
swerde that he pulde oute of the ston, wherewith that day he hadde yove many a
stroke. And as soone as he hadde it drawnen oute, hit yaf so grete light as it hadde
285 ben a grete bronde of fire, and covered hym with his shelde and raught a stroke to

258 **bon**, bone; **olyfaunte**, elephant. 260 **maletalentif**, angrily; **pris**, praise. 261
covetouse, desiring. 262 **betill**, club. 264 **plites**, layers. 265 **lifte**, left; **foysen**, quantity.
267 **remeve**, budge from. 269 **iyen**, eyes; **malentelent**, hatred. 270 **betill**, club; **tho**,
those. 275 **malle**, mallet; **douted**, feared. 276 **rudely**, strongly. 278 **were reised**, got up.
279 **wight**, agile; **lifly**, lively. 281 **largely**, at least. 283 **yove**, given. 284 **hit yaf**, it gave.
285 **raught**, dealt.

Arthur and Gonne; and The Battle against King Rion

the gaeante er he were covered upon the heede. And whan he saugh the stroke comynge, he caste the shelde ther agein, for sore he dredde the stroke of the swerde that he saugh so bright shynyng, for he knewe it was of right grete bountee.

290 And the Kynge Arthur smote so in the malle that he helde before hym in bothe hondes that he kutte the helve asonder faste by the hede, and yet was it bounde with iren. The stroke was grete and rudely smyten and discended upon the corner of his shelde that he slitte it to the bokill; and with the plukkyng of his swerde agein to hym, he made the Kynge Rion for to stomble, that was sory for his brasen malle that he hadde so loste. And than he leide honde to his swerde that was oon of the beste of the worlde, for as the booke seith, it was som tyme Hercules, that ledde Jason into the Ile of Colchos for to fecche the flees of goolde; and with that swerde dide Hercules sle many a gaeante in that londe where Jason ledde Medea that so moche hym loved; but after, he hir failled, whereas Hercules
295 300 hir dide helpe by his grete debonertee. And the booke seith that Vlcan iforged that swerde in the tyme of Adrastus, the Kynge of Greece, that many a day hadde in his tresour. This same swerde hadde Tideus, the sone of the Duke of Calcedoyne, that day that he dide the message to Ethiocles for Polemyte; and in his comynge homwarde with the same swerde he slowgh fifty at an hill. And after wente this
305 swerde fro hande to hande and from heir to heir that now hath it the Kynge Rion that com of the lynage of Hercules that was so noble and hardy.

Whan the Kynge Rion saugh his malle smyten asonder, he drough this swerde that was of so grete bountee; and as soone as it was oute of the skawberke, it caste so grete claretee that it semed a flame of fire; and the name of this swerde was Marmyadoise. And whan Arthur saugh the swerde that so flambed, he preised it moche in his herte and drough hym a litill up, hit to beholde, and coveyted it right sore, and thought that in goode houre were he born that it myght conquerre. And whan the Kynge Rion saugh hym stonde so stille, he withstode and hym aresoned as ye shull here.

315 "Sir knyght," quod he, "I wote never what thou art, but thou haste do grete

291 **helve**, handle; **by**, near. 292 **rudely smyten**, strongly struck. 293 **bokill**, buckle. 295 **brasen malle**, brass hammer. 297 **flees**, fleece. 299 **failled**, betrayed. 300 **debonertee**, courtesy. 307 **saugh**, saw; **malle**, mallet; **drough**, drew. 309 **claretee**, brightness. 314 **here**, hear. 315 **wote never what**, never knew who; **do**, done.

Prose Merlin

hardynesse that me durste sue or chace alone withoute compayne; and for the prowesse that I se in thee, I shall do thee grete curtesie that I dide never to no man. Yeve me that swerde and thyn armes and telle me thy name; and after thou shalt go quyte, for I have grete pité for to sle thee for that thou semest so yonge.”

320 Whan Arthur undirstode the wordes of the Kynge Rion, he hadde therof grete dispite, and ansuerde hym felly. “How wenest to take me so lightly, that I sholde yelde me recreaunt for that thou art so grete and so stronge! But ley down that swerde and tho armes and putte thee in my mercy, to do with thee my plesier outerly, for I thee assure but the deth.”

325 At these wordes lowgh the geaunte and turned the heede in traverse and asked hym what he was and what was his name, and conjured hym by his creaunce to sey the trouthe. And Arthur seide he wolde telle hym by covenauant what he were; and he hym graunted. “Now knowe thou well,” quod he, “that my name is Arthur of Breaigne, the sone of Uterpendragon, that am come to chalenge this reame that 330 is myn all quyte, for the Kynge Leodogan hath yove me hys daughter to my wif, and me have don homage alle the high barouns of this reame, and also he hymself. Now telle me what thou art, and what is thy name, for I have tolde the thee trouthe of myn.”

335 Quod the geaunte, “Seist thou trouthe that thou art Arthur, the sone of Uterpendragon, that slough Aungis before the Roche of Saisnes?” “Of the same, speke I withoute faile,” quod Arthur. “I have made covenauant,” quod the geaunte, “that I shall telle thee myn name. I do thee to wite that I am the Kynge Rion of Iselonde and of alle the londes unto pastures and yef ferther, yef a man myght ferther passe. But oon may never passe till that the lawes be broken that Judas Makabeus ther sette; and as olde auncient seyn that thei shall never be hadde awey till the aventures begynne in the reame of Logres of the Seynt Graal; and it behoveth hym to caste to the portes of the Goulf of Sathanye that it be never seyn after, for it is so of soche maner that so it moste be fallen. Now I have tolde thee

316 **durste sue**, dare to pursue. 318 **Yeve**, Give. 319 **quyte**, free. 321 **dispite**, insult; felly, fiercely; **How wenest to**, Why do you. 322 **recreaunt**, shamed. 324 **outerly**, entirely; **thee assure but**, promise you [nothing] but. 325 **lowgh**, laughed; **in traverse**, around. 326 **what¹**, who; **conjured**, urged; **creaunce**, faith. 330 **all quyte**, entirely; **yove**, given; **me**, to me. 335 **slough**, slew. 337 **do thee to wite**, want you to know.

Arthur and Gonne; and The Battle against King Rion

what I am. But I will never ete while I knowe thee on lyve, for by thee it is that I
345 am thus disconfited and chased from the felde; and therfore shall I avenge my
dooll yef I may."

"So helpe me God," quod Arthur, "than shalt thou longe be fastinge, for that
shall never falle that I shall be deed thourgh thee. And lo, here my swerde that thee
350 deffieth to the deth! And yef thou be so hardy, take now the vengaunce of hym
that thee diffieth to smyte of thyn heede."

And whan the geaunte herde Arthur thus speke, he was so wroth that nygh he
yede oute of his witte, and griped his shelde and com with his swerde in his honde
and lifte it high to smyte Arthur on the helme. But he caste the shelde ther agein
355 and lepte aside in the felde; and he smote so harde that a quarter fill to the erthe.
And Arthur stepped forth and yaf hym soche a stroke by the lifte yie and made
hym a grete wounde; and yef the swerde hadde not swarved, maymed hadde he
ben for ever. Whan the geaunte felt hym wounded and saugh the blode raile downe
by the lifte yie, he was nygh wode out of witte; and than he ran upon hym, for he
wende to take hym in his armes. But Arthur dide lepe aside, for abide that wolde
360 he not, and therwith caught hym a grete stroke; and ever he hym pursued with
swerde in honde, but atteyne hym myght he not.

And while thei demened hem in this manere, fill so that Nascien and Adragains
and Hervy de Rivell com upon hem, that chaced six Sarazins full fiercely, and alle
365 six were kynges; and that oon hight Cahainus, and that other Maltailles, and the
thirde Fernicans, and the forth Heroars, and the fifth Branremes, and the sexthe
the stronge Kynge Mahidrap. These six kynges com down the rocher sore hem
diffendinge, and the swyfte horse com dryvinge like a tempest. And whan the
tweyne that foughten herde this noyse and brunt of hem that fledden, and behelde
370 and saugh the six kynges that the thre knyghtes chaced, the Kynge Rion was sore
adredde, for he knewe tho that ther com, for he wiste well thei were noble and
hardy; and yef he lenger ther abide, he knewe well that dye he moste.

Than he com to his horse and lept up lightly, and in the lepinge up Arthur hym

344 **thee on lyve**, you [are] alive. 345 **disconfited**, defeated. 346 **dooll yef**, sorrow if. 350
of, off. 352 **yede**, went. 354 **fill**, fell. 355 **yaf**, gave; **yie**, eye. 357 **raile**, flow. 358 **wode**,
mad. 359 **wende**, hoped. 360 **caught**, struck. 361 **atteyne**, catch. 362 **demened hem**,
conducted themselves. 364 **oon hight**, one was named. 366 **rocher sore hem**, field
vigorously themselves. 368 **brunt**, tumult. 370 **tho**, those.

Prose Merlin

smote so harde that he kutte awey a quarter of his helme that the mailes of the hauberke apered all white, and astoned hym sore that he bowed on his horse
375 nekke; and yef he myght have recovered another stroke, he hadde fallen of his horse to the erthe. But the horse was of grete force and aferde of the stroke, and turned to flight with the kynge down the roche.

[*Summary. Arthur chases Rion but is overtaken by the six kings who attack him. Arthur quickly hacks the arms off one of them and slices another clear down to his teeth; then Nascien and Adrageins and Hervey rush to Arthur's aid. The battle rages on, and a little later King Rion and Arthur once again confront each other. Fols. 120v (line 29)–122r (line 12).]*

Ther was slayin Mahidrap and Balfinnes and Gloriex and Mandones, wherefore the Kynge Rion was full wroth, for thei were his nygh kyn. And whan Kynge
380 Rion saugh this myschaunce turne upon hym so grete, he was so wroth that nygh he was oute of his witte. And he helde his swerde naked and ran upon Arthur and wende to smyte hym on the heede; but he glenched aside, for sore he dredde the stroke of the geaunte. And he smote so harde in the shelde that he slitte it into the myddell; and whan that he wende to pulle agein his swerde, the Kynge Arthur
385 smote hym on the arme that sore he hym hurte. And he lefte the swerde stykinge in the shelde, that sore felt hym hurte and was wode for wrath. And Arthur caste down the shelde with the swerde, for it dide hym but gref. And whan the geaunte saugh that he hadde so loste his swerde, he was full of grete sorowe, and ran upon Arthur with his horse and caught hym by the shulders and wolde have hym
390 born with force, and so he sholde have don yef he hadde leiser, for he was of grete strengthe.

Whan Arthur felte the geaunte that so hym helde, he caste the swerde to the erthe, for he was ferde leste he sholde have taken it from hym by force, and than clippid his horse in bothe his armes aboute the nekke. And the geaunte pulled and drough, but he myght hym not arace from the sadell. And the Kynge Ban behelde and saugh the strif betwene the geaunte and Arthur, and anoon spored his horse
395

373 kutte, cut. **374 astoned**, stunned; **bowed on**, slumped over. **375 recovered**, received. **378 slayin**, slain. **382 glenched**, moved. **387 dide hym but gref**, hindered him. **394 clippid**, clasped. **395 drough**, tugged; **arace**, remove.

Arthur and Gonne; and The Battle against King Rion

that wey, for he hadde of hym grete drede. And [whan] the geaunte saugh hym come he lefte Arthur, for sore he doubted the Kynge Ban, and ran upon hym with his handes that were grete and square. And the Kynge Ban hym smote with Corsheuse, his goode swerde, that he rente his hauberke betwene his sholderes 400 and wounde hym right depe.

And whan the Kynge Rion felt hym so sore wounded and saugh his felowes ly at erthe deed bledynge, he hadde grete drede, for he hadde nothinge hym to diffende, and turned the horse that was of gret bounté and wente fleynge as faste as he 405 myght renne. And thei lete hym passe, for it was nyght. And he wente so wroth that for litill he hadde gon oute of witte. And he cursed his feith and his creaunce, and seide he wolde never cesse in all his age till that he were avenged; and as soone as he com into his contré he wolde sende for his grete hoste so that no 410 londe sholde agein hym endure till he hadde confounded all Bretaigne and all the peple therynne, and take the Kynge Arthur and his helpers, and do hem be flayn all quyk. Thus wente Kynge Rion, makyngre grete sorowe and weymentacion into his contrey.

Whan the Kynge Ban socoured the Kynge Arthur from the Kynge Rion that so 415 wolde aborn hym awey, he com to Arthur and asked hym yef he hadde eny harme; and he seide "Nay." Than seide Ban, "Where is youre swerde?" And Arthur seide it was at erthe, "For I caste it down as soone as the shrewe com rennyng on me to gripe me in his armes. And I have wonne the richest jewell, and that I love more than the richest citee that I have."

"What thinge is that?" seide the Kynge Ban. "That shall ye se anoon," quod 420 Arthur. Than he sette foot to grounde and yede firste to Calibourne and putte it in the skaberke, whan he hadde dried it clene, and than com to his shelde whereynne stake the swerde of Kynge Rion. And he drough it oute and toke the shelde and com to his horse and lept up, and than shewde the swerde to the Kynge Ban. And it shone so bright that Arthur hadde therof grete joye, and preide God sende 425 hym som aventure ther he myght it assay and prove yef it were so grete of bounté as it hadde bewtee.

And thei were ner the citee than thei wende; but er thei com ther hem fill soche

398 **douted**, feared. 406 **creaunce**, religion. 410 **do hem**, cause them. 410–11 **flayn all quyk**, skinned alive. 411 **weymentacion**, lamentation. 416 **shrewe**, wretch. 420 **yede**, went. 425 **ther**, where. 427 **ner**, nearer to; **wende**, thought.

Prose Merlin

aventure that ther was noon so wight ne hardy but he hadde inough to done. But now resteth a litell of hem and speke of the Kynge Leodogan.

[Summary. King Leodegan and his steward Cleodalis find themselves separated from the rest of their troops in the dark. The enemy attack them, killing Leodegan's horse; Cleodalis sets his lord on his own horse and urges him to ride to safety, but Leodegan will not go without him. By enchantment, Merlin raises a storm and confounds the enemy. Meanwhile Arthur fights well using Marmyadoise, the sword he captured from King Rion. Then Merlin urges Arthur and the others to ride to the rescue of Cleodalis and Leodegan; Arthur's troop arrives at midnight and saves them. After losing several of their leaders, the enemy forces flee. Arthur's forces rest and eat, and then Arthur dispenses riches among his men. Then they ride toward the city of Toraise. Fols. 122v (line 23)–127r (line 30).]

430 Whan the Kynge Arthur and his compayne com to Toraise, thei were richely
rescveyved with grete honour. And ther thei sojourned two dayes. And the thridde
day com the Kynge Leodogan to the Kynge Arthur and hym somowned to sposuen
his doughter Gonnore. And Merlin seide that he moste firste do another grete
werke, and the kynge asked what. And Merlin seide that he moste firste passe into
435 the reame of Benoyk, and tolde hym for what nede; but that was in counseile, for
he wolde not have the thinge knownen of no man that sholde go thider. And whan
he herde the nede, he praidre hym to repeire agein as sone as he myght. And Mer-
lin seide he neded not nothinge therof hym to prayen, and bad make hem redy,
“for morowe moste we remove.” Quod Arthur, “Shall we not abide the Kynge
440 Bohors, that is at the Castell of Charroye?” Quod Merlin, “Ye shull abyde hym at
Bredigan, youre castell.” And Arthur seide that all sholde be at his wille.

Than thei hem appareilleden, and on the morowe sette hem on here wey. And
so departed the Kynge Leodogan and the Kynge Arthur, and kisten at the
departyng. And Gonnore hym praidre soone to come agein, “For never,” quod
445 [she], “shall I be in ese of herte unto the tyme that I yow se agein.” And the kynge
seide that he wolde he were come agein oute of the contrey.

428 **wight ne**, able nor; **done**, do. 432 **sposuen**, marry. 435 **counseile**, private. 437
repeire, return. 441 **at his wille**, i.e., as Merlin wished.

Arthur and Gonneore; and The Battle against King Rion

[Summary. Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table, and a force of 20,000 travel to Bredigan. In the meantime, King Ban and his brother Guynebans the Clerk have an adventure deep in a forest where they encounter an old knight, a lovely young woman, and carol dancers in a meadow. Guynebans is smitten by the woman's beauty; he tells her that if she will give him her love, he will make the dancers go on dancing until a knight comes who has never been false to his love, a knight who will be the best knight of his time. She agrees, and Guynebans begins his enchantments. He also makes a chessboard on which only a man who has never been false to his love can achieve checkmate. Ban then departs to rejoin Arthur; but Guynebans chooses to stay with the lady, and he remains with her for the rest of his life. Fols. 127v (line 12)–128v (line 12).]

[Arthur and Gawain]

[Summary. King Bors and his men, on their way to Bredigan to join Arthur and Ban, are threatened by King Amaunt, who tells Bors he must surrender Castle Charryoe, which Amaunt claims is his. Bors replies that Uterpendragon gave the castle to him, but he will relinquish it if Amaunt agrees to do homage to Arthur. Amaunt refuses, proposing instead that they settle the matter by single combat. They fight and Bors kills Amaunt. Amaunt's knights then do homage to Arthur, and both groups ride to Bredigan. Fols. 128v (line 12)–131r (line 10).]

Thus thei sojourned at Bredigan thre dayes full. And than sente the kynge to
enquere for workemen and labourers with mattokkes and shoveles till he hadde
well five hundred. Than thei wente to the tresour, as Merlin hem taught, in the
foreste, and lete digge in the erthe and fonde the tresour that never er was seyn,
and toke it oute of the erthe and charged cartes and charietts in tonnes that thei
hadde brought thider grete plenté. And whan thei hadde all the tresour charged,
thei made it to be condited to Logres, whereas Arthurs nevewes dide abide. And
Merlin made hem digge depe undir an oke till thei fonde a vessell of lether, and
therin twelve the beste swerdes and the feirest that eny man nede to seche. These
ledde the Kynge Arthur to Logres with his tresour, till that thei were come to
court that thei sholde on be emploide.

And as soone as the children herde speke that the Kynge Arthur hir oncle was
comynge, thei lepte on theire horse and rode agein hym alle togeder, that noon ne
lefte but wente alle gladde and myrie that never peple myght make more joye.
And whan thei com nygh, Merlin toke the Kynge Arthur apart and the two kynges
and made hem alight under a feire tre for to abide the children that com; and [he]

2 enquere for, enlist. **5 charged**, filled; **charietts**, wagons; **tonnes**, barrels. **6 charged**,
loaded. **7 condited**, taken; **whereas**, where. **8 oke**, oak; **fonde**, found. **10 ledde**, took; **till
that**, so that when. **11 be emploide**, be put to good use. **12 children**, squires. **13–14
noon ne lefte**, no one stayed behind.

Arthur and Gawain

comaundered her hoste to ride all wey forth till that thei come to Logres, and take theire logginis and ese hem all by leiser.

And whan thei herde the comaunderement of the kynge, thei passed forth withoute
20 more abidinge and mette with the chelldren that com with grete chyvachie. And
when thei mette the routes, thei asked where was the Kynge Arthur; and thei hem
shewde the tre ther he was alight. And the childeren hem dressed that wey that
moche hem dide haste. And Gawein wente before, that thei helde for maister and
lorde, and thei hadde right, for he was the beste taught and the moste curteise that
25 ever was, and in whom was lefte vilonye, and the wisiste that myght be whan he
com to chivalrie.

Whan thei com to the tree ther the kynge was alight, and these other two kynges
with hym, and the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table. And as soone as the children
hem saugh, thei alight afoote from theire horse and wente afoote theras these
30 knyghtes were sette upon the fresshe herbes in the shadowe of the foreste. And
hem avented and keeled, for it hadde be hoote all the day, and thei hadde riden all
the day armed for doute of the Saisnes that were in the londe; and it was aboute
the ende of Maye.

Whan the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table saugh the children approche nygh,
35 that eche hadde take other hande in hande godely and alle were thei well clothed
and richely arayed and full of grete bewté, and semed well that thei were alle come
of gode issue; and it becom hem well that thei com so entreprised, and thei helde
it a grete debonerté that thei helde togeder so feire. And whan the knyghtes hem
saugh come, thei roos ageins hem. And whan thei com nygh Gawein hem salued,
40 that was of the chief and the eldeste; and than he seide, “Feire lordinges, we seche
the Kynge Arthur, wherfore we praye yow that ye will us shewen where he is,
that we may hym knownen.”

At this worde ansuerde Nascien and salued hym agein debonerly and seide,
“My feire sones, lo, hym yonde, ther tho noble men ben sette, and he is also the

20 **chyvachie**, horsemanship. 21 **routes**, companies of men. 22 **dressed**, proceeded. 23
before, ahead. 24 **right**, good reason. 25 **lefte**, absent. 26 **chivalrie**, knighthood. 27
Whan, Then; **ther**, where. 29 **saugh**, saw; **theras**, where. 31 **hem avented**, opened their
helmet vents; **keeled**, cooled. 32 **doute**, fear. 37 **issue**, parentage; **entreprised**, well
organized. 38 **debonerté**, virtue. 39 **ageins**, before; **salued**, greeted. 43 **debonerly**, po-
litely.

Prose Merlin

45 yongeste of alle," and shewde hym with his fynger. And whan Gawein hym saugh, he paste forth and seide, "Sir, gramercy," and com that wey ther the kynge was and his felowes. And thei stode upon foote as soone as thei saugh the children come.

Whan Gawein saugh his oncle and his felowes, he and alle the children kneled down and salued the kynge and his compayne, for hym and his felowes that were with hym icomen. "Sir," quod Gawein, "I am come to yow, I and my brethern and my cosins, as to my liege lorde; and these other be come also for the goode that thei here speken of yow, and for to seche oure armes of yow, and that it plese yow for to make us knyghtes; and [we] shull gladly yow serve, as we owe to do, yef oure servise may yow plese. And I sey not but that thei have yow served, for somme ther ben here that while ye have been oute of contrey have diffended youre londe as wele as it hadde ben theire owne agein alle youre enmyes, and have be in helpinge to alle hem that ye lefte it to kepe. And seth thei come have thei suffred many a grete travaile, and I will well that ye it wite, for to a goode man ther sholde be reported honour and bounté whan he hath don; and of a shrewe oweth oon consele, for he hath no herte it to guerdone, ner the iyen power a gode man to beholde, ne to knowe the halvendell of the bounté that in hym is."

Whan the kynge undirstode the childe that so wisely spake, he toke hym by the hand and anoon comaunded hem alle to arise. And thei did his comaundement. And than the kynge aresond hem and asked of Gawein what thei were. "Sir," seide Gawein, "er ye knowe more by us wolde we wite youre volunté; and after that, demaunde us that yow plesith, and we shull telle yow gladly that we knownen."

Whan the two kynges herde the wordes of the childe, thei helde hym right wise, and seide to the Kynge Arthur that he seide right. And than spake the Kynge

46 **gramercy**, great thanks; **com**, went; **ther**, where. **50** **salued**, greeted. **53** **here spoken**, hear spoken; **and²**, if. **54** **owe**, ought. **55** **yef**, if. **55–56** **yow served**, you [already] served. **57** **as it**, as if it; **agein**, against. **58** **be in helpinge to**, assisted; **seth**, since. **59** **travaile**, hardship; **will well**, much desire; **wite**, know. **61** **shrewe**, wicked man; **oweth oon consele**, ought to keep silent; **it to guerdone**, [a worthy] person to reward; **ner**, nor; **iyen**, eyes. **62** **halvendell**, extent; **bounté**, virtue. **65** **anoon**, then; **hem**, them. **66** **aresond hem**, spoke with them; **what**, who. **67** **wolde we wite**, we would know; **volunté**, wishes. **68** **demaunde**, ask; **that¹**, whatever; **that²**, what.

Arthur and Gawain

Arthur and seide, “Feire frendes, I will withholde yow with right gladde chere and will make yow knyghtes, bothe yow and youre compayne, of myn owne, and ye be right welcome. And I will that fro hensforth that ye be my frendes and my felowes and of my privé counseile and lordes of my court.” And whan the childeren herde how the kynge spake, thei kneled and hym thonked; and the kynge toke hem by the hondes and seide to Gawein, “Feire frende, now telle me what ye be, and of youre felowes telle me the verité, for longe me thinketh it to wite.”

“Sir,” quod the childe, “men clepe me by my right name Gawein, the sone of Kynge Loot of Leoneys and of Orcanye. And these thre that I holde by the hondes beth my brethern; and the name of that oon is Agravayn, and the tother is Gaheret, and the thridde Gaheryes. And oure moder hath do us to undirstonde that she is youre suster on hir moder side. And thise gentilmen ben oure cosins germain, as oure auntes sones. And the name of the lesse that is short and fatte is Galashin, and [he] is sone to Kynge Ventre. And this other that is longe and yonge is sone to Kynge Urien, and his name is Ewein; and this gentilman is his brother on his fader side and is cleped also Ewein. And these tweyne other that ye se holde togeder, thei be gentilmen of high lynage, for this feire broun is sone to the Kynge Belinans of South Walis and is nygh cosin to Galashin; and these other tweyne be nevewes to the Kynge of Strangore and ben nygh sibbe to Galashin. And these other tweyne ben nevewes also to the Kynge of Strangore, and the name of that oon is Kay Destranx and the tother Kehedin.

“And these other tweyne that ther stonde togeder aperteyne to the Kynge Loot, my fader, and be erles sones; and oon is cleped Ewein White Hande, and the tother Ewein Esclins, and the tother Ewein Cyvell, and the tother Ewein de Lyonell. And this other gentilman that is of so grete bewté, that is so moche and semly and well shapen of body and of alle membres, is nevew to the emperor of Costantynoble, and his name is Seigramor; and [he] is come with us be his debonerté and his fraanchise to take armes, and that ye hym make knyght. And he will yow gladly serve with gode will, and will that he and I be felowes in armes

71 **withholde**, support. 73 **will**, wish. 76 **what ye be**, who you are. 77 **verité**, truth; **for . . . wite**, for I have long desired to know. 78 **clepe**, call. 82 **cosins germain**, first cousins. 83 **lesse**, smaller one. 84 **longe**, tall. 86 **cleped**, called; **holde**, stand. 89 **ben nygh sibbe**, are close kin. 92 **aperteyne**, belong. 95 **moche**, large; **semly**, handsome. 97 **be**, by. 98 **debonerté**, courtesy; **and²**, if. 99 **will³**, desires.

Prose Merlin

100 while hym liketh to abide in this contrey. And these other gentilmen that ye seen
aboute us whereof be so grete plenté ben alle frendes and kynnesmen, and have
lefte her londes and hir honours for to come serve yow for the grete love that thei
have to yow."

Whan the Kynge Arthur hadde herde Gawein thus speke, he leide his arme
105 aboute his nekke and seide, "He is right wellcome [. . .]," and made of hem grete
joye; and than [to] his brethern and his cosins and to Segamor he made merveilouse
joye. And whan he hadde welcomed hem alle, than he seide to Gawein, "Gawein,
feire nevewe, com hider, and that I yow enffeffe ye will take the constabilrie of
110 myn housolle and of all the lordship of my londe after me, and fro hensforth to be
lorde and comaunder of alle hem that ben in my londe, for I will it so be." And
Gawein kneled and seide, "Sir, gramercy." And the kynge hym feffed with his
right glove, and than he reised hym upon his feet. And than [thei] lept to theirre
horse and rode forth to Logres.

And whan the kynge entred into the citee, his suster com agein hym, the wif of
115 Kynge Loot of Orcanye, and with hir com Morgne le Fee hir suster that was so
grete a clergesse. And whan the kynge hem knewe, he made of hem grete joye, for
longe tyme hadde he not hem sein; and thei kissed as brother and suster. And thus
thei come to the maister paleys that was hanged with clothes of silke and strowed
120 with fressh herbes softe and swote smellinge. And [thei] maden grete joye thourgh
the town all day on ende and all nyght, so that no man may reherse the joye and
the gladnesse of all the peple. The same nyght the kynge comaunded the children
to go wake in the cheiff mynster till on the morowe before messe, that no lenger
he wolde abide. And the storie seith this was the quynsyme after Pentecoste; and
ther was the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Bohors and the sixty-one Knygthes of the
125 Rounde Table with these children all day, that hem in no wise wolde leven.

Whan it com before the tyme of high messe, Arthur toke Calibre, his gode
swerde that he drough oute of the ston, and by the counseile of Merlin therwith he
girde Gawein his nevewe; and than he sette on the spore on the right hele and the
Kynge Ban upon the lifte hele; and after that the Kynge Arthur yaf hym the accolée

100 **hym liketh**, he chooses; **abide**, stay. 108 **enffeffe**, request that; **constabilrie**, management. 110 **will**, desire. 111 **feffed**, i.e., struck lightly. 114 **agein**, to. 116 **clergesse**, scholar. 118 **strowed**, bestrewn. 122 **wake**, keep vigil; **mynster**, cathedral. 123 **quynsyme**, the fifteenth day. 129 **acolee**, accolade.

Arthur and Gawain

130 and bad God make hym a gode knyght. And after he adubbed his thre brethern also, and yaf eche of hem a swerde of tho that were founde in the tresour that Merlin taught; and than the tweye sones of Kynge Urien; and than Galashin, and Dodinell, and Kay, and Kehedin; and to everiche of these he yaf a swerde of the tresour.

135 And than the kynge adubbe Seigramor with soche garmentes as he hadde brought from Costantynoble, for he was come well araid of alle thinges that behoveth to a newe knyght. And the kynge girde hym with a gode swerde that he hadde brought out of Costantynoble that his graunsire the Kynge Adrian hadde hym yoven. And than he sette on his right spore and the Kynge Bohors his lifte spore; 140 and than the Kynge Arthur yaf hym the acolee. And than he dubbed the four cosins — Ewein White Honde and Ewein Esclyn and Ewein Cyvell and Ewein de Lyonell — and Alain and Acon; and to ech of these six he yaf a swerde of tho that were of the tresour. But the storie seith that Dodynell hadde noon, but he hadde the swerde that was the Kynges Amaunt; and the Kynge Bohors hym it yaf, for he 145 was somdell of hys kyn.

Whan these children were thus adubbed, than eche of hem adubbed soche companye as thei wolde lede of soche as thei hadde brought with hem. And whan thei were alle redy, thei wente to high messe that the archebisshop sange; and whan messe was don, thei com agein to the paleise to mete. And ther helde Arthur 150 grete court and grete feste, and it nedith not to speke of the meesse ne the servise that thei hadde that day, for it were but losse of tyme. And after mete wolde these yonge bachelers have reised a quyntayn in the medowes, but the kynge hem diffended by the counseile of Merlin, for that the contrey was so trouble and full of werre, and the Cristin sore turmented with Saisnes that were entred in the londe.

155 Thus lefte the envysenx of these yonge bachillers and newe knyghtes at this tyme; and [thei] sojourned in the town three dayes. And the kynge departed grete richesse to yonge bachelers that he withheilde, that of alle parties were come grete plentee; for ther com so many of oon and other that thei were sixty thousande,

130 **adubbed**, knighted. 131 **yaf eche**, gave each; **of tho**, from those. 132 **taught**, had told them about. 133 **everiche**, everyone. 136 **behoveth**, pertains. 139 **yoven**, given. 140 **acolee**, accolade. 142 **yaf**, gave. 145 **somdell of hys kyn**, related to him. 149 **mete**, dine. 151 **mete**, dinner. 152 **quyntayn**, tilting board. 152–53 **hem diffended**, dissuaded them. 155 **lefte**, ended; **envysenx**, sporting. 157 **withheilde**, upheld.

Prose Merlin

what on horsebak and on foote, withoute hem that he hadde brought out of the
160 reame of Tamelide.

And in the menewhile that thei sojourned in the town, Morgne le Fee aqueynted
hir with Merlin and was with hym so privé; and so moche she was with hym that
she knewe what he was. And many merveilles he hir taught of astronomye and of
egramauncye; and she helde it right wele.

165 And on the thridde day spake Merlin to the kynge and badde hym appareile for
to move, for Pounces and Antony and Frolle ben entred now into the reame of
Benoyk; and also the peple of the Kynge of Gaule, and also Claudas the Kynge de
la Desert. And Arthur seide he was redy to go whan hym liked, for he abode but
170 his comaundement. Than seide Merlin, "Comaunde alle youre hoste to be redy
armed for to move at mydnyght, and take with yow of this londe twenty thousande,
and twenty thousande of the reame of Tamelide; and twenty thousande ye shull
leve in this town, for this reame may not be lefte withoute peple; and lete Doo of
Cardoell of hem have the governaunce." And thus ended her counseile.

175 And than the kynge comaunded Gawein as Merlin hadde seide, and anon
Gawein dide his comaundement and made hem redy appareilled. And hem de-
parted and dissevered asonder, and hem he logged in the medowes of Logres, alle
that sholde with hem go. And whan he hadde do thus, he com to the kynge and to
Merlin that he saugh in counseile togeder and seide how all was redy. And whan
Merlin hym saugh, he bad the kynge aske hym what was the knyght that ledde
180 hym to socour his moder in the medow of Glocedon. And he hym turned and
seide, "Sir, how knowe ye this, and who hath this to yow itolde?"

"Certes," quod the kynge, "he that tolde me knoweth alle these thinges well
inough." "So helpe me God, sir," seide Gawein, "I knowe not what he was, for I
185 saugh hym never before ne after." "Now," quod Merlin, "aske hym yef he knewe
hym that brought hym the letter from his cosin Ewein, the sone of Kynge Urien."
And whan Gawein saugh and behelde hym that satte by the kynge, he asked whi
he made the kynge hym so demaunde. And than he bethought hym agein wisely
and remembred the wordes that Doo of Cardoell hadde to hym seide. And the

159 withoute hem, excluding those. 162 so privé, very privately. 164 egramauncye,
necromancy; helde, learned. 165 appareile, prepare. 176 dissevered asonder, sepa-
rated; logged, stationed. 179 bad, bade; what, who. 183 what, who. 184 yef, if. 187
demaunde, question.

Arthur and Gawain

190 kynge asked yef he hym kenned. And he seide, “Nay; but oon dide me for to undirstonde that it was Merlin; but trewly, I knowe hym not. And many other bountees and servyses hath he me don; for Seigramor, the emperoures nevew, he made me delyver from pereile of deth; and my moder and my cosin Ewein and also oureself at the Castell of Arondell; and he is the man of the worlde that I wolde faynest knowe this day.”

195 “Ye shull knowe hym inough,” quod Merlin, “whan hym liketh.” Than began the kynge to laugh right lowde and seide, “Gawein, feire nevew, sitte down here by me, and I shall telle yow that I knowe.” And he sette hym down be the kynge, and ther were no mo but thei thre. Than seide the kynge to Gawein, “Feire nevew, lo, here the gode man by whom ye wente to the Castell of Arondell, where that ye 200 fought with the Saisnes that day that Dodynell the Savage and Kay Destranx and his neveu com oute of her contrey; and therfore, now thonke hym of the servises that he hath yow don, and well ye owe so to do, and to love hym for his gode herte that he hath to yow.”

205 “Sir,” seide Gawein, “I can not inowgh hym quyte as he is of worthynesse; but thus moche I sey, that I am all his and at his comaundement; and he is so wise that knowe I well that he knoweth all my corage that I have to hym.” And he seide ye, that he knewe well his herte, and that he wolde with hym ben aqueynted and be oon of his privees; but he bad hym that he sholde not telle no creature of nothinge 210 that he seide to hym, were he never so prývé ne frendly. “And ye shull se me,” quod he, “in so many gises that I will not be knowe of no man, for moche is the envye for covetyse in this worlde.” And Gawein seide that never wolde he speke therof to no creature of the erthe.

215 Thus was Merlin and Sir Gawein aqueynted before his oncle. And whan thei hadde longe spoke togeder, than seide Merlin, “Feire frende, go take youre leve of youre moder, and than goith to the hoste and make youre peple go to horsebak anoon after mydnyght; and than goith forth youre wey towarde Dover to the portes. And do appareille vesselles and assemble shippes at the ryvage, so that youre uncle whan he cometh, and the two kynges in his compayne that beth worthy

189 **yef**, if; **kenned**, knew; **oon dide**, one caused. 194 **faynest**, most happily. 197 **that**, what; **be**, by. 198 **mo**, more. 201 **her**, their. 202 **owe**, ought. 204 **quyte**, repay. 206 **corage**, love; **ye**, yes. 208 **privées**, confidants. 209 **prývé**, trustworthy. 217 **appareille**, ready; **ryvage**, seacoast.

Prose Merlin

men, may enter withoute lenger lettinge. And for Godes sake, loke ye do hem
220 worship and honour, for though thei be the Kynge Arthurs men, yet ben thei
comen of higher lynage than is he. And loke ye lete no man knowe what wey that
ye shull go." And Gawein seide it sholde be don as he hadde devised.

Than departed Gawein and toke leve of his moder, that was right wise and
moche hym loved, and comaunded hym to God to diffende hym from evyll. And
225 he departed and com to the hoste, he and his brethern, and Sir Ewein his cosin that
moche hym loved, and Galashin, and Dodinell, and Seigramor, and Ewein
Avoutres, and the foure cosins that alle were cleped Ewein, and Kay Destranx,
and Kehedin his nevew; these ne departed gladly asonder; these hadde the hoste
230 in governaunce, as Sir Gawein hem assigned, so that alle were at the comaundement
of my lorde Sir Gawein.

And anoon after mydnyght, Gawein made trusse sommers and other cariage,
and made goode wacche abouthe the hoste that ther ne ascaped noon aspie; and thei
hit kepten that the booke hath rehersed; and than thei rode forth a softe paas till
thei com to the port of Dover. And the Kynge Arthur abode at Logres, and Merlin,
235 and the Kynge Ban, and the Kynge Bohors, and the forty-one knyghtes that thei
ledde into Tamelide, and the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table.

And Sir Gawein made serche all the ryvages and take shippes and assembled a
grete navie. And whan Merlin knewe that all was redy, he sente to the kynge and
made hym move be nyght, and seide er thei moved that thei sholde aryve at the
Rochell, and badde hem do make her men rowe hem up thider. "And whan ye bith
240 arived, loke that ye move not till that ye se me agein." Quod the kynge, "Shull ye
not than come with us?" "No," quod Merlin, "but ye shull ly ther but oon nyght
whan ye shull se me with yow."

With that departed that oon from that other. And Merlin wente into
245 Northumbirlonde to Blase, his maister, that of hym was right gladde, for hertely
he hym loved, and asked hym how he hadde don seth he departed. And he hym

219 **lettinge**, delay. 224 **comaunded**, commended. 228 **ne departed gladly asonder**, were
happy not to be parted. 231 **made trusse sommers**, readied the packhorses. 232 **made**
goode wacche, posted guards; **ascaped noon aspie**, escaped any spy. 233 **kepten**,
guarded; **softe paas**, easy pace. 237 **serche**, searched; **ryvages**, coastal areas; **take**,
took. 239 **be**, by; **er**, before. 240–41 **bith arived**, have arrived. 242 **ly**, wait. 246 **seth**,
since.

Arthur and Gawain

tolde alle the thinges as thei were befallen, and Blase hem wrote in his booke. And whan Merlin com to that he behoved to telle, of the damsell that he loved paramours. And Blase was therof right hevy, for he douted she wolde hym disseyve
250 and that she sholde lese his grete witte, and he gan hym to chastise. And he hym tolde soche prophesies as were for to come and of other that sholde falle in other londes, as ye shull here herafter. And alle Blase wrote in his boke; but now returne we to speke of the Kynge Arthur.

248 **whan**, then; **that**, what; **behoved**, was compelled. 248–49 **paramours**, romantically.
249 **hevy**, sad; **douted**, feared; **disseyve**, deceive. 250 **lese**, cause him to lose; **he²**, i.e., Merlin. 251 **falle**, occur.

[The Begetting of Lancelot; and Merlin and Nimiane]

[Summary. The story now concerns the war between King Ban and King Bors and their enemies — Cladas de la deserte and the King of Gaul, who are being aided by the Romans Pounce Antony and Frolle. Arthur and his men cross over to the continent with the intention of helping Ban and Bors defend their kingdoms of Benoyk and Gannes. A great battle takes place before the city of Trebes, and in it many of Arthur's knights perform heroically. Gawain, in particular, displays his surpassing prowess as a knight; and Gaheris, Gawain's young brother, also emerges as one of the best knights after Gawain. Eventually the enemy forces suffer great losses and are forced to retreat to the "desert." Fols. 134r (line 19)–145v (line 16).]

Thus were the foure princes discounfited, as ye have herde, be the witte of Merlin. And whan thei hadde chaced hem to the nyght, thei returned with grete plenté of prisoners and com before the Castell of Trebes, where thei were loigged in tentes and pavilouns of thiers that were discounfited. And [thei] made grete joye and feste all the nyght, for thei fonde the loiggings well stuffed of all that neded to man that nothinge failed. And whan thei were herberowed, that nyght wacched the hoste Pharien and Grascien that thei were not assailed of somme maner peple. And the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Bohors ledde the Kynge Arthur and Sir Gawein and the Knygthes of the Rounde Table and the Forty Knygthes
5 that ye have herde named and the Newe Knygthes into the Castell of Trebes, where he made to hem grete joye and feste, and were well three hundred knygthes of the contrey. And that nyght were thei well served of all that behoved.

But who that was gladde or noon, ther was noon like to the joye of the two queenes that were sustres, whan thei saugh theire two lordes that thei hadde so longe desired for to seen. And thei were yonge ladyes and of grete bewté. And
10

1 discounfited, defeated; **be**, by. 2 to the, until. 4 of thiers, belonging to those. 6 herberowed, lodged. 7 wacched, guarded; **that**, so that. 11 were well, there were at least. 12 behoved, was fitting. 13 who that, whoever; **noon**, not. 14 saugh, saw. 15 seen, see.

The Begetting of Lancelot; and Merlin and Nimiane

gretly thei hem peyned to honour the Kynge Arthur and alle his compayne. Wherto sholde I tarie to reherse theire servise and the ese of softe beddes that thei hadde that nyght? For thei were served richely as worthi men. And after soper thei wente to reste, for therto hadde thei nede, for thei were wery for travaile that thei hadde that day suffred. And Arthur and Gawein and Segramor and Ewein and Dodinell and Kay and Antor lay in a feire chamber by hemself; and with hem was Merlin that from hem that nyght wolde not departe. And the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table and the Newe Knyghtes and the Forty Felowes layn in other chambers.

25 And whan the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Bohors hadde hem loigged at ese, thei wente to bedde with their wiffes, and lefte grete torches brennyng before hem in chambres. That nyght shewed the two kynges grete love to their wiffes. That nyght the Queene Heleyne conceyved a childe by her lorde the Kynge Ban. And whan thei were on slepe, the wiff of Kynge Ban fill into a merveilouse drem that longe endured that sore she was afeerde whan she dide awake. For she semed that she was on a high mountayn and saugh abouthe her grete plenté of bestes of all maner kendes that were in a feire pasture of grene grasse. And whan thei hadde longe tyme fedde hem on the herbes, ther roos amonge hem a grete noyse that thei ronne that oon upon the tother to dryve oute of the pasture.

30 35 And thei turned into two pastures, and the two partes wente on oon side, and hem ledde a grete lyon full huge and merveillouse. And on that other side, whereas were not so many by the halvendell, was a grete crowned lyon maister lededer; but he was not so grete as the tother. This lyon crowned hadde in his compayne eighteen lyonewes crowned, wherof eche of hem hadde lordship and domynacion over the tother bestes that were turned to the lyon crowned. And that other lyon that was not crowned hadde with hym thirty lyonewes that alle were crowned, wherof eche of hem hadde domynacion of a parte of the bestes that were drawe toward the lyon that was uncrowned. And whan these beestes were thus dissev-

16 **Wherto**, Why. 19 **travaile**, hardships. 21 **hemself**, themselves. 29 **on slepe**, asleep; **fill**, fell. 30 **sore**, greatly; **afeerde**, afraid; **semed**, thought. 31 **bestes**, beasts. 32 **kendes**, kinds. 33 **hem**, themselves; **roos**, arose. 34 **ronne**, ran; **that oon**, one. 35 **turned**, separated. 36 **whereas**, where. 37 **the halvendell**, half; **grete**, large. 39 **lyonewes**, young lions. 40 **were turned to**, supported. 41 **lyonewes**, young lions.

Prose Merlin

ered and departed, she loked toward the crowned lyon and saugh four hundred
45 boles that alle were teyed be the nekkes before a grove, and ete at a rakke small
grasses and herbes that was newe mowen.

And for the lyon uncrowned semed thei hadde better pasture with the crowned
lyon than hadde he, he ran upon hym for envy for to bereve hym his pasture, and
50 toke a partie of his bestes that he made thre grete hepes, and thei lepe to fight with
the crowned lyon that hadde his bestes departed into eighteen mouncels; and in
eche mounzell was a lyonsewe that hadde lordshippe over hem to governe hem
and gide. And the four hundred boles that weren full fierce and full prowde and
55 the eighteen mouncels were with the crowned lyon. And [thei] smote betwene
hem the grettest bateile that she ever hadde seyn or herde speke. But in the fyn the
bestes with the crowned lyon behoved to turne bakke, and the crowned lyon was
sore adredde to lese his pasture.

And while these beestes fought thus as ye have herde, the lady semed that a
grete leopard full fierce and the moste prowde that ever was seyn com oute of hir
right thigh, and wente through a grete valey that was right depe; and whan he was
60 entred into the valey, the lady semed that a grete blaste toke awey her sight that
she wiste not where he was become. And whan she hadde hym loste, he turned
toward the beestes that yet were fightinge and saugh that the crowned lyon and
his bestes hadde moche the werse. And whan the leopard com oute of a grete
foreste that was savage, he behilde the bataile of the beestes full longe. And whan
65 he saugh the crowned lyon hadde the werse, he yede to helpe hym, and ran upon
the beestes of the lyon uncrowned that faught with hem so fiercely that he made
hem resorte bakke; and as longe as he was agein hem myght thei never have the
better of the bataile. And whan the lyon that was uncrowned saugh he myght not
have the better while he was agein hym, he made departe the bataile and aqueynte
70 hym with the leopard, till he drough hym on his partye and ledde hym with hym.

43–44 **dissevered**, separated. 45 **boles**, bulls; **teyed be**, tied by; **ete**, ate; **rakke**, feeding
rack. 47 **for**, because; **semed**, thought. 48 **bereve hym**, take away. 49 **hepes**, groups. 50
departed, divided; **mouncels**, parts. 54 **bateile**, battle; **herde speke**, heard spoken of;
fyn, end. 55 **behoved**, were forced. 55–56 **was sore adredde**, greatly feared. 56 **lese**, lose.
57 **semed**, thought. 60 **semed**, thought; **blaste**, storm. 61 **wiste**, knew. 62 **saugh**, saw. 63
hadde moche, had it much. 64 **behilde**, beheld. 65 **yede**, went. 67 **resorte**, turn. 69 **made
departe**, left. 69–70 **aqueynte hym**, spoke. 70 **drough**, drew; **partye**, side.

The Begetting of Lancelot; and Merlin and Nimiane

And the thridde day began agein the bateile of the beestes as it hadde be byform,
and the leopart was with the lyon that was uncrowned. And the beestes fought so
togeder that the crowned lyon turned to discounfiture, and he made signe to the
lyon withoute crowne that he sholde go crye mercy. And so he dide, and so was
75 made the pees betwene the two lyouns in soche maner that never after were in no
wratthe togeder. And than the lady behilde the leopart to wite yef she cowde hym
knowe be eny wey; and at the laste hir thought it was the same that com oute of hir
thigh that was so woxen and amended. And hir thought that alle the beestes of the
80 Bloy Breteyne to hym enclyned, and alle thei of Gannes and of Benyok. And
whan he hadde alle the lordship of these beestes, she knewe not where he was
becomen.

Thus she aboode all nyght in this avision till it was day; and than she awoke, all
affraied of the merveile of hir dreme. And whan the Kynge Ban saugh hir so
affraied, he asked hir what her eyled. And she tolde hym hir dreme as she hadde
85 seyn in her slepe; and whan she hadde all tolde, the kynge seide therof sholde
come but goode, with Goddes grace. Than thei aroos and wente to the firste masse,
bothe the kynge and his wif, as erly as thei myght; but thei wolde not awake the
Kynge Arthur so erly ne his compayne that slepten savourly for the grete travaile
90 that thei hadd the day before. And the Kynge Ban praied oure Lorde with goode
herte that He wolde yeve hym the deth soche tyme as he wolde it aske. And this
prayour made he many tymes, till on a nyght in his slepe a voyse seide that his
prayour sholde be trewe and that he sholde have the deth as soone as he wolde it
askе the same day. But ones before sholde he synne dedly in avoutré er he dyed,
95 but therof not to be dismayed, for he sholde therof well acorde with oure Lord;
and he was right a goode man in his feith and creaunce.

In this dreme that the Kynge Ban was, hym thought whan the voyse departed
that it caste soche a crye as it hadde ben a thunder, the grettest and merveillouse
that ever he hadde herde. And he sprange therwith so sore theras he hilde the

73 turned to discounfiture, was defeated. **74 go crye mercy**, beg for mercy. **76 behilde**,
beheld; **wite**, discover; **yef, if**; **cowde**, could. **77 be, by**. **78 woxen and amended**, grown
and changed. **79 enclyned**, bowed. **82 aboode**, lay sleeping. **83 affraied of**, frightened
by. **84 her eyled**, ailed her. **85 seyn**, seen it. **88 savourly**, deeply. **90 yeve**, give. **93**
avoutré, adultery; **er**, before. **94 well acorde with**, be forgiven by. **95 creaunce**, belief.
97 as, as if. **98 so sore theras**, so strongly that.

Prose Merlin

queene in his armes, that nere he hadde fallen oute of the bedde that was grete and
100 large. And the queene was therwith so affraied that she myght speke no worde in
a longe while, and the kynge hymself so that he wiste not where he was. And
whan the kynge was come agein into his memorie, he aroos and wente to cherche
and was shrien, and than herde the servyse of oure Lorde. And ever after, as
105 longe as he lyved, was he confessed every eight dayes and was hoseled with the
blissed sacrament; and so dide Kynge Bohors his brother that was a full goode
man and of holy lyvinge.

Thus was the Kynge Arthur in the reame of Benoyk, he and his men, a moneth.
And [thei] ronne every day into Claudas londes and wasted it, so that longe tyme
110 after myght he have no power to arise upon the Kynge Ban. But after, he aroos
ageins hym by the force of Pounce Antony and by the force of the Kynge of
Gaule, as ye shall heren hereafter, and turmented so these two brethern that he
lefte hem noo foote londe, that thei died in poverté upon the grounde, and theire
yonge wiffes lefte withoute comfort, that after were nonnes veilled in the abbey
of the royal mynster for drede of Claudas. Ne never after myght thei have socour
115 of the Kynge Arthur, for he hadde so moche to done in his contrey that he myght
not come at that tyme. And so the heires that thei begat were longe tyme after
disherited. But in the ende Kynge Arthur hem therto restored and drof Claudas
oute of the londe, and yaf hem the reame of Gaule, as the booke shall reherse. But
now we shall reste to speke these thinges till tyme com therto, and returne to telle
120 how Merlin departed from the Kynge Arthur and how he certified the Kynge Ban
and his wif of dyvers dremes that thei hadden mette.

Upon a day com the Kynge Ban to Merlin and seide, “Sir, I am gretly in dispeir
of avision that is befalle to me and to my wif, wherefore I have grete nede of
counseile. And ye be the wisest man that now liveth; and therfore, yef it ples
125 yow, telle me what it betokeneth.” “Certes, sir,” seid Merlin. “In these two avisions
ther is grete significacion, and it is no wonder though ye therof be dredfull.”

99 **nere**, nearly. 101 **wiste**, knew. 102 **memorie**, senses. 103 **shrien**, confessed; **than**,
then. 104 **hoseled with**, received. 110 **ageins**, against. 111 **heren hereafter**, hear later
on. 112 **noo foote londe**, not a foot of land. 113 **that after were**, that later became;
nonnes, nuns. 114–15 **socour of**, help from. 115 **done**, do. 117 **disherited**, disinherited.
118 **yaf**, gave. 119 **reste to speke**, put off speaking. 121 **dyvers dremes**, various dreams;
mette, dreamed.

The Begetting of Lancelot; and Merlin and Nimiane

Than asked the Kynge Arthur what avisious ben thei, and Merlin hym tolde even as the kynge hadde mette in his dreme, that the kynge hymself knewe well he seide trouthe. Whan the Kynge Arthur and the Kynge Bohors and Sir Gawein
130 herde the fierce wordes that Merlin hadde seide, thei merveiled sore what hit myght signyfie, and thoughten inough of many thinges. And than seide the Kynge Arthur, “Ye have tolde what were the dremes. Now, yef it plese yow, telle us the betokenynges, for it is a thinge that I wolde fayn knowe.” “Sir,” seide Merlin, “of all will I not to yow declare, ne I ought not to do. But I shall telle yow a partie that
135 to yow apendeth.” And than he gan to sey:

“Kynge Ban,” quod Merlin, “hit is trouthe that the lyon that is not crowned betokeneth a prince that is right riche and myghty of londes and of frendes, that shall conquerre twenty-nine reames by force and make come in his companye alle these twenty-nine kynges crowned. And that other lyon that she saugh icrowned
140 that hadde the eighteen lyonewes signyfieith a kinge that is right myghty that shall have eighteen kynges under hym that alle shull be his liege men. And the four hundred booles that she saugh betokeneth four hundred knyghtes that alle shull be assured that oon to the tother eche of hem to helpe, and not faile for no drede of deth, and alle shull thei be the kynges men. And this prince that I spake of firste
145 shall come upon this kynge for to conquerre his londe. But he shall hym diffende as longe as he may.

“And whan this prince hath the better of this kynge, than shall come a knyght unknownen that longe hath be loste and helpe this kynge that the prince may not hym chase oute of the felde ne discounfite. And this leopart signyfieith this knyght,
150 for like as the leopart is fierce and prowde above alle other bestes, so shall he be the beste knyght that shall be in hys tyme. And by that knyght shall the pees be made betwene the prince and the kynge that so sore shull have foughten. Now,” quod Merlin, “have ye herde youre avision and the tokenyng. And now I moste departe, for moche have I to do in other places.”

155 And whan thei hadde iherde the merveile of the dreme that Merlin hadde tolde, thei were more abaissched and more pensef than thei were before. And than Arthur

128 mette, dreamed; **that**, so that. **130 fierce**, wondrous. **133 fayn**, happily. **134 partie**, portion. **135 apendeth**, pertains. **139 saugh**, saw. **142 booles**, bulls. **143 assured**, pledged; **oon**, one. **151 pees**, peace. **152 sore**, greatly. **156 abaissched**, astonished; **pensef**, pensive.

Prose Merlin

asked yef he wolde declare eny othir wise to theire understandinge, and he seide, “Nay.” With that departed Merlin oute of Kynge Bans house, whereas the Kynge Arthur was with grete companye of knyghtes; and this was on the Feeste of Seynt John.

160 And Merlin wente to his love that aboode hym at the welle, for to holde the covenauant that she hadde with hym imade. And whan she hym saugh she made to hym grete chere, and ledde hym into the chambres so prively that he was not aperceyved of no man. And she asked and enquired hym of many thinges, and he
165 her taught all her askynge for the grete love that he hadde to hir. And whan she saugh he loved hir so wele, she asked hym how she myght make a frende for to slepe and not to awake till that she wolde; and Merlin knewe well all hir thought; and nevertheless he asked her whi she enquired, and yet he wiste it wele inough. Quod she, “For I wolde make my fader aslepe alle the tymes that I wolde speke
170 with yow — whos name is Dionsas — and my moder, that thei aparceyve never of yow ne me, for witeth it well, thei wolden me sle yef thei parceyved of us two ought.”

These wordes seide the mayden ofte to Merlin. And it fill on a day that thei were in a gardin by the fountayne hem to disporte, and were sette upon an ympe.
175 And the mayden made hym to slepe in hir lappe and hilde her so with hym that Merlyn loved hir merveillously wele. Than the maiden required hym so that he taught hir to make oon slepe, and he knewe hir menynge right wele; but nevertheless he it hir taught, bothe that and many other thinges, for so wolde our Lorde. And he taught hir thre names that she wrote for to helpe hirself at alle tymes whan she
180 sholde with hym ly that were full of grete force, for never as longe as thei were upon hir ne myght never man touche her flessly.

And fro thensforth she tysed ever Merlin to come speke with hir, for he ne hadde no power to dele with hir agein her will; and therfore it is seide that woman hath an art more than the devell. Thus Merlin abode eight dayes full with the
185 damesell. But we fynde not in no writinge that ever he required eny vylonye of hir

157 wise, wisdom. 161 **aboode**, awaited. 163 **ledde**, took; **prively**, secretly. 164 **aperceyved of**, seen by; **no man**, anyone. 165 **for**, because of. 167 **till that**, until; **wolde**, wished. 170 **aparceyve**, know. 171 **sle yef**, slay if. 173 **fill**, befell. 174 **sette**, seated; **ympe**, tree. 176 **required hym so**, urged him so much. 177 **menynge**, intention. 180 **ly**, lie. 181 **flessly**, physically. 182 **tysed**, enticed. 183 **dele with**, resist.

The Begetting of Lancelot; and Merlin and Nimiane

ne of noon other. But she it douted sore whan she knewe what he was, and therfore she garnysshed hire so agein hym. And in tho eight dayes he taught hir many wonderfull thinges that eny mortall herte cowde thinke — of thinges paste, and of thinges that were don and seide, and a partye of that was to come. And she
190 putte hem in writinge.

And than Merlin departed from hire and com to Benoyk, where the Kynge Arthur rested, that gladde were whan thei saugh Merlin.

[*Summary. Gawain and his knights make a pillaging expedition into the lands of Cladas de la deserte; and then at Merlin's direction, they go to Rochelle, cross the sea, and set out for Tamelide. Fols. 148r (line 12)–148v (line 11).]*

186 douted sore, feared greatly. **187 garnysshed**, prepared; **tho**, those. **188 cowde**, could. **189 partye**, portion; **that**, what. **192 saugh**, saw.

[Merlin and Grisandolus]

As soone as Merlin was departed from Arthur, he wente into the forestes of Rome that were thikke and depe. And in that tyme Julyus Cesar was emperor. But it was not that Julyus Cesar that the deed knyght slough in his pavilion of Perce, but it was that Julius that Gawein, the nevew of Kynge Arthur, slough in bateile under Logres at the grete disconfiture that after was betwene hym and the Kynge Arthur that hym diffied. And what the cause was that Merlin wente that wey, it is reson it be declared.

5

This is the trouthe, that this Julyus Cezar hadde a wif that was of grete bewté. And she hadde with hir twelve yonge men arayed in gise of wyumen with whom she lay at alle tymes that the emperor was oute of hir companye, for she was the moste lecherouse woman of all Rome. And for the drede that theire beerdes sholde growe, shé lete anoynte her chynnes with certeyn oynementes made for the nones. And thei were clothed in longe traylinge robes, and theire heer longe waxen in gise of maydenes and tressed at theire bakkes, that alle that hem saugh wende wele thei were wyumen. And longe thei endured with the empresse unknownen.

10

In this tyme that the emperesse ledde this lif, it fill that a mayden com to the emperours court that was the daughter of a prince; and the name of this prince was Matan, Duke of Almayne. This mayden com in semblaunce of a squyer. And this Matan, the Duke Frolle hadde disherited and driven out of his londe. And she com to serve the emperor, for she wiste not where her fader ne moder were becomen. And she was moche and semly and well-shapen, and demened hir well in all maners that a man ought, saf only eny vylonye; and never was she knownen but for a man by no semblante. And so [she] aboode with the emperor and was of grete prowesse, and peyned tendirly to serve well the emperor, and plesed

15

20
5 **disconfiture**, warfare. 11 **for the drede**, for fear. 12 **her**, their; **nones**, occasion. 14 **tressed**, arranged. 21 **moche**, large; **semly**, attractive; **demened**, conducted. 22 **saf only**, without.

Merlin and Grisandolus

25 hym so well that she was lorde and governnour of hym and his housolde. And the emperour hir loved so well that he made hir knyght atte a Feeste of Seint John with other yonge squyers, wherof were mo than two hundred, and after made hir stiward of all his londe.

30 Than the newe knyghtes reised a quyntayne in the mede of Noiron and begonne the bourdinge grete and huge. And many ther were that dide right wele, but noon so well as dide Grisandoll, for so she lete hir be cleped; but in bapteme her name was Avenable. This bourdinge endured all day on ende till evesonge that thei departed; and Grisandols bar awey the pris amonge alle other. And whan the emperour saugh Grisandoll of so grete prowesse, he made hym stiward of all his londe and 35 comaunder above alle that ther weren. And Grisandols was well beloved of riche and pore.

40 And upon a nyght after, it fill that the emperour lay in his chamber with the emperesse. And whan he was aslepe, he hadde a vision that hym thought he saugh a sowe in his court that was right grete before his paleys; and he hadde never seyn noon so grete ne so huge. And she hadde so grete bristelis on her bakke that it trayled on the grounde a fadome large, and hadde upon hir heed a cercle that semed of fyn golde. And whan the emperour avised hym wele, hym thought that he hadde seyn hir other tymes and that he hadde hir norisshed up; but he durste not sey of trouthe that she were hys. And while he entended to avise hym on this 45 thinge, he saugh come oute of his chamber twelve lyonewes, and com into the courte to the sowe and assailed hir, oon after another.

50 Whan the emperour saugh this merveile, he asked his barouns what should be do with this sowe by whom these lyonewes hadde thus leyn. And thei seide she was not worthi to be conversaunt amonge peple, ne that no man sholde ete nothinge that of hir come, and juged hir to be brente and also the lyonewes togeder. And than awooke the emperour, sore affraied and pensif of this avision. Ne never to man ne to wif wolde he it telle, for he was full of grete wisdom.

On the morowe as soone as he myght se the day, he aroos and yede to the mynster to here messe. And whan he was come agen, he fonde the barouns

29 **quyntayne**, tilting board; **mede**, meadow. 30 **bourdinge**, games. 31 **bapteme**, baptism. 33 **bar awey the pris**, took first place. 41 **a fadome large**, a fathom freely. 42 **avised**, considered. 45 **lyonewes**, youthful lions. 48 **do**, done. 49 **conversaunt**, spoken of. 53 **yede**, went.

Prose Merlin

55 assembled, and hadde herde messe at the mynster, and the mete was all redy. And whan thei hadde waisshēn, thei satte to mete and were well served. Than fill that the emperour fill into a grete stodye, wherfore all the courte was pensif and stille. And ther was noon that durste sey a worde, for sore thei dredde for to wrathe the emperour. But now we moste turne a litill to Merlin, that was come into the
60 foreste of Romayne to certefie these thinges and these avisoun̄s.

While that the emperour satte at his mete amone his barouns thus pensif, Merlin come into the entré of Rome and caste an enchauntement merveilouse. For he becom an herte, the gretteste and the moste merveilouse that eny man hadde seyn, and hadde oon of his feet before white, and hadde five braunches in the top,
65 the grettest that ever hadde be seyn. And than he ran thourgh Rome so faste as all the worlde hadde hym chaced. And whan the peple saugh hym so renne and saugh how it was an herte, the noyse aroos and the cry on alle partyes, and ronne after grete and small with staves and axes and other wepen, and chaced hym thourgh the town. And he com to the maister yate of the paleys whereas the
70 emperour satte at his mete. And whan thei that served herde the noyse of the peple, thei ronne to the wyndowes to herkene what it myght be; and anoon thei saugh come rennyng the herte and all the peple after. And whan the herte com to the maister paleys, he drof in at the yate sodeynly, and than he ran thourgh the tables abandon, and tombled mete and drynke all on an hepe, and began therin a
75 grete trouble of pottis and disshes.

And whan the herte hadde longe turned therynne, he com before the emperour and kneled and seide, “Julius Cezar, emperour of Rome, wheron thinkest thou? Lete be thi stodyinge, for it availeth nought; for never of thyne avision shalt thou not knowe the trouthe before that man that is savage thee certefie. And for nought is it that thou stodyest theron eny more.”

Than the herte hym dressed, and saugh the yate of the paleyse cloos. And he caste his enchauntement that alle the dores and yates of the paleise opened so rudely that thei fly alle in peces. And the herte lept oute and fledde thourgh the town, and the chace began agein after hym longe, till that he com oute into the playn feeldes. And than he dide vanysshe that noon cowde sey where he becom.
85

57 stodye, study. **60 certefie**, explain. **62 entré**, entry. **63 herte**, hart. **66 renne**, run. **67 partyes**, sides. **74 abandon**, unchecked; **began**, caused. **83 rudely**, suddenly. **85 sey**, saw.

Merlin and Grisandolus

And than thei returned agein.

And whan the emperour wiste the herte was ascaped, he was wroth, and lete crye thourgh the londe that who that myght brynghe the savage man or the herte sholde have his feire daughter to wif, and half his reame, yef that he were gentill of birthe, and after his deth have all. And lepe to horse many a valiaunt knyght and squyer of pris, and serched and sought thourgh many contrees. But all was for nougnt, for never cowde thei heere no tidinges of that thei sought. And whan thei myght no more do, thei returned agein.

But ever Grisandols serched thourgh the forestes, oon hour foreward, another bakke, that so endured eight dayes full. And on a day as Grisandol was alight under an oke for to praye oure Lorde to helpe and to sped for to fynde that he sought. And as he was in his prayours, the herte that hadde ben at Rome com before hym and seide, “Avenable, thow chacest folye, for thow maist not sped of thy queste in no maner; but I shall telle thee what thow shalt do. Purchese flessh newe and salt, and mylke and hony, and hoot breed newe bake, and bringe with thee foure felowes and a boy to turne the spite till it be inough rosted. And com into this foreste by the moste uncouthe weyes that thow canste fynde; and sette a table by the fier, and the breed and the mylke and the hony upon the table. And hide thee and thi compayne a litill thens, and doute thee nougnt that the savage man will come.”

Than ran the herte a grete walope thourgh the foreste. And Grisandol lept to horse and thought well on that the herte hadde seide; and thought in his corage that it was some spirituell thinge that by hir right name hadde hir cleped; and thought well that of this thinge sholde come some merveile.

And Grisandol rode forth to a town nygh the forest seven myle, and toke ther that was myster, and com into the foreste theras he hadde spoke with the herte as soone as he myght, and roode into the deepe of the foreste whereas he fonde a grete oke full of leves; and the place semed delitable. And he alight and sette their horse fer thens, and made a grete fier and sette the flesshe to roste, and the smoke and the savour spredde thourgh the foreste that oon myght fele the savour right fer, and than sette the table be the fier. And whan all was redy, thei hidde

89 **gentill**, noble. 96 **spede**, aid. 100 **flesh newe**, fresh meat. 102 **uncouthe**, secret. 104 **thens**, thence; **doute**, doubt. 106 **walope**, gallop. 107 **that**, what. 111 **myster**, needed; **theras**, to where. 115 **fele**, smell. 116 **be**, by.

Prose Merlin

hem in a bussh.

And Merlin, that all this knewe and that made all this to be don, covertly that he were not knownen drough that wey with a grete staffe in his hand, smytinge grete strokes from oke to oke. And [he] was blakke and rough forrympled, and longe berde, and barfoote, and clothed in a rough pilche. And so he com to the fier theras the flesshe was rosted. And whan the boy saugh hym come, he was so aferde that he fledde nygh oute of his witte. And he thus com to the fier and began to chacche and frote abouthe the fier, and saugh the mete, and than loked all abouthe hym, and began to rore lowde as a man wood oute of mynde, and than behelde and saugh the cloth spredde and soche mete theron as ye have herde. And after he behielde towarde the fier and saugh the flesshe that the knave hadde rosted that was tho inough, and raced it of with his hondes madly, and rente it asonder in peces, and wette it in mylke and after in the hony, and ete as a wood man that nougthe ther lefte of the flesh. And than he eete of the hoot breed and hony that he was full and swollen grete. And somewhat was it colde, and he lay down by the fier and slepte.

And whan Grisandol saugh he was onslepe, she and hir fellowes com as softly as thei myght and stale awey his staffe. And than thei bounde hym with a cheyne of iren streytely abouthe the flankes, and than delyvered hym to oon of the compayne by the tother ende of the cheyne. And whan he was so well bounde, he awooke and lept up lightly and made semblaunt to take his staff as a wilde man. And Grisandolus griped hym in his armes right sore and hilde hym stille. And whan he saugh hym so bounde and taken, he hilde hym as shamefaste and mate. And than the horse were brought forth, and he was sette upon oon of hem and bounden to the sadell with two bondes. And a man sette behynde hym that was bounde to hym and embraced hym by the myddill; and so thei rode forth her wey.

And the savage man loked on Grisandolus that rode by hym, and began to laugh right harde. And whan Grisandolus saugh hym laughe, he approched ner and rode side by side and aqueynted with hym the beste that he myght, and enquired and asked many thinges; but he ne wolde nougthe ansuere. And Grisandol asked why

120 forrympled, rumpled. **121 pilche**, outer garment of furs. **124 chacche and frote**, scratch and poke. **125 rore**, roar; **wood**, insane. **128 tho inough**, i.e., cooked enough; **raced it of**, grabbed it off. **133 onslepe**, asleep. **135 streytely**, tightly. **138 right sore**, very tightly. **139 shamefaste**, ashamed; **mate**, confused. **140 horse**, horses.

Merlin and Grisandolus

he lough, but he wolde not telle saf that he seide, "Creature formed of Nature
chaunged into other forme, fro hensforth begilynge alle thinges, venimouse as
serpent, holde thi pees! For nought will I telle thee till that I com before the
150 emperoure."

With that the savage man hilde his pees and spake no more and rode forth
togeder. And Grisandolus of this that he hadde seide spake to his compayne. And
thei seide that he was wiser than he shewed and that som grete merveile sholde
falle in the londe. Thus thei ride spekyng of many thinges till thei passede before
155 an abbey, and saugh before the yate moche pore peple abidinge almesse; and than
the savage man lowgh right lowde. And than Grisandol com toward hym and
swetly prade hym to telle wherfore he lough. And he loked proudly on traverse
and seide, "Ymage repaired and disnatured fro Kynde, holde thy pees! Ne enquere
no mo thinges, for nought will I telle thee but before the emperour." And whan
160 Grisandolus this undirstode, he lete hym be at that tyme, and no more thinge hym
asked; and hereof spake thei in many maners.

Thus thei rode forth all day till nyght and on the morowe till the hour of prime.
And fill that thei passed byfore a chapell where a preste was toward masse, and
165 fonde a knyght and a squyer heringe the servyse. And whan Grisandolus saugh
this, thei alight alle the compayne, and entred in to here the masse. And whan the
knyght that was in the chapell saugh the man bounde with chaynes, he hadde
merveile what it myght be. And while the knyght beheilde the man that was sav-
age, the squyer that was in an angle behynde the chapel dore com agein his lorde,
and lifte up his hande and yaf hym soche a flap that alle thei in the chapell myght
170 it here; and than returned thider as he com fro, all shamefaste of that he hadde
don. And whan he was come in to his place, he ne rofte nothinge, for the shame
lasted no lenger but while he was in returnyng. And whan the savage man saugh
this, he began to laugh right harde. And the knyght that was so smyten was so
abaissched that he wiste not what to sey, but suffred. And Grisandolus and the
175 other compayne merveiled sore what it myght be.

Anoon after the squyer com agein to his lorde and yaf hym soche another

147 **saf**, save. 155 **moche**, many; **abidinge almesse**, waiting for alms. 157 **on traverse**,
askance. 158 **repaired**, altered; **disnatured fro Kynde**, distorted from Nature. 163 **fill**, it
befell; **toward**, beginning. 168 **agein**, to. 169 **flap**, blow. 170 **shamefaste**, ashamed. 171
ne **rofte nothinge**, cared not at all. 174 **abaissched**, astonished.

Prose Merlin

stroke as he dide before, and wente agein in to his place. And the savage man hym behilde, and began to laughe right harde. And yef the knyght before were abaisshed, he was than moche more. And the squyer that hadde hym smyten returned sorrowfull
180 and pensif to the place he com fro, and hilde hymself foule disceyved of that he hadde don. And whan he was in his place, he rought never. And Grisandolus and the compayne merveiled right sore, and herden oute the servise be leyser. And in the menewhile that thei thoughten upon these thinges that thei hadde seyn, the squyer com the thridde tyme and smote his lorde sorer than he hadde don before.
185 And therat lowgh the wilde man sore.

And be that was the masse at an ende; and than Grisdandolus and alle wente oute of the chapell. And the squyer that hadde smyten his lorde com after and asked of Grisandolus what man it was that thei hadde so bounde. And thei seide
190 that thei were with Julius Cezar, emperor of Rome, and ledde to hym that savage man that thei hadde founden in the foreste for to certefie of a vision that was shewed hym slepinge.

“But sir,” seide Grisandolus, “tell me wherefore hath this squyer yow smyten thre tymes, and ye ne speake no worde agein. Have ye soche a custome?” And the knyght ansuerde that he sholde it wite in tyme comynge. Than the knyght cleped
195 his squyer and asked hym before Grisandolus wherefore he hadde hym smyten. And he was shamefaste and seide he wiste never, but so it fill in his corage. And the knyght hym asked yef he hadde now eny talent hym for to smyte. And the squyer seide he hadde lever be deed. “But that,” quod he, “it fill in my mynde that I myght not kepe me therfro.” And Grisandolus lough of the merveile.

200 Than seide the knyght that he wolde go to court with hem for to here what the savage man wolde sey. And with that thei rode forth on her wey, and Grisandolus by the savage mannes side. And whan thei hadde a while riden, he asked the wilde man wherfore he lough so thre tymes whan the squyer smote his lorde. And he loked on hir a traverse and seide, “Ymage repeyred, semblaunce of creature wherby
205 men ben slain and diffouled, rasour trenchaunt, fountayne coraunt that never is full of no springes, holde thy pees and nothinge of me enquere! But before the

178 **behilde**, watched. 182 **be leyser**, at their leisure. 183 **that¹**, as. 186 **be that**, by then.
194 **wite in tyme comynge**, soon know. 196 **fill in**, came into; **corage**, heart. 198 **hadde lever be deed**, would rather be dead. 204 **a traverse**, askance. 205 **diffouled**, destroyed;
rasour, razor; **fountayne coraunt**, flowing fountain. 206 **But**, Except.

Merlin and Grisandolus

emperour, for nought will I telle thee." And whan that Grisandolus undirstode the fell wordes that he spake, he was all abaisshed and pensef and durste not no more enquere; and rode forth till thei come to Rome.

210 And whan thei entred into the town and the peple hem parceyved, thei wente alle ageins hem for to se the man that was savage. And the noyse was grete of the peple that folowed and behilde his facion as longe as thei myght; and so thei conveyed hym to the paleise. And whan the emperour herde the tidinges, he com hem ageins, and mette with hem comynge upon the graces. And than com Grisandolus
215 before the emperour and seide, "Sir, have here the man that is savage that I to yow here yelde; and kepe ye hym fro hensforth, for moche peyne have I hadde with hym."

And the emperour seide he wolde hem well guerdon, and the man sholde be well kepte. And than he sente to seche a smyth to bynde hym in chaynes and feteres.
220 And the savage man badde hym therof not to entermete; "for wite it right well," quod he, "I will not go withoute youre leve." And the emperour hym asked how he therof sholde be sure; and he seide he wolde hym asure by his Cristyndome. Quod the emperour, "Art thou than Cristin?" And he seide, "Ye, withoute faile." "How were thou than baptized," seide the emperour, "whan thou art so wilde?" "That
225 shall I well telle you," quod he.

"This is the trouthe, that my moder on a day com from the market of a town. And it was late whan she entred into the Foreste of Brocheland, and wente oute her wey so fer that the same nyght behoved hir to lye in the foreste. And whan she saugh she was so alone be hirself, she was afeerde, and lay down under an oke and fill aslepe. And than com a savage man oute of the foreste and by hir lay because she was sool by hirself. Durste she not hym diffende, for a woman aloone is feerfull. And that nyght was I begeten on my moder. And whan she was repeired hom, she was full pensif longe tyme till that she knewe verily that she was with childe. And [she] bar me so till I was born into this worlde, and was baptised in a
230 fonte, and dide me norishe till I was grete. And as soone as I cowde lyve withouten hir, I wente into the grete forestes, for by the nature of my fader behoveth me thider to repeire; and for that he was savage, I am thus wilde. Now have ye herde
235

208 fell, fierce. **211 ageins**, toward. **212 facion**, appearance. **214 graces**, steps. **220 entermete**, bother. **222 Cristyndome**, Christian faith. **231 sool**, alone; **Durste**, Dared. **232 repeired**, returned.

Prose Merlin

what I am.”

“So God me helpe,” seide the emperour, “never for me shalt thou be putte in
240 feteres ne in irenes, seth thou wilt me graunte that thou will not go withoute my
leve.”

Than tolde Grisandolus how he dide laugh before the abbey and in the chapell
for the squyer that hadde smyten his maister, and the dyverse wordes that he
hadde spoken whan he asked wherefore he dide laughe. “And he seide that never
245 wolde he nought sey till he com before yow, and now is he here; and therfore,
aske hym why he hath so often laughed by the wey.” And than the emperour hym
asked; and he seide he sholde it knowe all in tyme. “But sendeth first for alle youre
barouns, and than shall I telle yow that and other thinges.”

With that entred the emperour into his chamber and the savage man and his
250 privé counseile. And ther thei rested and disported and spake of many thinges.
And on the morowe the emperour sente to seche his barouns, hem that he sup-
posed sonest to fynde. And than thei come anoon, bothe oon and other, from alle
partyes.

On the fourthe day after, the savage man was comen where that the lordes
255 were assembled on the maister paleise. And the emperour [called] this savage
man and made hym to sitte down by hym. And whan the barouns hadde inough
hym beholden, thei asked why he hadde for hem sente. And he tolde hem for a
vision that hym befill in his slepynge, “for I will that it be expowned before yow.”
And thei seide that the significacion wolde thei gladly heren.

260 Than the emperour comaunded this man to telle the cause why that he was
sought. And he ansuerde and seide that he wolde nothinge telle till that the
emperesse and hir twelve maydones were comen. And she com anoon with gladde
semblaunce, as she that yaf no force of nothinge that myght befalle. Whan the
emperesse and hir twelve maydones were come amonge the barouns, the lordes
265 aroos agein hir and dide hir reverence.

And as soone as the savage man hir saugh comynge, he turned his heed in
traverse and began to laughe as in scorne. And whan he hadde a while laughed, he
loked on the emperour stadfastly, and than on Grisandolus, and than on the
emperesse, and than on hir twelve maydenys that weren with hir. And than he

240 seth, since. **253** partyes, sides. **263** yaf no force of nothinge, had no concerns
about anything. **266–67** in traverse, askance.

Merlin and Grisandolus

270 turned toward the barouns and began to lauge right lowde as it were in dispite. Whan the emperor saugh hym so lauge, he preied hym to telle that he hadde in covenauant, and whi that he lough now and other tymes.

With that he stode up and seide to the emperor so lowde that all myght it heren, “Sir, yef ye me graunte as trewe emperor before youre barouns that ben here that I shall not be the wers ne no harme to me therfore shall come, and that ye will yeve me leve as soone as I have yow certefied of youre avision, I shall telle yow the trewe significacion.”

275 And the emperor hym ansuerde and graunted that noon harme ne annoye to hym sholde be don, ne that he sholde conne hym no magré, to telle hym that he was so desirouse for to heren, and that he sholde have leve to go whan hym liste. “But I praye thee, telle me myn avision in audience of alle my barouns what it was, and than shall I thee better beleve the significacion, whan thow haste me tolde of that I never spake to no creature.” And he ansuerde, as for that sholde hym not greve, and therfore wolde he not lette. And than he began the avision.

280 285 “Sir,” seide the savage man to the emperor, “it fill on a nyght that ye lay by youre wif that is here. And whan ye were aslepe, ye thought ye saugh before yow a sowe that was feire and smothe; and the heer that she hadde on her bakke was so longe that it trailed to grounde more than a fadome; and on hir heed she hadde a cercle of goolde bright shynyng. And yow semed that ye hadde norisshed that sowe in youre house, but ye cowde it not verily knowe; and therwith yow semed that ye hadde hir othir tymes sein. And whan ye hadde longe thought on this thinge, ye saugh come oute of youre chamber twelve lyonewes full feire and smothe. And thei com by the halle thourgh the courte to the sowe, and lay by hir oon after another. And whan thei hadde do that thei wolde, thei wente agein into youre chamber.

290 295 “Than com ye to youre barouns and hem asked what sholde be do with this sowe that ye saugh thus demened. And the barouns and alle the peple seide she was nothinge trewe, and thei juged to be brent bothe the sowe and the twelve lyonewes. And than was the fier made redy grete and merveillouse in this courte,

270 **dispite**, scorn. 276 **yeve**, give; **certefied**, explicated. 279 **conne**, do, cause; **magré**, grief. 287 **heer**, hair. 288 **fadome**, fathom. 289 **semēd**, believed. 291 **sein**, seen. 292 **lyonewes**, young lions. 294 **do that**, done what; **wolde**, wanted. 297 **demened**, treated. 298 **brent**, burned.

Prose Merlin

300 and therynne was the sowe brente and the twelve lyonewes. Now have ye herde
youre swewe in the same forme as ye it saugh in youre slepinge. And yef ye se
that I have eny thinge mystaken, sey it before your barouns." And the emperour
seide he hadde of nothinge failed.

305 "Sir Emperour," seide the barouns, "seth that he hath seide what was youre
avision, hit is to beleve the significacion yef he will it telle; and it is a thinge that
[we] wolde gladly heren."

310 "Certes," seide the man, "I shall it declare to yow so openly that ye may it se
and knowe apertly that I yow shall sey. The grete sowe that ye saugh signifieth
my lady the emperesse, youre wif that is ther. And the longe heer that she hadde
on hir bakke betokeneth the longe robes that she is ynne iclothed. And the sercle
that ye saugh on her heed shynnge betokeneth the crowne of goolde that ye made
her with to be crowned. And yef it be youre plesier, I will no more sey at this
tyme."

315 "Certes," seide the emperour, "yow behoveth to sey all as it is, yef ye will be
quyte of youre promyse."

320 "Certes," seide the man, "than shall I telle yow. The twelve lyonewes that ye
saugh come oute of a chamber betokeneth the twelve maydenes that be ther with
the emperesse. And knowe it for very trouthe that thei be no wymen, for it be
men; and therefore make hem be dispoiled and ye shull se the trouthe. And as ofte
as ye go oute of the town, she maketh hem serve in hir chamber and in hir bedde.
Now have ye herde youre avision and the significacion. And ye may se and knowe
yef that I have seide to yow the soth."

325 Whan the emperour understande the untrouthe that his wif hadde don, he was so
abaissched that he spake no worde a longe while. And than he spake and seide that
that wolde he soone knowe. And than he cleped Grisandolus and seide, "Dispoile
mo tho damesoles, for I will that alle the barouns that be hereynne knowe the
trouthe." And anon Grisandolus and other lept forth and dispoiled hem before the
emperour and his barouns, and fonde hem formed alle as other men weren. And
than the emperour was so wroth that he wiste not what to do.

330 Than he made his oth that anon ther sholde be do justice soche as was right to

301 **swevene**, dream; **yef**, if; **se**, see. 302 **sey**, say. 304 **seth**, since. 307 **se**, see. 308
apertly, clearly. 309 **heer**, hair. 314 **behoveth**, need. 315 **quyte**, free. 324 **abaissched**,
disturbed. 325–26 **Dispoile mo tho**, Unclothe more those. 330 **do**, done.

Merlin and Grisandolus

be awarded. And the barouns juged seth she hadde don hir lorde soche untrouthe,
that she sholde be brente and the harlottes hanged; and some seide that thei sholde
be flayn all quyk. But in the ende thei acorded that thei sholde be brente in a fier.
And anoon as the emperor herde the judgement of the barouns, he comaunded to
make the fier in the place, and anoon it was don. And thei were bounde hande and
foot and made hem to be caste into the brynyng fier; and in short tyme thei were
alle brent, for the fier was grete and huge. Thus toke [the] emperor vengaunce
of his wif. And grete was the renomede that peple of hym spake whan that it was
knownen.

340 Whan the emperesse was brente, and thei that she hadde made hir maydenes,
the barouns returned agein to the emperor and seide oon to another that the
savage man was right wise and avisee, for yet shall he sey some other thinges
wheroft shall come some grete merveile [to] us and to all the worlde. And the
emperor hymself seide that he hadde seide his avision as it was in trouthe. Thus
wiste the emperor the lyvinge of his wif. And than the emperor hym called and
asked yef he wolde sey eny more. And he seide "Ye," yef he asked hym whereof.

345 "I wolde wite," quod he, "wherefore thou didst laughe whan thou were in the
foreste and loked on Grisandolus; and also whan thou were ledde before an ab-
bey; and in the chapell whan the squyer smote his lorde; and why thou seidest tho
wordes to my stiwarde whan he asked why thou loughe; and after, telle me what
betokeneth the laughter hereynne whan thou saugh the emperesse come."

350 "Sir," seide the savage man, "I shall telle yow inowgh. I do yow to wite that the
firste laughter that I made was for that a woman hadde me taken by her engyn,
that no man cowde not do. And wite ye well that Grisandolus is the beste maiden
and the trewest withynne youre reame; and therefore was it that I lough. And the
laughter that I made before the abbey was for ther is under erthe before the yate
the grettest tresour hidde that eny man knoweth; and therfore I lough for that it
was under feet of hem that aboode after the almesse. For more richessee is in that
tresour than alle the monkes beth worth, and all the abbey, and all that therto
belongeth. And the pore peple that theron stoden cowde it not take. And Avenable
your stywarde, that Grisandolus doth her clepen, saugh that I lowgh and asked

331 **seth**, since. 333 **flayn all quyk**, skinned alive. 338 **of, on**; **renomede**, renown. 342
avisee, informed. 349 **tho**, those. 353 **engyn**, subtlety. 358 **aboode after**, waited for;
almesse, alms. 361 **her**, herself.

Prose Merlin

me wherefore. And the coverte wordes that I to hir spake was for that she was chaunged into the fourme of man, and hadde take another habite than hir owne.
365 And alle the wordes that I spake thei ben trewe, for by woman is many a man disceyved.

“And therefore I cleped hir disceyaunt, for by women ben many townes sonken and brent, and many a riche londe wasted and exiled, and moche peple slain. But I sey it not for noon evell that is in hir. And thow thyself maist well perceyve that be women be many worthi men shamed and wratthed that longe have loved togeder,
370 yef it were not for debate of women. But now rech thee not for thy wif that thou haste distroied, for she hath it well deserved. And have therfore no mystrust to other, for as longe as the worlde endureth it doth but apeire. And all that cometh to hem be the grete synne of luxuré that in hem is closeth. For woman is of that nature and of that disire, that whan she hath the moste worthi man of the worlde
375 to hir lorde, she weneth she have the werste. And wite ye fro whens this cometh of the grete fragelité that is in hem, and the foule corage and the foule thought that thei have where thei may beste hir volunté acomplish. But therfore be not wroth, for ther ben in the worlde [many] that ben full trewe. And yef thow have be
380 desceyved of thyn, yet shall thow have soche oon that is worthy to be emperesse and to resceyve that high dignité. And yef thow wilt it beleve, thow shalt wynne theron more than thow shalt lese.

“But the prophesie seith that the grete dragon shall come fro Rome that wolde distroie the reame of the Grete Breteyne and put it in his subjeccion, and the fierce lyon crowned, maugré the diffence of the turtill that the dragon hath norisshed under his wynges. And as soone as the grete dragon shall meve to go to the Grete Breteigne, the lyon crowned shall come hym ageins, and shull fight so togeder that a fierce bole that is prowde, whiche the lyon shall bringe with hym, shall smyte so the dragon with oon of his hornes that he shall falle down deed; and therby shall

362 **coverte**, veiled. 363 **habite**, appearance. 366 **hir**, i.e., woman (not Avenable); **disceyaunt**, deceitful; **sonken**, destroyed. 369 **be¹**, because of; **wratthed**, angered. 370 **debate of**, dispute over; **rech**, concern. 372 **apeire**, occur. 373 **luxuré**, lechery; **closeth**, enclosed. 375 **weneth**, thinks. 376 **fragelité**, frailty; **corage**, desire. 377 **volunté**, wishes. 379 **of thyn**, by yours. 380 **wynne**, win. 381 **lese**, lose. 384 **maugré the diffence**, despite the contrary advice. 387 **bole**, bull.

Merlin and Grisandolus

be delyvered the grete lyon. But I will not telle the significacion of these wordes,
390 for I owe it nought to do. But all this shall falle in thy tyme; and therfore, be well
ware of evell counseile, for grete part longeth to thee.

“The tother laughter that I made in the chapell was not for the buffetes that the
squier yaf his lorde but for the betokenynges that therynne ben. In the same place
395 ther the squyer stode was entred, and yet ther is undir his feet a merveillouse
tresour. The firste buffet that the squyer yaf his lorde signifieth that for avoure
the worlde becometh so prowde that he douteth nother God ne his soule, no more
than the squyer doubted to smyte his maister. But the riche wolde oppresse the
pore under theire feet; and that make these untrewe riche peple whan enythinge
400 cometh to hem be myschaunce, thei swere and stare and sey maugré have God
for His yeftes. And wite ye what maketh this? Nothinge but pride of richesse.

“The seconde buffet betokeneth the riche userer that deliteth in his richesse and
goth scornynge his pore nyghebours that be nedy whan thei come to hym ought
for to borough. And the userer so leneth hem litill and litill, that at laste thei moste
selle theire heritage to hym that so longe hath it coveyted.

405 “The thridde buffet signifieth these false pletours, men of lawe, that sellen and
apeire theire neyghbours behinde here bakke for covetise and envye of that thei se
hem thrive, and for thei be not in her daungier. For whan these laweers sen that
her neighbours don hem not grete reverence and servise, thei thenken and aspien
how thei may hem anoyen in eny wise, and to make hem lese that thei have. And
410 therfore men seyan olde sawe: who hath a goode neighbour hath goode morowe.

“Now have ye herde the significaciouns why the buffetes were yoven. But the
squier delited nothinge therynne whan that he smote his maister; but he wiste not
fro whens this corage to hym com. But God that is almyghty wolde have it to be
shewed in exsample that men sholde not be prowde for worldly richesse; for to
415 covetouse theire richesse doth hem but harme, that slepen in avice and foryete
God and don the werkes of the devell, that ledeth hem to everlastinge deth. And all
is for the grete deelite that thei have in richesse.

390 **owe**, ought; **nought**, not; **falle**, befall. 391 **longeth**, pertains. 393 **betokenynges**,
meanings. 394 **ther¹**, where. 395 **avoure**, possessions. 396 **douteth**, fears; **nother**, nei-
ther. 399 **be myschaunce**, by misfortune; **sey maugré**, blame (?). 402 **ought**, anything.
403 **borough**, borrow. 405 **pletours**, pleaders. 406 **apeire**, abuse. 407 **daungier**, power.
410 **sawe**, saying. 411 **yoven**, given. 413 **corage**, desire.

Prose Merlin

“But now shall I telle you whi I lough today whan I saugh the emperesse comynge
and hir lechours. I do yow to wite that it was but for dispite, for I saugh that she
was youre wif, and hadde oon of the worthiest men of the worlde that eny man
knoweth of youre yowthe. And she hadde take these twelve harlottes and wende
ever for to have ledde this foly all hir lif. And therfore hadde I grete dispite for the
love of yow and of youre daughter, for she is youre daughter withoute doute, and
draweth litill after hir moder. Now have ye herde alle the laughtres and wherefore
thei were. And therfore, may I go yef it be youre plesier?”

“Now abide a litill,” seide the emperor, “and telle us the trouthe of Grisandolus.
And also we shull sende to digge after the tresour, for I will wite yef it be trewe.”
And he therto dide assent. Than the emperor comaunded that Grisandolus were
sought, and so she was founden, oon of the feirest maydenes that neded to enquere
in eny londe. And whan the emperor knewe that Grisandolus, his stiwarde that
longe hadde hym served, was a woman, he blissed hym for the wonder that he
ther-of hadde. Than he asked the savage man counseile what he sholde do of that
he hadde promysed to yeve his daughter and half his reame, for loth he was to
falsen his promyse of covenauant.

“I shall telle yow,” quod the man, “what ye shull do, yef ye will do my counseile.
And wite it well, it is the beste that eny man can yeven.” “Sey on, than,” seide the
emperor, “for what counseile that thou yevest, I shall it well beleve, for I have
founde thy seyinge trewe.”

Than seide the savage man, “Ye shall taken Avenable to be yowre wif. And wite
ye whos daughter she is? She is the daughter to the Duke Matan that the Duke
Frolle hath disherited and driven oute of his londe for envye with grete wronge.
And he and his wif be fledde, and his sone, that is a feire yonge squyer, into
Province into a riche town that is called Monpellier. And sende to seche hem and
yelde hem her heritage that thei have loste with wronge. And make the mariage of
youre daughter and Avenables brother that is so feire, and ye may her no better be
setten.”

And whan the barouns undirstode that the savage man seide, thei spoke moche
amonge hem, and seiden in the ende that the emperor myght do no better, after

419 **dispite**, anger; **for**, because of. 424 **draweth**, follows. 425 **yef**, if. 429 **neded to**
enquere, one could find. 433 **reame**, realm. 435 **do²**, follow. 443 **seche**, seek. 444 **yelde**,
give. 447 **that**, what.

Merlin and Grisandolus

theire advis. And than the emperor asked his name, and what he was, and the
450 hert that so pertly spake unto hym. And than seide he, "Sir, of that enquire no
more, for it is a thinge the more ye desire to knowe, the lesse shull ye witen."
"For sothe," seide the emperor, "now suppose I well what it may be. But shull
ye telle us eny more?"

"Ye," quod he. "I tolde yow right now of the lyon crowned and of the lyon
455 volage; but now shall I telle yow in other manere for that ye shull be better
remembred whan tyme cometh. emperor of Rome," quod he, "this is trewe
prophesie, that the grete boor of Rome, that is signified by the grete dragon, shall
go agein the lyon crowned of the Bloy Breteyne, agein the counseile of the turtell
460 that hath an heed of golde and longe hath ben his love. But the boor shall be so full
of pride that he will not hir beleve, but shall go with so grete pride with all his
generacion into the parties of Gaule to fight with the crowned lyon that shall
come ageins hym with alle his beestes.

"Ther shall be grete slaughter of beestes on bothe sides. Than shall oon of the
fawnes of the lyon crowned sle the grete boor. And therfore I praye thee, yef
465 thou wilt ought do for me er I departe, that thou do nothinge agein the volonté of
thy wif after that day that thou haste her wedded. And wite well, yef thou do
thus, thou shalt have profite. And now I take my leve, for here have I no more to
do."

And the emperor betaught hym to God, seth it myght no better be. And therwith
470 he wente on his wey. And whan he com to the halle dore, he wrote letteres on the
lyntell of the dore in Grewe that seide: "Be it knowe to alle tho that these letteres
reden, that the savage man that spake to the emperor and expounded his dreme,
hit was Merlin of Northumberlande, and the hert brancus with fifteen braunches
475 that spake to hym in his halle at mete amonge alle his knyghtes, and was chaced
thourgh the citee of Rome, that spake to Avenable in the foreste whan he tolde hir
how she sholde fynde the man savage. And lete the emperor well wite that
Merlin is maister counsellor to Kynge Arthur of the Grete Breteyne." And than he
departed and spake no mo wordes.

Whan this savage man was departed from the emperor, he sente into Province
454–55 **lyon volage**, zealous lions. 461 **parties**, territories. 464 **fawnes**, i.e., young
knights. 465 **volunté**, wishes. 469 **betaught**, consigned. 471 **Grewe**, Greek; **tho**, those.
473 **hert brancus**, antlered hart. 476 **wite**, know.

Prose Merlin

480 to seche the fader and the moder of Avenable and Patrik hir brother, in the town of Monpeller, whider as thei were fledde. And anoon thei com, gladde and joyful of the aventure that God hadde hem sente. And whan thei were comen, thei hadde grete joye of theire daughter that thei wende never to have seyn. Than thei abide with the emperour longe tyme, and the emperour restored hem to here herytage
485 that Frolle hadde hem berafte. But as Frolle myght, he it agein seide, for he was of grete power. And so endured the werre longe tyme; but in the ende the emperour made the pees. And than he maried his daughter to Patrik, and hymself toke Avenable to his wif. And grete was the joye and the feeste that the barouns maden, for moche was she beloved bothe of riche and pore.

490 And as the emperour was in joye and deduyt of his newe spouse, ther com a massage to hym oute of Greece for a discorde that was betwene the barouns of Greese and the Emperour Adrian that sholde hem justise, for the Emperour Adrian myght unethe ride for febilnesse of age. And whan the messager hadde spoke to the emperour and don all that he sholde, he toke his leve to go. And as he caste up
495 his yie upon the halle dore, he saugh the letteres that Merlin hadde writen in Grewe. And anoon he redde hem lightly, and than he gan to laughe right harde, and shewed hem to the emperour and seide, “Sir, is this trewe that these lettres seyn?”

500 “What sey thei?” quod the emperour. “Wote I never.” Quod the massager, “Thei seyn that he that tolde yow the untrouthe of youre wif, and youre dreme expowned, and spake to yow in the gise of an herte, that it was Merlin of Northumbirlande, the maister counsellor of Kynge Arthur of Breteyne, by whos counseile ye have spoused youre wif Avenable.”

505 And whan the emperour undirstode these wordes, he merveiled sore. And than befill a grete merveile whereof alle that were therynne hadde wonder, and the emperour hymself. For as soone as the emperour herde what the letteres mente, anoon the letteres vanysshed so sodeynly that no man wiste how. And therof hadde thei grete wonder, and moche it was spoken of thourgh the contrey. But now cesseth the tale of the emperour of Rome that abode in his paleis gladde and

481 **whider as**, where. 482 **aventure**, good fortune. 483 **wende**, thought. 485 **hem berafte**, from them taken; **agein seide**, opposed. 487 **pees**, peace. 490 **deduyt**, delight. 491 **massage**, message. 493 **unethe**, scarcely. 495 **yie**, eyes. 496 **Grewe**, Greek; lightly, easily.

Merlin and Grisandolus

510 myry with his wif Avenable, and ledde goode lif longe tyme. For bothe were thei yonge peple, for the emperor was but twenty-eight yere of age at that hour, and his wif was twenty-two. And yef thei ledde myri lif, yet Patrik and Foldate, the doughter of the emperor, lyved in more delite. But now returneth the tale agein to speke of Merlin.

[Summary. The scene shifts to Britain where the rebel barons, having consolidated their forces, directly confront the Saxon invaders. A terrible and chaotic battle takes place in a rain storm; when the weather clears, the Saxons drive the Christians from the field. That night the Christians mount yet another attack upon the Saxons, and they slaughter a great many of them. But the Saxons regroup; and returning to the battlefield, they thoroughly rout the Christians. The defeated barons now retreat to their home cities, not wishing to do further battle with the Saxons. Fols. 155r (line 10)–158v (line 4).]

[The Marriage of Arthur and Gonnore]

Now seith the storie that whan the Kynge Arthur and the barouns were assembled and entred into the shippes, thei sailed till thei come to the Bloy Breteyne. And as soone as thei were arived, thei lepe upon horse and ryde so day and nyght till thei come to Logres the thirde day. And ther were thei richly welcomed, and
5 the moste joye that myght be made to eny peple; and ther thei dide sojourne thre dayes with grete feeste. And the fourthe day remeved the Kynge Arthur and Gawein and his brethren and the Kynge Ban of Benoyk and the Kynge Bohors of Gannes, with thre thousande men of armes without moo, and rode so by her journeys that thei come to the reame of Carmelide, a two myle from Toraise, where the Kynge Leodogan sojourned.
10

And whan he herde tydinges that the Kynge Arthur com, he rode ageins hym, he and his meyné, two myle or more. And whan thei were mette ther was made grete joye and welcomyng betwene the two kynges that well loved; and so dide alle the other barouns and lordes. And whan thei com into the town, thei fonde it
15 all hanged with riche clothes and strowed with fresh herbes and fonde ladyes and maydenes carolinge and daunsinge and the moste revell and disport that myght be made. And on that other side these yonge bachelors of pris brake speres in bourdinge oon agein another; and thus thei conveyed hem unto the town whereas Gonnore, the daughter of Kynge Leodogan, com hem for to meten.
20

But whoso made joye, she was gladdest of alle other; for as soone as she saugh the Kynge Arthur, she ran to hym with armes spredde abrode, and seide he was welcome and alle his companye. And she kiste his mouth tendirly, seyng hem alle that wolde; and than eche toke other by the hande and wente up into the paleise. And whan it was tyme of soper, thei ete and dranke grete plenté, for

6 **remeved**, departed. 8 **moo**, more. 11 **ageins**, toward. 12 **meyné**, company. 14 **fonde**, found. 15 **strowed**, bestrewn. 17 **pris**, worth; **brake**, broke. 18 **bourdinge**, sport; whereas. 20 **whoso**, whoever. 22–23 **seynge hem alle**, in sight of them all.

The Marriage of Arthur and Gonne

25 inough thei have whereof. And whan thei hadde disported hem a longe while after soper, they wente to bedde for to resten hem, for wery they were of traveile.

And on the morowe erly aroos the Kynge Arthur and the Kynge Bohors and the Kynge Ban and Sir Gawein and Ewein, that gladly roos ever erly more than eny other, and wente to the mynster to here messe. And than [thei] com agein into the paleise above and fonde the Kynge Leodogan that hadde herde messe in his chapell. And than thei asked horse and rode forth tho six withoute eny moo, and yede to disporte hem and to se the medowes and the river. And than the Kynge Leodogan aresoned the Kynge Arthur and asked hym whan he sholde spousen his doughter, for he seide that it was tyme. And the Kynge Arthur ansuerde that whiche hour that hym plesed, for he was therto redy. “But I moste abide the beste frende that I have, for withoute hym will I do nothinge in no manere.” And than he asked whiche was that frende, and he tolde hem how it was Merlin, “Be whom I have recovered londe and honour and all the goode that I have ellis.” And whan Sir Gawein undirstode tho wordes, he seide that he hadde grete reson for to love hym well. “And eche oon of us oweth to desire his comynge; and wite it well, he shall come er ought longe, seth that ye hit desire.”

“Certes,” seide the Kynge Arthur, “he tolde me that he sholde be here all in tyme.” “Than ther is no more,” quod Gawein, “but lete us sette the day of sposaile.” And than toke thei day togeder the utas after, and com thus spekyng into the halle, and fonde the clothes leyde and all thinge redy. And than thei waissh as thei ought to do, and weren served as noble princes sholden be. And after mete thei wente to disporte, thei that wolde; and thus thei sojourned alle the eight days full. But now resteth a litill to speke of hem at this tyme, and returne to the twelve princes that were disconfit before the town of Clarence.

[Summary. The rebel barons learn that Arthur has knighted the Young Squires and that King Lot's wife is safe and in Logres but will not be returned until Lot does

25 whereof, thereof. **29 agein**, afterward. **30 fonde**, found. **31 tho**, those; **moo**, more. **32 yede**, went. **33 aresoned**, spoke to; **spousen**, wed. **35 whiche**, whatever; **abide**, wait for. **37 Be**, By. **38 recovered**, received; **ellis**, also. **40 oweth**, ought; **wite**, know. **41 er ought**, before; **seth**, since. **42 Certes**, Indeed. **44 sposaile**, the wedding; **toke thei day**, they chose the day; **the utas after**, one week later. **45 clothes leyde**, tablecloths in place. **46 mete**, dinner.

Prose Merlin

homage to Arthur. The rebels also hear of Arthur's success against Claudas de la deserte, of his success against King Rion, and of his plan to marry the daughter of King Leodegan. Most of the rebels now regret ever opposing Arthur. Lot is relieved to learn his wife and baby son are safe but is angered by his sons' actions against him; he forms a plan to kidnap Gonneore when Arthur sends her to Logres. Meanwhile Merlin reports all that has been happening to Blase.

A second plot is being formed against Gonneore, this one involving Gonneore's half-sister, the false Gonneore, who is the illegitimate daughter of Leodegan and the wife of Cleodalis (Leodegan's seneschal). Because Leodegan has dishonored his seneschal by sleeping with his wife, he has many enemies among Cleodalis's friends and kin who are eager for a chance to get back at him. Unbeknownst to Cleodalis, a group of them plan to kidnap Gonneore and put the false Gonneore in her place. Fols. 159r (line 15)–160r (line 21).]

50 But anoon as thei hadde this treson spoken, Merlin it wiste and tolde it to Ulfín
and to Bretell, and toke hem aside in counseile alone by hemself, and tolde hem
worde for worde all the untrouthe that thei purposed to don. And whan Ulfín and
Brettell herde the treson that these wolde have don, thei hadde therof grete merveile;
and than thei preied Merlin to telle how thei sholde spedē of this thinge. “With
55 gode will,” seide Merlin. “Tomorowe at even whan ye have souped, arme yow
well undir youre robes and goth into the chamber next the gardin under the graces
that is ther, for thei shull come alle unarmed saf hir swerdes and shull come
thourgh the gardin straight to the wicket, whereas thei shull bide till that that
maistresse bringe hir to disporte. But loke anoon as thei have hir sesed that ye be
60 not feynte her to rescowe, for than anoon have ye her loste for ever yef thei may
bringe hir to the shippe.”

“Sir,” seide these two goode men, “yef God will, we shull not her lese, seth we
knowe so moche therof.” “And loke also,” quod Merlin, “that ye speke hereof no
worde to no man of nothinge that I have to yow iseide, for than shall I never yow
65 love.” “Certes,” seide these two noble men, “we hadde lever be disherited and
chaced oute of the londe.”

50 *wiste*, knew. **52** *untrouthe*, deception. **53** *merveile*, wonder. **54** *preied*, asked; *spede of*, deal with. **54–55** *With gode will*, Gladly. **55** *at even*, in the evening; *souped*, supped. **56** *graces*, steps. **58** *wiket*, doorway; *whereas*, where. **59** *sesed*, seized. **60** *not feynte*, not afraid; *yef*, if. **62** *lese*, lose; *seth*, since. **65** *lever*, rather.

The Marriage of Arthur and Gonnore

Tho dide departe these thre frendes and com into the halle and fonde that the knyghtes sholde departe and wente to their loigginge till on the morowe that it was day. And than arise the barouns and the knyghtes and assembled faste in the
70 mynster paleise. And the Kynge Leodogan appareiled his daughter so richely as that never quene ne myght be better arayed. And she therto was so full of grete bewté that all the worlde was gladde hir to beholden. And whan she was all redy, the Kynge Ban toke hir on that oon side and the Kynge Bohors on that other side and ledde hir to the mynster of Seynt Stephene the Martir. Ther was many a baron
75 hir to conveien, holdinge be the hondes two and two, and formest that wente was Kynge Arthur and Kynge Leodogan. And the other tweyne was nexte after was Gawein and Seigramour, and than Galashin and Agravain the Prowde, and than Dodinell and Gueheret, and than Ewein le Graunt and Gaheries, and after that Ewein Avoutres and Kay Destranx, and Kay the Stiward and Antor his fadir; and
80 after hem com the maiden that the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Bohors ledden that was of so grete bewté. And she was discheveled and hadde the feirest heed that eny woman myght have, and hadde a sercle of goolde on hir heed full of preciouse stones, the feirest and the richest that eny man knewe, and was clothed in a riche robe that trayled to the grunde more than two fadome, that satte so well with hir
85 bewté that all the worlde myght have joye her to beholden.

And after hir com the stepdoughter of Cleodalis that hight also Gonnore, whiche was right feire and avenaunt; and hir ledde Gifflet and Lucas the Boteller. And after com the newe dubbed knyghtes two and two; and after com the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table; and after that com the barouns of the reame of Carmelide and the knyghtes; and after the burgeys of the contrey; and than the ladyes of the contrey and maydenes. And so thei come to the mynster.
90

Whan thei come to the dore, thei fonde ther the goode archebisshop that ther hem abode, and Sir Amnistan, the chapeleyne of Kynge Leodogan, that was a gode man of lyvinge. And the archebisshop hem blessed; and before alle the peple wedded the Kynge Arthur and Gonnore togeder. And the goode archebisshop entred into the chirche and sange the high masse, and Sir Amnistan hym served; and ther was riche offringe of kynges and princes. And whan the servise was
95

67 Tho, Then. **68 wente**, go. **69 arise**, arose. **73 oon**, side. **75 conveien**, accompany; **be by**. **80 ledden**, led. **81 discheveled**, bare-headed. **82 sercle**, circlet. **86 hight**, was named; **whiche**, who. **87 avenaunt**, comely. **93 abode**, awaited; **chapeleyn**, chaplain.

Prose Merlin

fynisshed, the Kynge Arthur and the barouns returned into the paleys whereas
was grete plenté of mynstralles and jogelours and other. Whereto sholde I yow
100 devise the joye and the deduyt that thei hadden? For the fourthe part cowde I not
telle.

Thus endured the joye and the melodye all the mete-while. And after mete,
whan the boordes were uppe, than was arered a quyntayn, and thyder yede the
newe adubbed knyghtes for to bourde with sheldes aboute their nekkes; and the
105 Forty Knyghtes that com into Carmelide with the Kynge Arthur wente with hem,
and also com thider the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table. And whan thei were comen,
thei begonne to do maistries jolily and in myrthe, as thei that were worthy men
and noble knyghtes; so that tidinges com to Sir Gawein that satte at mete amonge
his fellowes that hadden served. And whan Gawein undirstode that his frendes
110 were oversette, he aroos up and asked his armes and horse and his shelde, and
anoon it was brought. And so dide alle his fellowes. And Gawein dide on an habergon
of double maile under his robes, for that was ever more his custome ever as longe
as he lyved — nougnt for that he thought to do eny vilonye ne treson, but for he
douted ever that debate sholde arise amonge his fellowes thourgh the dedes of
115 some musarde or eny treson, whereof ther were inowe in the londe.

But whan that Gawein and his fellowes com into the medowes, whereas was
the turnement well begonne. But the Newe Knyghtes were evelle ledde, for the
Knyghtes of the Rounde Table ledde hem at her volunté. And whan that Gawein
saugh that thei were so at the warse, he was nothinge gladde. Than he and his
120 compayne wenten in that were well foure score accounted; and anoon these yonge
knyghtes come to Gawein and asked yef he wolde be with hem, and he seide “Ye,

99 **jogelours**, entertainers; **Whereto**, Why. 99–100 **yow devise**, relate to you. 100
deduyt, delight; **cowde**, could. 102 **all the mete-while**, all through dinner. 103 **boordes were uppe**, tables were removed; **arered**, raised; **quyntayn**, tilting board; **thyder yede**,
thither went. 104 **bourde**, sport. 107 **maistries**, great deeds. 108 **so that**, and so;
tidinges com, messages were taken. 109 **undirstode**, realized. 110 **oversette**, defeated.
111 **dide on**, put on; **habergon**, mail shirt. 113 **nought for that**, not because; **thought to do**, expected to be done. 114 **douted ever**, always suspected; **debate**, strife; **thourgh**,
through. 115 **musarde**, trouble-maker; **eny**, some. 116 **whereas**, already. 117 **evelle ledde**,
ill-treated. 118 **volunté**, wishes. 120 **wenten in**, charged in.

The Marriage of Arthur and Gonne

bothe now and also other tymes."

Whan the Forty Sowdiours herde that Sir Gawein wolde be with hem at that same turnement, thei were wonder gladde and joyfull, and the tother were full wroth. And than thei assured that never noon sholde faile other for deth ne for lif; and no more thei diden, and that well shewed that day, for thei diden so well that the Knyghtes of the Rounde Table therof hadde envye. For dere sholde be bought the same turnement, in the turnement that was made at Logres, theras Gawein was called lorde and maister for the wele doinge that he ther dide, as ye shull heren hereafter, whan that he was become the Queenes Knyght. And whan that Gawein hadde take the suerté of his felowes and of the Forty Knyghtes, of whiche ye have herde, thei renged hem and araide hem and girde agein theire horse. And Gawein sette hem in aray as he that was a wise knyght and withoute pride and the moste curteise that was in the Bloy Breteyne and the beste taught in alle thinges and ever trewe to God and to his lorde.

And whan that Gawein hadde ordeyned his felowes in aray, thei rode two and two togeder eche after other; and tweyne the firste was Sir Gawein and Sir Ewein le Graunt, the sone of Kynge Urien, that Gawein loved beste of alle other, for he was the beste after Gaheries; and the nexte tweyne were Seigramour and Galashyn; and than Gefflet and Lucas the Boteller for to assemble theire sheldes aboue her nekkes and her speres streight in theire handes. And the Kynge Arthur and the Kynge Ban and the Kynge Bohors and Merlin and Bretell and Ulfin and Antor were lefte with the Kynge Leodagan in the paleise, and were comen up on high for to se and beholde the bourdeyse. And with hem weren ladyes and maydenys grete plenté, and saugh that thei were redy araide for to mete.

[Summary. In the Tournament at Toraise, the 150 Knights of the Round Table challenge the New Knights who are led by Gawain. They agree to Gawain's suggestion that a limited and equal number of knights should fight at one time, and they set the number at forty vs. forty. In the mêlée, Gawain overcomes Nascien and urges him to yield; when Nascien says he would rather die than yield, Gawain is so impressed by Nascien's "high herte" that he offers to yield to Nascien; seeing Gawain's great courtesy, Nascien yields to Gawain; and then the two knights embrace.]

123 Sowdiours, Soldiers. 124 tother, other. 131 suerté, pledges. 132 renged hem, ordered themselves; araide hem, readied themselves. 136 ordeyned, ordered; aray, formation. 144 bourdeyse, jousting. 145 redy araide, prepared; mete, meet each other.

Prose Merlin

As the fight continues, Gawain's knights overcome forty of the Round Table knights, who then send in a fresh group. Gawain overthrows many of them, and Ewain and Galashin and Dodinell also do well. The Knights of the Round Table are angry at being humiliated by these young knights, and tempers begin to flare. Then Gawain sets aside his sword and enters the fray wielding a spar of oak, raging like a wild boar. Because the tournament has gotten out of hand, Merlin and the kings rush down to the field and separate the wrathful knights. Merlin and Arthur both tell Gawain that he has done enough and that the tournament is over. The Round Table knights are still resentful; but they praise Gawain and invite him to become one of them. Fols. 161v (line 9)–164r (line 25).]

With that were the tables leide and the knyghtes wash; and ther were thre halles
full of knyghtes, and thei were well served and by leiser of alle thinges. And after
soper, whan the clothes weren up, thei ennoysed the worthi knyghtes, and eche
reported of other honour as was right. And than thei ronge to evesonge in the
150 Mynster of Seynt Stephene, and thider thei wente to here the servise; and after
was the bedde of Arthur blessed, as was right. And than departed the knyghtes
and wente to theire hostelles for to slepe and resten.

And Gonnore belefte in the chamber, she and hir maistresse alone. And that
day was purchesed the treson wherby she sholde be taken and traied of the parentes
155 of Gonnore, the stepdoughter of Cleodales the stiwarde, for thei hadde yoven so
moche to the olde maistresse of Arthurs wif that she graunted to do theire volunté.
And [thei] tolde hir thei wolde abide in the gardin under the paleise, and thei sholde
have the tother Gonnore in her compayne. And all thus thei were acorded and
wente into the gardin and hidde hem under the trees, ten of hem. But thei were not
160 armed saf thei hadde eche of hem a suerde; and with hem was the false Gonnore.
And ther thei abide so longe that the barouns were departed to her hostels.

And thei made dispole the quene to go to hir bedde. And than the olde maistresse
hir toke and ledde hir into the gardin for to pissee. And whan the ten traitoris that
were quatte in the gardin under an ympe saugh her come, thei were stille and coy
165 and drough towarde the wall litill and litill. And Bretell and Ulfin hadde not foryete

148 ennoysed, praised. 153 **belefte**, remained. 154 **purchesed**, done; **traied of**, betrayed by; **parentes**, i.e., relatives. 155 **yoven**, given. 156 **volunté**, wishes. 160 **saf**, except; **suerde**, sword. 162 **made dispole**, prepared. 164 **quatte**, hidden; **ympe**, tree; **coy**, quiet. 165 **drough**, drew.

The Marriage of Arthur and Gonne

the wordes that Merlin hadde seide, but were well armed under her robes, and weren quat under the steyres theras the queene sholde come down, and hilde hem so stille that thei were not aparceyved of man ne woman, and herkened in this manere longe while, and than thei saugh the queene that the maistresse brought by
170 the hande and wente that wey whereas the traitours hadde sette theire waicch.

And whan thei saugh that thei weren oute of the chambre, thei lepe up and sette
175 hande on hir and toke to the olde maistresse the tother false Gonne. And anon as the queene hem saugh, she wiste well she was betraied and wolde crye as she that was sore affraied. And thei seide that yef she spake eny worde she sholde anon be slain; and therwith thei drough theire swerdes oute and wente toward the river that ran under the gardin, where thei hadde a barge iteyed wherein thei were come into the gardin. And the gardin was right high above the river, and noon myght come therto but by a lane or by a barge. And the lane was full thikke and comberouse to come up or down for the rokkes wherof was grete plenté. And yef
180 thei myght have brought hir into the barge, the queene hadde ben loste withoute recover.

Whan Ulfen and Bretell saugh that thei hadde so longe awayted, thei leptे oute of
185 their enbusshement and hem ascryed and cleped hem traitours and seide thei sholde dye. And whan that the traitours saugh thei were but tweyne and dide hem ascrye, thei preised hem at nougħt. Than five of hem toke the queene, and five abode for to fight with the tweyne that com with swerdes drawnen. And whan the queene saugh hir ledde in soche manere, she hadde grete drede and fill to grounde upon the grene; and thei lifte hir up and bare hir awey maugré hire. And whan she saugh tweyne come hir to socour, she braied rudely oute of there handes and [ronne] down the gardin till she com to an ympe and clippe it in hir armes full hard. And thise com for to take hir awey, but they myght not hir remeve, and yet thei pulde and drough, but more dide thei nougħt. And thei were nygh woode for
190

166 **her**, their. 167 **quat**, hidden; **steyres**, stairs; **theras**, where. 168 **aparceyved of**, seen by. 173 **wolde crye**, wanted to cry out. 174 **sore affraied**, greatly frightened; **yef**, if. 176 **wherein**, in which. 179 **comberouse**, difficult; **yef**, if. 182 **that**, that which. 183 **enbusshement**, ambush; **ascryed**, rebuked; **cleped**, called. 184 **and**, i.e., that. 185 **ascrye**, acost; **preised**, valued. 188 **maugré hire**, despite her wishes. 189 **braied rudely**, jerked quickly. 190 **ympe**, tree; **clippe**, clasped. 191 **thise**, these men; **yet**, though. 192 **woode**, insane.

Prose Merlin

sorowe and angre that for a litill thei wolde hir have slayn.

And Ulfin and Bretell be come to these five that hem abide with swerdes drawen;
195 and Bretell smote so the firste that he mette that he slytte hym to the teth, and
Ulfin smote another that the heede fill to grounde. And the other thre smyte at hem
sore, but nought thei myght hem apeire, for thei were well armed. And thei wolde
have fledde, but thei kepte hem so shorte that alle thre there were deed. And thei
com to the tother fyve that peyned to lede awey the quene by force, but thei
200 myght not have hir away from the ympe. And thei plukked at hir so sore that nygh
thei rente bothe armes from the body. And whan that Ulfin and Bretell saugh the
queene in soche turnement, thei ronne thider and hem ascried. And anoon thei
com hem ageins, and yaf togeder grete strokes with swerdes theras thei myght
atteyne, that thei slowgh tweyne of the five. And thei saugh thei were but thre,
205 and thei turned to flight down the lane towarde the barge.

And whan Ulfin and Bretell saugh hem fleen, thei sette no force hem to enchace
but com to the olde devell, the maistresse, and caught hir by the sholderes and
caste hir down the roche; and [she] rolled fro roche to roche till she com to the
river. And than thei caste in the bodyes of alle hem that thei hadde slayn. And
210 than thei toke the queene and ledde hir to hir chambre sore affraied, and thei
badde hir be nothinge dismayed. Than thei toke the false Gonnore and ledde hir to
theire hostell, for thei wolde that noon aparceyved her covyne.

Thus, as ye have herde, were the traitours demened by the counseile of Merlin,
and the Queene was socoured by these two worthi men. And as soone as thei were
215 gon, anoon Merlin it knewe well; and than he badde the kynge sende two maydenes
into the chamber to the queene for to bringe hir to bedde. And the kynge asked,
“Wherfore is ther not inowgh of the maistresse?” And Merlin tolde him the trouthe,
all as it was befallen. And whan the kynge it herde, he merveiled moche of this
thinge, and seide he sholde not be in ese till he hadde spoken with his doughter.

196 **heede**, head. 197 **apeire**, injure. 198 **kepte hem so shorte**, dealt with them so quickly. 199 **peyned**, tried. 200 **sore**, strongly; **nygh**, nearly. 201 **rente**, tore. 202 **turnement**, torment; **ascried**, acosted. 203 **yaf**, gave; **theras**, where. 204 **atteyne**, reach; **slowgh**, slew. 206 **sette no force**, made no attempt; **enchace**, chase. 212 **wolde**, wished; **noon aparceyved her covyne**, no one knew where she was confined. 213 **demened**, thwarted. 215 **the kynge**, i.e., Leodegan. 217 **Wherfore . . . maistresse**, Why is not the mistress sufficient. 219 **in ese**, relieved.

The Marriage of Arthur and Gonne

220 And than departed the Kynge Leodogan and com into the chamber whereas
Gonne his daughter was, and brought with hym two maydenes to helpe hir to
bedde. And whan she saugh hir fader, she began tenderly to wepe; and the kynge
toke hir by the hande and spake with hir sooll by hirself, and he badde hir not to be
dismayed, for she sholde no more have no drede. And she tolde hym all the aventure
225 that was befallen. And than the kynge comaunded the maydenes to make hir redy
and bringe hir to bedde, and thei anoon dide his comaundement. And the Kynge
Leodogan wolde never departe oute of the chambre till that he saugh the signe of
the crowne upon hire reynes; and than wiste he verily that it was his daughter
upon his wif, and than he covered hir agein and wente oute of the chambre and
230 spake no worde. And the dameseiles merveiled sore whi that he dide so.

And than com the Kynge Arthur and his compayne from theire disporte. And
whan he com into the halle, the Kynge Leodogan and Merlin com hym ageins and
badde hym go to his wif to bedde, for it was reson and high tyme. And he seide he
wolde with goode will, and com into the chambre where the two maidenes weren
235 that hadde brought the queene to bedde. And as soone as he was in his bedde, thei
departed oute of the chambre and lefte no moo but hem two; and ther thei ledde
myri lif togeder as thei that well loved.

Thus sholde the queene have be disceyved by these traitours, and thourgh hem
afterward hadde she grete annoye that longe tyme endured, as the storie shall
240 declare, how that the kynge hir lefte thre yer, that she com never in his compayne
but was with Galehaut, a riche prince in the reame of Sorloys, for the love of
Launcelot. And the Kynge Arthur hilde in avoutrye the false Gonne till that a
maladie hir toke; and Bertelak a traitour that made he wolde hir not forsake for no
man till that she stanke and rotened above erthe. And the reame was therfore nygh
245 thre yere enderdited, and stode acursed that never manes body ne womans was
byried in noon halowed place, but acursed be the centense of Holy Cherche. And
all this trouble suffred oure Lorde hem for to have for hir synnes that were right
grete; and all this com thourgh a knyght that died after upon myschevouse deth,
as ye shull here declared in the seconde book of this storie, and it is reson to telle

223 sooll, alone. **228 reynes**, loins. **229 upon**, begotten upon. **232 hym ageins**, to him.
238 be², by. **239 annoye**, difficulties. **240 the kynge**, i.e., Arthur; **lefte**, abandoned; **yer**,
years. **242 hilde in avoutrye**, held in adultery. **243 toke**, took; **that made**, made it so
that. **245 enderdited**, under interdict. **246 centense**, sentence. **249 here**, hear.

Prose Merlin

250 what was the cause that it fill.

This was the trouthe, that the Kynge Leodogan was a noble knyght and kepte well justice and right. And he hadde with hym a wise knyght that hadde don hym goode servise; and he was come of high lynage and hadde be a goode knyght in his tyme and was cleped Bertelak. And he hated a knyght dedly for that he hadde slain his cosin germain for his wif that he loved. And whan Bertelak wiste that he hadde his cosin slain and his wif diffouled, he ne deyned not to make no playnt to the Kynge Leodogan but com to hym and hym diffied, and awaited hym after many a day and many a nyght.

And it fill that same even that Arthur hadde wedded his wif that the knyghtes departeden fro the court and wente to theire hostels; and [it] happed that Bertelak mette that knyght and with hym two squyers; and anoon Bertelak ran upon hym and hym slowgh. And whan he hadde don, he wente to his hostell; and the two squyers that were with the knyght made a grete crie that the peple ronne oute on alle parties with lanternes and brondes of fire and torches brennyng, and fonde the knyght slain. And thei aske the two squyers that made so grete doell who hadde hym slain, and thei seide that Bertelak the Rede hadde it don. And whan the squyers hadde cried and braied for theire lord longe while, thei toke hym up and bar hym to theire hostell, and dide hym birie as oon sholde do a deed knyght, and dide the servise at cherche as therto belonged.

270 And on the morowe, Ulfen and Bretell sente after Cleodalis the Stiward for to come speke with hem in her hostell; and he com anoon with goode chere as fre and debonair. And anoon as he was comen, thei toke hym in counseile and tolde hym all the aventure as it was befallen how his daughter hadde wrought. And whan he hadde herde the untrouthe of hire, he seide his daughter was she not. “For yef she hadde be my doughter, she hadde not done this for nothinge that is in the erthe.” And as thei spake togeder amone hem thre.

The Kynge Leodogan was arisen erly, for sore was he affraied of the merveiles that were befallen that nyght of his doughter. And Merlin was also arisen and seide,

255 **cosin germain**, first cousin; **wiste**, knew. 256 **diffouled**, raped; **ne deyned not**, chose not; **no playnt**, a complaint. 257 **diffied**, challenged; **awaited hym after**, watched for him. 261 **anoon**, immediately. 262 **slowgh**, slew. 264 **parties**, sides; **brennyng**, burning. 267 **braied**, wept. 268 **birie**, bury. 271–72 **fre and debonair**, [one] generous and courteous. 273 **wrought**, acted. 275 **yef**, if. 276 **as**, thus.

The Marriage of Arthur and Gonne

280 "Sir, God yeve yow goode morowe." And whan the kynge hym saugh, he made
hym feire chere and bad God hym blisse. Than eche toke other be the hande and
wente spekyng of many thinges till thei com to the hostell of Ulfin and Bretell.
And thei entred in so stilliche that thei therof wiste no worde till thei were even
comen upon hem. And anoon as thei were of hem war, thei yede hem ageins as
285 thei that nothinge were abaissched to worship eny worthi man. Than thei entred
into a chambre alle five, and Ulfin brought forth Gonne and tolde how she and
the traitours hadde wrought, notwithstandinge thei knewe it alle wele, for Merlin
hadde it tolde the kynge all as it was.

290 Than spake the Kinge Leodagan to his stiwarde and seide, "Sir Senescall, I love
yow well, and fayn I wolde purchace youre worship for to encrce, and so I shall
do yef I may lyve, for full well ye have me served and trewly. And therfore wolde
I do nothinge that sholde yow turne to shame or reprof, and wite ye wherfore I it
sey. Se here youre daughter, that wele hath deserved that ther sholde be don on
hir justice. But ye have be so trewe to me that I ought it wele to pardon for the
love of yow, or a gretter thinge than is this. But for that me behoveth for to take
295 vengaunce in some manere, hit behoveth yow to bringe hir oute of this reame in
soche wise that never she be sein of man ne of woman that hir knowe; for so I will
that it be done."

300 And the stiwarde ansuerde and seide that his doughter ne was she never. But in
as moche as it was his wille and his comaundement, he wolde hit don. "For so
God helpe me," quod he, "I hadde lever she hadde be biried all quyk than this
hadde hir befallen. Ne to me she ne aperteyned nothinge never." "Now," quod the
kynge, "lete be all this matier and loke that it be don in soche maner that I never
here more speche of hir hereafter, and that ye take of myne what that is youre
plesier."

279 **yeve**, give. 282 **stilliche**, quietly; **wiste**, knew. 283 **anoon as**, as soon as; **war**,
aware; **yede hem ageins**, went to him. 284 **abaissched**, hesitant. 286 **wrought**, done;
notwithstandinge, despite the fact. 289 **fayn I wolde purchace**, happily would I cause;
worship, honor; **encrece**, increase. 292 **Se**, See. 293 **be**, been. 294 **me behoveth for**, I am
required. 295 **hit behoveth**, it is right for. 296 **sein of**, seen by; **will**, wish. 298 **ne was**,
was. 299 **wolde hit don**, would it do. 300 **hadde lever**, would rather; **be biried all quyk**,
been buried alive. 301 **Ne**, Nor; **ne aperteyned nothinge**, means nothing at all. 303 **here**,
hear.

Prose Merlin

305 Thus was take the counseile of the barouns. And Cleodalis appareiled hym and his stepdoughter to go withouten lenger respite, and rode forth by theire journeyes till thei com oute of the reame of Carmelide into an abbey that stode in a full wilde place. And ther he hir lefte, as seith the storie, till that Bertelak the Reade hir fonde, whiche by his art and his engyn by hir lay longe tyme after. But of hir as
310 now speketh no more the tale, saf that Cleodalis lefte hir there and com agein to Toraise into the grete court of the Kynge Leodogan in Carmelide whereas was the Kynge Arthur.

305 take, taken; **appareiled hym**, prepared himself. **306 lenger respite**, further hesitation. **307 wilde**, desolate. **309 fonde**, found; **engyn**, devices; **as**, for. **310 saf**, except.