

**Yvain, ou le chevalier au lion by Chrétien de Troyes, c. 1180**

**transl. W.W. Comfort; Everyman's Library, London, 1914**

But during the week they had all begged urgently, and with all the insistence at their command, that they might take away my lord Yvain with them. "What? Will you be one of those." said my lord Gawain to him, "who degenerate after marriage? Cursed be he by Saint Mary who marries and then degenerates! Whoever has a fair lady as his mistress or his wife should be the better for it, and it is not right that her affection should be bestowed on him after his worth and reputation are gone. Surely you, too, would have cause to regret her love if you grew soft, for a woman quickly withdraws her love, and rightly so, and despises him who degenerates in any way when he has become lord of the realm. Now ought your fame to be increased! Slip off the bridle and halter and come to the tournament with me, that no one may say that you are jealous. Now you must no longer hesitate to frequent the lists, to share in the onslaught, and to contend with force, whatever effort it may cost! Inaction produces indifference. But, really, you must come, for I shall be in your company. Have a care that our comradeship shall not fail through any fault of yours, fair companion; for my part, you may count on me. It is strange how a man sets store by the life of ease which has no end. Pleasures grow sweeter through postponement; and a little pleasure, when delayed, is much sweeter to the taste than great pleasure enjoyed at once. The sweets of a love which develops late are like a fire in a green bush; for the longer one delays in lighting it the greater will be the heat it yields, and the longer will its force endure. One may easily fall into habits which it is very difficult to shake off, for when one desires to do so, he finds he has lost the power. Don't misunderstand my words, my friend: if I had such a fair mistress as you have, I call God and His saints to witness, I should leave her most reluctantly; indeed, I should doubtless be infatuated. But a man may give another counsel, which he would not take himself, just as the preachers, who are deceitful rascals, and preach and proclaim the right but who do not follow it themselves."

My lord Gawain spoke at such length and so urgently that he promised him that he would go; but he said that he must consult his lady and ask for her consent. Whether it be a foolish or a prudent thing to do, he will not fail to ask her leave to return to Britain. Then he took counsel with his wife, who had no inkling of the permission he desired, as he addressed her with these words: "My beloved lady, my heart and soul, my treasure, joy, and happiness, grant me now a favour which will redound to your honour and to mine." The lady at once gives her consent, not knowing what his desire is, and says: "Fair lord, you may command me your pleasure, whatever it be." Then my lord Yvain at once asks her for permission to escort the King and to attend at tournaments, that no one may reproach his indolence. And she replies: "I grant you leave until a certain date; but be sure that my love will change to hate if you stay beyond the term that I shall fix. Remember that I shall keep my word; if you break your word I will keep mine. If you wish to possess my love, and if you have any regard for me, remember to come back again at the latest a year from the present date a week after St. John's day; for to-day is the eighth day since that feast. You will be checkmated of my love if you are not restored to me on that day."

My lord Yvain weeps and sighs so bitterly that he can hardly find words to say: "My lady, this date is indeed a long way off. If I could be a dove, whenever the fancy came to me, I should often rejoin you here. And I pray God that in His pleasure He may not detain me so long away. But sometimes a man intends speedily to return who knows not what the future has in store for him. And I know not what will be my fate — perhaps some urgency of sickness or imprisonment may keep me back: you are unjust in not making an exception at least of actual hindrance." "My lord," says she, "I will make that exception. And yet I dare to promise you that, if God deliver you from death, no hindrance will stand in your way so long as you remember me. So put on your finger now this ring of mine, which I lend to you. And I will tell you all about the stone: no true and loyal lover can be imprisoned or lose any blood, nor can any harm befall him, provided he carry it and hold it dear, and keep his sweetheart in mind. You will become as hard as iron, and it will serve you as shield and hauberk. I have never before been willing to lend or entrust it to any knight, but to you I give it because of my affection for you." Now my lord Yvain is free to go, but he weeps bitterly on taking leave. The King, however, would not tarry longer for anything that might be said: rather was he anxious to have the palfreys brought all equipped and bridled. They acceded at once to his desire, bringing the palfreys forth, so that it

remained only to mount. I do not know whether I ought to tell you how my lord Yvain took his leave, and of the kisses bestowed on him, mingled with tears and steeped in sweetness. And what shall I tell you about the King how the lady escorts him, accompanied by her damsels and seneschal? All this would require too much time. When he sees the lady's tears, the King implores her to come no farther, but to return to her abode. He begged her with such urgency that, heavy at heart, she turned about followed by her company.

My lord Yvain is so distressed to leave his lady that his heart remains behind. The King may take his body off, but he cannot lead his heart away. She who stays behind clings so tightly to his heart that the King has not the power to take it away with him. When the body is left without the heart it cannot possibly live on. For such a marvel was never seen as the body alive without the heart. Yet this marvel now came about: for he kept his body without the heart, which was wont to be enclosed in it, but which would not follow the body now. The heart has a good abiding-place, while the body, hoping for a safe return to its heart, in strange fashion takes a new heart of hope, which is so often deceitful and treacherous. He will never know in advance, I think, the hour when this hope will play him false, for if he overstays by single day the term which he has agreed upon, it will be hard for him to gain again his lady's pardon and goodwill. Yet I think he will overstay the term, for my lord Gawain will not allow him to part from him, as together they go to joust wherever tournaments are held. And as the year passes by my lord Yvain had such success that my lord Gawain strove to honour him, and caused him to delay so long that all the first year slipped by, and it came to the middle of August of the ensuing year, when the King held court at Chester, whither they had returned the day before from a tournament where my lord Yvain had been and where he had won the glory and the story tells how the two companions were unwilling to lodge in the town, but had their tents set up outside the city, and held court there. For they never went to the royal court, but the King came rather to join in theirs, for they had the best knights, and the greatest number, in their company. Now King Arthur was seated in their midst, when Yvain suddenly had a thought which surprised him more than any that had occurred to him since he had taken leave of his lady, for he realised that he had broken his word, and that the limit of his leave was already exceeded. He could hardly keep back his tears, but he succeeded in doing so from shame. He was still deep in thought when he saw a damsel approaching rapidly upon a black palfrey with white forefeet. As she got down before the tent no one helped her to dismount, and no one went to take her horse. As soon as she made out the King, she let her mantle fall, and thus displayed she entered the tent and came before the King, announcing that her mistress sent greetings to the King, and to my lord Gawain and all the other knights, except Yvain, that disloyal traitor, liar, hypocrite, who had deserted her deceitfully. "She has seen clearly the treachery of him who pretended he was a faithful lover while he was a false and treacherous thief. This thief has traduced my lady, who was all unprepared for any evil, and to whom it never occurred that he would steal her heart away. Those who love truly do not steal hearts away; there are, however, some men, by whom these former are called thieves, who themselves go about deceitfully making love, but in whom there is no real knowledge of the matter. The lover takes his lady's heart, of course, but he does not run away with it; rather does he treasure it against those thieves who, in the guise of honourable men, would steal it from him. But those are deceitful and treacherous thieves who vie with one another in stealing hearts for which they care nothing. The true lover, wherever he may go, holds the heart dear and brings it back again. But Yvain has caused my lady's death, for she supposed that he would guard her heart for her, and would bring it back again before the year elapsed. Yvain, thou wast of short memory when thou couldst not remember to return to thy mistress within a year. She gave thee thy liberty until St. John's day, and thou settest so little store by her that never since has a thought of her crossed thy mind. My lady had marked every day in her chamber, as the seasons passed: for when one is in love, one is ill at ease and cannot get any restful sleep, but all night long must needs count and reckon up the days as they come and go. Dost thou know how lovers spend their time? They keep count of the time and the season. Her complaint is not presented prematurely or without cause, and I am not accusing him in any way, but I simply say that we have been ~ betrayed by him who married my lady. Yvain, my mistress has no further care for thee, but sends thee word by me never to come back to her, and no longer to keep her ring. She bids thee send it back to her by me, whom thou seest present here. Surrender it now, as thou art bound to do."

Senseless and deprived of speech, Yvain is unable to reply. And the damsel steps forth and takes the ring from his finger, commending to God the King and all the others except him, whom she leaves in deep distress. And his sorrow grows on him: he feels oppressed by what he hears, and is tormented by what he

sees. He would rather be banished alone in some wild land, where no one would know where to seek for him, and where no man or woman would know of his whereabouts any more than if he were in some deep abyss. He hates nothing so much as he hates himself, nor does he know to whom to go for comfort in the death he has brought upon himself. But he would rather go insane than not take vengeance upon himself, deprived, as he is, of joy through his own fault. He rises from his place among the knights, fearing he will lose his mind if he stays longer in their midst. On their part, they pay no heed to him, but let him take his departure alone. They know well enough that he cares nothing for their talk or their society. And he goes away until he is far from the tents and pavilions. Then such a storm broke loose in his brain that he loses his senses; he tears his flesh and, stripping off his clothes, he flees across the meadows and fields, leaving his men quite at a loss, and wondering what has become of him. They go in search of him through all the country around — in the lodgings of the knights, by the hedgerows, and in the gardens — but they seek him where he is not to be found. Still fleeing, he rapidly pursued his way until he met close by a park a lad who had in his hand a bow and five barbed arrows, which were very sharp and broad. He had sense enough to go and take the bow and arrows which he held. However, he had no recollection of anything that he had done. He lies in wait for the beasts in the woods, killing them, and then eating the venison raw. Thus he dwelt in the forest like a madman or a savage, until he came upon a little, low-lying house belonging to a hermit, who was at work clearing his ground. When he saw him coming with nothing on, he could easily perceive that he was not in his right mind; and such was the case, as the hermit very well knew. So, in fear, he shut himself up in his little house, and taking some bread and fresh water, he charitably set it outside the house on a narrow window-ledge. And thither the other comes, hungry for the bread which he takes and eats. I do not believe that he ever before had tasted such hard and bitter bread. The measure of barley kneaded with the straw, of which the bread, sourer than yeast, was made, had not cost more than five sous; and the bread was musty and as dry as bark. But hunger torments and whets his appetite, so that the bread tasted to him like sauce. For hunger is itself a well mixed and concocted sauce for any food. My lord Yvain soon ate the hermit's bread, which tasted good to him, and drank the cool water from the jar. When he had eaten, he betook himself again to the woods in search of stags and does. And when he sees him going away, the good man beneath his roof prays God to defend him and guard him lest he ever pass that way again. But there is no creature, with howsoever little sense, that will not gladly return to a place where he is kindly treated. So, not a day passed while he was in this mad fit that he did not bring to his door some wild game. Such was the life he led; and the good man took it upon himself to remove the skin and set a good quantity of the venison to cook; and the bread and the water in the jug was always standing on the window-ledge for the madman to make a meal. Thus he had something to eat and drink: venison without salt or pepper, and good cool water from the spring. And the good man exerted himself to sell the hide and buy bread made of barley, or oats, or of some other grain; so, after that, Yvain had a plentiful supply of bread and venison, which sufficed him for a long time [...]

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Pensively my lord Yvain proceeded through a deep wood, until he heard among the trees a very loud and dismal cry, and he turned in the direction whence it seemed to come. And when he had arrived upon the spot he saw in a cleared space a lion, and a serpent which held him by the tail, burning his hind-quarters with flames of fire. My lord Yvain did not gape at this strange spectacle, but took counsel with himself as to which of the two he should aid. Then he says that he will succour the lion, for a treacherous and venomous creature deserves to be harmed. Now the serpent is poisonous, and fire bursts forth from its mouth — so full of wickedness is the creature. So my lord Yvain decides that he will kill the serpent first. Drawing his sword he steps forward, holding the shield before his face in order not to be harmed by the flame emerging from the creature's throat, which was larger than a pot. If the lion attacks him next, he too shall have all the fight he wishes; but whatever may happen afterwards he makes up his mind to help him now. For pity urges him and makes request that he should bear succour and aid to the gentle and noble beast. With his sword, which cuts so clean, he attacks the wicked serpent, first cleaving him through to the earth and cutting him in two, then continuing his blows until he reduces him to tiny bits. But he had to cut off a piece of the lion's tail to get at the serpent's head, which held the lion by the tail. He cut off only so much as was necessary and unavoidable. When he had set the lion free, he supposed that he would have to fight with him, and that the lion would come at him; but the lion was not minded so. Just hear now what the lion did! He acted nobly and as one well-bred; for he began to make it evident that he yielded himself to him, by standing upon his two hind-feet

and bowing his face to the earth, with his fore- feet joined and stretched out toward him. Then he fell on his knees again, and all his face was wet with the tears of humility. My lord Yvain knows for a truth that the lion is thanking him and doing him homage because of the serpent which he had killed, thereby delivering him from death. He was greatly pleased by this episode. He cleaned his sword of the serpent's poison and filth; then he replaced it in its scabbard, and resumed his way. And the lion walks close by his side, unwilling henceforth to part from him: he will always in future accompany him, eager to serve and protect him. [1] He goes ahead until he scents in the wind upon his way some wild beasts feeding; then hunger and his nature prompt him to seek his prey and to secure his sustenance. It is his nature so to do. He started ahead a little on the trail, thus showing his master that he had come upon and detected the odour and scent of some wild game. Then he looks at him and halts, wishing to serve his every wish, and unwilling to proceed against his will. Yvain understands by his attitude that he is showing that he awaits his pleasure. He perceives this and understands that if he holds back he will hold back too, and that if he follows him he will seize the game which he has scented. Then he incites and cries to him, as he would do to hunting-dogs. At once the lion directed his nose to the scent which he had detected, and by which he was not deceived, for he had not gone a bow-shot when he saw in a valley a deer grazing all alone. This deer he will seize, if he has his way. And so he did, at the first spring, and then drank its blood still warm. When he had killed it he laid it upon his back and carried it back to his master, who thereupon conceived a greater affection for him, and chose him as a companion for all his life, because of the great devotion he found in him. It was near nightfall now, and it seemed good to him to spend the night there, and strip from the deer as much as he cared to eat. Beginning to carve it he splits the skin along the rib, and taking a steak from the loin he strikes from a flint a spark, which he catches in some dry brush- wood; then he quickly puts his steak upon a roasting spit to cook before the fire, and roasts it until it is quite cooked through. But there was no pleasure in the meal, for there was no bread, or wine, or salt, or cloth, or knife, or anything else. While he was eating, the lion lay at his feet; nor a movement did he make, but watched him steadily until he had eaten all that he could eat of the steak. What remained of the deer the lion devoured, even to the bones. And while all night his master laid his head upon his shield to gain such rest as that afforded, the lion showed such intelligence that he kept awake, and was careful to guard the horse as it fed upon the grass, which yielded some slight nourishment.

In the morning they go off together, and the same sort of existence, it seems, as they had led that night, they two continued to lead all the ensuing week, until chance brought them to the spring beneath the pine-tree. There my lord Yvain almost lost his wits a second time, as he approached the spring, with its stone and the chapel that stood close by. So great was his distress that a thousand times he sighed "alas!" and grieving fell in a swoon; and the point of his sharp sword, falling from its scabbard, pierced the meshes of his hauberk right in the neck beside the cheek. There is not a mesh that does not spread, and the sword cuts the flesh of his neck beneath the shining mail, so that it causes the blood to start. Then the lion thinks that he sees his master and companion dead. You never heard greater grief narrated or told about anything than he now began to show. He casts himself about, and scratches and cries, and has the wish to kill himself with the sword with which he thinks his master has killed himself. Taking the sword from him with his teeth he lays it on a fallen tree, and steadies it on a trunk behind, so that it will not slip or give way, when he hurls his breast against it. His intention was nearly accomplished when his master recovered from his swoon, and the lion restrained himself as he was blindly rushing upon death, like a wild boar heedless of where he wounds himself. Thus my lord Yvain lies in a swoon beside the stone, but, on recovering, he violently reproached himself for the year during which he had overstayed his leave, and for which he had incurred his lady's hate, and he said: "Why does this wretch not kill himself who has thus deprived himself of joy? Alas! why do I not take my life? How can I stay here and look upon what belongs to my lady? Why does the soul still tarry in my body? What is the soul doing in so miserable a frame? If it had already escaped away it would not be in such torment. It is fitting to hate and blame and despise myself, even as in fact I do. Whoever loses his bliss and contentment through fault or error of his own ought to hate himself mortally. He ought to hate and kill himself. And now, when no one is looking on, why do I thus spare myself? Why do I not take my life? Have I not seen this lion a prey to such grief on my behalf that he was on the point just now of thrusting my sword through his breast? And ought I to fear death who have changed happiness into grief? Joy is now a stranger to me. Joy? What joy is that? I shall say no more of that, for no one could speak of such a thing; and I have

asked a foolish question. That was the greatest joy of all which was assured as my possession, but it endured for but a little while. Whoever loses such joy through his own misdeed is undeserving of happiness."

While he thus bemoaned his fate, a lorn damsel in sorry plight, who was in the chapel, saw him and heard his words through a crack in the wall. As soon as he was recovered from his swoon, she called to him: "God," said she, "who is that I hear? Who is it that thus complains?" And he replied: "And who are you?" "I am a wretched one," she said, "the most miserable thing alive." And he replied: "Be silent, foolish one! Thy grief is joy and thy sorrow is bliss compared with that in which I am cast down. In proportion as a man becomes more accustomed to happiness and joy, so is he more distracted and stunned than any other man by sorrow when it comes. A man of little strength can carry, through custom and habit, a weight which another man of greater strength could not carry for anything." "Upon my word," she said, "I know the truth of that remark; but that is no reason to believe that your misfortune is worse than mine. Indeed, I do not believe it at all, for it seems to me that you can go anywhere you choose to go, whereas I am imprisoned here, and such a fate is my portion that to-morrow I shall be seized and delivered to mortal judgment." "Ah, God!" said he, "and for what crime?" "Sir knight, may God never have mercy upon my soul, if I have merited such a fate! Nevertheless, I shall tell you truly, without deception, why I am here in prison: I am charged with treason, and I cannot find any one to defend me from being burned or hanged to-morrow." "In the first place," he replied, "I may say that my grief and woe are greater than yours, for you may yet be delivered by some one from the peril in which you are. Is that not true?" "Yes, but I know not yet by whom. There are only two men in the world who would dare on my behalf to face three men in battle." "What? In God's name, are there three of them?" "Yes, sire, upon my word. There are three who accuse me of treachery." "And who are they who are so devoted to you that either one of them would be bold enough to fight against three in your defence?" "I will answer your question truthfully: one of them is my lord Gawain, and the other is my lord Yvain, because of whom I shall to-morrow be handed over unjustly to the martyrdom of death." "Because of whom?" he asked, "what did you say?" "Sire, so help me God, because of the son of King Urien." "Now I understand your words, but you shall not die, without he dies too. I myself am that Yvain, because of whom you are in such distress. And you, I take it, are she who once guarded me safely in the hall, and saved my life and my body between the two portcullises, when I was troubled and distressed, and alarmed at being trapped. I should have been killed or seized, had it not been for your kind aid. Now tell me, my gentle friend, who are those who now accuse you of treachery, and have confined you in this lonely place?" "Sire, I shall not conceal it from you, since you desire me to tell you all. It is a fact that I was not slow in honestly aiding you. Upon my advice my lady received you, after heeding my opinion and my counsel. And by the Holy Paternoster, more for her welfare than for your own I thought I was doing it, and I think so still. So much now I confess to you: it was her honour and your desire that I sought to serve, so help me God! But when it became evident that you had overstayed the year when you should return to my mistress, then she became enraged at me, and thought that she had been deceived by putting trust in my advice. And when this was discovered by the seneschal — a rascally, underhanded, disloyal wretch, who was jealous of me because in many matters my lady trusted me more than she trusted him, he saw that he could now stir up great enmity between me and her. In full court and in the presence of all he accused me of having betrayed her in your favour. And I had no counsel or aid except my own; but I knew that I had never done or conceived any treacherous act toward my lady, so I cried out, as one beside herself, and without the advice of any one, that I would present in my own defence one knight who should fight against three. The fellow was not courteous enough to scorn to accept such odds, nor was I at liberty to retreat or withdraw for anything that might happen. So he took me at my word, and I was compelled to furnish bail that I would present within forty days a knight to do battle against three knights. Since then I have visited many courts; I was at King Arthur's court, but found no help from any there, nor did I find any one who could tell me any good news of you, for they knew nothing of your affairs." "Pray tell me. Where then was my good and gentle lord Gawain? No damsel in distress ever needed his aid without its being extended to her." "If I had found him at court, I could not have asked him for anything which would have been refused me; but a certain knight has carried off the Queen, so they told me; surely the King was mad to send her off in his company. [2] I believe it was Kay who escorted her to meet the knight who has taken her away; and my lord Gawain in great distress has gone in search for her. He will never have any rest until he finds her. Now I have told you the whole truth of my adventure. To-morrow I shall be put to a shameful death, and shall be burnt inevitably, a victim of your

criminal neglect." And he replies: "May God forbid that you should be harmed because of me! So long as I live you shall not die! You may expect me tomorrow, prepared to the extent of my power to present my body in your cause, as it is proper that I should do. But have no concern to tell the people who I am! However the battle may turn out, take care that I be not recognised!" "Surely, sire, no pressure could make me reveal your name. I would sooner suffer death, since you will have it so. Yet, after all, I beg you not to return for my sake. I would not have you undertake a battle which will be so desperate. I thank you for your promised word that you would gladly undertake it, but consider yourself now released, for it is better that I should die alone than that I should see them rejoice over your death as well as mine; they would not spare my life after they had put you to death. So it is better for you to remain alive than that we both should meet death." "That is very ungrateful remark, my dear," says my lord Yvain; "I suppose that either you do not wish to be delivered from death, or else that you scorn the comfort I bring you with my aid. I will not discuss the matter more, for you have surely done so much for me that I cannot fail you in any need. I know that you are in great distress; but, if it be God's will, in whom I trust, they shall all three be discomfited. So no more upon that score: I am going off now to find some shelter in this wood, for there is no dwelling near at hand." "Sire," she says, "may God give you both good shelter and good night, and protect you as I desire from everything that might do you harm!" Then my lord Yvain departs, and the lion as usual after him. They journeyed until they came to a baron's fortified place, which was completely surrounded by a massive, strong, and high wall. The castle, being extraordinarily well protected, feared no assault of catapult or storming-machine; but outside the walls the ground was so completely cleared that not a single hut or dwelling remained standing. You will learn the cause of this a little later, when the time comes. My lord Yvain made his way directly toward the fortified place, and seven varlets came out who lowered the bridge and advanced to meet him. But they were terrified at sight of the lion, which they saw with him, and asked him kindly to leave the lion at the gate lest he should wound or kill them. And he replies: "Say no more of that! For I shall not enter without him. Either we shall both find shelter here or else I shall stay outside; he is as dear to me as I am myself. Yet you need have no fear of him! For I shall keep him so well in hand that you may be quite confident." They made answer: "Very well!" Then they entered the town, and passed on until they met knights and ladies and charming damsels coming down the street, who salute him and wait to remove his armour as they say: "Welcome to our midst, fair sire! And may God grant that you tarry here until you may leave with great honour and satisfaction!" High and low alike extend to him a glad welcome, and do all they can for him, as they joyfully escort him into the town. But after they had expressed their gladness they are overwhelmed by grief, which makes them quickly forget their joy, as they begin to lament and weep and beat themselves. Thus, for a long space of time, they cease not to rejoice or make lament: it is to honour their guest that they rejoice, but their heart is not in what they do, for they are greatly worried over an event which they expect to take place on the following day, and they feel very sure and certain that it will come to pass before midday. My lord Yvain was so surprised that they so often changed their mood, and mingled grief with their happiness, that he addressed the lord of the place on the subject. "For God's sake," he said, "fair gentle sir, will you kindly inform me why you have thus honoured me, and shown at once such joy and such heaviness?" "Yes, if you desire to know, but it would be better for you to desire ignorance and silence. I will never tell you willingly anything to cause you grief. Allow us to continue to lament, and do you pay no attention to what we do!" "It would be quite impossible for me to see you sad and nor take it upon my heart, so I desire to know the truth, whatever chagrin may result to me." "Well, then," he said, "I will tell you all. I have suffered much from a giant, who has insisted that I should give him my daughter, who surpasses in beauty all the maidens in the world. This evil giant, whom may God confound, is named Harpin of the Mountain. Not a day passes without his taking all of my possessions upon which he can lay his hands. No one has a better right than I to complain, and to be sorrowful, and to make lament. I might well lose my senses from very grief, for I had six sons who were knights, fairer than any I knew in the world, and the giant has taken all six of them. Before my eyes he killed two of them, and to-morrow he will kill the other four, unless I find some one who will dare to fight him for the deliverance of my sons, or unless I consent to surrender my daughter to him; and he says that when he has her in his possession he will give her over to be the sport of the vilest and lewdest fellows in his house, for he would scorn to take her now for himself. That is the disaster which awaits me to-morrow, unless the Lord God grant me His aid. So it is no wonder, fair sir, if we are all in tears. But for your sake we strive for the moment to assume as cheerful a countenance as we can. For he is a fool who attracts a gentleman to his presence and then does not honour

him; and you seem to be a very perfect gentleman. Now I have told you the entire story of our great distress. Neither in town nor in fortress has the giant left us anything, except what we have here. If you had noticed, you must have seen this evening that he has not left us so much as an egg, except these walls which are new; for he has razed the entire town. When he had plundered all he wished, he set fire to what remained. In this way he has done me many an evil turn."

My lord Yvain listened to all that his host told him, and when he had heard it all he was pleased to answer him: "Sire, I am sorry and distressed about this trouble of yours; but I marvel greatly that you have not asked assistance at good King Arthur's court. There is no man so mighty that he could not find at his court some who would be glad to try their strength with his." Then the wealthy man reveals and explains to him that he would have had efficient help if he had known where to find my lord Gawain. "He would not have failed me upon this occasion, for my wife is his own sister; but a knight from a strange land, who went to court to seek the King's wife, has led her away. However, he could not have gotten possession of her by any means of his own invention, had it not been for Kay, who so befooled the King that he gave the Queen into his charge and placed her under his protection. He was a fool, and she imprudent to entrust herself to his escort. And I am the one who suffers and loses in all this; for it is certain that my excellent lord Gawain would have made haste to come here, had he known the facts, for the sake of his nephews and his niece. But he knows nothing of it, wherefore I am so distressed that my heart is almost breaking, for he is gone in pursuit of him, to whom may God bring shame and woe for having led the Queen away." While listening to this recital my lord Yvain does not cease to sigh. Inspired by the pity which he feels, he makes this reply: "Fair gentle sire, I would gladly undertake this perilous adventure, if the giant and your sons should arrive to-morrow in time to cause me no delay, for tomorrow at noon I shall be somewhere else, in accordance with a promise I have made." "Once for all, fair sire," the good man said, "I thank you a hundred thousand times for your willingness." And all the people of the house likewise expressed their gratitude.

Just then the damsel came out of a room, with her graceful body and her face so fair and pleasing to look upon. She was very simple and sad and quiet as she came, for there was no end to the grief she felt: she walked with her head bowed to the ground. And her mother, too, came in from an adjoining room, for the gentleman had sent for them to meet his guest. They entered with their mantles wrapped about them to conceal their tears; and he bid them throw back their mantles, and hold up their heads, saying: "You ought not to hesitate to obey my behests, for God and good fortune have given us here a very well-born gentleman who assures me that he will fight against the giant. Delay no longer now to throw yourselves at his feet!" "May God never let me see that!" my lord Yvain hastens to exclaim; "surely it would not be proper under any circumstances for the sister and the niece of my lord Gawain to prostrate themselves at my feet. May God defend me from ever giving place to such pride as to let them fall at my feet! Indeed, I should never forget the shame which I should feel; but I should be very glad if they would take comfort until to-morrow, when they may see whether God will consent to aid them. I have no other request to make, except that the giant may come in such good time that I be not compelled to break my engagement elsewhere; for I would not fail for anything to be present to-morrow noon at the greatest business I could ever undertake." Thus he is unwilling to reassure them completely, for he fears that the giant may not come early enough to allow him to reach in time the damsel who is imprisoned in the chapel. Nevertheless, he promises them enough to arouse good hope in them. They all alike join in thanking him, for they place great confidence in his prowess, and they think he must be a very good man, when they see the lion by his side as confident as a lamb would be. They take comfort and rejoice because of the hope they stake on him, and they indulge their grief no more. When the time came they led him off to bed in a brightly lighted room; both the damsel and her mother escorted him, for they prized him dearly, and would have done so a hundred thousand times more had they been informed of his prowess and courtesy. He and the lion together lay down there and took their rest. The others dared not sleep in the room; but they closed the door so tight that they could not come out until the next day at dawn. When the room was thrown open he got up and heard Mass, and then, because of the promise he had made, he waited until the hour of prime. Then in the hearing of all he summoned the lord of the town and said: "My lord, I have no more time to wait, but must ask your permission to leave at once; I cannot tarry longer here. But believe truly that I would gladly and willingly stay here yet awhile for the sake of the nephews and the niece of my beloved lord Gawain, if I did not have a great business on hand, and if it were not so far away." At this the damsel's blood quivered and boiled with fear, as well as the lady's and the

lord's. They were so afraid he would go away that they were on the point of humbling themselves and casting themselves at his feet, when they recalled that he would not approve or permit their action. Then the lord makes him an offer of all he will take of his lands or wealth, if only he will wait a little longer. And he replied: "God forbid that ever I should take anything of yours!" Then the damsel, who is in dismay, begins to weep aloud, and beseeches him to stay. Like one distracted and prey to dread, she begs him by the glorious queen of heaven and of the angels, and by the Lord, not to go but to wait a little while; and then, too, for her uncle's sake, whom he says he knows, and loves, and esteems. Then his heart is touched with deep pity when he hears her adjuring him in the name of him whom he loves the most, and by the mistress of heaven, and by the Lord, who is the very honey and sweet savour of pity. Filled with anguish he heaved a sigh, for were the kingdom of Tarsus at stake he would not see her burned to whom he had pledged his aid. If he could not reach her in time, he would be unable to endure his life, or would live on without his wits on the other hand, the kindness of his friend, my lord Gawain, only increased his distress; his heart almost bursts in half at the thought that he cannot delay. Nevertheless, he does not stir, but delays and waits so long that the giant came suddenly, bringing with him the knights: and hanging from his neck he carried a big square stake with a pointed end, and with this he frequently spurred them on. For their part they had no clothing on that was worth a straw, except some soiled and filthy shirts: and their feet and hands were bound with cords, as they came riding upon four limping jades, which were weak, and thin, and miserable. As they came riding along beside a wood, a dwarf, who was puffed up like a toad, had tied the horses' tails together, and walked beside them, beating them remorselessly with a four-knotted scourge until they bled, thinking thereby to be doing something wonderful. Thus they were brought along in shame by the giant and the dwarf. Stopping in the plain in front of the city gate, the giant shouts out to the noble lord that he will kill his sons unless he delivers to him his daughter, whom he will surrender to his vile fellows to become their sport. For he no longer loves her nor esteems her, that he should deign to abase himself to her. She shall be constantly beset by a thousand lousy and ragged knaves, vacant wretches, and scullery boys, who all shall lay hands on her. The worthy man is well-nigh beside himself when he hears how his daughter will be made a bawd, or else, before his very eyes, his four sons will be put to a speedy death. His agony is like that of one who would rather be dead than alive. Again and again he bemoans his fate, and weeps aloud and sighs. Then my frank and gentle lord Yvain thus began to speak to him: "Sire, very vile and impudent is that giant who vaunts himself out there. But may God never grant that he should have your daughter in his power! He despises her and insults her openly. It would be too great a calamity if so lovely a creature of such high birth were handed over to become the sport of boys. Give me now my arms and horse! Have the drawbridge lowered, and let me pass. One or the other must be cast down, either I or he, I know not which. If I could only humiliate the cruel wretch who is thus oppressing you, so that he would release your sons and should come and make amends for the insulting words he has spoken to you, then I would commend you to God and go about my business." Then they go to get his horse, and hand over to him his arms, striving so expeditiously that they soon have him quite equipped. They delayed as little as they could in arming him. When his equipment was complete, there remained nothing but to lower the bridge and let him go. They lowered it for him, and he went out. But the lion would by no means stay behind. All those who were left behind commended the knight to the Saviour, for they fear exceedingly lest their devilish enemy, who already had slain so many good men on the same field before their eyes, would do the same with him. So they pray God to defend him from death, and return him to them safe and sound, and that He may give him strength to slay the giant. Each one softly prays to God in accordance with his wish. And the giant fiercely came at him, and with threatening words thus spake to him: "By my eyes, the man who sent thee here surely had no love for thee! No better way could he have taken to avenge himself on thee. He has chosen well his vengeance for whatever wrong thou hast done to him." But the other, fearing naught, replies: "Thou treatest of what matters not. Now do thy best, and I'll do mine. Idle parley wearies me." Thereupon my lord Yvain, who was anxious to depart, rides at him. He goes to strike him on the breast, which was protected by a bear's skin, and the giant runs at him with his stake raised in air. My lord Yvain deals him such a blow upon the chest that he thrusts through the skin and wets the tip of his lance in his body's blood by way of sauce. And the giant belabours him with the stake, and makes him bend beneath the blows. My lord Yvain then draws the sword with which he knew how to deal fierce blows. He found the giant unprotected, for he trusted in his strength so much that he disdained to arm himself. And he who had drawn his blade gave him such a slash with the cutting edge, and not with the flat side, that he cut from his cheek a slice fit to roast. Then the other in turn gave him such a blow with the stake



that it made him sing in a heap upon his horse's neck. Thereupon the lion bristles up, ready to lend his master aid, and leaps up in his anger and strength, and strikes and tears like so much bark the heavy bearskin the giant wore, and he tore away beneath the skin a large piece of his thigh, together with the nerves and flesh. The giant escaped his clutches, roaring and bellowing like a bull, for the lion had badly wounded him. Then raising his stake in both hands, he thought to strike him, but missed his aim, when the lion leaped backward so he missed his blow, and fell exhausted beside my lord Yvain, but without either of them touching the other. Then my lord Yvain took aim and landed two blows on him. Before he could recover himself he had severed with the edge of his sword the giant's shoulder from his body. With the next blow he ran the whole blade of his sword through his liver beneath his chest; the giant falls in death's embrace. And if a great oak tree should fall, I think it would make no greater noise than the giant made when he tumbled down. All those who were on the wall would fain have witnessed such a blow. Then it became evident who was the most fleet of foot, for all ran to see the game, just like hounds which have followed the beast until they finally come up with him. So men and women in rivalry ran forward without delay to where the giant lay face downward. The daughter comes running, and her mother too. And the four brothers rejoice after the woes they have endured. As for my lord Yvain they are very sure that they could not detain him for any reason they might allege, but they beseech him to return and stay to enjoy himself as soon as he shall have completed the business which calls him away. And he replies that he cannot promise them anything, for as yet he cannot guess whether it will fare well or ill with him. But thus much did he say to his host: that he wished that his four sons and his daughter should take the dwarf and go to my lord Gawain when they hear of his return, and should tell and relate to him how he has conducted himself. For kind actions are of no use if you are not willing that they be known. And they reply: "It is not right that such kindness as this should be kept hid: we shall do whatever you desire. But tell us what we can say when we come before him. Whose praises can we speak, when we know not what your name may be?" And he answers them: "When you come before him, you may say thus much: that I told you 'The Knight with the Lion' was my name. And at the same time I must beg you to tell him from me that, if he does not recognise who I am, yet he knows me well and I know him. Now I must be gone from here, and the thing which most alarms me is that I may too long have tarried here, for before the hour of noon be passed I shall have plenty to do elsewhere, if indeed I can arrive there in time." Then, without further delay, he starts. But first his host begged him insistently that he would take with him his four sons: for there was none of them who would not strive to serve him, if he would allow it. But it did not please or suit him that any one should accompany him; so he left the place to them, and went away alone. And as soon as he starts, riding as fast as his steed can carry him, he heads toward the chapel. The path was good and straight, and he knew well how to keep the road. But before he could reach the chapel, the damsel had been dragged out and the pyre prepared upon which she was to be placed. Clad only in a shift, she was held bound before the fire by those who wrongly attributed to her an intention she had never had. My lord Yvain arrived, and, seeing her beside the fire into which she was about to be cast, he was naturally incensed. He would be neither courteous nor sensible who had any doubt about that fact. So it is true that he was much incensed; but he cherishes within himself the hope that God and the Right will be on his side. In such helpers he confides; nor does he scorn his lion's aid. Rushing quickly toward the crowd, he shouts: "Let the damsel be, you wicked folk! Having committed no crime, it is not right that she should be cast upon a pyre or into a furnace." And they draw off on either side, leaving a passage-way for him. But he yearns to see with his own eyes her whom his heart beholds in whatever place she may be. His eyes seek her until he finds her, while he subdues and holds in check his heart, just as one holds in check with a strong curb a horse that pulls. Nevertheless, he gladly gazes at her, and sighs the while; but he does not sigh so openly that his action is detected; rather does he stifle his sighs, though with difficulty. And he is seized with pity at hearing, seeing, and perceiving the grief of the poor ladies, who cried: "Ah, God, how hast Thou forgotten us! How desolate we shall now remain when we lose so kind a friend, who gave us such counsel and such aid, and interceded for us at court! It was she who prompted madame to clothe us with her clothes of vair. Henceforth the situation will change, for there will be no one to speak for us! Cursed be he who is the cause of our loss! For we shall fare badly in all this. There will be no one to utter such advice as this: 'My lady, give this vair mantle, this cloak, and this garment to such and such an honest dame! Truly, such charity will be well employed, for she is in very dire need of them.' No such words as these shall be uttered henceforth, for there is no one else who is frank and courteous; but every one solicits for himself rather than for some one else, even though he have no need."

Thus they were bemoaning their fate; and my lord Yvain who was in their midst, heard their complaints, which were neither groundless nor assumed. He saw Lunete on her knees and stripped to her shift, having already made confession, and besought God's mercy for her sins. Then he who had loved her deeply once came to her and raised her up, saying: "My damsel, where are those who blame and accuse you? Upon the spot, unless they refuse, battle will be offered them." And she, who had neither seen nor looked at him before, said: "Sire, you come from God in this time of my great need! The men who falsely accuse me are all ready before me here; if you had been a little later I should soon have been reduced to fuel and ashes. You have come here in my defence, and may God give you the power to accomplish it in proportion as I am guiltless of the accusation which is made against me!" The seneschal and his two brothers heard these words. "Ah!" they exclaim, "woman, chary of uttering truth but generous with lies! He indeed is mad who for thy words assumes so great a task. The knight must be simple-minded who has come here to die for thee, for he is alone and there are three of us. My advice to him is that he turn back before any harm shall come to him." Then he replies, as one impatient to begin: "Whoever is afraid, let him run away! I am not so afraid of your three shields that I should go off defeated without a blow. I should be indeed discourteous, if, while yet unscathed and in perfect case, I should leave the place and field to you. Never, so long as I am alive and sound, will I run away before such threats. But I advise thee to set free the damsel whom thou hast unjustly accused; for she tells me, and I believe her word, and she has assured me upon the salvation of her soul, that she never committed, or spoke, or conceived any treason against her mistress. I believe implicitly what she has told me, and will defend her as best I can, for I consider the righteousness of her cause to be in my favour. For, if the truth be known, God always sides with the righteous cause, for God and the Right are one; and if they are both upon my side, then I have better company and better aid than thou." [1] Then the other responds imprudently that he may make every effort that pleases him and is convenient to do him injury, provided that his lion shall not do him harm. And he replies that he never brought the lion to champion his cause, nor does he wish any but himself to take a hand: but if the lion attacks him, let him defend himself against him as best he can, for concerning him he will give no guarantee. Then the other answers: "Whatever thou mayst say; unless thou now warn thy lion, and make him stand quietly to one side, there is no use of thy longer staying here, but begone at once, and so shalt thou be wise; for throughout this country every one is aware how this girl betrayed her lady, and it is right that she receive her due reward in fire and flame." "May the Holy Spirit forbid!" says he who knows the truth; "may God not let me stir from here until I have delivered her!" Then he tells the lion to withdraw and to lie down quietly, and he does so obediently.

The lion now withdrew, and the parley and quarrel being ended between them two, they all took their distance for the charge. The three together spurred toward him, and he went to meet them at a walk. He did not wish to be overturned or hurt at this first encounter. So he let them split their lances, while keeping his entire, making for them a target of his shield, whereon each one broke his lance. Then he galloped off until he was separated from them by the space of an acre; but he soon returned to the business in hand, having no desire to delay. On his coming up the second time, he reached the seneschal before his two brothers, and breaking his lance upon his body, he carried him to earth in spite of himself, and he gave him such a powerful blow that for a long while he lay stunned, incapable of doing him any harm. And then the other two came at him with their swords bared, and both deal him great blows, but they receive still heavier blows from him. For a single one of the blows he deals is more than a match for two of theirs; thus he defends himself so well that they have no advantage over him, until the seneschal gets up and does his best to injure him, in which attempt the others join, until they begin to press him and get the upper hand. Then the lion, who is looking on, delays no longer to lend him aid; for it seems to him that he needs it now. And all the ladies, who are devoted to the damsel, beseech God repeatedly and pray to Him earnestly not to allow the death or the defeat of him who has entered the fray on her account. The ladies, having no other weapons, thus assist him with their prayers. And the lion brings him such effective aid, that at his first attack, he strikes so fiercely the seneschal, who was now on his feet, that he makes the meshes fly from the hauberk like straw, and he drags him down with such violence that he tears the soft flesh from his shoulder and all down his side. He strips whatever he touches, so that the entrails lie exposed. The other two avenge this blow.

Now they are all even on the field. The seneschal is marked for death, as he turns and welters in the red stream of warm blood pouring from his body. The lion attacks the others; for my lord Yvain is quite unable, though he did his best by beating or by threatening him, to drive him back; but the lion doubtless feels

confident that his master does not dislike his aid, but rather loves him the more for it: so he fiercely attacks them, until they have reason to complain of his blows, and they wound him in turn and use him badly. When my lord Yvain sees his lion wounded, his heart is wroth within his breast, and rightly so; but he makes such efforts to avenge him, and presses them so hard, that he completely reduces them; they no longer resist him, but surrender to him at discretion, because of the lion's help, who is now in great distress; for he was wounded everywhere, and had good cause to be in pain. For his part, my lord Yvain was by no means in a healthy state, for his body bore many a wound. But he is not so anxious about himself as about his lion, which is in distress. Now he has delivered the damsel exactly in accordance with his wish, and the lady has very willingly dismissed the grudge that she bore her. And those men were burned upon the pyre which had been kindled for the damsel's death; for it is right and just that he who has misjudged another, should suffer the same manner of death as that to which he had condemned the other. Now Lunete is joyous and glad at being reconciled with her mistress, and together they were more happy than any one ever was before. Without recognising him, all present offered to him, who was their lord, their service so long as life should last; even the lady, who possessed unknowingly his heart, begged him insistently to tarry there until his lion and he had quite recovered. And he replied: "Lady, I shall not now tarry here until my lady removes from me her displeasure and anger: then the end of all my labours will come." "Indeed," she said, "that grieves me. I think the lady cannot be very courteous who cherishes ill-will against you. She ought not to close her door against so valorous a knight as you, unless he had done her some great wrong." "Lady," he replies, "however great the hardship be, I am pleased by what ever may be her will. But speak to me no more of that; for I shall say nothing of the cause or crime, except to those who are informed of it." "Does any one know it, then, beside you two?" "Yes, truly, lady." "Well, tell us at least your name, fair sir; then you will be free to go." "Quite free, my lady? No, I shall not be free. I owe more than I can pay. Yet, I ought not to conceal from you my name. You will never hear of 'The Knight with the Lion' without hearing of me; for I wish to be known by that name." "For God's sake, sir, what does that name mean? For we never saw you before, nor have we ever heard mentioned this name of yours." "My lady, you may from that infer that my fame is not widespread." Then the lady says: "Once more, if it did not oppose your will, I would pray you to tarry here." "Really, my lady, I should not dare, until I knew certainly that I had regained my lady's good-will." "Well, then, go in God's name, fair sir; and, if it be His will, may He convert your grief and sorrow into joy." "Lady," says he, "may God hear your prayer." Then he added softly under his breath: "Lady, it is you who hold the key, and, though you know it not, you hold the casket in which my happiness is kept under lock."

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I pass over all that, until they mounted next morning and went away. They rode until they saw the town where King Arthur had been staying for a fortnight or more. And there, too, was the damsel who had deprived her sister of her heritage, for she had kept close to the court, waiting for the arrival of her sister, who now draws near. But she does not worry much, for she does not think that her sister can find any knight who can withstand my lord Gawain's attack, and only one day of the forty yet remains. If this single day had passed, she would have had the reasonable and legal right to claim the heritage for herself alone. But more stands in the way than she thinks or believes. That night they spent outside the town in a small and humble house, where, in accordance with their desire, they were not recognised. At the first sign of dawn the next morning they necessarily issue forth, but ensconce themselves in hiding until broad daylight.

I know not how many days had passed since my lord Gawain had so completely disappeared that no one at court knew anything about him, except only the damsel in whose cause he was to fight. He had concealed himself three or four leagues from the court, and when he returned he was so equipped that even those who knew him perfectly could not recognise him by the arms he bore. The damsel, whose injustice toward her sister was evident, presented him at court in the sight of all, for she intended with his help to triumph in the dispute where she had no rights. So she said to the King: "My lord, time passes. The noon hour will soon be gone, and this is the last day. As you see, I am prepared to defend my claim. If my sister were going to return, there would be nothing to do but await her arrival. But I may praise God that she is not coming back again. It is evident that she cannot better her affairs, and that her trouble has been for naught. For my part, I have been ready all the time up to this last day, to prove my claim to what is mine. I have proved my point entirely without a fight, and now I may rightfully go to accept my heritage in peace; for I shall render no

accounting for it to my sister as long as I live, and she will lead a wretched and miserable existence." Then the King, who well knew that the damsel was disloyally unjust toward her sister, said to her: "My dear, upon my word, in a royal court one must wait as long as the king's justice sits and deliberates upon the verdict. It is not yet time to pack up, for it is my belief that your sister will yet arrive in time." Before the King had finished, he saw the Knight with the Lion and the damsel with him. They two were advancing alone, having slipped away from the lion, who had stayed where they spent the night.

The King saw the damsel whom he did not fail to recognise, and he was greatly pleased and delighted to see her, for he was on her side of the quarrel, because he had regard for what was right. Joyfully he cried out to her as soon as he could: "Come forward, fair one: may God save you!" When the other sister hears these words, she turns trembling, and sees her with the knight whom she had brought to defend in her claim: then she turned blacker than the earth. The damsel, after being kindly welcomed by all, went to where the King was sitting. When she had come before him, she spoke to him thus: "God save the King and his household. If my rights in this dispute can be settled by a champion, then it will be done by this knight who has followed me hither. This frank and courteous knight had many other things to do elsewhere; but he felt such pity for me that he cast aside all his other affairs for the sake of mine. Now, madame, my very dear sister, whom I love as much as my own heart, would do the right and courteous thing if she would let me have so much of what is mine by right that there might be peace between me and her; for I ask for nothing that is hers." "Nor do I ask for anything that is thine," the other replied; "for thou hast nothing, and nothing shalt thou have. Thou canst never talk so much as to gain anything by thy words. Thou mayest dry up with grief." Then the other, who was very polite and sensible and courteous, replied with the words: "Certainly I am sorry that two such gentlemen as these should fight on our behalf over so small a disagreement. But I cannot disregard my claim, for I am in too great need of it. So I should be much obliged to you if you would give me what is rightly mine." "Surely," the other said, "any one would be a fool to consider thy demands. May I burn in evil fire and flame if I give thee anything to ease thy life! The banks of the Seine will meet, and the hour of prime will be called noon, before I refuse to carry out the fight." "May God and the right, which I have in this cause, and in which I trust and have trusted till the present time, aid him, who in charity and courtesy has offered himself in my service, though he knows not who I am, and though we are ignorant of each other's identity."

So they talked until their conversation ceased, and then produced the knights in the middle of the court. Then all the people crowd about, as people are wont to do when they wish to witness blows in battle or in joust. But those who were about to fight did not recognise each other, though their relations were wont to be very affectionate. Then do they not love each other now? I would answer you both "yes" and "no." And I shall prove that each answer is correct. In truth, my lord Gawain loves Yvain and regards him as his companion, and so does Yvain regard him, wherever he may be. Even here, if he knew who he was, he would make much of him, and either one of them would lay down his head for the other before he would allow any harm to come to him. Is not that a perfect and lofty love? Yes, surely. But, on the other hand, is not their hate equally manifest? Yes; for it is a certain thing that doubtless each would be glad to have broken the other's head, and so to have injured him as to cause his humiliation. Upon my word, it is a wondrous thing, that Love and mortal Hate should dwell together. God! How can two things so opposed find lodging in the same dwelling-place? It seems to me they cannot live together; for one could not dwell with the other, without giving rise to noise and contention, as soon as each knew of the other's presence. But upon the ground-floor there may be several apartments: for there are halls and sleeping-rooms. It may be the same in this case: I think Love had ensconced himself in some hidden room, while Hate had betaken herself to the balconies looking on the high-road, because she wishes to be seen. Just now Hate is in the saddle, and spurs and pricks forward as she can, to get ahead of Love who is indisposed to move. Ah! Love, what has become of thee? Come out now, and thou shalt see what a host has been brought up and opposed to thee by the enemies of thy friends. The enemies are these very men who love each other with such a holy love for love, which is neither false nor feigned, is a precious and a holy thing. In this case Love is completely blind, and Hate, too, is deprived of sight. For if Love had recognised these two men, he must have forbidden each to attack the other, or to do any thing to cause him harm. In this respect, then, Love is blind and discomfited and beguiled; for, though he sees them, he fails to recognise those who rightly belong to him. And though Hate is unable to tell why one of them should hate the other, yet she tries to engage them wrongfully, so that each hates the

other mortally. You know, of course, that he cannot be said to love a man who would wish to harm him and see him dead. How then? Does Yvain wish to kill his friend, my lord Gawain? Yes, and the desire is mutual. Would, then, my lord Gawain desire to kill Yvain with his own hands, or do even worse than I have said? Nay, not really, I swear and protest. One would not wish to injure or harm the other, in return for all that God has done for man, or for all the empire of Rome. But this, in turn, is a lie of mine, for it is plainly to be seen that, with lance raised high in rest, each is ready to attack the other, and there will be no restraint of the desire of each to wound the other with intent to injure him and work him woe. Now tell me! When one will have defeated the other, of whom can he complain who has the worst of it? For if they go so far as to come to blows, I am very much afraid that they will continue the battle and the strife until victory be definitely decided. If he is defeated, will Yvain be justified in saying that he has been harmed and wronged by a man who counts him among his friends, and who has never mentioned him but by the name of friend or companion? Or, if it comes about perchance that Yvain should hurt him in turn, or defeat him in any way, will Gawain have the right to complain? Nay, for he will not know whose fault it is. In ignorance of each other's identity, they both drew off and took their distance. At this first shock, their lances break, though they were stout, and made of ash. Not a word do they exchange, for if they had stopped to converse their meeting would have been different. In that case, no blow would have been dealt with lance or sword; they would have kissed and embraced each other rather than sought each other's harm. For now they attack each other with injurious intent. The condition of the swords is not improved, nor that of the helmets and shields, which are dented and split; and the edges of the swords are nicked and dulled. For they strike each other violently, not with the fiat of the swords, but with the edge, and they deal such blows with the pommels upon the nose-guards and upon the neck, forehead and cheeks, that they are all marked black and blue where the blood collects beneath the skin. And their hauberks are so torn, and their shields so broken in pieces, that neither one escaped without wounds. Their breath is almost exhausted with the labour of the strife; they hammer away at each other so lustily that every hyacinth and emerald set in their helmets is crushed and smashed. For they give each other such a battering with their pommels upon the helmets that they are quite stunned, as they almost beat out each other's brains. The eyes in their heads gleam like sparks, as, with stout square fists, and strong nerves, and hard bones, they strike each other upon the mouth as long as they can grip their swords, which are of great service to them in dealing their heavy blows.

When they had for a long time strained themselves, until the helmets were crushed, and the hauberks' meshes were torn apart with the hammering of the swords, and the shields were split and cracked, they drew apart a little to give their pulse a rest and to catch their breath again. However, they do not long delay, but run at each other again more fiercely than before. And all declare that they never saw two more courageous knights. "This fight between them is no jest, but they are in grim earnest. They will never be repaid for their merits and deserts." The two friends, in their bitter struggle, heard these words, and heard how the people were talking of reconciling the two sisters; but they had no success in placating the elder one. And the younger one said she would leave it to the King, and would not gainsay him in anything. But the elder one was so obstinate that even the Queen Guinevere and the knights and the King and the ladies and the townspeople side with the younger sister, and all join in beseeching the King to give her a third or a fourth part of the land in spite of the elder sister, and to separate the two knights who had displayed such bravery, for it would be too bad if one should injure the other or deprive him of any honour. And the King replied that he would take no hand in making peace, for the elder sister is so cruel that she has no desire for it. All these words were heard by the two, who were attacking each other so bitterly that all were astonished thereat; for the battle is waged so evenly that it is impossible to judge which has the better and which the worse. Even the two men themselves, who fight, and who are purchasing honour with agony, are filled with amazement and stand aghast, for they are so well matched in their attack, that each wonders who it can be that withstands him with such bravery. They fight so long that the day draws on to night, while their arms grow weary and their bodies sore, and the hot, boiling blood flows from many a spot and trickles down beneath their hauberks: they are in such distress that it is no wonder if they wish to rest. Then both withdraw to rest themselves, each thinking within himself that, however long he has had to wait, he now at last has met his match. For some time they thus seek repose, without daring to resume the fight. They feel no further desire to fight, because of the night which is growing dark, and because of the respect they feel for each other's

might. These two considerations keep them apart, and urge them to keep the peace. But before they leave the field they will discover each other's identity, and joy and mercy will be established between them.

My brave and courteous lord Yvain was the first to speak. But his good friend was unable to recognise him by his utterance; for he was prevented by his low tone and by his voice which was hoarse, weak, and broken; for his blood was all stirred up by the blows he had received. "My lord," he says, "the night comes on! I think no blame or reproach will attach to us if the night comes between us. But I am willing to admit, for my own part, that I feel great respect and admiration for you, and never in my life have I engaged in a battle which has made me smart so much, nor did I ever expect to see a knight whose acquaintance I should so yearn to make. You know well how to land your blows and how to make good use of them: I have never known a knight who was so skilled in dealing blows. It was against my will that I received all the blows you have bestowed on me to-day; I am stunned by the blows you have struck upon my head." "Upon my word," my lord Gawain replies, "you are not so stunned and faint but that I am as much so, or more. And if I should tell you the simple truth, I think you would not be loath to hear it, for if I have lent you anything of mine, you have fully paid me back, principal and interest; for you were more ready to pay back than I was to accept the payment. But however that may be, since you wish me to inform you of my name, it shall not be kept from you: my name is Gawain the son of King Lot." As soon as my lord Yvain heard that, he was amazed and sorely troubled; angry and grief-stricken, he cast upon the ground his bloody sword and broken shield, then dismounted from his horse, and cried: "Alas, what mischance is this! Through what unhappy ignorance in not recognising each other have we waged this battle! For if I had known who you were, I should never have fought with you; but, upon my word, I should have surrendered without a blow." "How is that?" my lord Gawain inquires, "who are you, then?" "I am Yvain, who love you more than any man in the whole wide world, for you have always been fond of me and shown me honour in every court. But I wish to make you such amends and do you such honour in this affair that I will confess myself to have been defeated." "Will you do so much for my sake?" my gentle lord Gawain asks him; "surely I should be presumptuous to accept any such amends from you. This honour shall never be claimed as mine, but it shall be yours, to whom I resign it." "Ah, fair sire, do not speak so. For that could never be. I am so wounded and exhausted that I cannot endure more." "Surely, you have no cause to be concerned." his friend and companion replies; "but for my part, I am defeated and overcome; I say it not as a compliment; for there is no stranger in the world, to whom I would not say as much, rather than receive any more blows." Thus saying, he got down from his horse, and they threw their arms about each other's neck, kissing each other, and each continuing to assert that it is he who has met defeat. The argument is still in progress when the King and the knights come running up from every side, at the sight of their reconciliation; and great is their desire to hear how this can be, and who these men are who manifest such happiness. The King says: "Gentlemen, tell us now who it is that has so suddenly brought about this friendship and harmony between you two, after the hatred and strife there has been this day?" Then his nephew, my lord Gawain, thus answers him: "My lord, you shall be informed of the misfortune and mischance which have been the cause of our strife. Since you have tarried in order to hear and learn the cause of it, it is right to let you know the truth. I, Gawain, who am your nephew, did not recognise this companion of mine, my lord Yvain, until he fortunately, by the will of God, asked me my name. After each had informed the other of his name, we recognised each other, but not until we had fought it out. Our struggle already has been long; and if we had fought yet a little longer, it would have fared ill with me, for, by my head, he would have killed me, what with his prowess and the evil cause of her who chose me as her champion. But I would rather be defeated than killed by a friend in battle." Then my lord Yvain's blood was stirred, as he said to him in reply: "Fair dear sire, so help me God, you have no right to say so much. Let my lord, The King, well know in this battle I am surely the one who has been defeated and overcome!" "I am the one" "No, I am." Thus each cries out, and both are so honest and courteous that each allows the victory and crown to be the other's prize, while neither one of them will accept it. Thus each strives to convince the King and all the people that he has been defeated and overthrown. But when he had listened to them for a while, the King terminated the dispute. He was well pleased with what he heard and with the sight of them in each other's arms, though they had wounded and injured each other in several places. "My lords," he says, "there is deep affection between you two. You give clear evidence of that, when each insists that it is he who has been defeated. Now leave it all to me! For I think I can arrange it in such a way that it will redound to your honour, and every one will give consent." Then they both promised him that

they would do his will in every particular. And the King says that he will decide the quarrel fairly and faithfully. "Where is the damsel," he inquires, "who has ejected her sister from her land, and has forcibly and cruelly disinherited her?" "My lord," she answers, "here I am." "Are you there? Then draw near to me! I saw plainly some time ago that you were disinheriting her. But her right shall no longer be denied; for you yourself have avowed the truth to me. You must now resign her share to her." "Sire," she says, "if I uttered a foolish and thoughtless word, you ought not to take me up in it. For God's sake, sire, do not be hard on me! You are a king, and you ought to guard against wrong and error." The King replies: "That is precisely why I wish to give your sister her rights; for I have never defended what is wrong. And you have surely heard how your knight and hers have left the matter in my hands. I shall not say what is altogether pleasing to you; for your injustice is well known. In his desire to honour the other, each one says that he has been defeated. But there is no need to delay further: since the matter has been left to me, either you will do in all respects what I say, without resistance, or I shall announce that my nephew has been defeated in the fight. That would be the worst thing that could happen to your cause, and I shall be sorry to make such a declaration." In reality, he would not have said it for anything; but he spoke thus in order to see if he could frighten her into restoring the heritage to her sister; for he clearly saw that she never would surrender anything to her for any words of his unless she was influenced by force or fear. In fear and apprehension, she replied to him: "Fair lord, I must now respect your desire, though my heart is very loath to yield. Yet, however hard it may go with me, I shall do it, and my sister shall have what belongs to her. I give her your own person as a pledge of her share in my inheritance, in order that she may be more assured of it." "Endow her with it, then, at once," the King replies; "let her receive it from your hands, and let her vow fidelity to you! Do you love her as your vassal, and let her love you as her sovereign lady and as her sister." Thus the King conducts the affair until the damsel takes possession of her land, and offers her thanks to him for it.