Is that oath now no longer binding, which was sworn that evening when the Margrave left Orange? He had been urged to do so by Giburt, who herself asked him to ride away for help, out of the city and into the land of the French, to see if the authority of the Empire, his father, his brothers and his other kinsmen would size him up in such a way that he would gain their support. He secured their aid and now they are here.

You have certainly heard both about his departure and their arrival. From now on he can eat more than bread: Giburt has been released from the clutches of her foes, even though she is still weighed down with misery. The Margrave was very glad to eat and drink whatever was set before him. His friend Rennewart, that sturdy youth, made his way in front of the visitors, intent on gaining renown for himself. In his hand he was carrying his huge club as though it were a piece from a shattered lance. All of them wondered what he had in mind, the Burgundians, the Bretons, the Flemings and the Englishmen, as well as the Frenchmen and the men from Brabant. It was the son of the most powerful ruler of the time who had come in and there was no disputing this.

Down the middle of the great hall were many marble pillars supporting lofty vaulting and Rennewart leant his heavy club against an archway. They wondered what he was up to, when he looked around him so wildly, and some of them were afraid that through no fault of their own they were going to have trouble with him, though as a matter of fact he knew how to avoid that, provided that he was not provoked.

Since his skin was sweaty and dust had settled on it when he came on ahead of all the others as his manly courage prompted him to do, here and there a bead of perspiration had removed the grime from the
shining skin of Rennewart, the bold young squire. He looked like a
dewy rose when its rough outer skin splits and reveals in part the
petals underneath. If he ever gets rid of all the grime he will shine like
the flowering meadow.\textsuperscript{37}

The powerful man – no weakling, this – had eyes in his head like a
dragon, huge, clear and shining. Although his beard was only just
beginning to grow – he was not yet old enough to have a proper one –
he had been obsessed with thoughts of fame since he had set off from
Laon on this march. Alize’s kiss had caused his beard to sprout. You
could have counted the hairs on his chin which did not get in the way
of his mouth very much.

You could detect in him the nobility of the mother who had borne
such a child. His whole face and all his limbs were perfection itself,
and his handsome appearance earned him the approval of women, so
that not one of them was ill-disposed to him. I shall have plenty to
say to you in praise of him if he gets closer to renown, and if I am still
clever enough for that. One thing you can believe, for no one could
take this away from him: through the grime he shone forth like the
young Parzival when Count Karnakrnanz came upon him on his
knees in the forest, so radiant in his beauty.\textsuperscript{36} Right now you are to
attribute a similar beauty and a similar strength to Rennewart, as
well as the same inexperience. Neither of them had been brought up
in accordance with his lineage and so they were robbed of their
nobility.

Heimrich addressed a question to the Queen: ‘Who is this coming
in before us, looking so strong and so vigorous and with such a huge
club?’

Giburc, who was always so kind, replied: ‘My lord, it is a sarjant
who, in the course of his short life, has not, I think, received his due. I
believe that he should be treated better. He is brave and far from
sluggish. He came on foot ahead of the men on horseback and would
have liked to go straight into battle, if he had encountered some of the
enemy. Sir, the Marquis told me that King Louis gave the lad to him.
He is certainly not hideous to look at. Since the death of Charles
l’Empereur and the mighty Baligan, no mother in the kingdom of
either of them has given birth to such a lovely child. Moreover, he is
modest and well-behaved, and as easy to train as a young girl, for he
is glad to do anything one asks of him. Since I saw him this morning for the first time my heart has been telling me something about him which often causes me to sigh. Before long something, whether joy or sorrow, is going to happen to me because he has come here. I must say that he is like some members of my family to look at. My heart gives me no option but to love him, I know not why. It may be that he hates me."

Rennewart, the young sargent, went up to his master, the Margrave, who soon became aware that his friend was standing there in front of him. He greeted him kindly: "I must ask you to do something for me," he said. "Go before my lady and that gentleman with the snow-white hair: they are both worthy of your service. Look at his lively manner. I am always pleased to see him. If I tossed that old falcon in the air he would surely catch the crane. There is not a timid bone in his body."

"My lord," replied Rennewart. "My service will not fail him, nor anyone who wishes to have it and asks for it nicely." With that the brave lad stepped courteously before the lady of the land.

Heimrich called across to Willehalm: "What if your visitor goes ahead and vents his anger on us? We have done nothing to deserve it."

"I shall take the responsibility for anything he may do to you in his inexperience," replied the lord of the land. "He was the first to arrive with me this morning. He knows how to be a good friend and a foe to be reckoned with as well."

The table was short and wide. Heimrich invited Rennewart to join them, to sit on the carpet at one edge of the table near to the Queen who did not, of course, object to that. Rennewart sat down with due courtesy, and Heimrich looked him up and down. The boy blushed with embarrassment at being so well treated there. The Queen made no ado but graciously placed a piece of the table-cloth across his lap, and, even though he did not speak, he bowed his thanks to her politely.

Although the Queen was sitting higher up than he was, his head was much higher still, and this, of course, was because he was so tall. Thus the two of them were able to demonstrate that they were very much alike, as if they had both been pressed out just a bit too hastily.
from the same seal, so that the only difference was his tender beard, and I should have been glad if that had not been there, for then one could easily have mistaken the man for the woman, so similar were they to look at.

Right away then, at the request of old Heimrich, Rennewart was provided better than he had ever been before, with mulberry wine, grape wine and claret. He stuffed his cheeks so full of the food which he found in front of him that there would not have been room for a snowflake in there, and ten bees would not have been able to suck so much from the bowls, unless my tale deceives me. Yet the two people who had it put on the table for him did not eat much, for they were ensnared in the bonds of sorrow. Even so – take note of this – they acted as though they were happy.

Many pages came along, wanting to seize his club or carry it away, but a rude farm-waggon would have creaked and groaned under its weight. Rennewart laughed and said to them: ‘You are making fun of me. Stop playing about like that with my club or I’ll make someone angry. You want to carry it in your arms like a child to be baptized. I swear by the twelfth apostle, who lives in Spain – they call him Santiago there – that if you do not stop this nonsense someone will live to regret it. I should be able to eat more of this food than a tiny sparrow if it were not for you and your games. Now just watch your manners.’

Rennewart was eager to get at the food, and no one needed to offer thanks for what he sent forth from his table. Spiced red wine, claret and mulberry wine too, these strong wines pleased him better than the water in the kitchen. He ate all of the food, disdaining none, but, unfamiliar as he was with wine, the excessive drinking got the better of his courtesy and restraint and excited him to wrath, that noble lad of high birth.

Many young pages were pressing against the club until they finally knocked it down and caused a terrific din to resound throughout the great hall. Rennewart jumped up from the table and headed towards them but all the pages had scattered so completely that he could get at none of them. He seized the club in one hand. One page had run away and swiftly slipped behind a pillar made of blue marble, but Rennewart caught sight of him there and thrust out at him with
such force that sparks flew out of the pillar and shot up towards the ceiling. The page scampere3d from the room, so now there were no pages left in the great hall. They were crowding out of the door, each one trying to get ahead of the others. The table-cloths were folded up but not carried away, for those who looked after such matters had fled and did not dare to venture up to Rennewart and encounter his bitter brand of tenderness.

Those who had been eating there rose to their feet. The Queen did not remain seated either but asked the princes to go and rest, saying to all of them: ‘Have your retinues take with them whatever they please in the way of food and drink.’ And Heimrich, the shrewd old man, added: ‘Those whose supply-train has not yet come need not be ashamed to accept this offer; you will be given whatever you wish in plenty. That is my advice to you all.’

The princes went to their camp-sites and the Margrave had a horse brought for him and rode down with them. Thus he rode this way and that, here over meadows and there across fields, and if any camp was without provisions, he ordered supplies to be brought down to the people there, so that they had no reason to complain of any shortage. When he had ridden down, the Margrave requested all the noblemen in the army to eat and drink well, and to rest for the whole of the day, adding: ‘As soon as day breaks, you are to hear Mass sung in my chapel, and I shall take counsel with you there.’ They gave him their promise and did as he commanded. All the princes, counts and those who bore the title of baron, every one of them, and all who were put in charge of a detachment, had ridden into the field.

Inside the town, Giburc was attending to the needs of her beloved father-in-law, Heimrich. Many lovely maidens, who were well versed in courtly service and were glad to be there now, were standing by his bedside in a chamber. Heimrich lay down and Giburc seated herself on the carpet before the old man. Young girls removed his boots in order that Giburc might massage his legs before she left him. Weariness and sorrow caused him to fall asleep straight away, even before they had gone out of the room, for he had been riding all night long in full armour.

And now the lord of the land – I mean the host there, Willehalm himself – came up again and did not fail to take advantage of that
companionship from which previously he had often derived both joy and pain. He and the Queen went to a bed and made love so tenderly that for both of them there was recompense for what the battle had inflicted on them at Alischanz through the loss of their kinsmen, so mutual was their compensation as they lay there.

When the generous Anfortas was in the service of Orgeluse before he parted company with joy and the Grail provided for his people, and Queen Sekundille ventured to offer him love and sent Cundrie to him with such precious wares, which he accepted from her out of love and out of love passed to another, the acquisition of all the crowns and all the lands of Sekundille, with the bequest of the Grail itself, could surely not have compensated for the enormous losses sustained by Willehalm at Alischanz. 62

In his arms now a slender shoot was blossoming forth from sweet love. In her pure tenderness Giburc snuggled so close against his chest that he was recompensed; she claimed her as his compensation for everything that he had ever lost. Her love afforded him such aid that the Margrave’s sadness was streaked with joy. Sorrow had ridden away from him so far that no spear could have reached it. Giburc was the guarantor of his joy.

Sometimes joy does follow on from sadness, and joy has assumed a familiar custom which applies to men and women alike, for sorrow is our beginning, and with sorrow we come into the grave. I do not know how it is in the life beyond, but that is how things are here. There is not much joy in this tale. I should need to be very clever to discover any joy in it, although I don’t begrudge good to those who have not done me any harm and do not harm me now: such people will not suffer at my hand. A wise man once advised me to perform good deeds, whenever I was able, which would be more to my credit than following the example of the false: that way I might gain renown.

Yet no one should despair if he has to endure suffering as well as joy, for a man who has joy as his constant companion has never really experienced ease. Indeed, a man’s efforts should be directed towards joy and sorrow, and true womanliness also knows this dual companionship, since sorrow has always been associated with joy, as its floor and its roof, and its walls, on the sides, at the back and in front. No one should rail against great sadness, for even if so far he
has avoided it, it nevertheless is right there, at the heels of his joy.

The Margrave took his ease, and his whole army, too, was well encamped, and his men very comfortable. Only Rennewart could still be seen coping with trouble. A great many pages would not desist from constantly running about and leaping around and did not tire, some of them, of hurling things at him. Many of them he had been chasing away all day long, and so he had been playing at fighting until after the time for vespers. Yet, even so, he injured none of them as he had done before at Laon when the jesting had got out of hand. There were plenty here who were taunting him, not having encountered his fury, but he did not give vent to that at all.

Now night was drawing nigh, and the noble, high-born youth spied away from them. The young man was carrying his club, for he was anxious to hide it from them. They plagued him from behind but after a while they grew tired of this and he too was overcome with weariness and, for all his nobility, he deigned to seek out the kitchen where he lay down to sleep. His soft little pillow was his hard club, and he did not rest there for long.

Poidjus, his sister’s son, had rarely lain like this, the King of Vriende who had in addition under his control the lands of Griffane, Triant and Kaukasas. I think he had a better bed when he lay down to sleep. This uncle of his was enduring hardship which he would have been spared altogether if only someone had known the true story, of how this high-born child had been stolen from the breast of his wet-nurse and plunged from wealth into a state of poverty. Such is the intricacy of fate. The child was brought up by merchants who kept him until he reached the age of understanding. Their sole concern was money and they believed that his noble lineage would be a great asset to them. They mentioned to him quite correctly the names of nine kingdoms where his father was the ruler and regaled him with tales of how the most powerful Saracens had to obey his command, in the north, south, east and west, and of how two of his sisters were queens and were so lovely that they were renowned above all others for their beauty. They spoke to him in particular, too, of truly marvellous wealth, of the lands of his ten brothers and the names of those brothers as well.
BOOK VI

The merchants were cultivated men and they taught the child French, for they had in mind to bring him as a gift to the Roman Emperor. The child was so good-looking that it could truthfully be said of him that no lovelier face had been seen since the day when Anfortas was cured by Parzival's question. The merchants warned the child that, if he wished to stay alive, he should keep silent and tell no one at all, neither man nor woman, from which land he had been abducted. Otherwise the men from Samargone would have come back for their wares.

Louis King of Rome gave instructions that he was to be well looked after. The child was renowned for his beauty and the maiden Alize, too, was beautiful, as I have told you. When they gave him to her as a playmate, the seed of their love grew to maturity, and they sustained it to the end of their lives, each enduring grief on account of the other. The King wished to have him baptized - he had been sold in Tenabri, you see - but he resisted this doggedly, and so he was denied the honour of the company of Alize, which caused them both distress. Alize was the epitome of loyalty and for this reason, when the two of them were together, the boy confided to her all about his family. Then he had to leave his lofty status for a lowly way of life and cope with humble tasks - and all in order to force him to be baptized.

The boy bore a grudge against his father and his other relatives because they had not secured his release. He thought that they were violating their own loyalty, yet his anger was not justified, for they did not know anything about him. If a messenger of his had come to them, or if anyone had demanded ransom money, such sums would have been offered for him that the French would be weighing the gold to this day. Many of his high-born kinsmen died because of the indignities he had suffered. He fought for Christendom and gained the victory and that was how he avenged the ignominy and the suffering which he had endured in the presence of Alize. It was her love which urged him on to fame, and matters will not always stand like this for him: the love of Alize will protect him. Whatever degradation he may have suffered, Alize's love wrenched this from him shortly afterwards in the course of deadly combat.

The cooks had been told that, at daybreak, a great deal of food was
to be prepared, if anyone wanted it, and that all the princes were to eat in the great hall. Because of this many kettles had been hung up over blazing fires. Then something happened which proved to be the end of the chef, who behaved as I shall now relate to you. He took a glowing brand and went right up to the wall where he could see Rennewart asleep. There was no need for anyone to deprive him of such miserable repose. The cook singed his young beard and burnt his mouth a little too, but his flippant behaviour was his downfall, when the boy whose sleep he had disturbed like this tied him up as though he were a sheep, trussed his arms and his legs together and hurled him without further ado under one of the cauldrons, into the huge blaze. This was how he came to lose his life. Rennewart did not have salt fetched to sprinkle over him but piled on him brands and pieces of coal. My lord of Vogelweide used to sing of roast meat: this roast was long and thick and would have been ample for his lady, for whom he always had such an adoring heart.\footnote{44}

Only Rennewart remained behind, for sheer terror had driven the others away from him. They were afraid that they would be landed with the bill. One cook fled this way, the other that, and then they peeped in through the wall and heard how young Rennewart was mourning for his beard and what else he was bewailing.

‘Wretched man,’ he said, ‘I thought that I had been freed from bondage when the Roman King gave me to him who is acknowledged before all others as the highest eskelir and who in truth is incapable of any false deed. If only they had allowed me to benefit from the enormous loyalty which I have pledged to him! If he knew me for what I am, he would be sorry about this. This beard of mine which has been burnt was sown upon my mouth by the love of her who gave me her kiss to guide me on this journey. Her love has done more to pull these hairs out of my chin than the few years I have lived, or that shameful treatment to which her father subjected me. I know for sure that she grieved on my behalf whenever she saw how the King was acting against his natural courtesy in his behaviour towards me and when I myself investigated the whys and wherefores of chivalry in tournaments and battles which I would often run to in order to observe the art of horse-riding, or how one should behave towards ladies. Whenever I was in refined company they chased me away
with their staffs. The lord of this land has been disgraced because his
cook has burnt me like this. Moreover, the children of the mighty
Terramer are mocked through me, ten of whom are powerful kings in
vast realms and themselves have great kings as their vassals. Those
whom I know to be my brothers must share in my ignominy, Fabor
and Utreiz, Malarsz and Malatras; if our origin, born as we all were of
one mother, was in loyalty, then Glorjex and Passigweiz, Karjex and
Matreiz, Merabjex and Morgowanz will have plenty of grief on my
account. If we are born of perfect loyalty my wretched life in exile
represents disgrace for those ten too. The King of Kordes should
allow me to benefit from his great wealth. Happe and Suntin,
Gorgozane and Lumpin, Poye and Tenabri, Sembli and Muntespir
are all under his command, yet I am receiving no support from him.
If only his noble eskelirs would tell him about his ill-treatment of
me! After all, I am the child of Terramer.'

Through the wall they could hear him lamenting like this.

By now day had come and the sun was breaking through the
clouds. Princes came riding up, and when they had all assembled, a
Mass was sung, in honour of God and for their own sakes too. The
Margrave sent someone to find out if the food was ready yet, but
those who were employed as cooks had fled the deadly toil, and no
one had made up the fires. The Margrave was told that Rennewart
was bitterly lamenting his singed whiskers. Some of them had heard
him saying something about his noble birth, but not all about it.
Willehalm sent the Queen to him, asking her to calm his rage.

'The chef is dead,' he told her, 'Use your diplomacy to get my
friend away from there.'

And so, in order to find the young man, she went to where she
never again set foot. Very courteously she begged him for her sake to
cease complaining of his loss, to calm down and put aside his bad
temper.

He replied: 'My lady, you are so kind. Whatever you tell me to do
I shall do, but look how I have been brought up. Many people are
being deceived about me.'

The Queen led the boy away and offered him better clothing, in a
room where tailors were sewing many different kinds of surcoats.

He, however, said to her: 'Madam, I am sorry that you had to walk
so far to fetch me. As far as I am concerned, you can give your clothes to those who are your subjects. Poor I may be, but lots of men in this army need them more than I do. Just leave me my club as my defence.’ (He had brought the club along with him.)

Giburc began to lament his singed whiskers and all the time she did not take her eyes off him, for she discerned something in him which startled her deep in her heart.

‘My dear friend,’ she said, ‘if you permit me I should like to ask you where you come from, if you will allow this and not get angry.’

He replied: ‘Madam, believe me: I am a poor page, and yet the child of very noble people. This I must admit if I know how to behave properly, but, my lady, for the sake of your own honour, do not ask me any more questions, for this will be the best thing for both of us: just leave me in my wretched misery.’

The boy was still standing in front of her and the lady’s heart was telling her something which she did not find out until a long time later. She asked him to sit down next to her and tucked part of her cloak around him.45

He said to her: ‘Madam, the finest knight who ever fastened his helmet with his own hand would be glad about this, but if anyone sees me sitting like this he will accuse me of behaving in a most unseemly fashion and mock at me because of it. My lady, spare me this for the sake of your god.’

Giburc said to the young man: ‘What other God should I have but the One whom the Virgin bore, if you know anything of His power?’

(The Queen wished by this means to discover whether he was a Saracen, for she did not know what his religion was.)

He told her: ‘Three gods are known to me: the holy Tervigant, Mahmete, and Apollé. I am happy to follow their commandments.’

The Queen sighed before she spoke and all the time she gazed at him, for her heart could see that he was certainly born of her race, however he might have been lost. She acted entirely in accordance with her good breeding, taking his hand into her hands and saying: ‘My dear, good friend. Have you a father or a mother, brother or sister? Do not be afraid to speak out and tell me without embarrassment just one thing: the name of your family.’

Rennewart replied like this: ‘I had a sister at one time who
surpassed all others in beauty, a maiden who took away the radiance
of the sun when people saw them both together in the morning,
when the sun was breaking through the clouds. She was given in
marriage to a man who has achieved much fame though he behaved
badly towards me too, when my brothers let me down as they did, for
he has left me in a state of distress for so long and has not been
prompted by true magnanimity. I am justified in hating him and my
whole family. They have cut me off from their gods and have still not
sent a messenger to me in my trouble but have brought shame upon
their famous name through their treatment of me.’

Then he added: ‘My lady Margravine, if you do not mind my
saying so, you must have looked like one of my sisters when you
were young, and, if you were powerful as they are, you could easily
be the child of the man who has brought dishonour on himself by his
ill-treatment of me and against whom I shall always struggle for
revenge because of my misery. My father and my other relatives are
too grand for me. I tell you this because I recognize your true
courtesy, but you must not treat me any better on this account. Keep
quiet about what I have told you. They want me to live in this lowly
station. If I was born of noble people, they have sacrificed their good
fortune by their treatment of me.’

Giburc asked him on his honour if the Marquis of Provence would
really have his support and he replied: ‘My lady, I shall uphold his
honour absolutely. In doing so I shall have my revenge for the
shameful suffering from which the heathens should have released
me a long time ago.’

Giburc said to him: ‘Then I wish to give you a suit of armour in
which you can protect your young life whenever you become
involved in battle. It is quite big enough for you and made with skill
and artistry. Thus nothing that they may do to you in battle can
defeat you. King Sinagun was wearing it in the battle during which
he took the Marquis prisoner, when the great defeat was sustained
and King Tibalt was put to rout. The undaunted Willehalm pursued
them until all of them, bold and timid, high and low, began to
regroup in strength. The heathens, one and all, acquitted themselves
with the utmost valour. Sinagun, who always strove for renown,
forced the Marquis to surrender, for he had ridden too far away from
the Christians. Thus Willehalm himself was conquered without a victory for the heathens, and led away into the land of Tibalt. I was unhappy when I saw him in chains and other irons. I had inherited the crown of Todjerne, and the generous King Tibalt of Kler held sway in many lands at that time — even today he is the leader of a vast army — and he had given me the crown of Arabi. I do not know who is now the Queen there. My nephew, King Sinagun, the son of Halzebier's sister, left me his own armour and his captive who had performed so many illustrious deeds. The armour and the Margrave both escaped with me, and that is how I came to have this armour.'

She gave orders that the armour be brought before him. Schoiusa had often struck out at it but it was so excellent that it had withstood the blades of Schoiusa and all other swords as well. The helmet was thick and hard, coming down far to the shoulders, decorated with jewels all round the edges and fitted with precious straps. The chain-mail leg-coverings and the hauberk gleamed; the sword was long and shining and quite perfect on both its cutting edges. Both the blade and the groove between the edges were smooth, the hilt sturdy and broad. No one in Nordlingen has a wider scingle. With this sword the valiant Sinagun had fought and won fame, but it did not please Rennewart, who considered it too slight for his enormous strength. He pulled it out and tossed it aside, saying: 'My lady Margravine, just let me carry my club, but I won't refuse the armour, although I can't do much dressed up in it. Nevertheless, have it put on me.'

Young girls, as well as the beautiful lady herself, helped Rennewart into his armour, and, when he had it all on, the young man fastened hefty shoes over his leg-coverings of chain-mail. His spirits began to soar with pride, constant as he was in his pursuit of fame. His coat was rather the worse for wear, nevertheless he wore it as a surcoat. Every lock on his head was covered by the sturdy, precious helmet.

'Now may this sword be my comrade,' he said. 'Let me put it on. The Margrave can absolutely depend on me to serve him as well as I am able, if only he will give me the chance to fight.'

Giburc the Queen asked all the maidens to keep him company and to comfort him in all his trouble. 'I shall soon come back to you,' she

150
said, 'but you must allow me to go to church and not raise any objections.'

Duly armed for combat, Rennewart sat down among the young ladies, who helped him while away the time.

The Mass was sung, and afterwards all of them, old and young, princes and counts, whatever their names were, and those who were appointed to command a detachment, were summoned to a council, just as to this very day people are glad to call together men of high rank. Giburc was granted leave to attend, together with many noble men. Now hear what they did: the Queen sat down and so did they. Only the Margrave remained standing, and he spoke as follows:

'I am addressing all of you who are my companions here, my father and my brothers and those other relatives of mine, and those whom the Lord of the Empire has sent here to protect baptism and our Christian faith. Listen, all of you, to how things stand with me. My father-in-law has attacked me. The breasts of Christian women have been cut off, their children martyred. Their menfolk have all been slain and set up as so many targets. Whoever shoots at them gains in respect among the heathens. This is how Tibalt and the mighty Terramer have vented their hatred in my march. Eight of my kinsmen who responded to the dictates of loyalty and hazarded their lives by riding with me have been taken captive; seven of my princes, too, have been slain, the noblest in the kingdom. I beg you, one and all, take pity on me, bereft of joy as I am.

'I must remind the Frenchmen that, when I accepted from the Empire in fief that land to which Tibalt now lays claim, I was granted the following pledge: The Hand of the Empire swore to me – and twelve men who were acknowledged as the most powerful in France gave their oaths too – that if ever the fighting threatened to overwhelm me they would come to my aid with an army of excellent knights within a year. I have been waiting seven years for that. Now Tibalt has defeated me, though I have inflicted substantial damage on him. I played the part of a merchant until I had conquered that fine city of Nîmes with my waggon. After that, while I was in prison, I sought the love of Tibalt's wife, the Queen. Kind as she is, she granted me all that I desired of her but she did this – and then when she crossed the sea with me – more on account of baptism than
through any worth of mine. Since then King Tibalt has very often inflicted great anguish upon me. Those who have treated Almighty God with contempt are still with us in this country. Now – if I may put it like this – honour the Virgin’s Son through me. Help me avenge my kinsmen so that we may gain such ransom from the heathens as may open up the fetters of Bertram in prison. If now I may benefit from my kinship and from the oaths which have been sworn to me, then joy will still be mine indeed.

‘Let my father and my brothers speak first and after that let my kinsmen and the chief among my vassals speak as their courage urges them to do and so demonstrate their loyalty by their behaviour towards me. If you command me to keep quiet about it, then it will be my duty never again to complain. Let each one be mindful of his honour as a knight in accordance with that benediction spoken when he received his sword: anyone who wishes to practise chivalry aright must protect widows and orphans from danger, and this will bring him lasting gain. He can, moreover, direct his heart towards service in pursuit of the reward of ladies, when one learns to recognize the sound which comes from spears cracking through shields, and to know how women rejoice at this and how a beloved woman soothes the anguish of her lover. Two rewards are waiting for us: heaven and the approval of noble ladies. If I am brave enough I must now seek to gain these things on the field of Alischenz, or die in the attempt.’

Up stood old Heimrich and spoke to his son in a fatherly fashion, saying: ‘You may now be seated. It is my privilege to reply first, for I am the oldest man present. My peers, princes, all of you, do not take it as an insult if I speak before you do. My son shall not bear his grief alone: I share it with him. I do not deny that my heart declares him to be my son because he is in trouble, but even if he were my vassal – which God has not deigned to grant to me – I should certainly still wish to help him since he has gained too much renown for the Empire and continues to bring honour upon it with his acts of courage. Whosoever is not deserted by good fortune will preserve the nobility of the Roman Empire by his valiant efforts. Since Terramer of Tenabri has led all the men who live as far as Vriende, into battle against us, all the noble people from Marsilje to Kukasas, we shall find all the more hostages to take. He has brought with him
across the sea no king so powerful that he could not easily lose his army."

Bernart le fleuri stood up and said: 'Brother, Margrave, my son Bertram carried your banner and dared indeed to spur his men on. I believe that he too was valiant. Now they have more than enough trouble, those princes who are in captivity with my son. Those of you who have entered our service and have accepted imperial payment, or who are here in any case in all your princely power with a vast company, both for the sake of the Empire and for our own sake, now, all of you, you heroes, help to break open the bonds of my son Bertram and to avenge the death of Vivian. I am speaking on behalf of all my brothers. I am so confident of their loyalty that our hearts are as one, and this is why none of them has spoken yet. Now our visitors are to speak, those who have come riding here in such force from France. Come on now, take your turn bravely! I am not referring to our relatives as "visitors": that would be to violate kinship, and my father and we ourselves are relying on our kinsmen. You, Frenchmen, speak up now and tell us what we can expect from you, and let us have a look at your courage.'

He who is telling this tale will now explain to you why the princes whom the Roman King had sent there are not mentioned by name. This is because some of them turned back and brought shame upon their princely rank, whether they had received this through the sceptre or the flag. If anyone wants to remind them even now of their ignominy, let it be said that, after all, they did return. Young Rennewart turned them back at the narrow pass at Pitit Punt, fifteen thousand of them in one go, between Orange and Alischanz. You think that he who was bearing the enormous club was dumber than an ox, and yet he was the son of the most powerful man reigning at that time. But enough of that! There were many princes sitting there who declared that anyone who was not satisfied that Orange had been freed from the heathen should try to find better aid and that, for their part, they did not wish to go any further with their travel-weary armies. It would be no shame, they said, if they did not fight, since the heathens had ridden out of the country and away to their ships. 'If anyone will deal with us,' they added, 'we shall ransom the prisoners in exchange for goods.'

153
Bertram of Berbester said: 'It was never right for a noble man to retreat from fame, and if anyone urged him to do so he should never again treat that man with favour. Now, heroes, remember that you have endured suffering to gain much fame in France. If you forsake the Marquis now, when he is in such dire straits, this will not match the intention of the lady of any one of you. I know, too, that He will hate you for this who on the Day of Judgement will come forward bearing in His mouth the sword which will lay low the bold man and the coward alike. Lucky for those whom He claims as His children! It only we may behold the five wounds which are still open! He shed His blood for us. Whoever now would turn from God would come to a terrible end and such a man's soul would go to hell. His flesh and blood gained blessing for us, He who came riding with no thought of flight. He was seen approaching on an ass to the place where later a blind man pierced Him with a spear, though He could easily have escaped even those who could see. 90 Anyone who wishes to preserve the blessing of the Cross for himself should grieve for how He hung upon the Cross, Jesus, when He accepted death for our sake.'

Then Buov of Commercey said: 'Frenchmen: you have always acted with courage, and yet you have really been too quick to abandon it. Let every bold knight behave as his finest nobility prompts him to.'

The Frenchmen were ready to have second thoughts and to avenge Vivianz on the hostile mass. Each Christian was matched in battle by fifteen others who had been brought from distant lands. This is how the Frenchmen behaved: that which they had sworn at Laon and at Orleans before the Roman Protector was no longer withheld. Declaring that all the Saracens must be their foes they took up the Cross with one accord. The noise resounded and reached the army outside, and many a knight rejoiced at this. The noble men all desired to take the Cross, and this the many priests arranged for them, for knights and sarjants alike. Stalwart turkopels everywhere took up the Cross without exception, too. They cleansed their hearts and thought only of Almighty God.

In the individual armies of the seven brothers some men were preparing for battle, while some were still asleep; others were checking their weapons, their shields and their banners. There again,
some were polishing their armour until it gleamed, while others were directing all their efforts towards decorating their helmets. None of the appropriate straps and ties was forgotten. Many brightly shining objects could be seen, armour and trappings, which later were to become murky with blood. Some were exercising their steeds, while others were riding around for pleasure on their lovely saddle-horses. At the same time, many undaunted men were enduring pangs of fear, as they came to realize quite correctly that the battle would cost no less than lives on both sides, willingly offered up to Death. The first battle at Alischanz had brought death to Pinel and because of this his kinsmen later caused suffering to Christian men at Alischanz. The death of Vivianz, too, later cost many noble heathens their lives. Thus revenge matched revenge.

Giburd was the cause of all this misery. She stood up now and spoke courteously before the assembly of princes dispersed. 'If any man present is loyal and chivalrous,' she said, 'then let it please him to listen to what I say. God knows that I have laid up in my heart such a store of grief that my body is hardly able to bear it.'

She asked those who had risen to their feet with her to be seated and not to leave. When they had all sat down she said: 'If I am responsible for the many deaths which have occurred on both sides and because of which I must endure the hatred of Christians and heathens alike, may God grant recompense to them through me. I hereby remind you princes of the Roman Empire that you will be increasing the honour of Christendom if God so honours you as to allow you to avenge the death of Vivianz in battle against my kinsmen and their army on the field of Alischanz: you will find them formidable fighters. And if you defeat the heathens you should act so that your salvation will be assured. Pay heed to the advice of a foolish woman: spare the creatures of God's Hand!

'The first man whom God created was a heathen and you should know for a fact that Elijah and Enoch, heathens though they were, are saved from eternal damnation.⁵¹ Noah, too, who was saved in the Ark, was a heathen, and Job was certainly also one, but God did not cast him down on that account. Think also of the three kings, whose names were Kaspar, Melchior and Balthasar, and whom we must consider as heathens who are not destined for damnation. God
Himself, at His mother's breast, received His first gifts from them. Heathens are not all condemned to perdition. We know it to be a fact that every mother who has borne a child since the time of Eve gave birth to one who was indisputably a heathen, although each child was encircled in the womb by baptism. Baptized women give birth to heathen children, even though baptism may have surrounded the child as it lay there. The Jews have a different custom with regard to baptism, for they perform it through circumcision.

"After all, we were all of us heathens once. It pains the person in a state of Grace if the Father has condemned His children to perdition. However, He who has always been compassionate will show pity for them. Now believe me when I say that mankind wrested that place in heaven in the Tenth Choir from those angels who are now so hostile towards our race. They behaved so defiantly towards God that they betrayed His noble and steadfast power. Those very comrades in arms had to fall because of their thoughts, for God, who knows thoughts undisclosed, did not allow them to express those thoughts in deeds. This was why man was conceived. Both men and angels had incurred the wrath of God. How is it that man now has more hope than the angels? I shall explain this to you: man was ruined by bad advice, while the angel, by his wicked cunning, selected eternal damnation for himself, and all who joined up with him encountered the same grievous end. To this very day, these wicked angels pursue mankind, as though the Choir were their inheritance, whereas it is in fact bequeathed to those who know how to avoid incurring the anger of God who grants eternal bliss.

"Whatever the heathens may have done to you, you should allow them to profit from the fact that God Himself forgave those who took His life. Have pity in the battle, if God grants you the victory. Our Father Tetragrammaton offered up His virtuous life for the guilty ones and so rewarded His children for their forgetfulness. His love which is so full of mercy embraces all miracles and in His loving loyalty He will not cease to hold out the helping Hand which first brought into being both land and water: all creatures contained beneath the heavens have need of this. That same Hand allows the planets to run their full courses both near and far. Never ceasing in their activity, they bestow warmth and cold alike, sometimes cre-
BOOK VI

ating ice, then bringing sap to the trees so that the earth may seem to
be shedding its plumage and the month of May instructs the earth to
accomplish its moulting process and to bring forth flowers in suc-
cession to the frost.

'I serve the Hand of God the Artist in place of the heathen god
Tervigant. Its power has led me away from Mahmete and towards
baptism. Because of that I am enduring the hatred of my kinsmen,
and of the Christians, too, for this reason: they believe I brought
about this conflict out of desire for human love. It is true that I left
love behind me there too and great stores of wealth, and lovely
children, with a man of whom I cannot discover that he ever
committed any wrongful act since I received a crown from him.
Tibalt of Arabi is innocent of any mischief. I alone bear the guilt, for
the sake of the grace of Almighty God, and also to some extent on
account of the Marquis who has gained such high renown.

'Alas, Willehalm, true fighter, that my love should ever have
become so bitter for you! How many supreme men have lost their
lives gallantly in your service! Rich and poor alike, all of you must
believe that the loss of your kinsmen sears my breast. Indeed, my joy
lies slain with them.' She wept copiously, convulsed with misery.

Gibert, the brother of their host, leapt up and pressed the noble
Queen to his breast. Her heart shed many tears out of her eyes and
down her cheeks. The council dispersed. The princes went into the
great hall, where many tables were splendidly bedecked. The courte-
sous Heinrich spoke to all the princes individually and told them
that they were all to sit against the same wall where they had been
seated on the previous day.

The maidens were summoned and they came, and with them
Rennewart. His incipient beard had been singed, but his armour was
expensive and brightly shining; he himself was handsome and
strong. He laid his club down and many knights went up to it.
However, none of them had sufficient strength - they all lacked the
power to lift it from the ground, except for the noble Willehalm, who
jerked it up above his knees, something the others could not do, not
one of them. Rennewart took hold of one end and that young sargent
swung the club above his head like a sapling. His strength stood the
Christians in good stead.
When there had been enough playing about, water was brought to the princes and to many lovely ladies, as well as to all the noble knights. Each one was sitting in his place, and Heinrich asked Rennewart to be seated beside the Queen, on the rug, at the head of the table. When he had sat down he had to eat, just as he was, in armour. It must be said of his sword that if Neidhart had seen it being carried over his local hill he would have complained about this to his friends. The Margrave did not object, even though Rennewart was sitting very close to the Queen.

Never had better food been seen and so willingly served in such a devastated land. If anyone knew how to live on goodwill alone, he received this from his host and hostess, and neither of them made the mistake of carrying away what anyone who was proposing to fight the enemy could eat right there. By the time they had eaten, it was far on into the morning. The princes took their leave, wanting to press on and eager for battle. Giburc was weeping as she kissed them.

Before they had reached their encampments, the tents had all been dismantled and the army drawn up in groups, and the field adorned with many banners. Giburc came quickly to the windows with her many maidens, to watch how the plain was being covered with many companies of knights and all their princely forces. From all sides there came marching along the roads towards the sea such a powerful army that the angels could have seen it if they had known anything about helmet decorations. On their helmets those men there had fixed many costly and beautiful ornaments. Moreover, the whole field could be seen glistening with the finest silks worn by these noble and high-spirited men. Never in the whole of Christendom had there been seen such an assembly of the friends of the lord of the land.

So they are about to depart: they are all set to ride against the heathens. May God, who takes care of everything, direct all this. He knows well enough who will be victorious there.