ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

The Pleier's Arthurian Romances

Garel of the Blooming Valley, Tandareis and Flordibel, Meleranz

Volume XCI
Series B

J. W. Thomas

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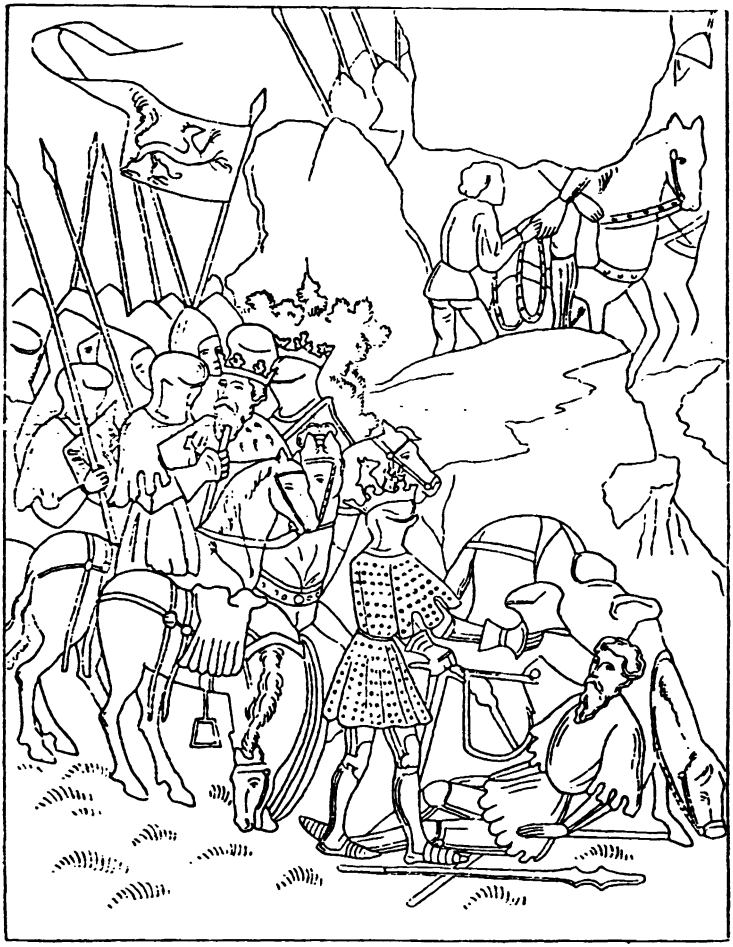

Fresco at Runkelstein Castle. Garel defeats Kei.

THE PLEIER'S ARTHURIAN ROMANCES

Garel of the Blooming Valley, Tandareis and Flordibel, Meleranz

Translated and with an Introduction
by J.W. Thomas

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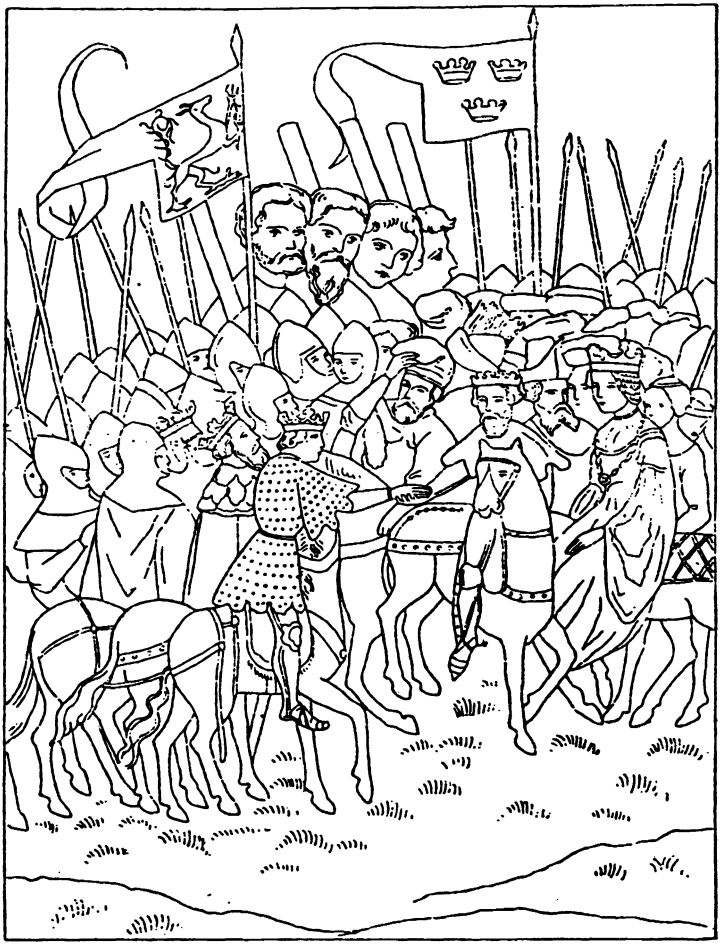
The General Editors hope that these volumes will bring the general reader a closer awareness of a richly diversified area that has for too

long been closed to everyone except those with precise academic training, an area that is well worth study and reflection.

James J. Wilhelm
Rutgers University

Lowry Nelson, Jr.
Yale University

To Professor Hans-Joachim and Ruth Lang



Fresco at Runkelstein Castle. Garel meets Arthur.

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Meleranz

INTRODUCTION

Life of the Author

Almost nothing is known of the man who called himself The Pleier. Since he composed in a Bavarian-Austrian dialect, some scholars have attempted to connect him with a county near Salzburg, a family of Salzburg nobility, or a family of Styrian counts—all with similar names. Others have suggested that Pleier, meaning one who smelts metallic ores, may be a descriptive pseudonym for an author who creates something of value from raw materials.[1] The approximate period of his productivity, somewhere between 1240 and 1280, has been determined by taking note of the literature with which he was familiar, but there is little agreement with respect to the order in which his romances appeared. The sequence *Garel of The Blooming Valley—Tandareis and Flordibel—Meleranz* is plausible because certain deeds of the hero of the first work are mentioned in the second and the prosody of the third work is superior to that of the other two.[2]

Artistic Achievement

The great popularity of the earlier Arthurian romances, especially Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* (ca. 1190) and *Iwein* (ca. 1200) and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (ca. 1202–ca. 1210), assured the subsequent works of this kind a large audience at the same time that it placed restrictions on their authors. For Arthur, his court, and the character and deeds of the knights of the Round Table had in effect become history that one could supplement but not change.

Nobody understood this better than Pleier. He carefully fitted his heroes and their adventures into the existing framework—constructed mainly by Wolfram—and presented his romances as authentic chapters of Arthurian lore, not as original compositions. He validated them with the familiar, chatty narrator and by using well-known knights as his

supporting cast, referring to episodes in earlier works, employing a traditional overall structure, and adopting to a considerable extent the language and style of his predecessors.

Yet in one very important respect Pleier's works, like those of all the later authors, differed from their chief models, for Hartmann and Wolfram had imperfect heroes who erred and paid dearly for their errors, and their adventures were less the results of exterior circumstances than the expressions of their state of mind. These men were interesting in a way that the idealized knights of a later time could not be, not only because they were less predictable, but also because their failings, like the tragic flaws of Shakespeare's heroes, were universal.[3] Pleier compensated for his infallible knights by concentrating on the adventures themselves, providing logical exterior motivation for the latter, and lending their outcomes widespread social significance. The teachings that are implicit in the action of the early romances appear in Pleier's works as digressions by the narrator.[4]

Pleier not only presents his heroes as models of knighthood, he also depicts King Arthur's court as an ideal society that, highly refined and richly attired, dwelt in great luxury in splendid castles and passed the time with an endless round of dances, concerts, feasts, and tournaments. This too represents a departure from Hartmann and Wolfram. It is true that the former's *Erec* portrays the court favorably, but primarily because it illustrates an alternative to the barren self-imposed isolation of Iders, Erec, and Mabonagrin. In *Iwein*, on the other hand, its preoccupation with personal glory is shown to be incompatible with the ideal of true kindness with which Hartmann's story begins. Wolfram tends to treat the court with good-humored irony and once refers to its lord as the May-man.

The picture of the Arthurian court as a magnificent Utopia of gracious living did not originate with Pleier but grew through the *Lanzelet* (ca. 1195) of Ulrich von Zatzikhoven and especially the *Wigalois* (ca. 1204) of Wirnt von Grafenberg. Yet Pleier's works stress the good life and fine manners more than other Arthurian romances do, which doubtless contributed to his popularity. Courtesy and propriety are of primary importance at all of his courts worthy of the name, and their lords display lavish generosity. Receptions, greetings, seating arrangements, farewells, and other ceremonies are described frequently and in detail. Good breeding and correct behavior distinguish most of the characters, whether they are presented as friends or foes of the hero. Etiquette is in effect equated with morality, for those who have no manners also have no morals.[5]

Pleier always assumes that his audience is familiar with the personae of all of the preceding Arthurian romances and he strives to present them with the same traits that previous authors have given them. When he introduces new characters, he usually describes them at once, rather than letting their actions reveal their natures, which to some extent reduces the dramatic impact of the adventures. Arthur appears in his traditional role as a generous ruler who is greatly concerned with honor, but he is not a stereotype, and each of the three romances shows him in a somewhat different light.[6]

The antagonists are of two kinds: those who oppose the hero through misunderstanding, duress, an ill-advised oath, or loyalty to his foe on the one hand, and those who are basically evil on the other. The former almost always survive and are reconciled with the hero; the latter, with one exception, perish. Heathens appear in both groups. Women play important roles in the development of the plots and, being less restricted than knights by codes of behavior, are more interesting and more clever. In *Garel* it is Laudamie who suggests the method by which the hero obtains a large army and Kloudite who is instrumental in reconciling the victors and the vanquished. In both *Tandareis and Flordibel* and *Meleranz* the heroine sets the plot in motion, and in the former work it is Flordibel who finds a way to save Arthur's honor and Tandareis's life, Antonie who rescues the hero a second time, and Jenover who devises the stratagem for bringing him back to Arthur's court.[7]

With regard to the Church and religious practices Pleier's works differ from all the early Arthurian romances but *Wigalois*, for Hartmann and Ulrich keep such matters in the background and Wolfram brings neither priest nor monk into his story. But there is a somewhat pietistic air about much of Pleier's writing: his heroes and heroines attend mass dutifully and at times pray for divine assistance in adversity and, although there are no obvious miracles, his narrator makes it clear that God does indeed interfere in the affairs of men, helping the righteous and punishing the wicked. Still, since it is quite likely that the author's audience did not think this at all unusual, one might consider the emphasis on religion and religious observance to be more an indication of increased realism than of Christian devotion.[8]

In any case, Pleier does have certain realistic tendencies: two of his romances are almost completely devoid of magic and all contain an unusual amount of detail. With obvious pleasure his narrator minutely describes great festivals with their many activities and colorful parades with their bands and banners. The portrayal of scenes of nature,

especially mountain scenery, is true to life, although the language may be somewhat stylized, and the accounts of journeys sometimes record day by day events with such respect for chronology that one can calculate the exact duration of a series of adventures. These episodes are usually held together either by a common goal or by one event developing out of another. The transitions are often made smooth by foreshadowings, which are intended to clarify future situations rather than to increase dramatic tensions. Sometimes the author includes a story within the story so that a character can explain his situation or his actions.

Pleier's three romances are clearly tales that are told. Everything passes through a narrator who permits one neither to forget nor ignore him. He frequently addresses the members of his audience directly: insisting that he is providing the true version of events, asking for their indulgence while he digresses, reminding them of past incidents, pleading ignorance of certain details, and giving his opinions on various matters that arise. At times he sounds much like Wolfram's narrator as he pictures himself in the situation of his hero and occasionally he appeals to our imagination by shifting to the present tense, as if the action were taking place before our eyes. Like his predecessors the narrator has a sense of humor. This expresses itself in calculated understatements, the embarrassment of such figures as the boastful Kei and the rascally brother of Antonie, and sly references to the joys of the wedding night.

Sources and Influences

With the title, *Garel of The Blooming Valley*, Pleier calls attention to the work's chief source, Stricker's *Daniel of The Blooming Valley*, and invites his audience to compare the two. The latter narrative, which appeared some ten to twenty years earlier, is the most unknightly Arthurian romance of medieval Germany. In it the hero has an untraditional Old Testament name, gains his ends by cunning rather than pure valor, and cares nothing about courtly love; Arthur is a crafty and bold warrior, rather than a passive model of generosity and honor; and the adventures are filled with strange magic and such creatures of mountain folklore as had appeared in the noncourtly Dietrich tales.

In *Daniel* an uncouth giant comes to Arthur's court and orders the king to accompany him to the land of Cluse and swear allegiance to its mighty ruler, Matur, who has seven great combat-ready armies. Pretending to agree, Arthur asks that his friends be permitted to go

along so that they too could do homage to the giant's lord, and with this ruse he collects a powerful force. Daniel, a stranger who had just won admission to the company of the Round Table, secretly goes on ahead to reconnoiter and along the way has a series of adventures, one of which yields him a magic sword that nothing can resist. With it and by turning a wondrous golden beast of the enemy against those it was intended to aid, he helps Arthur achieve a hard-fought, bloody victory.

Pleier employs the basic outline of *Daniel* for his plot but he uses only two of its adventures and these are drastically altered. In general he strives to build a traditional Arthurian romance on Stricker's framework and correct what he apparently considered a rather shocking corruption of a revered art form. In place of the stranger with the unorthodox name, he chooses for his hero a knight who appears briefly in *Erec*, *Parzival*, and *Wigalois* and makes him a relative of Arthur, Gawan, and Parzival. A descendant of the same fairy as they, he is a brave and guileless man with a keen sense of honor. The giant has now become a most polite messenger that delivers a formal challenge from the courtly King Ekunaver—also mentioned in *Parzival*—who feels honor-bound to avenge an injury that he believes Arthur has done him. Arthur accepts the challenge in an equally straightforward manner and is given a year to prepare for the invasion.

The author therefore lets his audience know at the outset that, despite the similarity in titles, his work will be much different from Stricker's: that the quarrel is between monarchs who will abide by the chivalric code and that the outcome will be determined by valor rather than guile. The most striking examples of the renunciation of cunning in the story that follows are seen in the disposition of a Medusa-head and a metallic beast. Instead of being used against the foes of the hero, the two are merely neutralized. Indeed the beast would have appeared to be a blind motif to those who heard or read Pleier's work, if they had not been familiar with *Daniel*.[9]

Pleier fits his romance into the Arthurian canon by having it start with the episode in which Ginover was abducted, which his audience knew from *Iwein*. Since Iwein is gone and both Gawan and Lanzilet rush off to save her, this is a convenient time for Garel's adventures to begin, because three famous knights who might have competed with him for the honor of defending Arthur are absent from the court. Two others, Erec and Parzival, had previously left to become kings of their own realms. To further establish a close connection with *Iwein*, the author has the seneschal Kei ridicule Garel before the latter departs, just as he had derided Hartmann's hero on a similar occasion.[10]

Throughout the work the author continually fashions ties to the narratives of his predecessors so that his tale appears to be merely a new chapter of a great epic in which the characters move freely from one story to another, much as Faulkner's do in the novels of Yoknapatawpha county. The knights and ladies refer to events or individuals that appeared in *Erec*, *Iwein*, *Lanzelet*, *Wigalois*, Wolfram's *Titurel*, and especially *Parzival*, which—with Dinazarun, Anferre, and Kanadic—also contributed to the fictional map of *Garel*. The process of revealing connections with the past is even carried beyond the Arthurian myth, for one of Garel's allies is the Duke Gilan who gave Tristan the magic dog Petitcreiu in Gottfried von Strassburg's romance.[11]

The Arthurian narrative tradition that Pleier inherited stressed symmetry. There may be a sort of prologue, as in *Parzival* and *Wigalois*, but the main action starts at Arthur's court and proceeds as follows: the hero departs, has a series of adventures that fall into two distinct and often parallel groups, returns to the court, and finally goes on to his own realm. *Garel* begins with Arthur's Whitsuntide festival, which is interrupted by the loss of the queen and the arrival of the giant messenger with the challenge. With Kei's ridicule ringing in his ears, the hero leaves to follow the giant and spy out the enemy land. Along the way he has adventures marked by single combats, each more perilous than the preceding one, that bring him promises of aid against Arthur's foe. He wins a bride and a kingdom, where he tarries for about ten months to initiate the restoration of the deserted land.

Then the hero sets out again, this time with the mighty forces that were promised him, and a second group of adventures follows, involving military actions on an ever larger scale: single combat between the hero and a giant in front of a border fortress, a battalion-size skirmish just inside the land of the enemy, a struggle at the river in which some forty thousand warriors take part, and finally the main battle, fought by three hundred thousand men. Victorious, Garel rides back toward Arthur's court, evens the score with Kei, sends a giant messenger to inform the king of his victory, learns of the return of Ginover, and joins the knights of the Round Table in a splendid festival.

The hero's journey to his own realm is somewhat longer than that of the earlier romances, for Pleier uses it to take care of a few loose ends and bind the different elements of the plot more closely together. Retracing his previous route, Garel stops at the same castles as before, thus refreshing the memory of the audience. No longer a solitary stranger, he travels triumphantly at the head of a great army, is feted at each

court, and provides husbands for each of the fair maidens he met when he first came that way.

Although these unions were the diplomatic marriages that were the rule in noble families, Pleier also introduces several true love stories into his tale of adventure. Two, which are mentioned briefly in *Parzival* and recounted as recent history in *Garel*, help to provide a sentimental and somber mood at the same time that they establish family relationships with which Pleier, following Wolfram's example, connects the separate parts of his plot. We are told how Elinot, Arthur's son, fell in love with Florie, the sister-in-law of his enemy, Ekunaver, and perished in her service, which caused her to die of grief. And we learn that the tragedy was repeated in the sad fate of Anfole, the sister of Laudamie, and Galwes, the uncle of Garel. A third unhappy love affair, that between Eskilabon and Klaretschanze, is treated at greater length since it formed the background of two of Garel's adventures. It too involved the service of a knight for a lady.

A more mundane love story is that related by Kloudite. At the death of her sister Florie she inherited the kingdom of Kanadic, and her vassals insisted on her marrying so that the land would have a strong protector. Having seen what grief and pain love could bring, Kloudite resisted their demands as long as she could, but finally agreed and chose Ekunaver; she became very fond of him, and they had a happy life together. Something of this realism is also seen in the case of Garel and Laudamie. Although they are from the beginning strongly attracted to each other, he consults with Albewin and she with her vassals and kinsmen before they decide to marry. In like situations the heroes of Hartmann and Wolfram were less cautious; it is clear that Pleier, despite his reverence for tradition, belonged to a later, less sentimental generation.

In addition to fitting his romance into the Arthurian world that his predecessors had created, Pleier frequently borrowed from them for his own episodes, producing variations of familiar themes and situations. In some cases one can readily detect the influences of three or four older works on a single incident, but the result has Pleier's own stamp. When he decided to make the threat to Arthur at the beginning of *Garel* a chivalric matter, the author drew on the scene in *Parzival* where Kingrimursel accuses Gawan of having murdered his lord and challenges the knight to fight him at Schanpfanzun in forty days. Aware of this, Pleier's audience may well have anticipated an eventual reconciliation between Arthur and his adversary.

In Garel's first adventure he defeats a prince who has laid waste a land and slain the son of its ruler because the latter had refused to give the prince his daughter in marriage. The situation is based on the Harpin episode of *Iwein* and may also have been influenced by the siege of Patelamunt in *Parzival*. In the second adventure the situation of Eskilabon—who, because of his ladylove, is forced to defend his garden against all comers—is in many respects like that of Mabonagrin in *Erec*, but the picking of flowers as a challenge to combat appears to have been borrowed from Gawan's first meeting with Gramoflanz in *Parzival*. The jousts in a field across a river from a castle and the freeing of four hundred prisoners points clearly to Gawan's adventure at Schastel Marveile in the same work; the fifty spears sticking in the ground that are shared by opponents and the shackle insignia displayed by the captive knights had previously appeared in *Wigalois*.

Adventure three has Garel slaying two giants and freeing a large number of imprisoned and oppressed women as Iwein does in Hartmann's work. The centaur-like monster of the following episode is a reincarnation of Wirnt's Marrien; the Medusa-head on its shield is left over from Stricker's work.

Although Pleier's chief source, *Daniel*, includes a great battle, he drew mainly from *Wigalois* for his portrayal of warfare and for the rest of his story. In both this work and *Garel* the hero collects his army at a splendid festival and sends a messenger to formally declare a state of war; in so doing the latter recites the names of all the highborn nobles who will join in the attack. As the hero's army moves out, unit by unit, the colorful pageantry is described in detail: the music, the splendid armor, and the banners with their various emblems.[12] After the battle—in which a highly praised young heathen king is among the slain—the hero leads his host to King Arthur'court, where there is a great celebration, and then returns to his own desolate land which, with the aid of his wife, he restores to its former prosperity. At the end both authors depreciate their talent and offer a prayer that they and their listeners may be admitted to heaven and enjoy eternal bliss.

In addition to the older Arthurian literature, Pleier occasionally makes use of tales native to the southern and south-eastern Alpine regions. Eskilabon's flower garden reminds one of the rose garden in *Laurin*, the owner of which wreaks vengeance when it is disturbed, and Garel's fight with the two giants in his third adventure closely parallels the struggle between Ortnit and the giant pair, Helle and Runze, as recounted in *Wolfdietrich B*. The dwarf king Albewin, who appears in the same episode, is modeled after the dwarf king Alberich of *Ortnit*.

Albewin gives Garel armor and shield that no weapon can pierce, a sword that will cut any steel, and a ring that makes him as strong as twelve men; Alberich provides Ortnit with sword, armor, and shield of like quality and is himself immensely strong. Albewin has a cape that makes him invisible; Alberich is by nature invisible and can be seen only by the wearer of a certain magic ring.[13]

Although *Garel* borrows freely from other works, it is not merely a collection of retold tales, for everything is subordinated to a strictly controlled plot. The early adventures are held together by the hero's pursuit of the messenger and, by winning him allies, contribute directly to the second series of episodes, that lead in logical sequence to the great battle. Pleier's romance also achieves continuity and gains substance by the author's social consciousness. This expresses itself not only in his keen interest in the social graces and proprieties that facilitate the interactions of courtly life but also in his conviction that great deeds do not merely bring fame to the hero but benefit society as a whole.

When Garel comes to the aid of fair maidens, he delivers entire nations. In the Merkanie adventure he frees the land from the ravages of war; his victory at Belamunt liberates four hundred young nobles whose captivity left countries without an heir; the death of the giant pair brings an end to the oppression of the dwarf kingdom; the slaying of Vulganus enables the people of Anferre to return to their homes; and the defeat of Ekunaver saves Arthur's lands from invasion. The marriages that Garel arranges have extensive social implications, for in each instance the maiden was the sole heir of a ruling prince. And, to a devout medieval Christian, his support for Ekunaver's hospital and monastery would also have seemed an appropriate social duty.

Two passages are significant with respect to the author's social interests. "We must not forget to speak of the role Garel played in restoring his land," said the narrator when his hero became lord of Anferre. "He gave freely to all the needy and made the poor who wanted to live there rich until so many came that the land was fully peopled." And the story ends with the words: "He and his beloved, the sweet Laudamie, lived in splendor here in their land and ruled in such fashion . . . that no other king was as upright and generous."[14]

The narrator himself is a genial person who treats all but the most inhuman characters sympathetically. His language is simple and direct. There are no extended similes as with Hartmann or obscure reflections, such as those for which Gottfried censured Wolfram. He especially likes to depict large-scale dramatic scenes: the pageantry of armies

moving off to war; the confused violence of mass conflict, with exhausted steeds sinking down onto the bodies of fallen warriors; and—with considerable realism—the despair of those who search among the mangled corpses of the battlefield for friends and kinsmen.

Garel is an adventure romance that includes a love affair; *Tandareis and Flordibel* is a love story that is embellished and complicated by adventures. The bare outline of its plot came from one of the most popular tales of the Middle Ages, versions of which appeared from Greece to Iceland. Pleier probably knew it from Konrad Fleck's *Flore und Blanscheflur*, that was composed about 1220. Here Flore is the son of the caliph of Cordova and Blanscheflur the daughter of a Christian captive. They have spent their entire childhood together at the court when the caliph realizes that at fourteen they are deeply in love. He is about to slay the girl when his wife persuades him to sell her to a seafaring merchant. The latter takes her to Baghdad to the sultan, who places her in a tower with other maidens to await his pleasure. Flore follows, learns where she is, and manages to get into the tower, where he stays for several weeks before being discovered. The two are tried before an assembly of nobles who are so impressed by their willingness to die for each other that they recommend clemency, which is granted. In the meantime Flore's father has died, so the lovers return to Cordova. They marry and rule the country, which is converted to Christianity.[15]

Pleier uses very little of this story: the two children of different races, the love that almost costs the life of one, the separation, the tower, the sojourn of the hero with the maidens, the trial, and the happy ending. That is all. He commences his narrative, as Gottfried does, with a discourse on love but, unlike the older author, he does not present a theme for his work. Instead Pleier advises good women to bestow their affections on those who are steadfast, declares his loyalty to his own lady love, and states that—for her sake—he will attempt to honor worthy men and women with a tale of adventure.

He begins once more by fitting his hero into the Arthurian cycle and the Arthurian family. Tandareis's mother is the same Anticoni with whom Gawan in *Parzival* carried on a brief and nearly fatal flirtation and who, as Pleier's public knew from the same work, was related to Arthur. She is also a cousin of Karel, the Garel of the previous romance. His father is the uncle of Queen Jenover (called Ginover by the *Garel* scribe) and is the ruler of Tandernas, a kingdom mentioned in Wolfram's *Willehalm*. Although Pleier creates new characters and

places, many of the personae and much of the fictional geography were already known to his audience; there is a fairly regular alternation between familiar and unfamiliar settings. Events of other Arthurian romances are mentioned: in the first scene Kei reminds Arthur of the embarrassing mantle episode of *Lanzelet*, at Montanikluse a knight recounts one of the exploits of Hartmann's hero in *Erec*, and at Tandernas Kalogriant ironically congratulates Kei on his "victories" in jousts that took place in *Erec*, *Iwein*, *Parzival*, and *Garel*.

The action of *Garel* falls into three parts: the knightly adventures, the military campaign, and the return to the hero's kingdom. But since the love element is much more important in *Tandareis*, this work needs a fourth section of some length to establish the Tandareis-Flordibel relationship as an axis around which the plot must turn and to motivate the hero's departure. It begins with the traditional Whitsuntide festival and with Arthur's ill-considered oath and ends with the hero's expulsion from his homeland. During the intervening period Tandareis and Flordibel have fallen in love and the former has proven himself in knightly combat. The trial at the close finds him innocent of seducing Flordibel but guilty of a serious breach of court etiquette, which forces Tandareis—like Erec, Iwein, and Parzival before him—to atone for his transgression. It is in keeping with Pleier's interest in manners that neither his narrator nor his hero should protest that the sentence was too severe.

Tandareis does not merely ride forth at random in search of adventures—the author does not favor aimless wandering—but sets out with the intention of visiting his uncle, the Fergulaht of *Parzival*. And it is not just bad luck that brings on the catastrophe with the robbers. For if the hero had been in full armor at the head of his company instead of far behind, daydreaming about his sweetheart, the robbers might not have attacked. But they do and Tandareis's attendants are taken prisoner which, since he must free them, provides the incentive for the rest of the first series of adventures. At its conclusion Tandareis has won himself a kingdom and sent a thousand knights and ladies to Arthur's court, thus assuring Flordibel of his continued loyalty and causing the king to revoke his banishment.

The second group of adventures is also the result of the hero's longing for his sweetheart, because his pain was such that he could not wait patiently for word from Arthur but had to find distraction through travel. The ensuing conflicts differ from the earlier ones in that his foes now were knights rather than robbers and rude giants, which

means that he could send them too to Arthur's court and thereby maintain communication with Flordibel and the king.

The initial episode is unique in that it has no causal relationship to any other, but it is nevertheless relevant to the plot in that it gave Tandareis a messenger to send to his loved one and an opportunity to demonstrate his faithfulness to her by resisting the charms of a beautiful and wealthy queen. The encounter with Claudin and Kalubin that followed supplied him with another messenger and made it possible for Tandareis to be imprisoned without being defeated, since he surrendered to the evil Kandalion to save Claudin. The subsequent participation of the hero in disguise in three tournaments provided further contacts with Flordibel and the court at the same time that it greatly enhanced his fame. The marriage of the two lovers at the end of the adventures comes as the goal toward which all the action has been directed.

As in *Garel*, the hero's return to his kingdom recapitulates all that has gone before. He returns to his father's country, which he had defended so valiantly; travels on to the lands he had won from the giant; sends greetings to the lord of Poitou, where he had recovered from his wounds; and sends gifts to Kalubin, whom he had defeated at the bridge, and to Kilimar, who had aided him at Montanikluse.

In *Tandareis* Pleier continued his efforts to make his story conform to the Arthurian tradition by using situations and language similar to those of his German predecessors—the French source he mentions is fictitious—but here he followed them less closely than in *Garel*. His prefatory comments on love were probably inspired by those of Gottfried, although the point of view is different, and in the first scene the latter's account of Petitcreiu contributed the bells on Flordibel's saddle, which in other respects is reminiscent of the one Enite was given in *Erec*. The mechanical singing bird on the bridle perhaps came from *Wolfdietrich B*.

Tandareis's jousting during the siege of Tandernas reflects that of Wolfram's Gahmuret at Patelamunt in some detail; for example, after his defeat of other knights Pleier's hero refuses to joust with his kinsman Gawan, just as the victorious Gahmuret avoids combat with his cousin Kaylet. Hartmann also contributed to this episode, for Tandareis unhorses Kei, Dodineis, and Kalogriant one after the other, as the abductor of Guinevere in *Iwein* had done, but not in the same order. The fighting at Tandernas takes place before six gates, as was the case in *Wigalois* when Namur was besieged, and in both works the commander of each of the six attacking forces is named. At the assembly of kinsmen

and vassals called by Tandareis's father to discuss their defense, Flordibel appears, expresses her dismay at being responsible for the hostilities, and presents a plan to conciliate Arthur. In like manner Giburg, the cause of the invasion of the Moslems in *Willehalm*, addresses the war council before the second battle of Alischanz to admonish the Christians to show mercy to the enemy if they should triumph.

The idea for the robber bands that Tandareis encountered came from *Erec*—although Pleier's treatment of the two struggles is quite different from Hartmann's—and the intervening episode, the hero's stay with the merchant Todila, was modeled after Willehalm's sojourn with the kindly merchant Wimar when the former arrived in Munleun.[16] For the Malmontan adventure Pleier borrowed from his own *Garel*. The four courtly giants who guarded the pass leading into Kanadic are given the savage natures of the giant pair, Purdan and Fidegart, and placed in the three fortresses that blocked the road to Malmontan and in the castle itself. Tandareis's struggles with them also remind one of Garel's adventure, but the situation of the prisoners at Malmontan is more like that described in the corresponding episode in *Iwein*.

The scene where the hero enters a deserted castle in the wilderness realm of Queen Albiun and finds a long table covered with food for a banquet recalls a similar situation in *Daniel*, and the race of dwarfs that brings these supplies is the same that Garel encountered.[17] The events dealing with Claudin and Kalubin in the following adventure were apparently inspired by an incident in *Parzival* in which the hero defeated Orilus, who had been abusing his wife, and brought about their reconciliation.

Tandareis's struggle with Kandalion and his men drew from a conflict that took place in *Erec*, to which Pleier refers, when an unidentified count tried to seize Enite. The subsequent tower episode and the tournaments are based on experiences in *Lanzelet*. In both works the hero is freed from his prison and nursed back to health by a member of his captor's family, a maiden whom he serves throughout three tournaments while disguised in three different outfits and in league with a group of knights who joust for material gain; Arthur's wife has expressed the wish that the hero come to the court and the king has offered a reward to anyone who would bring him there. At the beginning of each tournament the thoughts of his sweetheart cause Tandareis to sink into reverie—as Wolfram's Parzival did at sight of the drops of blood—from which he awakens just in time to meet a charge. The emblem that Pleier's hero displays is that of the captive knights in *Garel*, a shackle.

The trial to determine which maiden gets Tandareis as a husband recalls the lawsuit in *Parzival* that ended with Gahmuret being awarded to Herzeloyde. The marriages that Arthur arranges for Antonie and Claudin remind one of those he arranged for Gawan's mother and sisters in *Parzival*.[18]

The characters of *Tandareis* are more interesting than those of the previous romance. In his determination to keep his word at any cost, Arthur is more dynamic than in *Garel*; in his ability to manipulate the trial in which the maidens press their claims on Tandareis, he is more clever; and when he tells Antonie that she should kiss him because that was the custom at enfeoffment, he even reveals a sense of humor. Kei too has developed: he gives good advice without arrogance and his teasing of his companions is humorous without being malicious.

Tandareis and Flordibel are idealized but Antonie is quite human. Her heroism and benevolence in rescuing Tandareis are tempered by considerable self-interest, as is clear when she makes him pledge obedience in order to escape death and later on when she declares that he should marry her because she saved him. She enjoys irritating her rude brother by asking about his success at tournaments that she knows have cost him dearly and she playfully pretends to punish Tandareis for having troubled him. She embarrasses the hero by appearing during his bath and, on another occasion, attempts to seduce him. Claudin is another less than perfect maiden, who is sympathetically portrayed and reminds one of Obie in *Parzival*.

Certain composition techniques of *Garel* are more pronounced in *Tandareis*. The author likes to present variations of basically the same situation, as can be seen in the two fights with robbers, the four combats with giants, and the four tournaments that provide opportunities for vivid, panoramic description. The narrator frequently mentions his limited knowledge and at times refers to coming events. There are several interesting digressions from the main plot, such as Todila's account of his business and Kalubin's explanation for his treatment of Claudin, but the story of the excursion of Albiun and the hero into the wilds is less engaging.

Tandareis is more didactic than its predecessor. Dulcemar gives the hero counsel as he rides away from his homeland; the merchant's wife advises him when he leaves her dwelling; after slaying Karedoz the hero moralizes on the evil of arrogance; the narrator frequently quotes proverbs and, toward the conclusion, discourses at length on modesty and morality. Like *Garel*, *Tandareis* ends on a realistic note: with politics and piety. The hero declares that his land will be subject

to his father who, in turn, promises that Tandareis will be his sole heir. Tandareis devotes himself to making his kingdom prosperous and happy, and the narrator concludes with a prayer that we may be freed of guilt and gain entrance to the kingdom of heaven.

The bare outline of the plot of *Meleranz* appears to have come directly or indirectly from "Graelent," the Breton lay whose melody the boy Tristan played for King Mark and whose hero appears as a wedding guest in *Erec*. An anonymous Old French version tells how a knight named Graelent chases a white deer through a dense forest to a heath where a fairy queen, having left her garments in a nearby leafy bower, is bathing in a spring. Her maiden attendants flee, leaving the two alone, and they become lovers. She confesses that she had known who he was, had used the deer to lead him there, and warns him never to speak of her to anyone. After he returns to his dwelling in the seat of government, she sends a courtly messenger to him with gifts and then comes to stay with the knight, invisible to all but him.

Some time later the king has a great festival, during which he asks his assembled vassals and guests if they do not think that the queen is the loveliest of all women. When Graelent says that he knows one who is more beautiful, the king declares that he must produce her within a year or be tried for having maligned the queen. The fairy leaves the knight and his situation is perilous, but she vindicates Graelent by appearing before the full court on the day of the trial. As she rides away, the knight follows her through the forest to the heath. Here they are reconciled and cross the river below the spring to the fairy's land, which in another version is called Avalon.

In addition to the beautiful maiden who is bathing in a forest clearing while she waits for the hero, Pleier's story has the maids-in-waiting, the leafy bower, the courtly messenger who brings gifts, the long separation, the return to the clearing, and the departure to the maiden's country, but in other respects his romance is quite different from the fairy tale.

The author once more is careful to integrate his narrative with the existing Arthurian tradition. By giving Arthur another sister, he expands the family relationships that appear in *Parzival* and makes his new hero a nephew of the king; by having Meleranz name his sons after ancestors of Parzival, he establishes further ties to Wolfram's work; and by making use of two characters and a country named in *Erec*—Libers, Malloas, and Trefferin—he relates Meleranz and his

adventures to Hartmann's romance. When he has his hero come to a foreign court alone as a youthful stranger, his audience would have recalled the arrivals of Parzival, Lanzelet, and Wigalois at Arthur's court and Tristan's appearance at Mark's.

With regard to structure the work deviates somewhat from the norm, for the significant action begins and ends at the clearing with the splendid linden rather than in Brittany. But Arthur's court is not just a point of departure, for, although the hero does not return to it, it comes to him and thus provides the customary framework for the story. The adventures take place in quick succession and are closely connected, since each evolves from the preceding one, yet they clearly fall into two groups. In the Godonas and Verandoz affairs, Meleranz's enemies are evil tyrants, who are slain. The hero's opponents by the linden, on the other hand, are honest knights, and their lord, Libers, has a legitimate claim to the hand of Tydomie: her uncle and guardian has promised her to him. These latter contests are like the tournaments of *Tandareis* in that they are accompanied by colorful pageantry and no one is injured.

In the final section of the work the author presents his usual grand festival and ties up loose ends. Arthur and the hero's father reappear, hero and heroine are married, a suitable husband is found for Dulceflur and a beautiful wife for Libers, and a close friendship is formed between Meleranz and Malloas. Nothing is overlooked.

The chief unifying element of the plot is, of course, the love story. While Meleranz and Tydomie are apart, the scene shifts back and forth between them, they exchange letters, Dulceflur's messenger and later her mistress speak to the knight about his sweetheart, and Tydomie's governess—by means of astrology—informs the maiden of Meleranz's deeds and whereabouts.

For what appears to be his third romance, Pleier adapts several situations and scenes of his earlier works. Meleranz's journey over the high mountain after he left home reflects in some detail Tandareis's difficult ride into the realm of Albiun, and the beautiful meadow with the linden that Meleranz finds at the foot of the mountain recalls that of the wilderness queen; both are recreation areas that must be freed by combat. But the clear spring of *Tandareis* (and *Graelent*) is replaced by a bathtub with an ornate plumbing system that was apparently borrowed from the Grippia episode of the popular *Herzog Ernst*. This adventure also tells of a splendid bed—trimmed with gold and precious stones—that may have served as a model for that which Meleranz saw near the tub.[19]

The latter bed has a curtain with embroidery that depicts the love affair of Paris and Helen, the conquest of Troy, and the experiences of Aeneas, all of which was engraved on the saddle that was given to Enite in *Erec*. And one of the brooches on the mantle hanging near the bed has the form of Amor with a golden spear and salve box, a figure that appears in Heinrich von Veldeke's *Eneit*, a work from which Pleier also drew for the discussions on the nature of love that later took place between Tydomie and her governess. This lady's great knowledge of astrology reminds one of Flegetanis in *Parzival*.

The meeting of Meleranz and Arthur parallels that of Tristan and Mark: a boy of twelve to fourteen enters a strange land, encounters a master huntsman, and goes with him to a royal uncle whom he has never seen; although the king does not know his identity, he keeps the boy at his court and eventually knights him. But with respect to strength the young Meleranz resembles Parzival rather than the boy Tristan. The latter cannot turn over the stag that has been killed, while Meleranz is able to drag a live deer up to the king; it is hardly a coincidence that, at about the same age, Parzival could carry home a beast that would burden a mule.

Meleranz's Terrandes experience is basically an adaptation of the Malmontan adventure in *Tandareis*. The unwilling brigands and the giant oppressor of one work have become the robber giants and the man-size tyrant of the other. In both cases subjects of the foe warn and advise the hero, who slays their lord, releases prisoners, and assumes control of the country: enfeoffing vassals, distributing great wealth, and placing the government in charge of a deputy so that he can continue his travels. Pleier also borrows here from his first romance. The soliloquy of Meleranz as he stands over the fallen Godonas resembles that of Garel when he thinks he has killed Malseron; and Cursun, the guardian of the Terrandes border, becomes Meleranz's vassal just as Malseron, the guardian of the Kanadic border, becomes a vassal of Garel. The horn that Meleranz blows three times to challenge Godonas is reminiscent of the horn that Erec blows three times to signal his defeat of Mabonagrin.

The background of the struggle with Verangoz is the same as that of the chief adventure in *Wigalois*. In each work a heathen lord becomes friendly with the Christian ruler of a neighboring land, treacherously leads a surprise attack against him, and kills him and his men. The heir of the murdered nobleman, a young lady, then sends one of her maids-in-waiting to Arthur's court to get a knight to rescue her and free her land.

The Libers affair reminds one of the series of tournaments in *Tandareis*, for both take place when the hero, after a long absence, returns to the place where his adventures had begun and engages in four days of jousting, during which he wears splendid outfits of different colors. This final adventure also draws from the Pluris episode of *Lanzelet* in which a challenge was issued, as in *Meleranz*, by striking one of the many shields that were arranged in a row before a pavilion which was pitched on a blooming meadow.

By combining two royal weddings and four coronations with the threat of war, Pleier gives free rein to his love of pageantry and ends his romance with an extravaganza unparalleled in Arthurian literature. Twenty thousand handsome men and five thousand beautiful ladies move into Kamerie from Terrandes and pitch elegant tents on the flowering field below Flordemunt Castle; King Malloas enters the land with a vast host; King Arthur and the king of France, each with a magnificent retinue, ride up to the accompaniment of many trombones, lutes, and tambourines with banners flying and file in splendid companies onto the field; and the queen of Karedonas arrives with fifty comely ladies in elegant attire and a like number of knightly escorts.[20] There are three weeks of festive activities: bohorts (a knightly game in which two or more troops of horsemen show their riding skill by charging through each other's ranks), banquets, dances, and all sorts of other sports and entertainment. This was the epitome of the joyous times of the past of which the narrator speaks with nostalgia in his prologue and contrasts with the discontent and parsimony of his own day. Such nostalgia, as Pleier knew well, was the chief source of the popularity of Arthurian romance.

Since the narrator in his introductory remarks finds the noble and mighty largely responsible for the deterioration of society, one may regard the work as a sort of textbook for princes and view Meleranz and Tydomie as models. Meleranz in particular is frequently praised for the traits that great lords should have, just as Godonas, a contrast figure, is censured for lacking them, and the narrator never misses an opportunity to show the former's concern for the common good. The advice he receives as a young monarch from his father and the brief account of the successful reign of Meleranz and Tydomie make it clear that the author hoped to edify as well as entertain the influential members of his audience.[21]

In spite of meticulous attempts to adapt his works to the spirit and content of the earlier Arthurian romances, this didactic goal, together

with Pleier's emphasis on manners and attention to realistic detail, indicates that the author was composing for a generation with somewhat different literary interests and expectations than those of Hartmann and Wolfram.[22]

The three romances appear to have been quite popular during the second half of the thirteenth century and the late Middle Ages. Their influence can be seen in Albrecht von Scharfenberg's *Seifrid de Ardemont*, Konrad von Stoffeln's *Gauriel von Muntabel*, Ulrich von dem Türlin's *Willehalm*, and the anonymous *Wigamur*; *Garel* is mentioned in Püterich von Reichertshausen's *Ehrenbrief*.[23] In his *Buch der Abenteuer* Ulrich Füetrer refers to all three works, borrows extensively from *Garel* and *Meleranz* for his *Flordimar*, and presents an abridgement of *Meleranz*.[24] The names of several characters in Füetrer's *Lanzelot* were taken from *Garel*, and *Der jüngere Titurel*, by an author known only as Albrecht, has a minor character named Tandreas. Three Czech versions of *Tandareis* are extant in fifteenth-century manuscripts and there is a sixteenth-century Czech abridgement of *Meleranz*.[25]

Perhaps the most significant confirmation of Pleier's popularity in the Middle Ages came about the year 1400 when Nikolaus Vintler added a wing to the thirteenth-century Runkelstein Castle in South Tirol and had one of the two new halls decorated with twenty-three frescoes that portrayed episodes in *Garel*. Twenty have been preserved.[26] During the sixteenth century Pleier's romances, together with most medieval German literature, were forgotten and remained so for nearly three centuries. When they finally appeared in print, in the second half of the nineteenth century, such attention as they received was largely unfavorable. A few critics welcomed them as historical documents that threw light on the manners and mores of their time, but most dismissed Pleier as a mere imitator and plagiarist because he drew so heavily on the earlier Arthurian works.[27]

This opinion prevailed until several complimentary articles around the middle of the present century forced a reevaluation of the author, which has greatly improved his reputation.[28] There is now general agreement that Pleier was a skillful artist who could mold whatever he borrowed to suit his own needs and taste, that he was in many respects quite original, and that his stories had been influential and were interesting. As a result the number of studies devoted to Pleier has greatly increased and an additional manuscript of one of his works has been discovered.[29]

Editorial Policy for this Translation

Pleier composed his works in the verse form traditional for courtly romances—rhymed couplets in which iambic tetrameter predominates—and, like most of his contemporaries, used a large number of line and rhyme fillers. Intent on creating smooth verses, he occasionally is repetitious and introduces elements in other than normal thought sequence, although in general his language is direct and lucid. In rendering it into idiomatic prose, the translator has felt free to leave out such words and phrases as served only the interests of prosody and, in several instances, to put clauses in a more logical order. Place names have been given their modern equivalents only when there could be no doubt as to the locality intended.

Pleier's Arthurian romances appear for the first time in a modern language with these English versions. They were made from the texts of Michael Walz, Ferdinand Khull, and Karl Bartsch.[30] Occasionally the absence of a rhyme in the text shows that a scribe has overlooked a verse, and sometimes a couplet appears to be missing, but such omissions have been indicated in the translation only when they noticeably affect the sense of the narrative. The only significant loss was the first leaf of the *Garel* manuscript, which gave the narrator's prologue. Chapter divisions and headings have been provided by the translator. He is greatly indebted to Professor Bernd Kratz and Lina Thomas for their generous assistance in the preparation of this work.

Notes

1. Petrus Tax, "Der Pleier," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, IX, 707, believes that the author's name may mean "(glass) blower" and that it has metaphorical significance.

2. Summaries of the scholarship dealing with the identity of the author and the order in which his romances appeared have been prepared by Peter Kern, *Die Artusromane des Pleier* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1981), pp. 16–31; James Robert Wahl, "Investigations of The Pleier's *Meleranz*," Diss. University of Michigan 1987, pp. 1–9; and Alexander Hildebrand, "Nachwort," in *Der Pleier: Meleranz*, ed. Karl Bartsch (1861; rpt. Hildeheim: Olms, 1974), pp. II–XIX.

3. The fall and redemption of Hartmann's Arthurian heroes are treated by J. W. Thomas, *Erec* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1982), pp. 2–18, and *Iwein* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1979), pp. 8–25. The more complex condition of Wolfram's knight is examined by Henry Kratz, *Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival* (Bern: Francke, 1973), pp. 204–314.

4. Walter Haug, "Paradigmatische Poesie. Der spätere deutsche Artusroman auf dem Weg zu einer 'nachklassischen' Ästhetik," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 54 (1980), 204–231, discusses the implications of the structural differences between the Arthurian romances of Hartmann and Wolfram and those of the later authors.

5. The importance of good manners in Pleier's works is treated by Ann G. Martin, *Shame and Disgrace at King Arthur's Court: A Study in the Meaning of Ignominy in Arthurian Literature to 1300* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1984), pp. 141–153.

6. Karin R. Gürttler, "*Künec Artûs der guote*": *Das Artusbild der höfischen Epik des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976), pp. 239–262, deals with Pleier's picture of Arthur.

7. The role of women in Pleier's romances is investigated by Petra Kellermann-Haaf, *Frau und Politik im Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zur politischen Rolle der Frau in den höfischen Romanen des 12., 13., und 14. Jahrhunderts* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1986), pp. 167–184.

8. John L. Riordan, "The Pleier's Place in German Arthurian Literature," Diss. University of California 1944, p. 39, concludes that the author was a devout practicing Christian; Eduard Hartl, "Der Pleier," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, III (1943), 909, believes the piety to be an expression of a middle class attitude.

9. Helmut de Boor, "Der Daniel des Stricker und der Garel des Pleier," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* (Tüb.), 79 (1957), 67–84, and Dorothea Müller, *'Daniel vom blühenden Tal' und 'Garel vom blühenden Tal': Die Artusromane des Stricker und des Pleier unter gattungsgeschichtlichen Aspekten* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1981), pp. 38–47, regard Pleier's romance as a correction of Stricker's; Horst P. Pütz, "Pleiers *Garel von dem blühenden Tal*: Protest oder Anpassung?" in *Literatur und bildende Kunst im Tiroler Mittelalter*, ed. Egon Kühebacher (Innsbruck: Institut für Germanistik, 1982), pp. 29–44, considers it more an adaptation of *Daniel*.

10. When Jürgen Haupt, *Der Truchsess Keie im Artusroman: Untersuchungen zur Gesellschaftsstruktur im höfischen Roman* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1971), pp. 111–113, in discussing this scene, criticizes Pleier as an unoriginal imitator, he fails to consider the possibility that the author was less interested in being original than in linking his work with that of Hartmann.

11. Kern, *Die Artusromane*, pp. 136–139, points out various connections between *Garel* and the preceding Arthurian stories; Christoph Cormeau, "Zur Gattungsentwicklung des Artusromans nach Wolframs *Parzival*," in *Spätmittelalterliche Artusliteratur*, ed. K. H. Göller (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1984), pp. 119–131, shows how the later works tended to build on the past and avoid conflicts with earlier ones.

12. Werner Schröder, "Das *Willehalm*-Plagiat im *Garel* des Pleier oder die vergeblich geleugnete Epigonalität," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 114 (1985), 119–141, lists similarities between the main conflict in *Garel* and the second battle of Alischanz in Wolfram's *Willehalm*.

13. Studies of Pleier's sources appear in Riordan, "The Pleier's Place in German Arthurian Literature," pp. 56–106; Kern, *Die Artusromane*, pp. 150–311; and Otto Seidl, *Der Schwan von der Salzach: Nachahmung und Motivmischung bei dem Pleier* (Dortmund: Ruhfus, 1909). Werner Besch, "Vom 'alten' zum 'nüwen' Parzival," *Der Deutschunterricht: Beiträge zu seiner Praxis und wissenschaftlichen Grundlegung*, 14 (1962), 96, believes that the introduction of native fairy tale material indicates a change in the taste of the public. Günter Zimmermann, "Die Verwendung heldenepischen Materials im *Garel* von dem Pleier: Gattungskonformität und Erweiterung," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 113 (1984), 42–60, examines Pleier's borrowings from *Ortnit*, *Wolfdietrich B*, and the tales of the Dietrich cycle.

14. Wolfgang Herles, ed., *Garel von dem blünden Tal von dem Pleier* (Vienna: Halosar, 1981), p. XIII, suggests that *Garel* may have been influenced to some extent by the political situation in Styria during the fourth decade of the thirteenth century and that the relations between Pleier's hero, his vassals, and Arthur may represent an ideal that contrasted with the relations between Friedrich II, Duke Friedrich of Austria and Styria, and the landed nobility of Styria. Kellermann-Haaf, *Frau und Politik im Mittelalter*, pp. 167–184, investigates the role Pleier's heroines play in the governing of their countries.

15. Kern, *Die Artusromane*, pp. 218–221, calls attention to a series of parallel situations which indicate that Pleier's plot may also have been influenced by Rudolf von Ems's *Willehalm von Orlens*.

16. At the end of *Meleranz* the author praises the "noble, esteemed Wimar" who encouraged him to compose the work. It is quite likely that Pleier is comparing the man to Wolfram's generous merchant and that Wimar was not his name.

17. The experience in the deserted castle is actually more similar to one of Gawan's adventures in *Die Krone* (ca. 1230) by Heinrich von dem Türlin, who lived in the same general area as Pleier, but there are no other indications that the younger author knew Heinrich's work.

18. After discussing Pleier's works, Elard Hugo Meyer, "Über *Tandarois und Flordibel*: Ein Artusgedicht des Pleiers," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 12 (1865), 470–514, declares that "jeder derselben ist nur ein sammelplatz von reminiscenzen aus verschiedenen höfischen dichtern."

19. Hans-Friedrich Rosenfeld, "Zum Pleier," *Neophilologus*, 15 (1930), 34–39, cites parallel passages to show the influence of *Herzog Ernst* on Pleier's works.

20. The manuscript has Arthur's banner displaying a *kapûn* (capon), which is quite unusual. Wahl, "Investigations of *Meleranz*," p. 69, suggests that this may be a scribal error and that the original text had *capelûn* (a dragon-like beast), the more traditional bearing of Arthur.

21. Alfred Karnein, "Minne, Aventiure und Artus-Idealität in den Romanen des späten 13. Jahrhunderts," in *Artusrittertum im späten Mittelalter: Ethos und Ideologie*, ed. Friedrich Wolfzettel (Giessen: Schmitz, 1984), p. 117, considers the just and enlightened exercise of authority to be a pervasive theme of the work.

22. Besch, "Vom 'alten' zum 'neuen' Parzival," ascribes changes in Arthurian literature during the thirteenth century to changes in the Zeitgeist.

23. Friedrich Panzer, ed., *"Merlin" und "Seifrid de Ardemont" von Albrecht von Scharfenberg* (Tübingen: Literarischer Verein in Stuttgart, 1902), pp. cxxiii–cxxx, points out similarities to show that *Meleranz* was influenced by *Seifrid*. Kern, *Die Artusromane*, pp. 264–277, argues that *Meleranz* is the older work.

24. Peter Kern, "Ulrich Füetrers 'Flordimar': Bearbeitung eines Artusromans des 13. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 107 (1988), 410–431.

25. Karel Brušák, "Some Notes on *Tandariáš a Flordibella*, a Czech 14th Century Chivalric Romance," in *Gorski vijenac: A Garland of Essays Offered to Professor Elizabeth Mary Hill*, ed. R. Autry et al. (Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1970), pp. 44–56, discusses the Czech work.

26. M[ichael] Walz, ed., *Garel von dem blühenden Tal: Ein höfischer Roman aus dem Sagenkreise von dem Pleier* (Freiburg: Wagner, 1892), has included reproductions and (pp. 329–336) remarks about the frescoes.

27. Ignaz Zingerle, "Über *Garel vom blühenden Thal* von dem Pleier," *Germania*, 3 (1858), 40, writes: "Eine reiche Ausbeute gibt *Garel* für Altertumskunde. Denn mit besonderer Vorliebe schildert der Pleier das Leben und die Sitte der damaligen Zeit." And Franz V. Zillner, "Ein Salzburgischer Dichter des 13. Jahrhunderts," *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde*, 33 (1893), 14, adds: "Der Pleier ist so vollständig mit höfischer Sitte vertraut, dass man aus seinen Werken einen beinahe umfassenden Spiegel derselben für die damalige Zeit herstellen könnte."

28. Pleier's works were favorably reviewed by Hartl, "Der Pleier"; Riordan, "A Vindication of the Pleier," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 47 (1948), 29–43; and de Boor, "Der *Daniel* des Stricker und der *Garel* des Pleier."

29. Peter Kern, "Eine Handschrift von Pleiers *Tandarios und Flordibel* im historischen Archiv der Stadt Köln," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 104 (1975), 41–54. An account of the other manuscripts and a recent selective bibliography appear in "Der Pleier," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, VII (1989), 728-737, by the same author.

30. Michael Walz, ed., *Garel von dem blüenden Tal*; Ferdinand Khull, ed., *Tandareis und Flordibel: Ein höfischer Roman von dem Pleiaere* (Graz: Buchhandlung Styria, 1885); Karl Bartsch, ed., *Der Pleier: Meleranz*.

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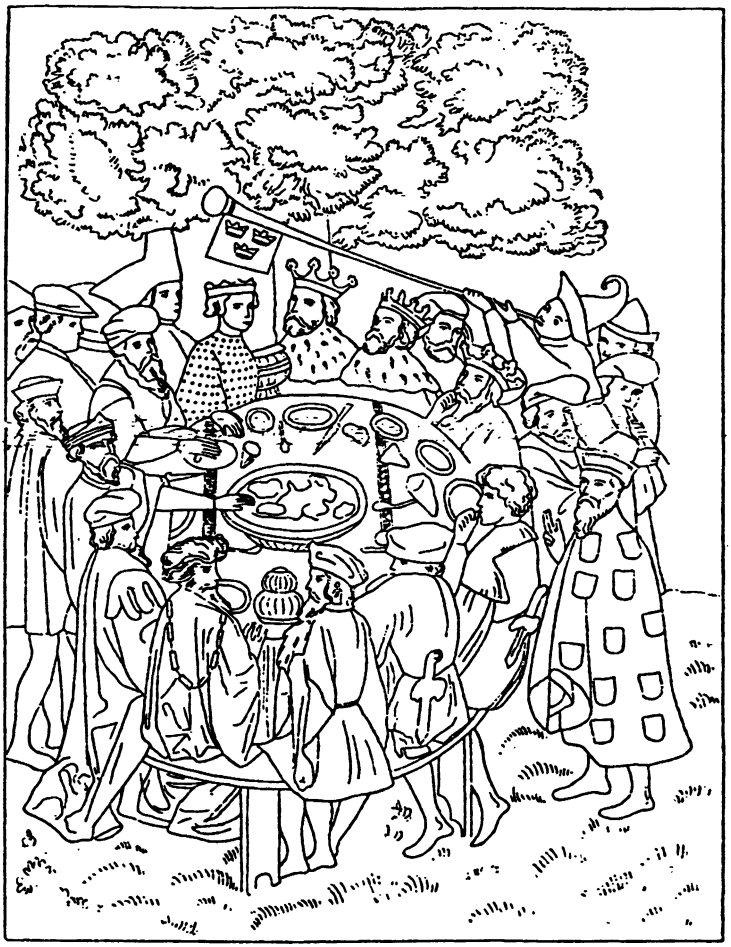
GAREL OF THE BLOOMING VALLEY



Fresco at Runkelstein Castle. The feast at the Round Table.

Chapter One

A WHITSUNTIDE FESTIVAL

[lacuna] a splendid festival. People therefore hastened to the good king's land from every direction. Truly it was his custom to celebrate Whitsuntide lavishly each year on a flower-decked plain bordered by the Briziljan Forest. Beside a deep river that flowed through the plain stood the large town of Dinazarun where the king always stayed in May at Whitsuntide, so the story goes, and many traveled a great distance from all the countries around to be with him. No one found the sojourn irksome, for his bounty was such that he never refused anybody, but was always ready with generous gifts to whoever desired them. He willingly granted every petition no matter what was wanted. That is why he is still famous today.

Now hear a wondrous tale. In a well-known book, *The Knight with the Lion*, Hartmann von Aue maintained that Arthur's wife was taken away from him and related how it happened. The king had arranged a celebration as fine as any he ever held before or since and many great nobles had come. Once when he was sitting at the Round Table eating with all of his best knights, a stranger rode up with a most uncourtly request. The bold and impudent knight asked for the queen! Arthur was shocked and saddened but kept his word and allowed her to be led away. Everyone bewailed this great misfortune and the knights of the Round Table hastily started out after the stranger. To the dismay of the unhappy king, this brought them only shame and suffering, for they were defeated on the broad heath, one after the other, until there was none left to oppose the knight. Thus was Arthur's retinue disgraced by a single man, who managed to carry off their queen and remain unscathed.

Gawan, King Lot's son, was away at the time. When he came back and heard that she had been abducted, he set out at once in pursuit. The proud Lanzilet, who had returned from a journey just before Gawan, at the king's request was already hurrying to overtake the knight.

Determined to bring back the queen or die, the brave man was later to free her by defeating her captor in knightly combat.

While Arthur was lamenting the strange loss of his beloved wife and his honor, a famous knight was seen approaching. He was courtly, wise, generous, bold, and cheerful, as those are who seek high praise. His virtues had so blossomed in his youth that they shone as brightly as a mirror, and his valor made him renowned in many foreign lands. Arthur was glad to claim him as a kinsman—so I have heard—for both in private and in public he strove in such knightly fashion to gain esteem that he fully deserved the applause he received. I'll give you the name of the bold champion as it was told to me: Sir Garel of The Blooming Valley.

The good knight who always aimed at excellence came riding onto the green plain and, seeing that everyone was grief-stricken, asked what had happened. Distressed by the story he heard, Garel at once hurried to find the king, who was very glad to see him. Arthur left his tent, went to meet the knight, and welcomed him. "As a true friend, sympathize with me in my distress," he said. "The queen has been taken from me."

"For God's sake, how could all these knights be overcome by a single man?" demanded Garel. "It was foolish of you to give up my lady. Where were your wits that you were not more careful?"

"I am afraid that I have well deserved God's wrath," replied Arthur.

"If I don't find the queen and the knight who came here to get her and disgrace us all, you'll never catch sight of me again," declared Garel. "I'll learn where he has taken her and accept what fate has in store for me when I meet him. Neither you nor your land will see me until then. I'll find my lady whatever may happen to me."

"It would be a blow to my honor should you too leave me," protested the king. "Since God has sent you here, you should be my adviser so that I may have the encouragement I need and do not sustain further loss of esteem. I have suffered much harm and am bereft of all joy. Because of my lamenting, Gawan, to whom I owe great affection, has gone after the knight, and my nephew Lanzilet at my request is also pursuing him. They will not return until they find the queen and bring her back. God grant them success!" Thus did Arthur urge him to remain.

"You must not give way to sorrow," said Garel. "You have long known of a like misfortune that befell your father and cut him to the heart, for he never saw your mother again. Yet he preserved his honor without reproach until he died. Cheer up! Do as the stalwart man does

who knows how to deal with his sorrow: show proper restraint in lamenting. Be moderate both in grieving and in banishing grief and people will speak well of you. I maintain that no one should be too downcast at his misfortune. Moreover, the valor that enabled the knight to ride away with the queen will cause him to be well-mannered and to treat her in such fashion that her honor will not suffer. So be light-hearted!"

"That is sound advice," replied Arthur. "I shall take it and leave my good name in God's hands. May He protect my wife wherever she goes and watch over Lanzilet and Gawan, about whom I am also greatly concerned." Garel then agreed to stay with the king.

Not long afterward the people with Arthur on the plain observed a man coming out of the forest who was as tall as a tree. All declared that he was larger than anyone they had ever seen before. They crowded together to look at him, as if he were a marvel, but were careful not to get in his way. Still he didn't act like somebody they needed to fear. In fact—according to my source—for all his size and youth, he was not lacking in courtesy. The stranger was well armed. His stout hauberk was the best that any man ever wore; his splendid surcoat was of baldaquin; his helmet gleamed brightly; his fine mail leggings went down to his feet, where they were covered by shoes that were firmly tied to his legs. He was prepared for battle: he carried a heavy, steel rod and a shield with a boss, and a beautiful sword—sharp and long—hung at his side. We owe this giant thanks for being so polite.

When he approached the place where Arthur and his people were encamped, a large group of men went to meet him, mounted and on foot, and gave him a friendly reception. After thanking them courteously, he asked where he could find the king, and they led him at once to Arthur who, with many highborn men, was sitting on the grass in front of his tent. The stranger thus came, fully armed as he was, to the circle of tents in which the king and his retinue were lodged and was greeted cordially by a company of nobles. Casting aside his rod, he took off his helmet and dropped it on the ground—you won't believe how courtly he was. After his head was bare, he laid down his sword and shield and went up to the king, who welcomed him.

The giant, whose name was Karabin, knelt very properly and said: "King, be so kind as to permit me to deliver the message I bear."

"I grant this," replied Arthur. "Say anything you please." All the knights fell silent and listened, curious as to what he wanted and what his mission might be.

"Sir," he said politely, "my lord, the ruler of Kanadic, has sent me here. He declares himself your enemy and bids me renounce peaceful relations with you. He regrets having endured pain and disgrace from you for so long; he has suffered far too much because of you. My lord maintains that it was on your advice that your father slew his, which has sorely distressed him. After this lengthy delay he intends to avenge the deed if he can and settle the matter. He plans to lead an army here and told me to say that you will see him in this land a year from today unless sickness, imprisonment, or death intervenes. Nothing else will prevent him from attacking you with such a splendid army of knights that no one can oppose him. A host of highly praised warriors will come with him to win knightly fame." The giant was well-mannered, wise, and prudent, but he was a heathen.

Arthur was taken aback by the message, but he answered thus: "I am not guilty of that with which your lord charges me and am not to blame for any injury he may have suffered. My father was an honest man. I knew him to be upright in every respect and am fully prepared to defend his good name; it distresses me to hear him slandered. Moreover, I have never advised treachery. Your lord has been too hasty in assailing my honor: that is not praiseworthy. Tell him that I'll certainly not flee from my land whatever he does. If he knows how to strive for glory, your lord may find it here, for he'll win great fame by defeating me. Since he claims that my father wronged him so, it would be unseemly for him to leave the deed unavenged. As a highly respected man, your lord must keep his word."

"Sir," said Karabin, "I must tell you that my lord is your bitter enemy and is enlisting powerful allies. He himself will lead a large number of highborn noblemen with a host of bold warriors into this land, and five mighty kings, who gladly support him, will bring many excellent troops. The king of Kalde, a renowned knight, is coming from heathendom with a large army. The trustworthy king of Nasseran will take part, as will the king of Rivelanz—one sees countless sturdy lances among his excellent forces. The noble king of Gandin, who has often proven his valor; and the king of Iserterre, whose many proud warriors are among the very best, also declare war on you. And I should add, sir, that I am likewise to inform you of the enmity of my comrades, the three mightiest men I know. They have confidence and great courage and are much more powerful than I. Indeed all three are unbelievably strong. With them beside me, I would not fear an army."

Although this news added to the king's worries, he showed his heroic nature and remained undaunted. "You won't frighten me," he

said. "Wonders happen, and your lord's might can fail him. David was a small man, but God's strength helped him defeat Goliath. I am sure that God still has the same power and that victory is his to grant. Sir, do not threaten us with your companions. God is strong and valiant. If I have his support, I shall be safe from all danger, for nothing can harm me. Let those who send this challenge come! They will find me here. With God's help I shall give your lord such a reception that he will never slander me again."

"In my own words I have told you of my lord's intention," answered the messenger courteously. "Whatever his fate may be, he will spare neither his wealth nor himself in carrying out this campaign. With your leave I wish to go now. May God protect your life and honor! The high regard in which you are held makes me regret your troubles."

The renowned Arthur asked him kindly to accept a messenger's reward, but the giant answered: "I wouldn't think of it; I don't want anything from you. My lord is very generous to my comrades and me, giving us silver, gold, and fine clothing. I don't need a gift from you; it would only earn me my lord's anger."

"Then tell him," said the king, "that he should not change his mind about the campaign that he has taken upon himself. It becomes a monarch always to keep his word. That is fitting."

"I shall tell him this," declared the giant, "and shall repeat everything else I have heard from you." Politely taking leave of Arthur, he went to where he had left his arms and tied on his helmet, girded on his sword, and picked up his rod and shield. He then departed in a courtly manner and, having carried out his mission properly and with honor, hurried home.

The mighty warrior found his lord, King Ekunaver, in the town of Borteramunt. The monarch welcomed him and said: "Give me your report, Karabin; maybe it will lessen my concern. Let me hear good news. Will Arthur stay and defend himself, as I hope, or will he slip away?"

"I can answer that, sir," replied the giant courteously. "The truth is that Arthur does not act at all like a coward. I found the worthy king with many noblemen in Lover, on the plain outside of Dinazarun, and he listened with dignity to your message. I assure you that you will get from him all the fighting you want. Arthur asked me to tell you that."

Ekunaver's concern changed to joy. He was eager to do what would gain him the greatest esteem. He endeared himself as much as he could

to both acquaintances and strangers so that he would be highly regarded. Karabin related everything that King Arthur had asked him to say and concealed nothing. "However large the army you lead into his land," the giant added, "you'll get your fill of combat. I'll be security for that. His forces are strong enough to do battle with you. There are many brave men in his service."

"I have lands and courage," declared the monarch arrogantly, "and both my strength and my wealth will dwindle so greatly that I'll never again be worthy of a crown if I don't carry out the campaign that I have undertaken."

But now we must leave these two and tell how matters stood with Arthur and what he did about them. The good king was sorely troubled by the loss of the queen and the declaration of war. "Oh, unlucky me!" he exclaimed sadly. "How have I offended God? Was I fated to suffer this distress? I am filled with grief at losing my wife and pained that the mighty king of Kanadic should accuse me of treachery. This second misfortune so oppresses me that all my joy has vanished. I must defend my father's name and my own honor or die of remorse."

"There is help at hand to meet the threat of war," said the nobleman from The Blooming Valley with confidence. "You have many good knights here and all of them are fond of you. Take my advice and send forth couriers at once to ride throughout your broad lands and tell the news to all your subjects, rich and poor: friends, kinsmen, and vassals. They are loyal and will surely come to your aid. Truly, you will get so many knights that you would be ashamed to let an army come into your land to find you. You and your knights should go to meet them halfway. We'll play a knightly game with them for glory; just follow my counsel and you'll be highly praised. I'll ride after the giant and get to know the land, which should benefit our army and thus add to our fame."

"Now you must listen to me," Arthur objected, "and I'll advise you as a friend. You should not go to Kanadic. It is a wild and desolate place with danger lurking on all sides."

"Whatever might happen to me won't change my mind," said Garel. "You should let me go, for I must find out what the country is like." The king was greatly troubled.

The critical Kei—who was left hanging from the branch of a tree at the end of the first joust when the queen was led away—now spoke up. "How pleased I am at the loyalty and courage that God has given you and the praise you receive from men!" he exclaimed scornfully.

"But if you had returned earlier, I don't think you would have taken my lady from the stranger who unhorsed me. Still, as you didn't win fame then, you should ride at once to Kanadic and slay the four giants there. I ask for a vote: everyone say 'yes,' for no man seeks fame so boldly as Sir Garel here. Although I didn't get much support, he has often done well with strength and valor in many conflicts."

"Since I was so crude as to speak thoughtlessly," laughed Garel, "you have shown your good breeding in rebuking me, which is just." Like the polite person that he was, he said no more but went straight to his tent and sent for his armor. It was quickly brought to him and he began to put it on. When the valiant warrior was finished, he went to the king—as courtesy required—and addressed him respectfully. "Sir," he said, "may almighty God preserve your life and honor. You will not see me again until I have looked over the land of Kanadic." Garel said goodbye to the king's retinue, went to where his steed waited, already saddled, and mounted at once. A squire handed him shield and spear and he rode after the giant.

Arthur was not pleased. "Kei, you talk too much," he said angrily. "It annoys me that you won't give up this evil habit. I tell you that it deprives you of all charm, which I deeply regret. You lose both acclaim and honor thereby. That's all I have to say to you."

"You should not depart from your fine manners by venting your wrath on me," answered Kei. "It is not my fault that you lost your wife. A king as generous as you is highly honored. I praise your liberality above that of any other monarch since you didn't think this gift excessive. You always gave whatever was requested and now you appear to regret having been so openhanded. That is unworthy of you. You may be certain of this: whatever you do to me, I'll not conceal the fact that I am in truth not pleased at your generosity." Thus spoke the ill-bred fellow. Dejected, Arthur left in silence. His behavior was always faultless.

The gracious king lamented his misfortune but followed the counsel he had received. He sent messengers hurrying through his lands to announce his campaign everywhere and bid all the knights come to him. They gathered in front of his tent at the festival on the green field, where the king sadly told them that war had been declared on him and asked for their help. They answered as they should: by promising to support him whatever the danger. In return he offered them his services, for among them were many of his peers as well as highborn princes of great families and many mighty counts, all of whom were

his willing vassals. The good king had often rewarded them with rich gifts: precious stones, silver, gold, steeds, and garments, and all he had found in need were made wealthy. Many left him with rich gifts.

The festival was not prolonged, but ended without mishap, and the kings, dukes, counts, and many rich barons took leave of the Breton monarch to journey to their lands and wait until they were called to depart with his army. Meanwhile Arthur, Utepantragun's son, moved into Dinazarun with his retinue and remained there until the return of the queen. We shall leave him here and turn to the knight who now inherits the story.

Chapter Two

THE LIBERATION OF MERKANIE

After he left the king, Garel bravely followed the giant into the forest. Hoping to overtake him, he rode all day without rest, but Karabin walked so fast that he could not catch up. As evening approached, the knight emerged from the forest and entered a beautiful land that had been laid waste and burned; the fields on both sides of the road were untilled. Garel hurried on, for he saw no one and did not know where he would spend the night. The sun sank low as he hastened along the road.

Then he saw on a high mountain before him a mighty castle surrounded by the lofty peaks of a mountain range that reached to the sea. It was beautiful, the most splendid castle he had ever seen, and it could easily have withstood the attack of all the armies in the world. Driven by weariness, the coming night, and need, Garel turned toward it and followed a road that led up the mountain to the massive towers and walls. The road and his steed took him to the main gate, in front of which stood a magnificent linden tree: tall with wide-spread branches and thick foliage, a lovely shelter from the sun.

Under the linden sat the lord of the castle and the land—the most handsome old man the knight was ever to know—and on his hand was perched a seven-year-old female sparrow hawk. He looked like a person of noble character. Dressed in fine, bright clothing, the worthy lord was sitting on a silk mattress, filled with wool, over which was spread a broad, silk coverlet that was very costly. Two highborn pages of pleasing appearance, who knew how to render good service, stood before him.

When the knight rode up, helmet in hand, they ran at once to welcome him and hold the bridle of his steed as he dismounted. The old man approached and, taking him by the hand, received him cordially. Garel expressed his gratitude to his genial host and was led at once into the castle, where many noblemen came forward with friendly greetings. Happy at this warm reception, the knight thanked them all.