

The following is the text of *Perceval, or the Story of the Grail*, by Chrétien de Troyes.

The left column is the line number, corresponding to the original Old French text. The middle column is the Old French, and the right column is the English. The line breaks are such so the Old French and English correspond. They are not to be construed as actual breaks in the text; any section break is indicated by a long series of dashes.

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Prologue

1	Ki petit semme petit quel,	HE WHO SOWS little harvests little,
2	Et qui auques requeillir velt,	and whoever hopes for a fine harvest
3	En tel liu sa semence espande	should spread his seed
4	Que fruit a .c. doubles li rande;	where it will grow two-hundredfold.
5	Car en terre qui riens ne valt,	Because in worthless soil
6	Bone semence seche et faut.	even good seed will dry and spoil.
7	Crestiens semme et fait semence	Chrétien sows the seed of a tale
8	D'un romans que il encomence,	
9	Et si le seme en si bon leu	and sows it in such good soil
10	Qu'il ne puet [estre] sanz grant preu,	that its greatness is ensured;
11	Qu'il le fait por le plus preudome	for he does it for the best man
12	Qui soit en l'empire de Rome.	in all the Roman Empire.
13	C'est li quens Phelipes de Flandres,	He is the count, Philippe of Flanders,
14	Qui valt mix ne fist Alixandres,	who is greater even than Alexander,
15	Cil que l'en dist qui tant fu buens.	the man about whom such great is told.
16	Mais je proverai que li quens	But I will show that the count
17	Valt mix que il ne fist assez,	is a far greater man than he
18	Car cil ot en lui amassez	because Alexander had
19	Toz les visces et toz les maus	all the vices and evils
20	Dont li quens est mondes et saus.	that the count is free from.
21	Li quens est teus que il n'escoute	The count is such a man that he listens
22	Vilain gap ne parole estoute,	to no senseless jokes, nor haughty words
23	Et s'il ot mesdire d'autrui,	and if he hears others slandered
24	Quels que il soit, ce poise lui.	suffers for them, whoever they may be.
25	Li quens aime droite justise	The count believes in firm justice
26	Et loiauté et Sainte Eglise	loyalty to the Holy Church
27	Et toute vilonnie het;	and hates all vile acts.
28	S'est plus larges que l'en ne set,	He is more generous than one could imagine,
29	Qu'il done selonc l'Evangille,	and gives, without hypocrisy or guile,
30	Sanz ypocrisie et sanz gille,	as the Bible tells, saying
31	Qu'el dist: «Ne sache ta senestre	“Let your left hand ignore
32	Les biens quant le fera ta destre.»	the good done by your right.”
33	Cil le sache qui le reçoit,	May he who receives know
34	Et Diex, qui toz les secrez voit	and God as well, who sees all secrets
35	Et set totes les repostailles	and knows all that is hidden
36	Qui sont es cuers et es entrailles.	deep within our hearts.
37	L'Evangille por coi dist ele	Why does the Bible say,
38	"Les biens a ta senestre cele"?	“Hide your good deeds from your left hand”?
39	Le senestre, selonc l'estoire,	The left, tradition says, means
40	Senefie la vaine gloire	vain glory that comes from false hypocrisy.
41	Qui vient de fausse ypocrisie.	
42	Et la destre que senefie?	And what does the right mean?
43	Carité, qui de sa bone oevre	Charity, that, from its good works,
44	Pas ne se vante, ançois se coevre,	seeks not to boast, but to hide
45	Si que ne le set se cil non	so well that no one knows of it,
46	Qui Diex et caritez a non.	except he whose name is God and Charity.
47	Diex est caritez, et qui vit	God is charity, and he
48	En carité selonc l'escrit,	who lives in charity, as Saint Paul said,
49	— Sainz Pols le dist et je le lui —	and I read with my own eyes,
50	Il maint en Dieu, et Diex en lui.	stays in God, and God in he.
51	Dont sachiez bien de verité	Know therefore the truth

52 Que li don sont de carité
53 Que li bons quens Phelipes done;
54 Onques nului n'i araisonne
55 Fors son bon cuer le debonaire
56 Qui li loe le bien a faire.
57 Ne valt cil mix que ne valut
58 Alixandres, cui ne chalut
59 De carité ne de nul bien?
60 Oïl, n'en doutez ja de rien.
61 Dont avra bien salve sa paine
62 Crestïens qui entent et paine
63 Par le comandement le conte
64 A rimoiier le meillor conte
65 Qui soit contez a cort roial:
66 Ce est li CONTES DEL GRAAL,
67 Dont li quens li bailla le livre.
68 Oëz coment il s'en delivre.

that the gifts of good count Philippe
are truly gifts of charity.
He asks no one
but trusts the generosity of his own heart
that exhorts him to do good.
Isn't this much better
than Alexander, who cared nothing
of charity and goodness?
Yes, there is no doubt about it.
So, Chrétien's labors will not be in vain

as he follows the count's wishes.
From a book given him by the count,
he puts into verse the best story
ever told in a royal court:
the Story of the Grail.
Listen to how it turns out . . .