

# Sir Libeaus Desconus

translated by

Jessie L. Weston

In parentheses Publications  
Middle English Series  
Cambridge, Ontario 2000

## Introduction

*Sir Libeaus Desconus* is the English representative of a small, but highly interesting and important, group of poems, dealing with a hero who, brought up in poverty and obscurity, rises to fame and honour at Arthur's Court, and eventually proves to be the son of the king's nephew, Sir Gawain—in one variant, Sir Gawain, instead of being the lad's father, is that father's slayer.

The group consists of the English poem here given, the French *Le Bel Inconnu*, the German *Wigalois*, and the Italian *Carduino*; this last, as mentioned above, differing from all the others in the role ascribed to Gawain.

Further, the continuations of the *Perceval* of Chrétien de Troyes contain two distinct accounts of the begetting of Guinglain (*Le Bel Inconnu*), and several references to his early life and adventures; while the second part of the romance of *Ipomedon* betrays, in incident and sequence, a knowledge, on the part of the writer, of our story. There is, I think, little doubt that the tale of this unknown son of Sir Gawain is older and at the same time more important for the study of Arthurian Romance than has yet been realised.

Hitherto the efforts of scholars have been mainly directed towards the establishment of the relations existing between the French and English forms of the story. Doctor Schofield's interesting studies on the subject (*Studies on the Libeaus Desconus*, Harvard Studies, vol. iv.) have gone far to establish the independence of the two versions, and have certainly proved, beyond reasonable doubt, the extensive use made by the French writer of the *Erec* of Chrétien de Troyes. The most interesting part of Doctor Schofield's study, that in which he maintains the original identity of the hero with Perceval li Galois, has not hitherto been received with much favour by the majority of critics; but I am inclined to

think that a closer examination of the tales will bring to light other and stronger arguments, of the existence of which Doctor Schofield, at the time he published his study, was not aware.

This much is quite certain: the various versions of the *Perceval Enfances*, largely as they have already engaged the attention of scholars, have not as yet been exhaustively studied; a close critical comparison of every extant version is urgently necessary, both for the purpose of arriving at a clear idea of the earliest form of the story—which, unless I am much mistaken, is no longer fully represented by any—and also for establishing the true position to be assigned to the poem of Chrétien.

In the notes attached to this volume I have endeavoured to indicate certain points which appear to be worthy of closer study, but so far the ground is not ripe for the expression of any definite views as to the real origin and development of the tale. We must first determine the earliest form of the *Perceval* story before we shall be in a position to formulate a definite theory of the evolution of this kindred group.

The poem, of which a prose rendering is here given, has been preserved in several MSS.; the dialect is that of southern England—Doctor Schofield thinks, in all probability, of Kent—and was written about the middle of the fourteenth century.

Certain correspondences of phrase and metre have led some critics to maintain, but on somewhat insufficient grounds, that it is the work of Thomas of Chestre, the author of *Launfal*. It has been four times edited—by Ritson in 1802; by Hippeau in 1860; by Hales and Furnivall in 1868; and by Kaluza in 1890. The version in this volume was made from Ritson's edition some years ago, and was not originally intended for this series, but through unforeseen circumstances I was unable either to undertake a fresh translation or to revise extensively the work already completed. I can, therefore, only apologise to the reader for any imperfection that may be found in the text, and remind the critic that the object of this series is to popularise the study of Arthurian Romance by presenting it in a form acceptable to the general reader, not to provide scholars with a critical text.

May our Saviour Christ, and the sweet maid His mother, help him who shall hearken to this tale of a knight, wise of wit, a valiant warrior, and doughty in deed.

The name of this knight was Gyngalyn.<sup>1</sup> Son he was to Sir Gawain, who had met with his mother by a forest side,<sup>2</sup> and never have ye heard tell of a braver knight 'mid all those who sat with Arthur at the Round Table.

This Gyngalyn was fair to look upon, graceful of body, and bright of face, but his mother kept him close, for very dear he was to her, and she feared lest ill should befall him. And for love of his fair face she called him Beau-fis and naught else;<sup>3</sup> and he himself was but simple, and never thought to ask his mother what his true name might be.

Now it chanced on a day that the boy went forth to the woods to chase the deer, and he found a knight lying clad in gay armour;<sup>4</sup> slain he was and lifeless. And the boy did off the dead knight's weed, and clad himself in that rich armour, and went forth to Glastonbury, where King Arthur held his Court.

Then he kneeled in the hall before all the knights, and greeted them with honour, and prayed King Arthur that he might speak a word. Then said Arthur the King without delay, "Tell me thy name, for never since I was born have I looked on one so fair of face." And the boy said, "I know not my name, the more foolish I, but while I abode at home my mother in her game would call me Beau-fis."

Then said Arthur the King, "This is a wondrous thing, when he who would be a knight knows not his own name, and yet is so fair to look upon! Now will I give him a name before ye all here present. By St. James, his mother, whoever she may be, hath never so called him! For that he is so fair and frank, for the love of me ye shall all call him Libeaus Desconus.<sup>5</sup> Wit ye well that the reading of that is, The Fair Unknown; of a surety so shall he be called."

In the self-same day did King Arthur make him a knight, and gave him bright armour, and girt him with a sword of might, and hung round his neck a shield, rich and gilded over, and on it was the device of a griffin. And his father, Gawain, (but he knew not that he was his father) took him forth on the plain to teach him how to handle his arms as befitting a knight.

When the lad was made a knight there and then he prayed a boon of the King and said, "My lord, I were right glad at heart if I had the first fight that any man asks of thee!" Then said Arthur the King, "I grant thee thine asking, whatever the battle may be; but methinks by aught that I can see thou art too young to make a good fight!" Without more words the knights, dukes, earls, and barons washed themselves and sat them down to table; enough had they of all manner of meats as befitted such famous knights.

Now Arthur had been seated at table but so long as might suffice to ride a mile, when there came a maiden riding,<sup>6</sup> and a dwarf beside her, all of a sweat for heat. The maid was named Elene; a lady messenger was she, gentle, fair, and bright; neither countess nor queen, though fair to look upon, might be her peer.

The dwarf was clothed in silk of Ind; stout he was and pert; among all Christian kin his like might no man find. He wore an open surcoat, his beard was yellow as wax, his hair hung low to his girdle. His shoes were all bedight with gold; his clothing was that of a knight who knew not poverty. Teodelain he was called, and his fame was known north and south. He was skilled in music, on the cithole, the psaltery, harp, and fiddle. He was a noble teller of tales in the ladies' bower and a merry man in his speech. He spoke to that maiden and bade her tell their errand, since it would brook no delay.

Then the maiden kneeled in the hall before all the knights, and greeted them with honour, and said to the King, "Evil is the case of which I tell thee; within walls was never a sadder. The fair lady of Sinadoun is held in close prison. She prays thee to send her a knight good and strong of heart who may win her freedom."

Then up started that young knight and said, "Arthur, my lord, if thou art true of word, 'tis I shall venture this fight and win that fair lady!" And Arthur answered, "That is sooth and certain, as I bear record. God

grant thee grace and strength to uphold that lady's right by stroke of sword."

Then began Elene to lament and say, "Alas the day that I was sent hither! Little shall this word avail. Lord King, now are thy fame and thy manhood dishonoured when thou sendest a child, wild and witless, to deal mighty strokes, and yet hast valiant knights, Lancelot, Perceval, and Gawain, well proved in many a tournament!"

Then Libeaus Desconus answered, "Yet was I never afraid for wrath of man, and somewhat have I learnt to fight with spear and sword whereby men may be slain. I wot, he that fleeth for fear, by road or street, his body is forfeit. I will take the battle, and never forsake it, as is Arthur's law."

Then said Arthur straightway, "By Christ that bought me dearly thou gettest none other knight. If thou thinkest him not valiant enough, go, get thee a braver where thou canst."

And the maiden for wrath and anger would neither eat nor drink, but sat herself down with the dwarf, all dismayed, till the feast might be over.

Anon Arthur bade four of the chief knights of the Round Table arm Libeaus with the best arms that might be found, and said, "Through the help of Christ who was baptized in the flood, he shall keep all he has promised, and be a good champion to the lady of Sinadoun, and uphold all her rights."

And the knights were fain to arm him. The first was Sir Gawain, the second Sir Perceval, the third Sir Ywayn, and the fourth Sir Agravain (so the French tale saith). And they put on him a shirt of silk, fair and white, and a bright hauberk, richly bedight, the mail of which was close and small. Gawain, his own father, hung about his neck the shield with the griffin device, and Lancelot brought him a spear that would stand him in, good stead in battle, and a sharp falchion. Sir Ywayn brought him a steed, eager as a lion, good at every need; and a costly helmet, all of steel, not of iron, did Sir Perceval set on his head.

Then the knight sprang on his horse and rode up to Arthur the King and said, "My lord, give me now thy blessing, since my will is to wend forth without more delaying." And Arthur lifted up his hand and gave

him his blessing as a courteous king and true: "God grant thee grace and speed thee well, that thou mayst bring the lady out of bonds."

The maiden sprang on her palfrey, the dwarf riding beside her; and ever till the third day did she mock and chide the young knight, and said, "Coward and caitiff, though thou vaunt thee of thy valour, yet now is thy pride fallen. This pass before us doth a knight keep whose fame is spread far and wide. William of Salebranche is he called, and with every man that cometh will he fight, and none may endure his joust, so doughty a warrior is he. All that ride against him will he smite with his spear through heart or through thigh." Then said Libeaus Desconus, "Is his fighting so fierce? Hath he never been smitten? Whatsoever may betide I will ride to him and see how he may sit his steed."

So the three rode together and came to a Castle Adventurous, and upon the Vale Perilous they saw the knight, clad in shining armour. He bare a shield of green, whereon were three golden lions, and was armed in such fashion that he might deal stout strokes to all who came against him. But when he had sight of them he rode straight towards them and said, "Welcome, fair brother; he that rideth here, by day or night, must needs fight with me or leave here his arms in my keeping."

"Well," said Libeaus Desconus, "for the love of God let us pass safely. Far have we to ride, and far are we from our friends, I and this maid, my companion." And William answered, "Thou shalt not escape me so; ere thou goest we will fight together, we two, a furlong here to the west." Then said Libeaus, "Now I see that it may not be otherwise, do thy best in haste; ride me a joust with thy spear if thou be a skilful knight, for little time have I for delaying."

No longer would they tarry, but at full speed each rode against the other. In that joust Libeaus Desconus smote William of Salebranche in the side with a sharp spear; and William sat so fast in the saddle that his stirrup brake and the hinder bow of his saddle, and he bowed him backward over his horse's croup and fell to the ground. His steed ran away, but William lay not long, anon he started to his feet and said, "By my faith, before to-day found I none so strong. Now my steed is gone, fight we on foot, as thou art valiant knight." Then Libeaus Desconus said, "Thereof shall I be right joyful!"

Then they drew forth their swords and sprang each on the other, and fell and fast they fought. So mighty were their strokes that fire sprang forth from their helmets. But William of Salebranche smote Libeaus Desconus through his shield, so that a can tell thereof fell to the ground; and Libeaus took that sorely to heart. Then as noble knight and valiant warrior he smote and shore off the crest of William's helmet, and with the point of his sword he shaved off his beard and came nigh to cutting his flesh. Then William smote him again so fiercely that his sword brake in two, and he cried aloud, "For the love of St. Mary let me pass alive, for it were great villainy to slay an unarmed knight."

Then said Libeaus Desconus, "Thy life shalt thou not have, save that ere we two part thou swearest me an oath. Kneel down in haste, and swear on my sword that thou wilt wend thy way to Arthur and say, 'Lord of renown, as one overcome and a prisoner a knight hath sent me hither; Libeaus Desconus is he called, of kith and kin unknown.'" Then William fell on his knees and sware even as the young knight bade him.

Thus they departed from each other, and William went on his way to Arthur's hall. And as it chanced that self-same day he met with three proud knights—his sister's sons were they—and when they saw William bleed they made great lamentation, as men much dismayed.

And they said, "Uncle, who hath done thee this shame and wounded thee so sorely?" And he answered, "By St. James, naught is he to blame for that, he is a good and valiant knight; a dwarf had he for squire and a right fair maiden with him. But one thing grieveth me sore: he hath made me swear upon his sword to rest neither day nor night till I come before King Arthur; for I must yield me prisoner, as one overcome by his own knight, and bear neither shield nor spear against him. All this have I promised."

Then said the three knights, "Of a sooth thou shalt be well avenged. He alone against us three will not be worth a straw to hold the battle. Wend forth, uncle, and do thine oath. By the Rood we will assail the traitor ere he pass this forest, though his armour be good!"

Now leave we speaking of William, who went on his way toward Arthur the King, and hearken, lordings, to the fair and gallant fighting of these three knights:



Without delaying they armed them well in iron and steel and leapt on their steeds and rode forth to slay that young knight. But hereof Libeaus knew naught, as he rode gently on his way. He and that maiden bright made great game and solace together. She cried him mercy for the villainy that she spake against him, and he forgave her that trespass. The dwarf was their squire, and served them far and near of all that was needful to them.

At morning, when it was day, they went on their journey towards Sinadoun. Then they saw three knights in shining armour ride out of Karlown. All armed were they to the teeth, mounted on bay-brown steeds. Each one had sworn his death, and cried to him, "Thief, turn again and fight, or leave here thy renown!"

Then Libeaus Desconus, cried, "I am ready to ride against ye all!" As a prince in pride he spurred his steed towards them; the eldest brother—Sir Gower was his name—bare a spear against him, but Libeaus smote him so fiercely that he brake his thigh, and ever after he went lame. The knight groaned for pain, and Libeaus smote him down to the ground. The dwarf Teodelain took the steed by the rein and leapt into the saddle and rode to where that fair maid, Elene, sat. Then the maiden laughed aloud and said, "This young knight is in sooth a champion for my choice!"

Then the middle brother came riding swiftly, upon a steed strong and eager as a lion, thinking to fell Libeaus adown. As one out of wit he smote the young knight on the helmet with a sharp falchion, and so mighty was his stroke that the sword clave through helm and basnet till it touched his crown.

Then was Libeaus angered when he felt on his head the sharp edge of the steel, and he brandished his sword as a warrior wild and mad, cleaving all that he might hit. "Alas," he said, "one against two is no fair fight!" for both the knights now smote fiercely at him, and he with grim strokes withstood them well.

Then these knights saw that they had no might to fight against so fierce a foe, and they yielded up their spears and shields to Sir Libeaus and cried him mercy. And Libeaus answered, "Nay, thou shalt not so escape me, but thou and thy two brethren shall here plight me your faith to wend to King Arthur and say, 'Lord of renown, a knight hath hither

sent us, overcome and prisoners, to dwell in your bonds and to yield you tower and town for ever.' And, but ye will so do, I shall slay you three ere it be night!" Then the knights sware that they would go to Arthur, and plighted their troth thereto.

Thus they departed, and Sir Libeaus and that fair maiden rode gaily together until the third day. And ever they rode westward, through the wild forest, toward Sinadoun; and when night fell and they would rest, since there was no town near at hand, with their keen swords they made them a bower of leaves in the green groves and dwelt therein all night.

But the dwarf awoke oft, fearing lest a thief should come and take their horses with guile. And he began to quake with dread, for he saw a great fire scarce half a mile away. "Arise," he said, "young knight, and get thee to horse, for I doubt me there is peril near. I hear a great noise and I smell the smell of roasting."

Then Libeaus leapt on his charger and took shield and spear and rode towards the fire. And when he drew near he saw two giants; grisly they were of countenance, the one was red and loathly and the other black as pitch. And the black giant held clasped in his arm a maiden as bright as blossom on bough. The red giant was turning a wild boar on a spit before the fire, which burnt brightly. The maiden cried aloud that some man should come to her aid, and said, "Alas, that ever I saw this day, that I should sit with two fiends! Now help me, Mary mild, for love of thy dear Son, lest I be brought to shame!"

Then said Sir Libeaus, "By St. James, 'twere a fair emprise to save this maiden from shame! and yet 'twere no child's play to fight with the twain, they be both so grim and grisly!" Then he rode at them, spear in rest, as a skilful knight, and smote the black giant through liver, lungs, and heart, that he might rise up no more,

Then that fair maiden fled, thanking the Queen of Heaven who had sent her such succour. And the maid, Elene, came with her dwarf, and with goodwill took her by the hand and led her into the grove to their bower of leaves; and they prayed Christ to help Libeaus Desconus, that he be not overcome in the strife.

But the red giant smote at Sir Libeaus with the boar that was on the spit as one that is beside himself; and he set such sore strokes upon him that the knight's courser fell dead to the ground. But Libeaus leapt

swiftly out of his saddle, even as a spark from a burning brand, and eager as a lion he fought with his falchion to give the giant his desert. The giant ever fought till his spit brake in two, and he caught a tree in his hand and tare it up to fight against his foe, and with the end of the tree he smote Sir Libeaus' shield into three pieces. Then was Libeaus in woe; but ere the giant could heave the tree up again the knight, with a mighty stroke, smote off his right arm. The giant fell to the ground, and Libeaus, with no delay, smote off his head.

So were the two giants slain. And the knight took the heads and gave them to the maiden for whom he had fought that fight. And the maiden was glad and blithe, and many a time she thanked God that ever he had been made a knight.

Then said Libeaus, "Gentle lady, tell me thy name and where thou wert born." And she said, "My father dwelleth near by; he is of great fame, an earl, an old hoar knight who hath been a mighty man in his day; Sir Antore is his name. Men call me Violette, and for me have these giants aforetime beset our castle. Yesterday, at eventide, I went forth on my playing, thinking no evil, when of a sudden the giants sprang out of a cave and brought me to this fire. I had been lost had not God, Who made this world, sent me succour."

Without any more talking they gat them to horse and rode all together. And Libeaus told the earl, Sir Antore, tidings, how in fair fight he had slain the giants and rescued his daughter from woe and shame. The two heads he sent with much joy as a present to Arthur the King. Then first arose in the Court the praise and fame of Sir Libeaus Desconus.

And Sir Antore was blithe, and proffered him his daughter, that fair maiden Violette, to wife, with fifteen castles, and all his lands for ever after his death. Then said Libeaus Desconus, "Nay, no wife may I take as yet; I must needs journey farther with this fair maiden, therefore I bid ye farewell." But Sir Antore for his good deeds would give him gifts—rich garments, a shield and shining armour, and a noble steed strong and doughty in battle.

So they rode forth all three towards the fair city of Kardevyle, for so was it named. They saw in a park a stout and strong castle, royal in fashion. Such an one had they never seen before: 'twas built of lime and

stone with battlements all about. "Oh," said Libeaus, "here were a worthy prize for a valiant knight!"

Then that maiden laughed aloud and said, "He who owneth that castle is the best knight here about. He that will fight with him, be it by day or by night, he layeth him low. For love of his mistress, who is passing fair, he hath made it to be cried aloud that he will give a gerfalcon, white as a swan, to any knight who shall bring with him a fairer lady; but if the maiden be not so fair, then her knight shall fight with Giffroun, and ill shall he speed, for his head shall be smitten off and set on a spear-shaft that it may be seen far and wide. Thyself canst see full well how on each battlement there stand one or two heads." Then said Libeaus swiftly, "By St. Michael, I will fight with Giffroun and challenge the gerfalcon, and say that I have in this town a lady as fair as his! and if he wills to see her, then will I show thee to him!"

The dwarf said, "Gentle Sir Libeaus Desconus, that were a great peril; Sir Giffroun hath arts<sup>7</sup> whereby to beguile the knights who would fight with him." But Libeaus answered, "Thereof have I no care. I will see his face ere I pace westward a mile from this city." Without more speech they rode into the town and took them a lodging, and lay in peace that night.

At morn Libeaus was fain to win him renown, and he rose without delay and armed him full surely in the self-same armour that Sir Antore had given him. Then he bestrode his steed, and, with the dwarf beside him, rode towards that proud palace.

Sir Giffroun arose, as was his use, in the early morning, and when he came forth from his castle he saw Libeaus Desconus come pricking as a prince in pride; and without more ado he rode towards him, crying in a loud voice, "Comest thou for good or for ill? Tell me, and hide naught from me."

Then said Libeaus, "I have great desire to fight with thee, for thou doest maidens a despite in saying that there be no lady half so fair as thy mistress. I have in this town one fairer of face when she is fitly robed, therefore shall I bear thy gerfalcon to Arthur the crowned king."

Then said Giffroun, "Gentle knight, how shall we prove the which of them be the fairer?" And Libeaus answered, "In Kardevyle city, that each man may see them, there let them be set in the marketplace, for all, bond

and free, to look upon; and if my lady be not fair, then will I fight with thee for the gerfalcon." Then said Giffroun swiftly, "All this I grant thee well. To-day at underne-tide will I ride to the city." And they held up their gloves as pledges each to the other.

No longer would Sir Libeaus abide, but rode home to his lodging and bade Maid Elene clothe herself in her fairest robes; "for Giffroun's lady shall to-day come to the town, and there, in the midst of the city, shall men look upon ye both, and if thou be not so fair, then will I fight with Giffroun to win the gerfalcon."

Anon Maid Elene tired herself in a robe of samite, with white kerchiefs wrought with gold wire. About her neck she cast a velvet mantle, furred with gris and grey, and on her head she set a circlet of gold, with stones, the best in that land.

Then Sir Libeaus set the maiden on her palfrey and the three rode forth, and all men who saw them said, "Here cometh a lady, gay and goodly to look upon." Into the market midway of the city she rode, and then she stayed her palfrey.

Then they saw Giffroun come riding with two squires and no greater following. He bare a shield, gules, with three owls of silver, and the border thereof was gold; of no other colour were his armour and trappings. One squire led before him on a steed three shafts, good and sure; the other bare the white gerfalcon that was laid to wager. After him a lady came riding in her pride, all clothed in purple pall. From far and wide the folk came to look upon her, so graceful and slender was she. Her mantle was furred with ermine, rich and royal; on her head she ware a golden circlet wherein was many a jewel. Her cheeks were red as the rose; her hair on her head shone bright as gold wire; her brows were even as a silken thread; her nose was straight, her eyes grey as glass, her skin milk-white (so said they who saw her); her neck was long and slender; no man might tell all her beauty.

Then they set them together in the midst of the market place that all might behold them. And all, young and old, said, of a truth and without lying, no comparison might there be, for Giffroun's lady was fair as the rose on the bough, and beside her Maid Elene was but as one of her waiting women.

Then said Giffroun, "Sir Libeaus Desconus, the hawk hast thou lost." And Libeaus answered, "Nay, such was never mine use; a joust will I ride for it, and if thou bearest me down, then hast thou mine head, and the falcon as aforetime; and if I bear thee down, then shall the hawk go with me, maugré thine hoar head!"

They rode forth to the field, and a great folk with them. With spears strong and sharp did they smite each other on the shield so that the shafts brake, and their blows sounded as thunder that cometh out of the sky; and with drums and trumpets and loud-voiced heralds did the people acclaim their strokes.

Then Sir Giffroun spoke, "Bring me here a shaft that will not break, a shaft with a cornall!<sup>8</sup> This young valiant knight is as fast in his saddle as a stone in the castle wall; yet though he be as mighty a warrior as Alexander or Arthur, Lancelot or Perceval, I will make him stoop over his horse's croup and give him an evil fall."

The two knights rode together at full speed, and Libeaus smote Giffroun so that his shield fell from his grasp on to the field. And all that saw it laughed and said, of a truth, duke, earl, or baron, never before had they seen the man who might stand a joust with Giffroun.

Sir Giffroun was mad out of wit that he might no better speed. Then he rode again, and smote Libeaus even as one beside himself, but Libeaus sat so fast that he smote down both Giffroun and his steed, and Giffroun's leg brake so that all men around heard the crack.

Then all that were there said that Giffroun had lost the hawk, and they bare it to Sir Libeaus, and great and small went back with him to the city. With care and rueful moan was Sir Giffroun borne on his shield to his castle. The white gerfalcon was sent by the hand of a knight named Gludas to Arthur, the crowned King, and with him he bare written all the adventure how Libeaus had won the hawk. And when Arthur had heard it read he said to his knights, "Libeaus warreth well: since he first began he hath sent me the proof of four noble deeds. Now will I send him treasure, that he may spend as befitteth so valiant a knight." And a hundred pounds in florins did he send to Kardevyle. There Libeaus held a feast forty days for lords of renown.

Then Libeaus and Elene, the maid, took their leave of duke, earl, and baron to wend into another country on their way to Sinadoun. As they

were riding on a hill they heard a blowing of horns there below the down, and the sound of a great hunt and of many hounds running in the vale. And the dwarf said, "Of a sooth I have known that horn well for many a year past: 'tis Sir Otis de Lisle bloweth it, he who whilom served my lady while she was in fair estate, but when she was taken by guile he fled for the great peril westward into Wales!"

As they rode talking, a brachet<sup>9</sup> came running across their way, and all said 'twas the fairest hound they had ever beheld,<sup>10</sup> for he was of all colours, even as the flowers that blossom between May and Midsummer. The maiden said swiftly, "Never saw I any jewel that pleased me better; I would I had him for mine own!"

Straightway Sir Libeaus caught the brachet and gave him to Maid Elene. And they rode on together, speaking ever of knightly deeds done for the sake of fair maidens.

Scarce had they ridden a mile in that green forest when they saw a hind come flying followed by two greyhounds. And Sir Libeaus and the maiden drew bridle under a linden to see the course of the hind. Then they saw come riding a knight, on a bay charger, clothed in silk of Inde. He gave a blast on his bugle, that his folk should know where he might be, and spoke courteously: "Sir, that brachet was mine own for seven years past; let him go, friends." But Libeaus answered, "That shall never betide, for with mine own two hands I gave him to the maiden who rideth with me."

Then said Sir Otis de Lisle, "If thou abide by that word, then art thou in peril." And Libeaus answered, "Chide an thou wilt, churl; I care naught for thy threats."

Sir Otis de Lisle spake, "Ill words be those, Sir Knight; churl was never my name. An earl was my father, and my mother Countess of Carlisle. Were I but armed ready as thou art we would fight, here and now; but an thou leavest me not the brachet, thou shalt play a wonder wild game ere it be eventide!"

Then said Libeaus swiftly, "Thereof do thy best; thy brachet shall wend with me." Then they took their way westward through the wild forest, even as the dwarf guided them.

But the lord rode in great haste home to his tower, and called his friends together, and told them how one of Arthur's knights had

shamefully entreated him and taken from him his brachet. Then they said, all and several, "That traitor shall be taken and never again return home, aye, even though he were a doughtier champion than Lancelot of the Lake." Then they did on them their armour, with swords and halberds, as if war should awake, and knights and squires leapt on their chargers for their lord's honour.

Upon a high hill they saw Sir Libeaus, riding gently, and they cried loudly upon him, "Traitor, thou shalt die for this thy wicked trespass." And Sir Libeaus beheld and saw that the field was full and that there was a great people, and he said, "Maid Elene, I ween we are in an evil case for this our brachet. I rede that ye withdraw yourselves into the wood and hide your heads, for though I should be slain, yet were I fain to abide their onset."

Into the wood they rode, but Libeaus abode in the open as an adventurous knight in pride; and his foemen shot fast at him with bows and crossbows and made wide wounds; and Libeaus spurred his steed towards them and bare down horse and man, sparing none, so that the folk said, "This is the fiend Satan, who will destroy mankind!" for whom Libeaus smote, after the first stroke he slept for evermore. But soon he was beset as in a net, and sore and grimly wounded; for he saw come swiftly through the forest twelve knights in bright armour. All day they had lain at rest, and thought to slay Libeaus the knight. The twelve were all armed alike and one was Sir Otis himself; and they smote all at once, thinking to strike Sir Libeaus down and break his bones.

Then might men hear loud clang of arms and the ring of sword-blades. So fiercely did they fight that the sparks sprang from shield and helmet. Sir Libeaus slew three of his foes, and four durst not draw nigh him but fled; but the lord and his four sons abode there to sell their lives dearly.

And the blows fell thickly, for the one knight against the five fought as if he were mad. The blood ran from his wounds as water over a rock; well nigh had they borne him down, for his sword brake at the hilt. Then was he mad of mood, for the lord dealt him a stroke through helm and basnet that the blade stood fast in his shield, so that he fell swooning as one dead on his saddle-bow, and his foemen thought to pierce through his armour, mail and hauberck. Then as he smarted sorely he took heart



once more and bethought him, all but too late, of the axe that hung ready at his hinder saddle bow. And he bestirred him as a knight, and he smote three mighty strokes, and at each stroke he smote off the head of a steed.

The lord saw that sight, and he turned his horse and fled swiftly. But Libeaus rode after him, and had slain him under a chestnut-tree but that Sir Otis yielded to him to be at his will, with his treasure, his lands, and his castles. And Sir Libeaus thereto agreed if he would ride to King Arthur and say, "Lord of renown, I am overcome and prisoner to thine honour." Then Sir Otis granted him his will and led him to his tower.

Anon fifteen knights fetched Maid Elene to the castle, and she and the dwarf told all the bold deeds of Sir Libeaus Desconus, how they had befallen, and how he had sent four such presents, to King Arthur that he had won praise and honour. And the lord was glad and blithe, and would have Sir Libeaus abide with him in all honour till his wounds were healed.

Now leave we Sir Otis de Lisle and tell of other tales, how Sir Libeaus rode many a mile and met with many a stern adventure in Ireland and in Wales.

It befell in the month of June, when the fennel hangeth green in many a goodly hall, when the summer day is long and the song of the birds gay and the notes of the nightingale are heard, that Sir Libeaus came riding by a riverside and saw a great city with a proud palace and high castles and many a great gate. Then he asked what the city might be, and Maid Elene answered, "Sir, I will tell thee: men call it L'Ile d'Or.<sup>11</sup> Here hath been more fighting than elsewhere in my country, for the land is in dismay because of a noble lady, fair as the rose on the bough. A giant named Maugis, who hath no equal, hath beset her about. He is black as pitch (none was ever like him), stern and fierce in deed; whoso passeth the bridge must lay down his arms and do homage to the giant."

Then said Sir Libeaus, "Maid, I shall not wend hence for his ill strokes. If God give me grace, ere this day end, I shall have felled him in fight. Oft have I seen great oaks fall before the blast while that the small trees have stood fast. Though I be young and light yet will I smite him."

They rode forth all three towards the city called by men L'Ile d'Or. On the bridge of wood they saw Maugis, fierce as any wild boar. His

shield and armour were black as pitch; thereon he bare three devils<sup>12</sup> in shining gold. He held in his hand shield and spear, and cried despitefully, "Say, thou fellow in white, who art thou.? Turn thee home again quickly for thine own profit if thou lovest thy renown!" Sir Libeaus answered, "Arthur made me a knight, and to him I made vow that I would never turn me back from any fight; therefore, thou devil in black, make thee ready!"

With that Sir Libeaus and Maugis, on their good steeds, rode straightway at each other. Both lords and ladies leant forth from the tower windows to see that goodly fight; and they prayed with goodwill, both loud and low, "Help Libeaus the knight, and grant that that vile giant who believes in Termagaunt may die this day."

Then their blows rang as thunder, and the shafts flew in pieces. All men wondered that Libeaus had not been borne under in the first shock. They drew their swords as men that were wroth and went each for the other. And Libeaus smote Maugis so that his shield fell from his hand and flew afar into the field. But Maugis was cunning in the wiles of war, and he smote the knight's steed so that the brains fell out on the ground, and the steed fell down dead. Libeaus said no word, but started up again and took the axe that hung at his saddle-bow, and with it he smote a stroke of might and clave through the neck of Maugis' steed and smote asunder bone and gristle so that the head fell on the plain.

Then they began to fight afoot as mighty men of war, and no man might fitly tell of the blows that passed between them, for they fought from the hour of prime till it was already evensong. Then Sir Libeaus thirsted sore, and he said to Maugis, "Let me drink, and I will grant thee any suchlike boon as thou mayest ask of me; 'twere great shame and little profit to slay a knight for thirst." And Maugis granted him his will to drink his fill without hindrance or despite; but as Libeaus lay on the river bank and drank through his helmet, Maugis smote him a stroke that he fell into the river and wetted all his armour.

Then the knight started up swiftly and said, "By St. Michael, now am I twice as light as I was before! What dost thou, foul fiend, who wast unchristened till I met thee in fight? For this baptism shall I right well repay thee!"

Then they began to fight anew, and either ran upon the other and dealt him heavy blows. Many a gentle knight and fair lady wrung their hands for Sir Libeaus, for Maugis carved his shield in twain. But Libeaus ran to where on the field lay the giant's shield that he had smitten from his hand earlier in the fight, and caught it up and ran again on his foe with strokes great and grim. So they fought a bitter battle on that river's brink till it was dim with the dusk of evening. Then Libeaus smote a stroke of might through hauberk, mail, and shoulder-bone, so that Maugis' right arm fell from him on to the field. The giant seeing that he would be slain turned and fled, but Libeaus followed hard after him, and with three stern strokes he clave his back asunder, so that he fell dead. And the knight smote off his head, and joyful of his victory bare it with him into the town, and the folk all came to meet him in fair procession.

They came to the palace, and a lady, white as a flower, who was called La Dame d'Amour,<sup>15</sup> received Sir Libeaus well, and thanked him that he had been her succour against that evil giant. She led him to a chamber, and did off his armour, and clad him in fair attire, and bade him be lord of herself, her city, and her castle. And the knight granted her prayer, and cast his love upon her, for she was wondrous fair. Alas that he did so, for much loss it caused him! Twelve months and more he abode there, and never might he go forth to help the lady of Sinadoun.

For this lady knew much of sorcery, more than any other five. She made him melody with all manner of minstrelsy that can be thought of. When he saw her face he thought himself in Paradise, with spells and witchery so did she blind his eyes; till it fell on a day that he met Maid Elene within that castle tower, and she spake to him, saying, "Sir knight, thou art false to King Arthur. For love of a woman skilled in sorcery thou doest thyself great dishonour! The lady of Sinadoun lieth o'er long in prison and great is the pity of it!"

When Sir Libeaus heard her so speak his heart was like to break for sorrow and shame. By an unlatched postern he stole away from that fair lady, and took with him his steed, his shield, and his goodly armour, and so rode forth; and the steward—Giflet was his name—he made his squire.

They rode as swift as might be on their journey, till on the third day they saw that fair city of Sinadoun with its high castle and proud palace

built in wondrous fashion. But Libeaus Desconus wondered him much of a custom that he saw there, for all the filth and off-scouring of the city that was cast outside the walls did the folk gather together. And the knight said, "Tell me, Maid Elene, what meaneth this? Methinks they do amiss to gather together that which they have already cast forth!"

Then said Maid Elene, "Sir knight, the meaning will I tell thee. No knight findeth lodging here save at the will of the steward, whom men call Sir Lambard, Constable of this castle. Ride thou to yonder gate and ask entrance courteously, and ere he grant thy prayer a joust will he ride with thee. If he bear thee down then shall his trumpets be blown, and throughout the city men and maidens shall throw on thee dirt<sup>13</sup> which thou seest them gather; and then to thy life's end wherever thou goest shalt thou be held for a coward, and through thy deed shall King Arthur be reft of his honour."

Then said Sir Libeaus, "That were a great despite for any man living. To profit King Arthur and to aid the lady will I joust with him. Sir Giflet, make thee ready; thither will we fare blithe and speedily."

Then with spear-shafts five they rode even to the castle gate and asked hostelry for adventurous knights. And the porter let them within swiftly and asked who might be their lord, and they answered, "King Arthur, who is the man most mighty against his foes, the well of courtesy, and flower of chivalry."

And the porter went and told his tale thus to his lord the Constable, "Sir, there be come two bold knights of the Round Table, and the one is well armed in rose-red armour, with three lions of gold." And Lambard was fain to hear the tidings, and sware an oath that he would joust with him; and he bade them make ready to fare into the field without the castle gate. Then the porter ran as swiftly as greyhound after the hare and said, "Ye adventurous knights, let nothing hinder you, but see that your shields be strong and your shafts stout, and ride into the field, for my lord cometh to joust with you." Libeaus spake boldly, "That is a tale well pleasing to my hearing." Into the field they rode and drew bridle, and waited even as beasts brought to bay.

Then the Constable bade them bring him his steed, his shield, and his goodly armour. Fair was his attire; his shield was of fine gold; the boar's head thereon black as a burnt brand; the border thereof was ermine;

there was none so cunning of device 'twixt Carlisle and Kent. And all his armour and trappings were of the same fashion, fair and well wrought. His spear was strong withal, and the cornall broad to deal mighty blows.

And when that gallant steward, Sir Lambard, was armed at all points, he rode into the field, light as a leopard. There the knights awaited him. Sir Libeaus rode at him with spear in rest, and either smote the other on the shield, so that their shafts brake and the pieces flew far afield; and all that beheld them said each to the other, "The young knight is keen." Sir Lambard was sore ashamed, for never before had it so chanced to him, and he cried, "Bring hither a new spear, and it shall be seen if Arthur's knight have skill."

Then he took a spear, the cornall thereon was sharply ground, and rode straight for his foe; and either showed himself valiant as a lion to give the other a deadly wound. Sir Lambard smote Libeaus so that his shield fell from him adown to the ground; so fierce was the blow that his shaft brake, and the young knight might scarce sit upright in the saddle. And Libeaus hit Sir Lambard on the helmet so that the fastenings broke, and helmet, ventail, and gorget flew afar into the field, and Lambard, upright in his saddle, rocked even as a child without might in the cradle. And each man who saw it took the other by the sleeve and laughed and clapped their hands, barons, burghers, and knights.

Again Sir Lambard thought to ride a joust, and another helmet was brought him and anew spear. When they met together each smote the other in the shield with a grimly great stroke. Sir Lambard's shaft brake, and Sir Libeaus sat so fast in the saddle that the steward, Sir Lambard, fell backward off his steed, so fiercely did they meet.

The Constable was sore ashamed. Then said Libeaus, "Wilt thou more?" And he answered, "Nay; never since I was born did I see come hither a knight so ready to my liking. A thought have I in my heart. Thou art surely one of Gawain's kin, who is so gay and gallant a knight. If thou wilt fight for my lady, then art thou welcome to me in all faith and love."

Then Libeaus answered swiftly, "Fight I shall for thy lady by behest of King Arthur, but I know not wherefore, nor why, nor who doth villainy to her, nor what may be her grief. A maiden, who is her

messenger, and a dwarf, brought me here to her succour." And the Constable said, "Well found, noble Knight of the Round Table."

Anon Maid Elene was fetched by ten knights before Sir Lambard, and she and the dwarf told all the valiant deeds the knight had done on his journey thitherward, and how that Sir Libeaus fought with foul monsters, and spared not for fear of death. And Sir Lambard was glad, and gave thanks to God and St. Edward.

Thus they sat them down to supper with much mirth and rejoicing, and Sir Lambard and Sir Libeaus, as comrades, spoke together of many brave adventures. Then said Libeaus, "Sir Constable, tell me of a truth what is the name of the knight who holds in prison the lady of Sinadoun, who is so fair and gracious a maiden?" "Nay," said Sir Lambert, "knight is he none who holds her in prison, but two clerks are her foes. False are they in flesh and bone who have done this deed. Men of mastery are they, versed in all magic spells. Mabon is the one called, and his brother, Yrain, and we go in dread of them both. This Mabon and Yrain<sup>14</sup> have made of our city a palace of cunning device. There is no knight or baron, be he bold as a lion, who durst enter therein. This have they done by magic and faëry; and the lady of Sinadoun, who comes of a noble kin, do they hold within, a prisoner. Often do we hear her cries, but have no power to behold her. By day and night do they torment her with all villainy. The two have sworn to do her to death save that she promises to do Mabon's will and yield to him all her rights. The lady comes of a noble kin and is heir to this fair dukedom. Meek she is and débonnaire, therefore we are in despair lest evil befall her." Said Libeaus Desconus, "By God's grace I shall win that lady from Mabon and Yrain and put them both to an open shame."

Then they took their rest in the castle that night, and the morrow Libeaus arose, fresh and ready to fight, and did on his best armour. And Sir Lambard led him forth and brought him to the palace gate, and they found it open, but neither earl, baron, nor knight durst bare him company farther, but turned them home again, save his squire, Sir Giflet, who would ride with him. But Sir Libeaus bade him also turn again and he sware an oath, if they would abide him in the castle they should see him anon. Then they rode back to the castle, and cried on God that He

would send them glad tidings of them that had so long held their lady captive.

Sir Libeaus, that courteous knight, rode into the palace. and alighted at the great hall. There, before the high daïs, he saw minstrels with trumpets and shawms. In the midst of the hall was a great fire that burnt brightly. He led in his steed, that was wont to aid him in fight. Then he began to pace through the chambers within the palace, but of great or small he saw no one, neither body nor face, save only minstrels clad in silk, who made merry with harp, fiddle, organ, cithole, and psaltery. So much melody was never within walls. Before each minstrel stood a torch burning brightly.

Ever farther he went, seeking for one who should fight with him. He sought in the corners and looked on the pillars that were strange to see. Of jasper were they and fine crystal, pillars and walls alike, none richer had he ever seen. Of brass were all the doors; the windows of glass adorned with fair imagery; all painted was the hall; never had he seen its like. Then he sat him down on the daïs, and lo! the music was stayed, the torches that burnt so brightly were quenched, and all the minstrels vanished. The doors and windows throughout the hall rattled<sup>15</sup> as at the voice of thunder; the daïs shook and the earth quaked; the stones from out the wall fell on him as he sat, and the roof above his head gaped wide as if it would rend asunder.

As he sat thus dismayed he heard horses neigh, and said to himself, well pleased, "Yet may I hope to fight!" He looked forth into a field, and there he saw two come riding, well armed with shield and spear. All their armour and trappings were of purple Inde, gay with golden garlands. Then one rode into the hall and began to call aloud, "Sir Knight Adventurous, proud though thou mayst be, yet must thou needs fight with us. Cunning must thou be of wile if thou wouldst win that fair lady!"

Then said Libeaus, "With the help or God, ready am I to fight!" With goodwill he sprang into his saddle, lance in hand he rode swiftly against him, for all his desire was to fell his foe in the field. When they met together they smote each other doughty strokes on their shields. Mabon's shaft flew in splinters, and he was sore aghast and deemed himself lost. Sir Libeaus bare him down over his horse's tail, for the

hinder bow of his saddle brake and he fell to the ground. Well nigh had the young knight slain him when Yrain came riding, with helm, hauberk, and coat of mail all fresh for fight, thinking by force to slay Libeaus.

Then was Sir Libeaus 'ware of him, and rode at him with a spear, and let his brother lie. He smote him such a stroke that his hauberk was all rent, and Yrain liked that ill. Their lances brake in two, and they drew out their swords, with grim intent to prove their might one against the other. As they hewed at each other Mabon, the fiercer of the two, rose up; he saw and knew well that Yrain smote but few strokes, therefore he ran to aid him to slay in fight the noble knight, Sir Libeaus. But Libeaus fought with them both, though they were never so wroth, and kept himself safely.

When Yrain saw Mabon he smote a felon stroke, and struck the neck of Sir Libeaus' steed before the saddle bow. But Libeaus was a skilful warrior, and he smote off his thigh, skin, and flesh and bone neither his armour nor his enchantments, nor his spells might help him aught; down he fell, a sorry sight!

Libeaus lighted adown to fight on foot with Mabon, such strokes they gave each other that the sparks sprang out bright from shield and helmet; and as their swords clashed together, Mabon smote the blade of Sir Libeaus in twain.

Sir Libeaus was sore ashamed, and angry at heart, for he had lost his sword, and his steed was lamed, and he feared lest he should lose his fame before Arthur his lord. Then he ran to Yrain, and drew out his sword, which was keen and sharp of edge, and ran upon Mabon, and began to fight fiercely. No word of love was there betwixt them, but Mabon as a furious lion ever sought to slay Libeaus. Then Libeaus smote down his shield with the sword that he took from Yrain, and hewed off his right arm with the shield. Then spake Mabon, "Hold thy fell strokes, Sir Knight, and I will yield me to thy will in all truth and loyalty; and thou shalt have that lady whom I hold in my power. For through the stroke of that sword have I lost mine hand, and shall surely die of the venom; for of a truth I poisoned both swords thinking to slay thee!"

Said Libeaus, "By my troth I will naught of thy gifts, were I to win all this world by it. But lay on thy strokes, for one of us shall surely slay the other."



Then Mabon and Sir Libeaus fell together again, and stinted their blows for naught; but Libeaus was the mightier of the two, and cleft Mabon's helmet and his head in twain.

When Mabon was thus slain he ran, sword in hand, to where he had left Yrain, thinking to cleave his head also. But when he came there his foe had been borne away, whither he wist not; he sought him in all the chambers, and when he found him not he held himself betrayed, and said in himself, "For this shall I pay dearly, that he has thus escaped me." On his knees fell that gentle knight, and prayed to the Blessed Virgin to shield him from sorcery. And as he prayed thus in the hall the casement of one of the windows fell open, downwards, and a great wonder seized upon him as he beheld, for a serpent came forth from the wall,<sup>16</sup> with the face of a woman, young and fair. Her body and wings were bright and shining like gold, hideous was her tail, and her paws grim and great. Libeaus began to sweat with fear, so sorely terrified was he that he dare not arise, not even though the place had been afire. And ere he wist the serpent had coiled about his neck, and kissed him on the mouth, and even as she kissed him, behold the tail and wings fell off from her, and the fairest woman he had ever seen stood before him naked and trembling!

She said, "Gentle knight, my foes hast thou slain; two evil clerks who would have done me to death. East, north and south, many a man could they harm by their spells. A serpent did they make me by their enchantments, to dwell in woe till I had kissed Gawain, or some other knight of his kin. And since thou hast saved my life fifteen castles will I give thee, and myself to be thy wife, if it be Arthur's will."

Then Sir Libeaus was glad and blithe; and he leapt on his steed, and left that lady, for ever he feared Yrain, since he was not slain, that he would harm him by his spells. To the castle gate he rode, and drew rein, and told Lambard and the other knights how it had gone with him, how Mabon was slain and Yrain wounded; and how that fair lady by their enchantments had been made into a serpent; how, through the kiss of a knight, she had been turned again into a maiden, goodly to look upon.—"But she stood before me naked, and said, 'Now am I sure that we may abide in peace, since my foemen, Mabon and Yrain, are slain.'"

When Sir Libeaus had told the Constable all this adventure, he bade them bring forth a purple robe, furred with grey, cauls, and rich kerchiefs, and sent them to his lady without delaying. And when she was ready dight she rode forth, and all the people of the city went in fair procession to bring her into the town. And when she was come into the city they set on her head a crown of gold and precious stones, and were glad and blithe, and gave thanks to God that her woe was ended. And all the lords did homage and fealty unto her, as was her right; thus Libeaus won that fair lady out of the devil's net.

Seven nights did they sojourn with Lambard in his tower, and then they went with honour and great rejoicing to the noble King Arthur. And Arthur and his knights thanked God that Sir Libeaus had not been put to shame; and Arthur gladly gave that fair lady to Sir Libeaus to wife.

The joy of that bridal is told in no tale and recounted in no geste. Barons and lords and noble ladies came to that fair hall; there was rich service, for great and small alike, of all that men could desire. The minstrels in hall and bower and the wandering folk had rich gifts. Forty days they dwelt with Arthur the King, and held their feast, as the French tale saith, and then Arthur with his gallant knights rode with them to their land. For many years they dwelt in joy and gladness, Sir Libeaus and that sweet lady. May Christ our Saviour, and the fair Maid, His Mother, grant us a like good ending.

## Notes

1. The name of the hero of our tale seems worthy of more attention than it has yet received. The French *Bel Inconnu* has "Guinglain," the continuations of the *Perceval* "Guiglain," the German "Wigalois," which the author expressly tells us is a corruption of "Gwî von Galois." Professor Zimmer is of opinion that the form given in the *Perceval* is the original, and suggests an intermediate "Guiganlois," giving "Wigalois." Taking into consideration the very decided resemblance between parts of our tale and the *Perceval Enfances*, is it not possible that the original name was, as stated by the German poet, a simple name of one syllable, which later on became amalgamated with its qualifying appellation? In any case,

the connection of the term "Galois" with the hero is, *vu* the Perceval parallels, decidedly worthy of attentive examination. Mis-readings, and mis-copyings, are so frequent in mediæval MSS. that the possibility of their occurrence can never be left out of sight in attempted derivations. Professor Zimmer's suggestion that the termination -ain may be due to the influence of Gauvain, he being the hero's father, and the reference to the names Gauvain, Agravain, and Yvain, as illustrations of such influence, scarcely strikes me as happy. Yvain is not Gawain's brother, nor is he ever represented as such; of the four brothers of that hero, Agravain, alone, has a kindred termination, while both in their case and in that of Perceval and Agloval, cited by the learned Professor as a further example, the name of the father is entirely different; for the suggested theory to hold good they should correspond in some measure with the names of their sons.

2. This is lacking in the French *Bel Inconnu*, but agrees closely with Gawain's adventure with the sister of Brandalis, related in the old English *Jeste of Syr Gawayne*, and also in the continuations of the *Perceval*. These latter, which distinctly identify our hero as the offspring of that liaison, give two variants of the story. In one the lady has long desired Gawain as a lover; in the other she yields to force against her will. The existence of these variants shows clearly that the story of Gawain's amours with the lady was, at the date of the appearance of the earliest continuations of Chrétien's poem, sufficiently well known for conflicting versions of it to be in circulation, and that in one case, if not in both, she was recognised as the mother of an already popular hero, Guinglain, or The Fair Unknown.

In the *Bel Inconnu*, on the contrary, Guinglain is the son of Gawain and the fairy Blancemal; while the late version of *The Weddyng of Syr Gawayne* makes him the offspring of that hero's union with the bespelled Dame Ragnell. This contradiction of evidence seems to indicate that there were two distinct accounts of Guinglain's birth current, in one of which he was the son of a mortal maiden, in the other of a fairy, or supernatural being. The *Wigalois* seems to occupy a position midway between these versions, the mother, herself mortal, being sister to a magician.

Malory, in his list of knights given in the handling of Sir Urre (Book XIX., chap. xi.) mentions three sons of Sir Gawain—Sir Gingalin, Sir Florence, and Sir Lovel, adding that the two latter were begotten upon Sir Brandiles' sister, thus apparently excluding Gingalin. The point deserves closer attention.

3. This should be compared with *Parzival* (Book II. l. 1628). It is one of the points of contact with the *Perceval* story; cf. also my *Legend of Sir Lancelot du Lac*, chaps. ii. and vii., for the curious correspondence between our story and the *Lancelot*. This is a point unfortunately overlooked by Doctor Schofield.

4. The incident of finding a dead knight, or slaying a knight, and clothing himself in his armour, also occurs in certain of the *Perceval* romances. In the *Perceval* continuations, already referred to, Gawain's son, in his first encounter, slays his adversary, and not recognising death, which he has never seen before, takes up the slain knight in his arms and shakes him violently, thinking to awake him. Here the simplicity, which is so marked a trait in *Perceval*, appears strongly in Guinglain (cf. *Parzival*, Wisse-Collin, section 178d, p. 276).

5. In the *Perceval* continuations we find two apparent allusions to this. In Wisse-Collin (197a, p. 364) we are told that our hero was called by the Britons "Schöne Unbekannte." Later on he reveals himself to Gawain as "Uwer sün, den könig Artus nannte Der Schöne Unerkannte" (*ibid.* 243b. p. 572). The general impression given by these scattered references is that of correspondence with *Libeaus Desconus* rather than with *Bel Inconnu*.

6. This summoning of a young knight by a maiden messenger is of frequent occurrence in mediæval romances; apart from the immediate members of our group, we may mention the *Prose Lancelot*, where the parallel is sufficiently close to have led M. Philipot to maintain the view that in the *Lancelot* we have the original of which the *Bel Inconnu* is a copy (cf. *Romania*, xxvi, p. 290). Also my *Legend of Sir Lancelot*; and the episodic romance of the *Côte Mal-tailé*, now generally found incorporated in the *Prose Tristan*, and included in Malory's excerpt from that romance; the story of Gareth, or Sir Beaumains, also given by Malory (Book VII.), and so far found nowhere else; and the metrical romance of *Ipomedon*. All these also agree in the persistent flouting of the young knight by the lady, who is eventually convinced of his valour; in the last-named

romance she carries her repentance so far as to offer herself to the hero! The correspondence in the case of the *Ipomedon* is so strong that it seems impossible to doubt that the author was familiar with some form of our story, a fact especially interesting in view of the comparatively early date of the *Ipomedon*. A striking feature of the parallels is their agreement, now with the French, now with the English, version of the tale—a peculiarity which appears to indicate that the particular form drawn upon was one which, while it corresponded exactly with neither, possessed features common to both. I have gone more fully into this question in a study on *The Three Days Tournament* (Grimm Library). For the general series of adventures, and the relation of one account to the other, I would refer the reader to Doctor Schofield's Study, where the whole subject is treated in an exhaustive manner; here I have endeavoured to confine my remarks to points which appeared to me to be worthy of fuller discussion.

7. I note this, as the real significance of the allusion appears to have escaped Doctor Schofield; he simply says, "The dwarf advises the hero to be wary, for the knight is full of guile." The reference appears to me rather to indicate that the original owner of the hawk was a magician, and that the passage had been retained in the text after the real meaning had been forgotten. As it is, the warning is superfluous; Giffroun practises no wiles, but simply relies on his knightly skill. But the fact that the adventure, as a whole, stands in a close relation, not only to the "Sparrowhawk," but also to the "Joie de la Court," adventure of *Erec*, where the garden is surrounded by a magic mist, and the lord is certainly a magician, would suggest the view that here *Libeaus Desconus* has retained a hint of the original form which has vanished from *Bel Inconnu*. It may be noted also that in the *Wigalois*, though the knight is not said to be a magician, yet the horse, one of the prizes to be competed for, is parti-coloured, white, red, black, and yellow. These parti-coloured animals are, as a rule, of fairy origin, and the presence of a horse of this description leads strength to the supposition that the adventure with which it is found connected was originally of a fairy character. Under varying forms the adventures here found combined are of frequent occurrence in mediæval romance (cf. *Legend of Sir Lancelot*, App., p. 223).

They probably both belonged to the “stock-in-trade” of professional story-tellers, and were in no sense the invention of Chrétien de Troyes.

8. A broad steel point.

9. A small hound, often referred to in Mediæval Romances as a pet of noble ladies.

10. This should be compared with the description of Petitcriu, in the *Tristan* of Gottfried von Strassbourg, and also with the brachet pursued by Schionatulander in *Titurel* (*Parzival*, Bartsch, vol. iii. p. 254); and the horse given by Guivret le Petit to Enid, in *Erec*. *Titurel* being incomplete, the origin of the brachet is not explained, but there is no doubt that the others are fairy animals.

11. The retention of the names “L’Ile d’Or” and “La Dame d’Amour” is interesting as showing that the original source must have been French.

12. The original word is *Mammettes* which probably = Mahomets. Our forefathers mistakenly believed the Saracens to be idolators, and credited them with worshipping not only their great prophet Mahomet, but all the gods of classical antiquity.

13. This should be compared with Gawain’s experiences at the Grail Castle (*Legend of Sir Lancelot*, App., p. 222).

14. In other versions of the story there is but one enchanter. In the “Joie de la Court” in *Erec*, already alluded to, the magician’s name is Mabonagrain. M. Gaston Paris considers that this is the original form, and that the two enchanters, Mabon and Yrain (or Eurain, as in the *Bel Inconnu*), are due to a mistaken division of the name. M. Ferd. Lot, on the contrary, holds the two enchanters to be the more primitive form, and would refer Mabonagrain to a fusion of the earlier names (cf. *Romania*, vol. xxiv. pp. 321, 322).

15. Compare this with Gawain’s adventure in the Château Merveil (*Parzival*, Book XI. ll. 373 et seq.), also in the Grail Castle (*Legend of Sir Lancelot*, App., p. 221). I have before this suggested that Gawain’s adventures may be the basis for the later presentment of the Grail Castle, and the parallel of the dirt-throwing, noted above, seems to make it possible that they may also have affected our story.

16. For the variants of the *Fier Baiser* adventure, cf. Doctor Schofield’s Study. The *Perceval* poems do not among their allusions include any mention of this feat, nor is there a hint of it in the *Ipomedon*. I am inclined

to think that, in spite of Doctor Schofield's conclusions to the contrary, this adventure may *not* have been in the original version of the story, though it must have been added to it at an early date. It is evident that there is ample material for more study than has yet been devoted to the subject.