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The Wicked Emperor and the Knight in the Bathtub: An Annotated Translation of the Middle High German *Heinrich von Kempten* by Konrad von Würzburg

Alan V. Murray

Abstract

Heinrich von Kempten is a poem by Konrad von Würzburg, an author active in southern Germany in the middle decades of the thirteenth century. It raises interesting questions about knightly values, legal and feudal obligations and courtly behaviour, and is thus potentially interesting to anyone studying or teaching medieval society or chivalry. This publication presents an English translation of the poem (together with linguistic and historical notes) which is placed alongside the standard edition of the text published by Edward Schröder in 1930.

Introduction

The work translated and annotated here is a Middle High German poem in rhyming couplets by Konrad von Würzburg, which is now usually known by the title *Heinrich von Kempten*.¹ Konrad was one of the most famous and prolific German authors of poetry in the thirteenth century, whose reputation is attested in laudatory mentions by later poets.² He was born around the year 1235 in the city of Würzburg, the seat of a bishopric in the duchy of Franconia. As far as can be established, Konrad seems to have become a professional poet, and from around 1260 onwards he was active in the Upper Rhine area, primarily in the episcopal cities of Basel and Strasbourg. He died on 31 August 1287 and was buried in Basel cathedral.³

Konrad was the author of numerous works in a variety of genres. He composed lyric poetry, comprising both love poetry (*Minnesang*) and moral and religious lyric (*Spruchdichtung*), as well as a series of epic poems in rhyming couplets. Many of the epics are described in

¹ For the text of the poem, see 'Heinrich von Kempten', in *Kleinere Dichtungen Konrads von Würzburg*, ed. by Edward Schröder, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1925–30), I 41–68 and *Konrad von Würzburg, Kaiser Otto und Heinrich von Kempten. Abbildung der gesamten Überlieferung und Materialien zur Stoffgeschichte*, ed. by André Schnyder (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1989).

² *Dichter über Dichter in mittelhochdeutscher Literatur*, ed. by Günther Schweikle (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1970), pp. 3, 30, 39.

³ Brandt, *Konrad von Würzburg*, pp. 15–18.

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the manuscripts as *mæren* (literally, ‘tales’), but in terms of content and style several of them could be more accurately regarded as romances; these include *Heinrich von Kempten*, *Das Herzmære*, *Engelhard*, *Partonopier und Meliur*, *Der Trojanerkrieg* (*The Trojan War*), and the *Schwanritter* (telling of the ‘swan-knight’ Lohengrin). There are three hagiographical legends, namely *Silvester*, *Alexius*, and *Pantaleon*, to which we might add *Die Goldene Schmiede*, a poem in praise of the Virgin Mary. The shorter poems *Die Klage der Kunst* and *Der Welt Lohn* (*The World’s Reward*) are moralising allegories. Finally, there is *Das Turnier von Nantes* (*The Tournament of Nantes*), which is less easy to categorise. It gives a narrative of a fictitious tourney involving various European rulers, but its detailed heraldic descriptions suggest that it is in fact a political allegory.⁴

Heinrich von Kempten is thought to derive ultimately from a story told in the *Pantheon* (c. 1191), a Latin work written by the chronicler Godfrey of Viterbo, which tells of an incident supposedly occurring during the life of the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I (912–73).⁵ However, Konrad’s story is longer and much more detailed, particularly with regard to characterisation and the motivation of its main figure, the knight Heinrich. There is little in the poem that relates to the time of Otto I; rather, its ethos, vocabulary, and the manners which it depicts very much reflect the courtly world of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The poem raises interesting questions about knightly values, legal and feudal obligations and courtly behaviour, and is thus potentially interesting to anyone studying or teaching medieval society or chivalry. It is also a gripping tale, in which moments of humour are interspersed with high drama.⁶

⁴ Brandt, *Konrad von Würzburg*, pp. 18–43.

⁵ ‘Gotifredi Viterbens Opera’, ed. by Georg Waitz, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores in folio*, 22 (Hannover: Hahn, 1872), pp. 1–338 (at pp. 235–36).

⁶ The main studies on the work are: Walter Röll, ‘Zum *Heinrich von Kempten* von Konrad von Würzburg’, *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 112 (1983), 252–57; Rosemary E. Wallbank, ‘Emperor Otto and Heinrich von Kempten’, in *Studies in Medieval Literature and Languages in Memory of Frederick Whitehead*, ed. by William Rothwell and others (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), pp. 353–62; Maria Dobozy, ‘Der alte und der neue Bund in Konrads von Würzburg *Heinrich von Kempten*’, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 107 (1988), 386–400; Rosemary E. Turner-Wallbank, ‘Tradition and Innovation in Konrads von Würzburg *Heinrich von Kempten*’, *Jahrbuch der Oswald von Wolkenstein-Gesellschaft*, 5 for 1988–89 (1989), 263–71; André Schnyder, ‘Beobachtungen und Überlegungen zum *Heinrich von Kempten* Konrads von Würzburg’, *Jahrbuch der Oswald von Wolkenstein-Gesellschaft*, 5 for 1988–89 (1989), 273–83; Helmut Brall, ‘Geraufter Bart und nackter Retter. Verletzung und Heilung des Autoritätsprinzips in Konrads von Würzburg *Heinrich von Kempten*’, in *Festschrift für Herbert Kolb zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Klaus Matzel and Hans-Gert Roloff (Bern: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 31–52; Rüdiger Brandt, *Konrad von Würzburg: Kleinere epische Werke* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2000); Beate Kellner, ‘Der Ritter und die nackte Gewalt. Rollenentwürfe in Konrads von Würzburg *Heinrich von Kempten*’, in *Literarische Leben: Rollenentwürfe in der Literatur des Hoch- und Spätmittelalters: Festschrift für Volker Mertens zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Matthias Meyer and Hans-Jochen Schiewer (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2002), pp. 361–84; Werner J. Hoffmann, ‘*Wan manheit und ritterschaft / diu zwei diu tiurent sêre*: Ein semantisches Problem im *Heinrich von Kempten*’, *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 240 (2003), 354–60; Gustavo Fernández Riva, ‘Critic of Courtliness in Konrad von Würzburg’s *Heinrich von Kempten*’, *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 49 (2018), 187–98; Markus Stock, ‘Responionen: Konrads von Würzburg Erzählkunst im *Heinrich von Kempten*’, in *Konrad von Würzburg als Erzähler*, ed. by Norbert Kössinger and Astrid Lembke (Oldenburg: BIS-Verlag, 2021), pp. 245–60; Monika Schausten, ‘Beim Barte des Kaisers: Soziales Chaos und poetische Ordnung in Konrads von Würzburg *Heinrich von Kempten*’, in *Erzählte Ordnungen — Ordnungen des Erzählens*, ed. by Daniela Fuhrmann and Pia Selmeyer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), pp. 230–49; Schausten, ‘Der Ritter im Bade und das “Körper gewordene Soziale”’: Zur Dynamisierung von Konventionalität in Konrads von Würzburg *Heinrich von Kempten*’, in *Kunst und Konventionalität. Dynamiken sozialen Wissens und Handelns in der Literatur des Mittelalters*, ed. by Udo Friedrich, Christiane Krusenbaum-Verheugen und Monika Schausten (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2021), pp. 125–55.

Why translate *Heinrich von Kempten*? Unlocking the content of literature written in Middle High German is not straightforward. For German speakers, individual words might seem recognisable at first sight, yet they might still be led astray by superficial similarities of lexical items whose meanings have shifted, often quite drastically, since the Middle Ages.⁷ Native speakers of English have greater problems. Most of the Anglophone researchers and students who engage with the language will have already studied modern German for several years, and the relatively few study aids written with English speakers in mind tend to make this assumption of their prospective readers. This certainly applies to the most widely used introduction to the language, which habitually explains phonology, pronunciation and grammatical features by reference to New High German.⁸ The most recent comprehensive guide includes several glossed and annotated texts aimed at students, but its authors nevertheless state that ‘the only prior knowledge that we take for granted is an understanding of present-day German’.⁹ A further factor is that the standard lexicographical resources are presented through the medium of modern German.¹⁰ Finally, most of the secondary literature has been produced by Germanists working in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, who naturally have written in their native language. As the literature cited above indicates, this is clearly the case with *Heinrich von Kempten*. There are now good modern English translations of many of the more important longer poems from the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries (with the more recent publications usually giving the original text alongside the translation), but these represent only a fraction of the entire corpus of Middle High German epic poetry. Moreover, there are far fewer translations available for works written after this ‘classical’ period. *Heinrich von Kempten* is a work which is interesting in its own right and is of a manageable length that makes it a suitable subject for seminar discussion. The aim of this publication is to provide an English translation of the poem to make it accessible to those who do not know medieval or modern German; it also gives linguistic and historical notes which may be useful to those who are learning or wish to learn more about the Middle High German language.

Text and Translation

The title *Heinrich von Kempten* is a conventional one, assigned to the poem by Germanists on the grounds that the knight Heinrich is the main protagonist of the story. However, the headings given in most of the surviving manuscripts associate the story with Otto, the Holy Roman emperor, probably because he is the first character to be mentioned.¹¹ Otto

⁷ Franz Saran, *Das Übersetzen aus dem Mittelhochdeutschen*, 6th edn, ed. by Bert Nagel (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1975), pp. 1–21.

⁸ Maurice O’C. Walshe, *A Middle High German Reader with Grammar, Notes and Glossary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

⁹ Howard Jones and Martin H. Jones, *The Oxford Guide to Middle High German* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 2.

¹⁰ The most important of these is the *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch (MWB Online)*, which incorporates data from earlier printed resources. See <http://www.mhdwb-online.de/index.html>.

¹¹ The complete poem is transmitted in six surviving manuscripts: Cologny-Genève, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, Cod. Bodm. 72 (formerly Kalocsa, Kalocsai Főszékesegyházi Könyvtár [Kalocsa Cathedral Library], 1), ff. 242^{ra}–247^{ra}; Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, cpg.341, ff. 241^{ra}–46^{ra} and cpg.395, ff. 92^{vb}–98^{vb}; Innsbruck, Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Cod. FB.32001 (formerly 16.0.9), ff. 84^{vb}–213^{vb}; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 2885, ff. 205^{va}–213^{vb} and 10100a, ff. 17^v–23^v. The fragments held in London, Senate House Library, Closs/Pribsch Family Papers, Closs Box 67/ii, contain lines 764–70 of the poem.

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is introduced in negative terms. He has red hair, a feature which in many ages has been stereotypically associated with a short temper and a predilection to anger, and indeed, the emperor is quick to take offence and implacable to those who oppose him. He is especially proud of his long, luxuriant red beard, and when he threatens anyone with the oath 'by my beard' (*sam mir mîn bart*), it is a clear sign that they can expect no mercy.

The narrative falls structurally into two roughly equal halves.¹² The first part begins in the city of Bamberg, where the emperor is holding a gathering of his court for the festival of Easter. In the emperor's palace the boards have been set out for a sumptuous meal after the celebration of Mass. At first sight the scene is one of order and harmony, but a seemingly trivial act sets off a chain of events which leaves one character dead, and two others in fear for their lives when Heinrich threatens to kill the emperor. This highly dramatic action ends with Heinrich being banished from court, and told never to enter the emperor's presence again. He returns to Swabia where he lives peaceably on the estates that he holds in fief from the abbot of Kempten. The different actions and reactions of the four characters who figure in this part of the narrative raise questions about what behaviour is justified or reprehensible according to the social conventions and obligations of their time.

The second part takes up the story ten years later. The emperor, who is campaigning in Italy, sends word to his vassals in Germany that they are to provide him with reinforcements. When the abbot of Kempten musters his troops, Heinrich is unwilling to join him, fearing Otto's ferocious and unforgiving nature, but the abbot insists the knight should perform the service that he owes. After they join the imperial forces where the emperor is besieging a city, Heinrich tries to remain apart from the rest of the army in order to avoid being recognised by Otto or his officials, which might expose him to the emperor's vengeance. One day Heinrich is taking a bath outside his pavilion at the edge of the imperial camp, when some distance away he sees how the emperor, riding out with the intention to parley with the enemy, is in danger of being ambushed by a group of the defenders of the city. Heinrich jumps out of his bath, and pausing only to seize his sword and shield, rushes out, naked, and furiously drives off the plotters. Once the emperor is safe, Heinrich returns to camp, hoping that he has not been recognised. However, Otto makes enquiries about the identity of his rescuer, and Heinrich is brought to him. The knight still fears for his life because of his actions ten years previously, and the tension about his fate when he finally confronts the emperor is maintained until the conclusion of the poem, when the conflict between Heinrich and Otto is finally resolved.

The English translation below is presented alongside a facing-page Middle High German text derived from the published edition by Edward Schröder (as n.1). In order to assist the learner who wishes to compare the original text with the translation, a number of glosses and linguistic notes are given.¹³

¹² Röhl, 'Zum *Heinrich von Kempten* von Konrad von Würzburg'.

¹³ Words are generally glossed only if they are not easily found in the glossary in Walshe, *Middle High German Reader*.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are employed in the notes:

adj	adjective
adv	adverb
f	feminine noun
irreg	irregular verb
m	masculine noun
n	neuter noun
sv	strong verb (with verb class in Roman numerals)
wv	weak verb
<	is derived from, is a derivative form of (e.g. infinitive)
≠	is different from (words with similar form but different meanings)

Text

Ein keiser Otte was genannt, ^a
des magencrefte manic lant
mit vorhten undertænic wart.
Schoen unde lanc was im der bart, ^b
wand er in zôch viel zarte, ^c
und swaz er bî dem barte
geswuor, daz liez er allez wâr. ^d
Er hete rætelehtez hâr ^e
und was mitalle ein übel man. ^f
10 Sîn herze in argem muote bran ^g
daz er bewârte an maneger stete:
swer iht wider in getete, ^h
der muoste hân den lîp verlorn.
Über swen der eit gesworn
von des keisers munde wart:
'du garnest ez, sam mir mîn bart!' ⁱ
der muoste ligen tôt zehant,
wand er dekeine milte vant ^j
an sîner hende danne.
20 Sus hete er manegem manne
daz leben und den lîp benomen, ^k
der von sînen gnâden komen
was durch hôher schulde werc.
Nu hæte er dâ ze Bâbenberc ^l
in der schoenen veste wît ^m

gemachet eine hôchgezît,
Und was diu zeinen ôstern. ⁿ
des quâmen ûzer clôstern ^o
vil hôher ebbete in den hof ^p
30 und manic werder bischof,
der mit êren îlte dar.
Ouch quâmen dar in liehter schar
grâven, frîen, dienstman, ^q
die daz rîche hôrten an ^r
und den keiserlichen voget,
die quâmen alle dar gezoget
in wûnneclicher presse. ^s
Nu daz gesungen messe
was an dem ôsterlichen tage,
40 dô wâren sunder leides clage
al die tische dâ bereit,
und het man brôt dar ûf geleit
und manic schoene trincvaz ^t
dar ûf gesetzet umbe daz,
sô der keiser Otte
mit sîner fûrsten rotte ^u
von deme mûnster quæme,
daz er dâ wazzer næme
und er enbizze sâ zehant.

^a *Otte* (m) = Otto (in oblique cases *Otten*).

^b *bart* (m) = 'beard'; *im* is dative form of *er* (personal pronoun), denoting possession.

^c *zarte* (adv) = 'tenderly, lovingly'.

^d *geswern* (sv VI) intensive form of *swern* = 'swear'; *liez* < *lassen* (sv VII).

^e *ræteleht* (adj) = 'reddish'.

^f *mitalle* (adv) = 'all, completely'. Cf. archaic English *withall*.

^g *brînnen* (sv III) = 'burn'.

^h *getuon* (irreg) = 'do something to someone'.

ⁱ *garnen* (wv) = 'harvest, reap, deserve'.

^j *dekeine* < *dechein* (adj) = 'no'.

^k *benemen* (sv IV) = 'take away'.

^l *Bâbenberc* = Bamberg.

^m *veste* (f) = 'fortress, castle'.

ⁿ *zeinen* = contraction of *ze einen*.

^o *clôster* (n) = monastery.

^p *ebete* (more accurately *âbbete*) = plural of *abbet* 'abbot'.

^q *dienstman* = 'ministerialis, ministerial knight'.

^r *hôren/hæren* (wv) *an* + accusative case = 'belong to'.

^s *presse* (f) = 'press, throng'.

^t *trincvaz* (n) = 'drinking vessel'.

^u *rote/rotte* (f) = 'crowd, group of people, companions'.

Translation

There was once an emperor named Otto, who was the mighty and feared ruler of many lands. His beard was splendid and long, for he kept it with great care, and whatever he swore by his beard, he would see that it was done. He had red hair and he was a wicked man; many a time he showed the evil that burned within his heart, and anyone who opposed him had to pay for it with his life. His favourite oath was ‘you shall pay for this, by my beard!’, and anyone to whom he said this would receive no mercy from him, but would be condemned to die at once. In this way the emperor had taken the life of many a man whose deeds had incurred his displeasure.

Now the emperor had come to the fine, great city of Bamberg to celebrate the holy feast of Easter.¹ Many high abbots travelled from their monasteries to attend the court, and many worthy bishops acted honourably in making haste to be there. There was also a great number of counts, free lords and ministerials who served the empire and its ruler — all of them came together there in a magnificent throng.² When mass was sung that Easter Day the tables had already been prepared with the greatest of care: the boards had been set and many splendid vessels placed upon them, so that when Emperor Otto came from the cathedral with his princes, he could wash his hands and sit down to dine at once.³

¹ Bamberg, a city in eastern Franconia (now in mod. Bavaria), the seat of a bishopric. The great church festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun were often the occasion for meetings of the imperial court, when large numbers of prelates, secular princes and vassals could be expected to attend.

² Free lords (Ger. *Edelfreie*) were the lowest rank of German free nobility, below that of counts. Ministerials (Latin *ministeriales*) were a class of knights who were technically unfree, but who carried out important military and executive functions for their lords. See Karl Bosl, ‘Noble Unfreedom: The Rise of the Ministeriales in Germany’, in *The Medieval Nobility*, ed. by Timothy Reuter (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1979), pp. 291–311; Benjamin Arnold, *German Knighthood 1050–1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Arnold, ‘Servile Retainers or Noble Knights: the Medieval Ministeriales in Germany’, *Reading Medieval Studies*, 12 (1986), 73–84; Arnold, ‘Instruments of Power: The Profile and Profession of *ministeriales* within German Aristocratic Society (1050–1225)’, in *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. by Thomas N. Bisson (Philadelphia, 1995), pp. 36–55.

³ Formal feasts such as the one described here had an important representative function, demonstrating the bonds between emperor and princes. See Gerd Althoff, ‘Der frieden-, bündnis- und gemeinschaftstiftende Charakter des Mahles im frühen Mittelalter’, in *Essen und Trinken in Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, ed. by Irmgard Bitsch and others (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1987), pp. 13–25.

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50 Nu was durch hovezuht gesant
ein werder juncherre dar,^a
der edel unde wünnevar
an herzen und an lîbe schein.
die liute im alle sunder mein^b
vil hôhen prîs dâ gâben.
Sîn vater was von Swâben^c
herzoge vil gewaltec,^d
des gûlte manicvaltec^e
solt erben dirre aleine.^f
60 Der selbe knabe reine^g
des tages dâ ze hove gie
vor den tischen unde lie^h
dar ûf die blanken hende sîn:
ein lindez brôt nam er dar in,ⁱ
des brach der hôchgeborne knabe
ein lützel unde ein wênic abe^j
und wolte ez ezzen sam diu kint,
diu des sites elliu sint
und in der wille stât dar zuo
70 daz si gerne enbîzent fruo.
Der junge fürste wünnesam,
als er daz brôt an sich genam
und ein teil gebrach dar abe,^k
dô gienc aldâ mit sîme stabe^l
des keisers truhsæze^m

und schihte daz man æze,ⁿ
sô man gesungen hæte gar.
Der selbe der wart des gewar,
daz der juncherre wert
80 des brôtes hæte dâ gegert.^o
des wart er zornic sâ zehant:
der site sîn was sô gewant
daz in muote ein kleine dinc.
Des lief er an den jungelinc
mit eime stabe den er truoc,^p
dâ mite er ûf daz houbet sluoc^q
den knaben edel unde clâr,
daz im diu scheidel und daz hâr^r
von rôtem bluote wurden naz.
90 Des viel er nider unde saz
und weinde manegen heizen trahen,
daz in der truhsæze slahen
getorste. Daz ersach ein helt,^s
der was ein riter ûzerwelt
und hiez von Kempten Heinrich;
sîn edel muot der hæte sich
rîlicher manheit an genomen.^t
Er was mit deme kinde komen^u
von Swâben dar, als ich ez las,
100 wand er sîn zuhtmeister was^v
und in nâch ganzer wirde zôch.

^a *juncherre* (m) = 'young lord'.

^b *mein* (m) = 'falsehood, falsity'.

^c *Swâben* = 'Swabia'.

^d *herzoge* (m) = 'duke'.

^e *gûlte* (f) = 'income, money' (< *gelten*)

^f *erben* (wv) = 'inherit'; *dirre* (adjectival noun) here means 'this person'

^g *knabe* (m) = 'boy, lad'.

^h *lie* < *lazzen*.

ⁱ *linde* (adj) = 'soft'.

^j *ab* (adv) is a separable prefix belonging to the verb *brach*.

^k *gebrechen* (sv IV) = intensive of *brechen* 'break'.

^l *stab* (m) = 'staff'.

^m *truhsæze* (m) = 'seneschal, steward'.

schichten (wv) = 'order, see to it'; *æze* = 3rd person present subjunctive of *ezzen* 'eat'.

ⁿ *gern* (wv) = 'desire'.

^p *eime* = *einem*.

^q *dâ mite* = 'with which'; *sluoc* < *slahen/slân* (sv VI) = 'slay, kill'.

^r *scheidel* (f) = 'crown of the head'.

^s *getorste* < *geturren* (irreg).

^t *rîlich* (adj) = 'fine, splendid'.

^u *komen* is used here as the past participle for the more usual *gekomen*. Verbs of movement, plus *sîn* ('be') and *werden* ('become'), form their perfect tense with *sîn* as auxiliary rather than *haben*, which is used with most verbs.

^v *zuhtmeister* (m) < *zuht* (f) 'upbringing, education' + *meister*.

Now there was a certain young lord who had been sent to court for his education. He was noble and handsome in both body and spirit, and everyone without exception had the highest opinion of him. His father was the mighty duke of Swabia, and the young man was the sole heir to all the rights and possessions of the duchy.¹ As this innocent youth was walking past the tables at court that day, he picked up a loaf of fine bread with his fair hands; the high-born boy broke off a small morsel from a loaf, wanting to eat it there and then, like children who are impatient for their meal. Just as this young, handsome prince was breaking off a piece of the bread that he had in his hands, the emperor's seneschal² entered carrying his staff of office, to announce that, now that the mass had been sung, it was time to dine. But when he saw the young man about to eat the bread he became enraged, for his nature was such that he was upset even by such trifling matters. He rushed up to the youth and, with the staff he was carrying, beat the fair, noble boy on the head until his hair and scalp were wet and red with blood. The boy fell to the floor and sat there, weeping many hot tears because the seneschal had dared to beat him.

All of this was seen by a worthy knight called Heinrich von Kempten, who had always distinguished himself by his great courage. He had come from Swabia with the young man, as I have read, to act as his tutor and educate him as was appropriate to his dignity.

¹ The duchy of Swabia covered much of the south-west of the medieval kingdom of Germany, corresponding to the greater part of the modern state of Baden-Württemberg together with adjacent parts of northern Switzerland and south-eastern Bavaria.

² The seneschal or steward (in modern German, *Truchsess*) was one of the four main officials found in medieval royal households, alongside the marshal, the constable and the butler. The office was normally held by someone of knightly or higher rank, who was responsible for keeping order at the court, alongside other duties. On the development of the court offices, see Werner Rösener, 'Hofämter an mittelalterlichen Fürstehöfen', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 45 (1989), 485–550 and Alan V. Murray, 'Der König und der Küchenmeister: Überlegungen zur Rolle Rumolts im *Nibelungenlied*', in *Nibelungenlied und Klage: Ursprung — Funktion — Bedeutung*, ed. Dietz-Rüdiger Moser and Marianne Sammer (München: Institut für Bayerische Literaturgeschichte, 1998), pp. 395–410.

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<p>Daz man den juncherren hôch als unerbermelîchen sluoc,^a daz muote in sêre und ûbel gnuoc und was im leit und ungemach. Zuo dem truhsæzen sprach der unverzagte ritter dô harte zorniclîche alsô: ‘waz habent ir gerochen^b 110 daz ir nu hânt zebrochen^c iuwer ritterlichen zuht, daz ir eins edeln fürsten fruht als übellîche habet geslagen? Ich will iu nemelîchen sagen: ir werbent anders danne ir sult, sît daz ir sunder alle schult geslagen hânt den herren mîn.’ ‘daz lânt iu gar unmære sîn!’ sprach der truhsæze 120 ‘mir ist daz wol gemæze^d deich ungefüegen schelken were^e und einen iegelichen bere^f der hie ze hove unzühtic ist. Lânt iuwer rede an dirre frist belîben algemeine: ich fürhte iuch alsô cleine</p>	<p>als der habich tuot daz huon.^g Waz welt ir nû dar umbe tuon daz ich den herzogten sluoc?’^h 130 ‘Daz wirt bekant iu schiere gnuoc’,ⁱ sprach von Kempten Heinrich, ‘daz ir den fürsten edelîch sô vaste kunnet bliuwen, daz sol iuch hie geriuwen,^j wand ich vertrag es langer niht. Ir tugentlôser bæsewiht,^k nu wie getorstet ir geleben daz ir dem kinde hânt gegeben als ungefüege biusche?’^l 140 Daz iuwer hant unkiusche sô gar unedelîche tuot, des muoz begiezen iuwer bluot^m den sal und disen flecken.’ Dô greif er einen steckenⁿ als einen grôzen reitel:^o er sluog in daz diu scheidel^p im zerlahte sam ein ei,^q und im der gebel spielt enzwei^r reht als ein havenschirben,^s 150 daz er begunde zirben^t alumbe und umbe sam ein topf;^u</p>
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^a *unerbermelîchen* (adv) < *erbarmen* (wv) = ‘show mercy’.

^b *rechen* (sv IV) = ‘punish’. The characters address each other with the 2nd person plural pronoun *ir*, a marker of courtly discourse.

^c *hânt* < *haben/hân*; *zebrochen* = *zerbrochen* (past participle) < *zerbrechen* (sv IV).

^d *gemæze* (adj) = ‘suitable, proportionate’. Cf. *maze* ‘measure, moderation’.

^e *deich* = contraction of *daz ich*; *wern* (wv) = ‘restrain, hinder’.

^f *bern* (wv) = ‘beat, strike’.

^g *habich(t)* (m) = ‘hawk’.

^h *sluoc/sluog* < *slahan* (sv)

ⁱ *gnuoc* = *genuoc*.

^j *geriuwen* (sv II) + dative subject = ‘rue, regret’ (impersonal).

^k *bæsewiht* (m) = ‘villain’.

^l *biusche* (f) = ‘knock, blow’.

^m *begiezen* (sv II) = ‘make wet, cause to flow’.

ⁿ *stecken* (m) = ‘stick, staff’.

^o *greif* < *grîfen* (sv I) = ‘grasp’; *reitel* (m) = ‘club’.

^p *scheidel* (m) = ‘crown of the head, skull’.

^q *ei* (n) = ‘egg’.

^r *gebel* (m) = ‘head’; *spielt* < *spalten* (sv I) ‘split’

^s *havenschirben* (m) = ‘potsherd(s)’.

^t *zirben/zirben* (wv) = ‘rotate, spin around’.

^u *topf* (m) = ‘pot’.

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It distressed him sorely to see this young nobleman beaten so mercilessly, for it upset his sense of propriety. Enraged, the courageous knight demanded of the seneschal:

‘Why have you broken the knightly code and beaten the son of a noble prince in such a shameful manner? I will say only this to you: you have acted quite wrongly, for you have maltreated my lord without cause’.

The seneschal replied,

‘This is no concern of yours. It is my responsibility to restrain vulgar rogues and to chastise anyone who does not know how to behave at court. So hold your tongue now: I fear you as little as a hawk fears a hen. What if I have beaten the duke¹ — what are you going to do about it?’

‘You shall find out soon enough’, said Heinrich von Kempten, ‘and here and now you shall regret ever having struck this noble prince, for I cannot stand this state of affairs any longer. You worthless villain, why do you deserve to live when you have beaten this boy in such a monstrous manner? Since you are so ignoble that you have shown no restraint with your hand, you will have to pay for it with your own blood, here in his hall’.

Heinrich seized a piece of wood and, grasping it like a club, he smashed the seneschal’s head as if it were an eggshell, and it shattered like fragments of broken clay. The seneschal began

¹ The seneschal here refers to the young man by the title of *herzog* (duke), that strictly speaking belongs to the youth’s father. This may be a way of heightening the apparent arrogance of the seneschal by making him boast that he is not afraid to strike the highest rank of princes in the empire.

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daz hirne wart im und der kopf ^a
erschellet harte, dünkent mich. ^b
Des viel er ûf den esterich ^c
und lac dâ jâmerlichen tôt.
Der sal wart sînes bluotes rôt.
Dâ von huop sich en michel dôz ^d
unde ein lûtgebrehete grôz. ^e
Nû was ouch der keiser komen
160 und hæte wazzer dâ genomen
und waz gesezzen über tisch.
Daz bluot begunde er alsô frisch
ûf dem esteriche sehen;
er sprach: ‘waz ist alhie geschehen?’
wer hât den sal entreinet ^f
und die getât erscheinet ^g
daz er sô bluotic worden ist?’
Zehant begunde im an der frist ^h
sîn werdez ingesinde sagen,
170 daz im sîn truhsæze erslagen
waere bî der zît alsô.
Mît zorne sprach der keiser dô:
‘wer hât an im beswæret mich?’
‘daz tet von Kempten Heinrich’
riefens algelîche. ⁱ
‘Jâ’, sprach der keiser rîche,
‘hât im der sînen lîp benomen,
sô ist er uns ze frûeje komen
von Swâben her in ditze lant.
180 Er werde schiere nû besant ^j
für mîn antlitze her;

ich will in frâgen war umb er
mir habe sô vaste an im geschadet.’
Sus wart der ritter dô geladet
für den keiser freissam. ^k
Und als er für sîn ougen quam
unde er in von êrste ersach,
mit zorne er wider in dô sprach:
‘wie hânt ir, herre, alsus getobet, ^l
190 daz mîn truhsæze hôchgelobet
von iu lît ermordet?’ ^m
Ir hânt ûf iuch gehordet ⁿ
mîn ungenâde manicvalt;
iu sol mîn keiserlîch gewalt
erzeiget werden sêre;
ir hânt mîns hoves êre
und mînen prîs zebrochen;
daz wirt an iu gerochen;
der hôhe mein und diu geschicht ^o
200 daz man den truhsæzen siht
von iu ze tôde erlempten. ^p
‘Nein, herre!’ sprach von Kempten
der unverzagte Heinrich:
‘lânt hie genâde vinden mich
und iuwer stæte hulde.
Geruochent mîne unschulde
vernemen hie und mîne schult.
Hab ich mit rehter ungedult ^q
verdienet iuwer vîentschaft,
210 sô lâzent iuwer magencraft
mich vellen unde veigen. ^r

^a *hirne* (n) = ‘brain(s)’.

^b *erschellen* (wv) = break, fracture’ ≠ *erschellen* (sv III) = ‘sound’.

^c *est(e)rich* (m) = ‘floor’.

^d *huop* < *heben* (sv VI).

^e *lûtgebrehete* (n) = ‘commotion, uproar’.

^f *entreinen* (wv) = ‘defile’ < *rein* (adj) = ‘clean, pure’.

^g *getât* (m) = ‘deed(s)’.

^h *frist* (f) = space of time; *an der frist* = ‘straight away’.

ⁱ *riefens* = contraction of *riefen sî* < *ruofen* ‘shout, call out’.

^j *besant* = past participle of *besenden* (irreg) = ‘send for’.

^k *freissam/vreissam* (adj) = ‘terrible’.

^l *toben* (wv) = ‘rage’.

^m *ligen* (sv V) = ‘lie’ (position/state) ≠ ‘tell lies’; *ermorden* (wv) = ‘murder’.

ⁿ *orden* (wv) = ‘hoard, collect, gather’.

^o *mein* (m) = basic meaning is ‘falsehood’ or ‘injustice’; also consequences thereof, e.g. ‘misdeed, damage’.

^p *erlemmen* (wv) = ‘make lame’.

^q *ungedult* (f) = ‘impatience’.

^r *veigen* (wv) = ‘destroy, condemn’ < *veige* (adj) ‘doomed’.

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to sway and totter around like a wobbly pot; his skull and his brain must both have been severely damaged, for he fell to the floor and lay there lifeless, staining the floor of the hall with his blood. This brought forth a mighty uproar from all those standing around.

At that moment the emperor arrived; he had just washed his hands and taken his place at table when he noticed the fresh bloodstain on the floor. He said, 'What has happened here? Who has defiled the hall so that it is covered in blood? At once the courtiers started to tell him how his seneschal had been slain only a short time before. 'Who has done this thing to me?', said the emperor angrily. 'It was Heinrich von Kempten', came the reply from all sides.

'Indeed', said the mighty emperor, 'if he has taken the life of my seneschal, then it was an ill thing that he ever left Swabia to come to these parts. Let him be brought before me at once, for I wish to know why he has done this great injury to me'.

And so Heinrich was brought before the infuriated emperor, and immediately the emperor saw the knight, he shouted out in anger,

'What brought such a fit of rage on you, sir, that my esteemed seneschal is now lying here dead by your hand? You have incurred my extreme disfavour, and now you shall feel the full force of my imperial authority. You have dishonoured my court and my own reputation, and you shall pay for this great crime that has left my seneschal dead'.

'No, sire', cried the bold Heinrich von Kempten, 'grant me your mercy and your grace, for I ask you to hear me out before you decide whether I am guilty or innocent. If my impetuous behaviour has indeed deserved your enmity, then you can condemn me to death by your authority.'

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Müg aber ich erzeigen
daz niht sî diu schulde mîn,
sô ruochent mir genædic sîn
daz ir mir niht übel̄s tuont.
Durch den got der hiute erstuont
an disem ôsterlichem tage,^a
sô gunnet mir daz ich bejage
iuwer keisterlîche gunst.^b
220 Sît daz ir habent die vernunst^c
daz ir von art bescheiden sît,^d
sô êrent diese hôchgezît
an mir vil armen hiute,^e
lânt mich der werden liute
geniezen die man schouwet hie.
Kein schulde wart sô michel nie
dan hœre zuo genâden teil:
dur daz sô lâzent mich daz heil
hie vinden unde erwerben
230 daz ich niht müeze ersterben.
Der keiser übel̄ unde rôt
der rede im antwürte bôt^f
ûz eime grimmen herzen,
er sprach: ‘des tôdes smerzen
den hie mîn truhsæze treit,^g
lîd ich mit solher arebeit
daz ich niht muotes hân dar zuo
daz ich iu keine gnâde tuo
umb iuwer hôhe schulde.
240 Mîn keiserlîchiu hulde

muoz iemer sîn vor iu verspart.
Ir garnet ez, sam mir mîn bart,^h
daz mîn truhsæze tôt
lît von iu alsunder nôt.ⁱ
Der werde ritter Heinrich
verstuont wol bî dem eide sich
den der übel̄ keiser tete,
daz er benamen an der stete
daz leben müeste hân verlorn.
250 Des wart im alsô rehte zorn
daz er sich gerne wollte wern^j
und daz leben sîn genern^k
mit willecliches herzen ger,
wand er bekande wol, swaz er
bî dem barte sîn gehiez,^l
daz er daz allez stæte liez.^m
Dâ von sprach er: ‘nu merke ich wol
daz ich benamen sterben sol;ⁿ
nû ist zît daz ich mich wer
260 und daz leben mîn gener
al die wîle daz ich kan.’
Hie mit der ûzerwelte man
geswinde für den keiser spranc,
er greif in bî dem barte lanc,^o
und zuhte in über sînen tisch:^p
ez wære fleisch oder visch^q
daz man dâ für in hæte brâht,
daz wart gevellet in ein bâht;^r

^a *osterlîch* (adj) < *ostern* = ‘Easter’.

^b *gunst* (f) = ‘favour’.

^c *vernunst* (f) = ‘(good) sense, understanding’.

^d *bescheiden* (adj) = ‘prudent, discerning, wise’.

^e *armen* (adj) = here in dative case, qualifying the personal pronoun *mir*.

^f *bieten* (sv II) = ‘offer’.

^g *treit tragen* (sv) = ‘carry, bear’.

^h *garnen* = *gearnen* < *arnen* (wv) = ‘earn, harvest, deserve’.

ⁱ *alsunder* = *sunder*.

^j *wern* (wv) = ‘defend, restrain, hinder’.

^k *genern* (wv) = ‘save, keep alive’.

^l *geheizen* (sv VII) = ‘order, command’.

^m *stæte lassen* = ‘have something done’; *stæte machen* = ‘confirm’.

ⁿ *benamen* (adv) = *bî namen* = ‘in truth’.

^o *grîfen* (sv I) = ‘grasp, grip’.

^p *zugen* (wv) = ‘pull’.

^q *ez wære* = literally ‘were it’, meaning ‘whether (it was) ...’.

^r *bâht* (n) = ‘rubbish, refuse, heap’.

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But if I can show that this was not my fault, then I ask you to show mercy and refrain from doing me harm. By God who rose on this Easter Day, permit me to seek your majesty's favour. Since you have the capacity to be judicious, I ask you to honour this high feast day by showing mercy to an unfortunate and allow me to enjoy the fine company assembled here today. No fault can be so great that it cannot find mercy; allow me to redeem myself so that I do not have to suffer the punishment of death'.

But the wicked, red-haired emperor gave a reply that came from the depths of his grim heart:

'the pains of death that my seneschal has had to suffer here have caused me such distress that I am not minded to show any mercy for this great crime. By your actions you have forfeited the imperial favour for ever. By my beard, you shall pay for having killed my seneschal without cause'.¹

The worthy knight Heinrich realised from the oath that the evil emperor had sworn that he would certainly lose his life there and then. He became so enraged that he resolved to fight for his life with all his spirit, for he knew well that whatever the emperor had sworn by his beard, he would stop at nothing to do.

And so Heinrich said, 'I see that I must die, and so now it is time for me to fight for my life as long as I can'. With these words this excellent man threw himself on the emperor, seized him by the beard and pulled him up onto the table in front of him. Every dish that had been set there, whether meat or fish, was sent flying as he dragged the emperor across the board.

¹ The emperor's oath is almost word for word the same as that quoted above at line 16, except that here he uses *ir*, the polite form of the second person pronoun normally used within courtly society, as opposed to *du*, the familiar form that would have been used to address servants or menials.

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als er in bî dem barte dans, ^a
 270 daz kinne wart im und der flans ^b
 vil hâres dâ beroubet:
 sîn keiserlichez houbet
 wart sêre entschumphieret, ^c
 diu krône wol gezieret
 diu dar ûf gesetzet was,
 viel nider in den palas ^d
 und al sîn rîchiu zierheit.
 Er hæte in under sich geleit
 geswinde bî den zîten.
 280 er zuhte von der sîten
 ein mezzet wol gewetzet, ^e
 daz hæte er im gesetzet
 vil schiere an sîne kelen hin. ^f
 Mît der hant begunde er in
 vast umb den kragen wûrgen. ^g
 Er sprach: ‘nu lânt mich bûrgen ^h
 emphâhen unde sicherheit,
 daz iuwer gnâde mir bereit
 und iuwer hulde werde,
 290 ir muozent ûf der erde
 daz leben anders hân verlorn.
 Den eit den ir nu hânt gesworn,
 den velschet ob ir welt genesen,
 oder ez muoz iuwer ende wesen.’ ⁱ
 Sus lag er ûf im an der zît
 und roufte in sêre widerstrît
 bî sînem langen barte,
 er wurgte in alsô harte

daz er niht mohte sprechen.
 300 Die werden und die frechen
 fürsten alle ûf sprungen,
 si liefen unde drungen
 allgemeinlîchen dar
 dâ der keiser tôtgevar ^j
 lag under dem von Kempten:
 an kreften den erlempten
 hæstens an den stunden ^k
 von im vil gerne enbunden.
 Dô sprach der ritter Heinrich:
 310 ‘ist iemen der nu rüere mich, ^l
 sô muoz der keiser ligen tôt:
 dar nâch sô bringe ich den in nôt
 der mich zem êrsten grîfet an. ^m
 sît daz ich niht genesen kan,
 sô kumt der wirt ze freisen,
 ich stiche im ab den weisen ⁿ
 mit disem mezzet veste.
 Ouch müezen sîn die geste
 engelten die mich wellen slahen:
 320 ich giuze ir bluotes manegen trahen ^o
 ê daz ich müge verderben.
 Nu her! swer welle sterben,
 der kêre her und rüere mich!’
 dô trâtens alle hinderisch, ^p
 als in diu wâre schult gebôt.
 der keiser ouch mit maneger nôt
 vil sêre winken dâ began, ^q
 daz si giengen alhindan.

^a *dansen* (wv) = ‘pull, extend’.

^b *vians* (m) = ‘mouth’.

^c *en(t)schumphieren* (wv) = ‘defeat, humble’.

^d *vallen* (sv VII) = ‘fall’.

^e *wetzen* (wv) = ‘whet’.

^f *kêl(e)* (f) = ‘throat’.

^g *kragen* (m) = ‘collar, neck’.

^h *bürge* (m) = ‘surety, guarantor’.

ⁱ *wesen* (infinitive) = ‘be’.

^j *tôtgevar/hôtvar* (adj) = ‘deathly pale’.

^k *hæstens* = contraction of *hæten sî*.

^l *rüeren* (wv) = ‘touch’; the subjunctive form here denotes possibility.

^m *angrîfen* (sv I, with separable prefix) = ‘attack’.

ⁿ *weise* (m) = ‘orphan’ (here used figuratively)

^o *giezen* (sv II) = ‘pour’.

^p *hinderisch* (adv) = ‘back, away’.

^q *winken* (wv) = ‘wave, indicate with a movement of the hand’.

The imperial head suffered greatly in the process, for many hairs were ripped out from chin and cheeks, while the crown that had sat upon it fell to the palace floor along with all the rich ornaments. Heinrich quickly jumped on top of the emperor, drew a sharp knife from his side and held it to the emperor's throat; with his free hand he grabbed the emperor's neck and started to choke him. 'Now grant me security', Heinrich said, 'and give me assurance of your mercy and favour, or else I will put an end to your time on earth. Take back the oath you have sworn, or it will mean death for you'.

And so Heinrich was lying on top of the emperor, holding him tight by his beard and choking him so hard that he could not speak. The bolder among the princes had all jumped up, and now they all rushed forward to where the emperor (who by now was the colour of death) was lying underneath the knight of Kempten. They would have done anything to free him at once, but the knight Heinrich cried out:

'if anyone here so much as touches me, the emperor shall be the first to die, and then I will turn on whoever has attacked me. If I am to lose my life, then it will be the emperor who suffers for it, for I will part him from his crown with this sharp knife.¹ Anyone else who tries to kill me will have to pay for it, too, for I intend to spill the blood of many before I go down. Come on then! Anyone who wants to die can come up and try to strike me!'

At this, they all drew back; indeed, they had little choice but to do so, since the emperor was desperately signalling them to move away.

¹ The 'Orphan' was a particularly splendid jewel in the imperial crown, so called because it was thought to be unique. Here it functions *pars pro toto* to signify the emperor's crown and the authority and power that it represents. See Hubert Herkommer, 'Der Waise, *aller fürsten leitesterne*. Ein Beispiel mittelalterlicher Bedeutungslehre aus dem Bereich der Staatssymbolik, zugleich ein Beitrag zur Nachwirkung des Orients in der Literatur des Mittelalters', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 50 (1976), 44–59 and Gunther Wolf, 'Der Waise: Bemerkungen zum Leitstein der Wiener Reichskrone', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 41 (1985), 39–65.

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Daz wart getân und diz geschach.
 330 zuo dem keiser aber sprach
 der unverzagte Heinrich:
 'lânt hie niht lange ligen mich,
 ob ir daz leben wellent hân:
 mir werde sicherheit getân
 daz ich genese, ich lâze iuch leben.
 Wirt mir gewisheit nicht gegeben
 umb den lîp, est iuwer tôt!' ^a
 hie mite ûf sîne vinger bôt
 der keiser unde lobte sâ
 340 bî keiserlichen êren dâ,
 daz er in lieze bî der stunt
 von dannen kêren wol gesunt. ^b
 Nu daz diu sicherheit ergie,
 den keiser Otten er dô lie
 geswinde von im ufe stân,
 er hæte im schiere dâ verlân
 den bart ûz sînen handen.
 Und als er ûf gestanden
 was von dem esteriche wider,
 350 dô gieng er aber sitzen nider
 ûf sînen stuol von rîcher art;
 daz hâr begunde er und den bart
 streichen unde sprach alsô ^c
 zu dem von Kempten aber dô:
 'ich hân iu sicherheit gegeben
 daz ich iu lîp unde leben
 unverderbet lâze. ^d
 Nu strîchent iuwer strâze
 alsô daz ir mich iemer

360 vermîdet, unde ich niemer
 mit mînen ougen iuch gesehe.
 Ich prüeve daz wol unde spehe
 daz ir zeim ingesinde mir
 ze swære sît. Joch habent ir
 vil harte an mir gunfuoget ^e
 swer blicket unde luoget ^f
 an mînen bart, der kiuset wol ^g
 daz ich iemer gerne sol
 iuwer heimlîch enbern.
 370 Mîr muoz ein ander meister schern ^h
 dann ir, daz wizzent âne spot,
 mîn bart muoz iemer, sam mir got,
 iuwer scharsach mîden: ⁱ
 ez kan unsanfte snîden
 hût unde hâr den kûnegen abe.
 Vil wol ich des emphunden habe
 daz ir ein ûbel scherer sît. ^j
 ir sult bî dirre tageszît
 uns rûmen hof unde lant.'
 380 Sus nam der ritter alzehant
 zuo des keisers mannen
 urloup und îlte dannen.
 Er kêrte gegen Swâben wider
 und lie sich dâ ze lande nider
 ûf ein rîchez lêhengelt. ^k
 Acker, wisen unde velt ^l
 het er ze Kempten, als ich las:
 dar ûf er sich, wande er was
 ein dienstman der selben stift. ^m

^a *est* = contraction of *ez ist*.

^b *kêren* (wv) = 'turn (away), depart, leave'.

^c *streichen* (wv II) = 'stroke, smooth, touch'.

^d *verderben* (sv IV) = 'damage, spoil'.

^e *unfuogen* (wv) = 'make unseemly, coarse'.

^f *luogen* (wv) = 'look'.

^g *kiesen* (sv II) = (i) 'choose, elect, select' (ii) 'discern, observe'.

^h *schern* (sv IV) = 'shear, cut'.

ⁱ *scharsahs* (n) = 'scissors, knife for trimming hair'.

^j *scherer* (m) = 'cutter, shearer', i.e. 'barber'.

^k *lêhengelt* (n) = 'fief, money fief'.

^l *acker* (m) = 'cultivated field'; *wise* (f) = 'meadow';

^m *stift* (f) = 'religious foundation', e.g. a monastery or collegiate church < *stiften* (wv) 'endow'.

It was done as the emperor had commanded, but then Heinrich said to him,

‘do not let me lie here for too long if you want to remain alive: if I receive assurance of my safety, I will let you live; but if I do not get your word on this, it will mean your own death’.

Thereupon the emperor raised his fingers to promise on his honour that Heinrich should be allowed to leave without harm there and then. When he had received the assurance, Heinrich quickly let go of the emperor’s beard and allowed him to stand up again. The emperor got up from the floor and walked over to sit down on his sumptuous throne, where he began to smooth down his hair and beard. To the knight of Kempten he said,

‘I have given you my word that I will spare you life and limb. Now be gone from here and stay away, for I never wish to see you again. You are far too much trouble for my court, for you have treated me with disgrace. Anyone who looks at my beard will understand that I do not want you in my presence any longer. By God, in future I want that blade of yours kept away from my beard, for it cuts off skin and hair far too roughly for a king’s taste; I have learned only too well what a vile barber you are. This very day you must leave this court and this land’.¹

And so the knight at once took leave of the emperor’s vassals and rode away in haste. Heinrich returned to Swabia, and took up residence on a rich fief in the country, for he held tillages, meadows and fields at Kempten as a vassal of the abbey there, as I have read.² The story

¹ Since Heinrich goes back to Swabia, it is evident that the *lant* (‘land, country’) which the emperor tells him to leave must refer to Franconia, i.e. the area where the court is being held, rather than Germany as a whole.

² Kempten was a town in south-eastern Swabia, the seat of a wealthy Benedictine abbey, founded in 752.

The Wicked Emperor and the Knight in the Bathub

390 Uns seit von im diu wære schrift ^a
daz er sich schône gar betruoc, ^b
wande er hæte gülte gnuoc ^c
und was an êren offenbâr.
Dar nâch wol über zehen jâr
quam es von geschichte alsô
daz der keiser Otte dô
eins grôzen urliuiges pflac ^d
und enhalp des gebirges lac ^e
vor einer stat vil wünnelich.
400 Er und die sîne hæten sich ^f
dar ûf geflizzen manege zît, ^g
daz si der veste gæben strît
mit steinen und mit phîlen. ^h
Doch was er bî den wîlen
an liuten alsô nôthafft
daz er nâch tiutscher ritterschaft
her zû begunde senden.
Er hiez in allen enden
den herren künden unde sagen: ⁱ
410 swer iht hæte bî den tagen
ze lêhen von dem rîche,
daz im der snelliclîche
ze helfe quæme bî der stunt.
Dâ bî tet er den fürsten kunt: ^j
swer im wære diensthaft ^k
und lêhen unde manschaft
hæte emphanen under in,
daz er balde kêrte hin
ze Pülle bî den zîten ^l

420 und im dâ hülfe strîten. ^m
Swer des niht entæte,
daz er sîn lêhen hæte
verwürket unde ez solte lân.
Nu daz diu botschaft getân ⁿ
wart in elliu tiutschiu lant
dô wart ze Kempten gesant
dem abbet ouch ein bote sâ, ^o
der im diu mære seite dâ. ^p
Dô der fürste lobesam
430 des keisers botschaft vernam,
dô wart er ûf die vart bereit;
ouch wurden schiere, sô man seit,
al sîne dienstman besant
und ûf die reise dô gemant
bî triuwen und bî eiden.
Den ritter wol bescheiden
vom Kempten liez er für sich komen,
er sprach: 'ir hânt daz wol vernomen,
daz der keiser hât gesant
440 nâch liuten her in tiutschiu lant,
und ich der fürsten einer bin
der im ze helfe komen hin
über daz gebirge sol.
Dar zuo bedarf ich iuwer wol ^q
und iuwer dienstliute:
die man ich alle hiute, ^r
und iuch ze vorderst, daz ir vart
und die reise niht enspart
diu mir und iu geboten ist.

^a *seit* = *saget*.

^b *sich betragen* (sv VI) = 'occupy oneself (with), 'earn one's living'.

^c *gülte* (f) < *gelten* (sv IV) = 'be valid, have value', in this case = 'income, financial resources'.

^d *urliuige* (n) = 'dispute, quarrel, feud, war'.

^e *enhalp* = *enethalp* (preposition) 'beyond'; *gebirge* (n) 'mountains, mountain range' < *berc* (m) 'mountain'.
The prefix *ge-* can be used with nouns in a collective sense.

^f *die sîne*: one would expect *die sînen*. See Walshe, *A Middle High German Reader*, §20.

^g *vlîzen* (sv II) = 'strive, make an effort, be concerned about'. Related to *vlîz* (m) 'zeal, eagerness'. ≠ *vliezen* 'flow'.

^h *pfîl* (m) = 'arrow'.

ⁱ *künden* (wv) = 'make known, announce, inform'.

^j *kunt tuon* = 'make known, announce'.

^k *diensthaft* (adj) = 'owing (feudal) service'.

^l *Pülle* = Apulia (in Italian Puglia), region in south-eastern Italy.

^m *hülfe* < *helfen* (sv III).

ⁿ *botschaft* (f) = 'embassy, message'.

^o *abbet* (m) = 'abbot'.

^p *seite* = *sagete*.

^q *wol* (n) here is noun with meaning 'goodwill'.

^r *man* < *manen*.

reports that he lived well and honourably there, for he was wealthy enough and was well regarded.

More than ten years passed, when news came that Emperor Otto was undertaking a great campaign, and was camped before a great city beyond the Alps.¹ He and his troops had already spent a long time besieging it, assaulting the walls with stones and arrows. Yet by this time he was running so short of men that he needed reinforcements from the knights of Germany, and so now he sent messages to all the princes of the land to say that anyone who held a fief from the emperor should come to his aid as quickly as possible: whoever owed him service, or had done homage for a fief, was to make his way to Apulia with all speed so that he might come to his assistance in the fighting. Anyone who failed to do his duty would forfeit his fiefs and have to surrender them.²

Now as this order was being sent throughout Germany, one of the messengers came to bring the news to the abbot of Kempten. When the worthy abbot heard the emperor's command he immediately began to make preparations for the journey. He sent word to his vassals that they should join him in the campaign, according to the loyalty that they had sworn to him. The abbot also summoned the knight of Kempten, and said to him:

'You have certainly heard that the emperor has sent to Germany for reinforcements, and that as a prince I am obliged to travel over the mountains to go to his assistance. In this I will require the service of yourself and your own vassals: so I am giving notice now — to you above all — that you must join the expedition that we have been commanded to undertake. You should begin your preparations for the journey straight away.'

¹ The text refers only to *gebirge* 'mountains', but it becomes clear later that this must relate to the main mountain range that separated Italy from Germany.

² In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the Holy Roman emperors relied especially on troops provided by the German bishops and abbots, who often accompanied them on campaign in person. See, for example, Jan-Peter Stöckel, 'Reichsbischöfe und Reichsheerfahrt unter Friedrich I. Barbarossa', in *Kaiser Friedrich Barbarossa: Landesausbau — Aspekte seiner Politik — Wirkung*, ed. by Evamaria Engel and Bernhard Töpfer (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1994), pp. 63–79.

The Wicked Emperor and the Knight in the Bathub

450 dâ von sult ir an dirre frist
 werden ûf die vart bereit.⁷
 ‘Ach herre, waz hânt ir geseit!’^a
 sprach von Kempten Heinrich:
 ‘nu wizzent ir doch wol daz ich
 für den keiser niht getar^b
 ze hove komen, wande ich gar
 verwürket sîne hulde hân.^c
 Ir sult der reise mich erlân
 iemer durch den dienest mîn.
 460 der keiser hât die hulde sîn
 vil gar von mir geleitet
 und über mich gespreitet^d
 sîner ungenâden büene.^e
 Ich hân erzogen zwêne süene,
 die sende ich, herre, mit iu dar;
 ê daz ich alters eine var,
 sô füerent ir si beide samt:
 gezieret wol ûf strîtes amt^f
 kêrent si mit iu dâ hin.’
 470 ‘Nein’, sprach der abbet, ‘ich enbin
 des muotes niht daz ich ir ger
 und iuwer durch si beide enber,
 wand ir mir nützer eine sît.
 mîn trôst und al mîn êre lît
 an iu bî disen zîten:
 jâ kunnet ir ze strîten
 gerâten ûzer mâzen wol,
 und swaz man hôher dinge sol
 ze hove schicken alle wege,
 480 daz mac verrihten iuwer phlege
 vil baz dann anders iemen:
 sô nütze enist mir niemen
 an dirre hineverte als ir.^g
 Dâ von sô bite ich daz ir mir

rât mit wîser lêre gebent.
 Ist daz ir dâ wider strebent
 und ir mir dienstes abe gânt,
 swaz ir von mir ze lêhen hânt,
 weizgot daz lîhe ich anderswar,
 490 dâ manz verdienen wol getar.’
 ‘Entriuwen’, sprach der ritter dô,
 ‘und ist der rede denne alsô
 daz ir mîn lêhen lîhent hin,
 ob ich iu niht gehôrsam bin,
 ich var ê mit iu, wizze Crist,
 swie mir diu reise an dirre frist
 ze grôzen sorgen sî gewant.
 Ê daz ich lâze ûz mîner hant
 mîn lêhen und mîn êre,
 500 ê rîte ich unde kêre
 mit iu benamen in den tôt.
 Mîn helfe sol ze rehter nôt
 iu bereit von schulden sîn,
 wande ir sît der herre mîn,
 den ich dienstes muoz gewern;^h
 sît ir sîn niht welt enbern,
 sô werde erfüllet iuwer muot.
 Swaz mir der keiser übels tuot,
 daz will ich gerne dulden,
 510 durch daz ich iu ze hulden
 gedienen müge an dirre vart.’
 Hie mite ûf sîne reise wartⁱ
 bereit der ellenthafte man,
 er fuor mit sîme herren dan
 über daz gebirge enwec.
 Er was sô küene und ouch sô quec^j
 daz er durch vorhte wênic liez:
 er tet swaz in sîn herre hiez
 und wart im undertænic gar.

^a *geseit* (past participle) = *gesaget*.

^b *geturren* (irreg) = ‘dare’.

^c *verwûrken/verwirken* (irreg) = ‘forfeit’, lose something (or the right to it) through one’s own fault.

^d *spreiten* (wv) = ‘spread, cover’.

^e *büene* (f) = ‘roof, cover’ — here seems to be used in figurative sense.

^f *zieren* (wv) = ‘decorate, cover (with)’.

^g *hineverte* (f) = ‘expedition’.

^h *gewern* (wv) = ‘grant, confer, bestow’.

ⁱ *wart* < *werden* (sv III).

^j *quec* (adj) = ‘alive, lively, fresh’. Cf. the biblical sense of English ‘the quick and the dead’.

'Oh, my lord', said Heinrich von Kempten, 'you know full well that I dare not go to the court, for I have forfeited the emperor's goodwill. I ask you to release me from my obligation to take part in this campaign; the emperor's wrath is so great that it is like a great wall standing between me and his favour. I have raised two sons, my lords, and I will gladly send them with you. Take both of them rather than me on my own: I will see that they join you fully equipped for the campaign'.

'No', said the abbot, 'I am not disposed to take them if it means I have to do without you, for you are of far greater use to me than they are. In this campaign you shall be crucial to my strength and my honour: you can give the best advice in all matters relating to war; and if it becomes necessary to carry out an important mission at court, you can carry it out better than anyone else. No-one will be as useful to me on this expedition as you, so I ask you to assist me with your wise counsel. But if you are not disposed to do this, and refuse to render service to me, then God knows that anything you hold from me now, I shall grant out to others who are more deserving'.

'On my honour', said the knight, 'if this means that you intend to confiscate my fief if I do not obey, then, by Christ, I will go with you, even though this journey gives me every reason to worry. Before I surrender my fief and my honour, I will ride with you, even if it means that I go to my death. You shall be able to count on my assistance when you need it, for you are my lord, and I cannot refuse you my service. Since you cannot do without it, I will do your bidding, and anything that the emperor may do to me, I will accept it because of my obligation to serve you on this expedition'.

And so the courageous man made his preparations for the expedition, and then travelled over the mountains with his lord. He was so full of boldness and energy that there was no task he was afraid to undertake: he did what his lord commanded and obeyed him in all things.

The Wicked Emperor and the Knight in the Bathub

520	Si wâren beide schiere dar für die selben stat gezoget dâ der roemische voget ^a lac mit sîme her vil starc. Von Kempten Heinrich allez barc ^b sich vor des keisers angesiht und quam für in ze liehte niht, wand er in durch den alten haz und durch die schulde sîn entsaz. ^c Sô flôch in der vil küene man: ^d	umb die stat wolt er mit in teidingen unde kôsen. ^k Dâ von die triuwelôsen burgære hæten ûf geleit ^l mit parât und mit kûndekeit, daz sîn ze tôde slüegen; ^m si wolten gerne füegen, ⁿ
530	ein lützel von dem her hin dan het er die hütten sîn geslagen. ^e Ein bat was im dar in getragen an eime tage, als ich ez las, wand im nâch sîner verte was gemaches durft: dô badet er ^f in eime zuber der im her ^g was von eime dorfe brâht. ^h Und dô der ritter wol bedâht was gesezzen in daz bat, dô sach er komen ûz der stat ein teil der burgære, und ouch den keiser mære ⁱ stapfen gezen in dort hin: ^j	sô er mit in sprâchen wolde, daz man in slahen solde und morden âne widersagen. Nu hæte schiere sich getragen diu zît alsô, des bin ich wer, ^o daz er geriten quam dort her, gewæfens îtel unde bar. ^p Ein tougenlichiu harmschar ^q was im ze lâge dâ geleit, dar în er ungewarnet reit und wart mit frechen handen eins strîtes dâ bestanden, wan diu triuwelôse diet, diu tougen sînen schaden riet, ^r diu quam ûf in geriuschet dar mit blôzen swerten lichtgevar und wolte im briuwen ungemach. ^s
540		

^a *roemische vogt* or *voget von Rôme* (m), literally 'advocate of Rome', a title applied to the Holy Roman emperor.

^b *bergen* (sv IV) = 'hide'.

^c *entsîzen* (sv V) + genitive case = 'avoid, stay away from'.

^d *vliehen* (sv II) = 'flee'.

^e *hütte* (f) = 'hut, pavilion, tent'.

^f *badet er* = *badete er* (contraction with elision of unstressed syllable); *durft* (adj) with dative subject + genitive = 'in need of' < *durft* (f) = 'need, requirement', e.g. *mir ist durft* + genitive = 'I require, I have need of'.

^g *zuber* (m) = 'tub'.

^h *brâht* (here) = *gebrâht* (past participle) < *bringen*.

ⁱ *mære* (adj) = 'renowned' ≠ *mære* 'story' (n).

^j *stapfen* (wv) = 'step, march'.

^k *teidingen* = *tagedingen* (wv) = 'treat with, confer'; *kôsen* (wv) = 'talk', cf. Fr. *causer*.

^l *ûf legen* = (sv with separable prefix) = 'plan, put together, think up, determine (on)'.

^m *sîn* = contraction of *sî in*.

ⁿ *vüegen* (wv) = 'bring about'.

^o *des bin ich wer* = 'I am witness to this, it is true'.

^p *îtel* (adj) = 'empty, useless'.

^q *tougenlich* (adj) = secret; *harmschar* (f) = 'evil deed, harm, damage, punishment'.

^r *tougen* (adv) 'secretly'; *râten* (sv VII).

^s *briuwen* (v) = 'brew, (figurative) cause'.

Soon they arrived at the city where the Roman emperor was encamped with his army. Heinrich von Kempten kept himself out of the emperor's sight and away from his presence, wishing to avoid him because of his own offence and the enmity that this had caused many years before. This the brave man did by pitching his tent some distance from the rest of the army.

One day (as I have read) he wished to take his ease after his long journey, and so he decided to take a bath, ordering a tub to be brought for him from a village nearby. And so as the knight was sitting there in his bath, he spied a group of burgesses leaving the city, while from the opposite direction the illustrious emperor was riding out to meet them. The emperor had come to parley and treat about the fate of the city, but the faithless burgesses were cunningly plotting to kill him: they only wanted to negotiate with the emperor so that they might gain the opportunity to take him by surprise and murder him unopposed. And so the time had come, as I can testify, that the emperor was riding towards them, unarmed and without any protection.¹ Riding into the trap that had been prepared for him, he was seized by impudent hands, for the faithless rabble that had plotted his demise now came rushing towards him, brandishing bright swords and resolved to do him harm.

¹ In an age when the importance of lords was reflected in the size of their retinues, it is highly unlikely that the emperor would have ventured close to the enemy without some retainers and servants in attendance. However, this implausible detail is necessary to the way that the story develops.

The Wicked Emperor and the Knight in the Bathub

Und dô der ritter dez ersach
 von Kempften in dem bade dort,
 570 daz man dô mein unde mort
 alsus begunde briuwen,
 und daz man an den triuwen ^a
 den keiser Otten wolte slahen,
 dô liez er baden unde twahen
 vil gar belîben under wegen: ^b
 reht als ein ûzerwelter degen
 sprang er uz dem zuber tief,
 ze sîme schilte er balde lief, ^c
 der hieng an einer wende, ^d
 580 den nam er zuo der hende
 unde ein swert gar ûzerwelt.
 Dâ mite quam der blôze helt
 geloufen zuo dem keiser hin.
 Von den burgæren lôste er in
 und werthe in alsô nacket:
 zerhouwen und zerhacket
 wart von im der vînde gnuoc. ^e
 Der liute er vil ze tôde sluoc
 die den keiser wolten slahen,
 590 er gôz ir bluotes manegen trahen
 mit ellenthafter hende.
 Ze bitterlîch em ende ^f
 mit starken slegen er si treip, ^g
 und swaz ir lebendic beleip,
 die mahte er alle flûhtec.
 Und dô der ritter zûhtec
 den keiser hæte enbunden,
 dô lief er an den stunden
 nacket in daz bat hin wider.
 600 Dar în gesaz er drâte nider, ^h
 als ob er umbe die geschicht ⁱ

weste in dirre werlte niht,
 und badet als er tet dô vor.
 Der keiser ûf der flûhte spor ^j
 quam gerennet in daz her.
 Wer in mit manlicher wer
 hæte erlœset bî der stunt,
 daz was im harte cleine kunt, ^k
 wand er sîn niht erkande.
 610 Für sîn gezelt er rande,
 dô erbeizte er balde nider ^l
 und saz ûf sîn gestüele wider ^m
 vil zorniclîchen bî der zît.
 Die fürsten quâmen alle sît
 für in gedrungen schiere dar.
 Er sprach: 'ir herren, nement war
 wie nâch ich was verrâten:
 wan daz mir helfe tâten
 zwô ritterlîche hende schîn,
 620 sô müeste ich gar verderbet sîn
 und den lîp verlorn hân.
 Und weste ich wer mir kunt getân ⁿ
 het alsô baltlichen trôst,
 daz er mich nacket hât erlôst,
 ich wolde im lîhen unde geben.
 Den lîp han ich und daz leben
 von sîner helfe stiure:
 nie ritter wart sô tiure
 noch sô frech ân allen spot.
 630 Erkennet ieman in, durch got,
 der bringe in für mîn ougen her
 ich bin des offenlichen wer
 daz er emphâhet rîchen solt.
 Mîn herze ist im in triuwen holt
 und muoz im iemer gûnstic wesen.

^a *an den triuwen* = *in triuwen* 'in truth, indeed'.

^b *under wegen (blîben)* = 'abandon, leave'

^c *ze sîme* = contraction of *ze sînem*.

^d *wende* < *wande* (f) = 'wall'.

^e *gnuoc* = *genuoc*. Often the *ge-* prefix is reduced to *g-*, as in many modern southern German dialects.

^f *em* = *einem*.

^g *trîben* (sv I); *belîben* (sv I).

^h *gesitzen* (sv V) = sit down; *drâte* (adv) = quickly.

ⁱ *geschichte* (f) = 'that which had happened'.

^j *spor* (n) = 'trace, track'.

^k *kunt* (adj) = known (to)'.
^l *erbeizen* (wv) = 'dismount, disembark'.

^m *gestüele* (n) = 'chair, throne'.

ⁿ *emphweste ich* (subjunctive form) = 'if I knew'; *kunt tuon* = 'make known'.

From where he was sitting in his bath, the knight of Kempton saw that violence was about to be done. Fearing that Emperor Otto would be murdered, he abandoned all thoughts of bathing: like the excellent warrior that he was, he sprang out of the tub and seized his good sword and a shield that was hanging on his pavilion. With no other gear than this he ran to the place where the emperor was under attack. Stabbing and hacking at the enemy, the naked knight cut his way through to the emperor and fought him free, killing or wounding many of those who were trying to murder the sovereign. Raining bitter blows upon them, he drove them back and put to flight the few who remained alive. But when this noble knight was sure that the emperor was safe, he ran, still naked, back to his encampment; he jumped back into his tub and sat there as if he knew nothing of the events that had occurred in the meantime, and went on bathing just as he had been doing before.

The emperor fled, running back to where the army was encamped. He had no idea who had freed him with such great courage, for he had not recognised the man. He hurried back to his own pavilion, and sat down on his throne, enraged because of what had happened.

When the princes appeared, pressing all around him, he said,

‘My lords, I wish you to hear that I was betrayed today: if it had not been for the help of a single knight, I would have been in danger of losing my life. If I knew who it was that came to my aid and fought — naked — to save me, I would bestow rich rewards on him, for I owe him life and limb: I can say in all honesty that there was never a knight so bold or so estimable in his deeds. If anyone knows who he is, then by God, he should bring him before me, for I proclaim that this man should be richly rewarded. I am so indebted to him that he deserves my eternal favour, for there is not such an outstanding knight to be found in all the world’.

The Wicked Emperor and the Knight in the Bathub

Kein ritter sô gar uzerlesen
lebt weder hie noch anderswâ.
Nu stuonden sumelîche dâ
die wol westen under in
640 daz Heinrich deme keiser
geholfen hæte bî der zît.
Die sprâchen alle widerstrît:
‘wir wîzzen, herre, wol den helt
der iuwer leben ûzerwelt
von dem tôde erlœset hât.
Nu vert ez leider unde stât
umb in alsô bî dirre zît
daz iuwer ungenâde lît
ze vaste ûf sînem rûcke.
650 Er hât daz ungelücke^a
daz er dur sîne schulde
vermîdet iuwer hulde.
Wûrd im diu sælde nû getân
daz er die möhte wider hân,
wir liezen, herre, iuch in gesehen.’
Der keiser dô begunde jehen:
‘hæt er den vater mîn erslagen,
ich lieze in mîne gunst bejagen
und tæte im mîne gnâde schîn;
660 daz nîm ich ûf die triuwe mîn
und ûf mîn êre keiserlich.’
Dô war der ritter Heinrich
von Kempten im genennet.
Der keiser wîte erkennet
sprach dâ wider sâ zehant:
‘und ist er kômen in diz lant,
daz weiz ich gerne sunder wân,
war hæte ouch anders diz getân

daz er nacket hiute streit?
670 Wand er ouch die getürstekeit^b
truog in sîme herzen hôch
daz er bî dem barte zôch
einen keiser über tisch.
Sîn muot ist frevel und frisch,
des enkilt er niemer;^c
mîn helfe muoz in iemer
genædeclîchen decken.
Doch will ich in erschrecken
und übellîche emphâhen.’
680 Dô hiez er balde gâhen
und in ze hove bringen;
mit zorniclichen dîngen
wart er für in gefüeret hin.
Seht dô gebârte er wider in
als er gehaz in wære.
‘Nu sagent’, sprach der mære
keiser, ‘wie getorstent ir
ie gestrîchen her ze mir
oder iemer für mîn ougen kômen?’
690 Nu habent ir doch wol vernomen
war umbe ich iuwer vîent wart:
ir sît ez doch der mir den bart
âne scharsach hât geschorn,
und iuwer grimmeclîcher zorn
vil hâres in beroubet hât,
daz er noch âne locke stât,
daz hât gefrumet iuwer hant.
Daz ir getorstent in diz lant
ie kômen, dar an wirt wol schîn^d
700 daz ir hôchvertic wellet sîn
und übermuotes künnet phlegen.’

^a *ungelücke* (n) = ‘misfortune, bad luck’.

^b *getürstekeit* (f) = abstract noun < *geturren*.

^c *enkilt* is an unusual form; most probably it is meant as 3rd person present singular of *engelten* (sv IV) = ‘pay for something’.

^d *schîn werden* = ‘to become apparent, come to light’.

Alan V. Murray

Some of those standing there knew well that it was Heinrich who had come to the emperor's aid, and they immediately replied:

'Sire, we know the valiant man who saved your illustrious majesty from death. He is greatly weighed down by your ill will, since he once committed an act that incurred your displeasure. If you were willing to restore him to favour, sire, we would gladly bring him before you'.

The emperor said,

'Even if he had killed my own father, I would show him mercy and allow him back into my favour. This I promise on my honour as emperor'.

Then he was told that the knight was Heinrich von Kempten. Straight away the emperor replied,

'If he is really here in this country, then I know it must be him. Who else would have charged into battle naked, as he did today? Who else had the daring to drag an emperor over a table by his beard? He is bold and brazen in spirit, but he should not have to suffer for it. From now on he shall always be assured of my favour, although first I have a mind to frighten him with a hostile reception'.

He ordered that Heinrich should be fetched straight away, and the knight was brought before him with all signs of hostility. The emperor acted as if he were still full of hatred:

'Now tell me', said the emperor, 'how you have the effrontery to show yourself to me again? You know full well why I am your enemy: it was you, was it not, who cut my beard without shears; it was your terrible rage that tore out so many hairs; and it is because of you that my beard is in the sorry state it is now. That you dare to come to this land after all that only shows your arrogance and insolence'.

The Wicked Emperor and the Knight in the Bathub

‘Genâde, herre!’ sprach der degen,
 ‘ich quam betwungenlîchen her.
 Dâ von sô bite ich unde ger
 daz ir verkieset die getât.
 Mîn herre, ein fürste der hie stât,
 bî sîner hulde mir gebôt,
 daz ich durch keiner slahte nôt
 liez ich enfüere her mit ime.
 710 Ich setze daz hiut unde nime
 ûf alle mîne sælekeit,
 daz ich die vart ungerne reit,
 wan daz ich muoste, sam mir got,
 erfüllen gar sîn hôch gebot.
 Wær ich niht ûz mit ime komen,
 mîn lêhen hæet er mir benomen,
 wære ich an den stunden
 an der verte erwunden.’
 Der keiser lachen dô began:
 720 er sprach: ‘ir ûzerwerlter man,
 ir sît unschuldic, høre ich wol:
 dâ von ich gerne lâzen sol
 gegen iu den zorn mîn.
 Mir und gote sult ir sîn
 wol tûsent warbe willekomen. ^a
 Ir hânt mir swærer vil genomen ^b
 und daz leben mîn genert.
 Den lîp müeste ich hân verzert ^c
 wan iuwer helfe, sælic man!’
 730 Sus sprang er ûf und lief in an
 und kuste im ougen unde lide, ^d
 ein suone lûter unde ein fride
 wart gemachet under in,
 ir zweier vîntschafft was dâhin,
 wan der keiser hôchgeborn
 und sîn grimmeclicher zorn
 was dem ritter niht gevêch. ^e
 Ein gelt gab er im unde lêch ^f
 daz jâres galt zweihundert marc, ^g
 740 sîn manheit frevel unde starc
 brâht in in hôhen rîchtuom
 unde in ganzer wurde ruom,
 daz man sîn noch gedenket wol.
 Dar umbe ein ieslîch ritter sol
 gerne sîn des muotes quec,
 werf alle zageheit enwec
 und ûebe sînes lîbes kraft.
 Wan manheit unde ritterschafft
 diu zwei diu tiurent sêre:
 750 si bringent lob und êre
 noch einem iegelichen man
 der si wol gehalten kann
 unde in beiden mag geleben.
 Hie sol diz mære ein ende geben
 und dirre kurzen rede werc,
 daz ich dur den von Tiersberc
 in rîme hân gerihtet
 unde in tiutsch getihtet
 von latîne, als er mich bat.
 760 Ze Strâzburc in der guoten stat, ^h
 dâ er inne zuo dem tuome ⁱ
 ist prôbest unde ein bluome ^j
 dâ schînet maneger êren.
 Got welle im sælde mêren,
 wand er sô vil der tugende hât.
 Von Wirzeburc ich Cuonrât
 muoz im iemer heiles biten.
 Er hât der êren strît gestriten
 mit gerne gebender hende.
 770 Hie hât daz buoch ein ende.

^a *tûsent warp/warbe* = ‘a thousand times’.

^b *swærer* seems to be unusual plural form of *swære* (f) = ‘burden, care, sorrow’.

^c *verzern* (wv) = ‘use up, consume, destroy’.

^d The expression *ougen unde liden* is unusual; *ouge* (n) = ‘eye’ and *lit* (n), plural *lide* = ‘limb’.

^e *gevêch* (adj) = ‘hostile (towards)’.

^f *lêch* (n) = *lêhen* ‘fief’.

^g *jâres* (n) in this case, a genitive form of the noun, functioning as an adverb; sense is probably ‘in the course of a year, every year, per annum’.

^h *Strâzburc* = Strasbourg.

ⁱ *tuom* (m) = ‘cathedral’.

^j *prôbest* (m) = ‘provost’.

‘Mercy, sire!’, cried the knight. ‘I only came here under compulsion, and I beseech you to forgive that deed of mine. For it was my own lord — one of the princes standing here — who ordered that nothing should prevent me from accompanying him. I swear on my own salvation that I made the journey against my will, for I had no choice — as God is my witness — but to obey my lord’s command. He would have deprived me of my fief if I had failed to join him on this expedition’.

The emperor burst out laughing, and said,

‘You excellent man, you are blameless, and I am happy to give up the hatred that I have had for you. You have earned the gratitude of God and the emperor a thousand times over. You have preserved me from danger, for my life would have been lost if it had not been for your help, you fortunate man’.

Springing up, the emperor went over to him and kissed him on eyes and forehead. Thus peace and reconciliation were restored between the two, for their ancient enmity was dissolved now that the high-born emperor had given up the terrible hatred he had once had for the knight. He made Heinrich a gift of money, and bestowed on him a fief worth two hundred marks a year.¹ Thus the knight’s boldness and courage brought him great wealth and such renown that he is still remembered today.

This example shows that every knight should be keen to act with courage, cast aside all thoughts of cowardice, and fight with all of the strength in his body, for valour and chivalry together confer distinction: they bring praise and honour to every knight who is able to live by their code.

That is how the story ends, and it also concludes the account that I have translated from Latin into German and made into rhyme at the request of the lord of Tiersberg. In the fine city of Strasbourg he is provost of the cathedral and an ornament of honour.² May God grant him the happiness that his many virtues deserve. I, Konrad von Würzburg, shall always pray for his salvation. He has striven to attain honour, and has always showed great generosity. With these words my book is ended.

¹ The mark was the standard money of account in Germany, worth 144 pence. To obtain a sense of the value of the fief bestowed on Heinrich, it can be adduced that in later twelfth-century Germany one mark per month was regarded as a standard amount necessary to support a serving knight on campaign: Alan V. Murray, ‘Money and Logistics in the Armies of the First Crusade: Coinage, Bullion, Service and Supply, 1096-99’, in *Logistics of Warfare in the Age of the Crusades*, ed. by John Pryor (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 229-49, and Murray, ‘Finance and Logistics of the Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa’, in *In Laudem Hierosolymitani: Studies in Crusades and Medieval Culture in Honour of Benjamin Z. Kedar*, ed. by Iris Shagrir, Ronnie Ellenblum and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 357-67.

² Strasbourg in Alsace was part of the kingdom of Germany and a German-speaking city in the Middle Ages.