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

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

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Prologue

1. Ki petit semme petit quelt, HE WHO SOWS little harvests little,
2. Et qui auques requeillir velt, and whoever hopes for a fine harvest
3. En tel liu sa semence espande should spread his seed
4. Que fruit a .c. doubles li rande; where it will grow two-hundredfold.
5. Car en terre qui riens ne valt, Because in worthless soil
6. Bone semence seche et faut. even good seed will dry and spoil.
7. Crestïens semme et fait semence Chrétien sows the seed of a tale
8. D’un romans que il encomence, and sows it in such good soil
9. Et si le seme en si bon leu that its greatness is ensured;
10. Qu’il ne peut [estre] sanz grant preu, for he does it for the best man
11. Qui soit en l’empire de Rome. in all the Roman Empire.
12. C’est li quens Phelipes de Flandres, He is the count, Philippe of Flanders,
13. Qui valt mix ne fist Alixandres, who is greater even than Alexander,
14. Cil que l’en dist qui tant fu buens. the man about whom such great is told.
15. Mais je proverai que li quens But I will show that the count
16. Valt mix que il ne fist assez, is a far greater man than he
17. Car cil ot en lui amassez because Alexander had
18. Toz les visces et toz les maus all the vices and evils
19. Dont li quens est sans enda and sows it in such good soil
20. Li quens est teus que il n’escoute that the count is free from.
21. Li quens est teus que il n’escoute The count is such a man that he listens
22. Vilaïn gap ne parole estoute, to no senseless jokes, nor haughty words
23. Et s’il ot mesdire d’autrui, and if he hears others slandered
24. Quels que il soit, ce poise lui. suffers for them, whoever they may be.
25. Li quens aime droite justise The count believes in firm justice
26. Et loiauté et Sainte Eglise loyalty to the Holy Church
27. Et toute vilonnie het; and hates all vile acts.
28. S’est plus larges que l’en ne set, He is more generous than one could imagine,
29. Qu’il done selonc l’Evangille, and gives, without hypocrisy or guile,
30. Sanz ypocrisie et sanz gille, as the Bible tells, saying
31. Qu’el dist: «Ne sache ta senestre “Let your left hand ignore
32. Les biens quant le fera ta destre.” the good done by your right.”
33. Cil le sache qui le reçoit, May he who receives know
34. Et Diex, qui toz les secrez voit and God as well, who sees all secrets
35. Et set totes les repostailles and knows all that is hidden
36. Qui sont es cuers et es entrailles. deep within our hearts.
37. L’Evangille por coi dist ele Why does the Bible say,
38. ”Les biens a ta senestre cele”? “Hide your good deeds from your left hand”?
39. Le senestre, selonc l’estoire, The left, tradition says, means
40. Senefie la vaine gloire vain glory that comes from false hypocrisy.
41. Qui vient de fausse ypocrisie. And what does the right mean?
42. Et la destre que senefie? Charity, that, from its good works,
43. Carité, qui de sa bone oevre Charity, that, from its good works,
44. Pas ne se vante, ancoirs se coevre, seeks not to boast, but to hide
45. Si que ne le set se cil non so well that no one knows of it,
46. Qui Diex et caritez a non. except he whose name is God and Charity.
47. Diex est caritez, et qui vit God is charity, and he
48. En carité selonc l’escrit, who lives in charity, as Saint Paul said,
49. — Sainz Pols le dist et je le lui — and I read with my own eyes,
50. Il maint en Dieu, et Diex en lui — stays in God, and God in he.
51. Dont sachiez bien de verité Know therefore the truth
Que li don sont de carité that the gifts of good count Philippe
Que li bons quens Phelipes done; are truly gifts of charity.
Onques nului n’i araison He asks no one
Fors son bon cuer le debonaire but trusts the generosity of his own heart
Qui li loe le bien a faire. that exhorts him to do good.
Ne valt cil mix que ne valut Isn’t this much better
Alixandres, cui ne chalut than Alexander, who cared nothing
De carité ne de nul bien? of charity and goodness?
Oïl, n’en doutez ja de rien. Yes, there is no doubt about it.
Dont avra bien salve sa paine So, Chrétien’s labors will not be in vain
Crestiens qui entent et paine as he follows the count’s wishes.
Par le comandement le conte From a book given him by the count,
A rimoier le meillor conte he puts into verse the best story
Ce est li CONTES DEL GRAAL, ever told in a royal court:
Dont li quens li bailla le livre. Listen to how it turns out . . .
Oëz coment il s’en delivre.