

The Turke and Sir Gawain – MnE Translation

- Based on Middle English text, and intro by: [Thomas Hahn](#) (Editor) from: [Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales](#) .
- <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hahn-sir-gawain-turke-and-sir-gawain>
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Line #	Modern English Translation	Line #	Modern English Translation
5	Listen Lords, great and small, What adventures did befall In England, where there once had been The knights who held the Round Table Who were very strong and able, Warriors fierce and keen.	40	“This blow you have Well paid back And yet I will make you three times as afraid As ever man was on this here earth, Before you come again to this Court”
10	All of England, both East and West, The Lords and Ladies who were best, They all came and went. And when the King sat in his seat And Lords served him food and meat Then into the hall a man there came.	45	Then said Gawain, “I give my word, I’ll go with you ‘cross field and ford And from you never fly I’ll never flee from any adventure Jousts, nor other tournament As long as I am alive.”
15	He was not tall, but he was broad And like a Turk was he arrayed Both in leg and thigh; And he said, “Is there any who, as a brother. Will strike a blow and take another? Might there be any so hardy here?”	50	The Turk took leave of the crown king; Sir Gawain prepared and had servants bring His armor and his steed. They rode northwards two days and more. By then Sir Gawain hungered sorely; Of meat and drink he had great need.
20	Then spoke Sir Kay, that sulky knight, And said, “Man, you don’t seem so strong And you should be afraid. For there are knights in this hall Who with one stroke will make you fall And drop you to the ground.	55	The Turk understood Gawain needed to eat And spoke to him with words great, Raising himself upon high; He said, “Gawain where is all your wealth? Yesterday you ate while in great health, And no part would you give me,
25	No matter how strong you are of hand I will bring you to the ground, That I dare to safely swear.”	60	“But with a blow you hurt me sore; Therefore you shall suffer more, And adventures you will see I wish I had King Arthur here, And many other knights who fear And tested deserve to be.”
30	Then spoke Sir Gawain, that worthy knight, Saying, “Cousin Kay, you speak not right – Rude is your answer!”	65	He led Sir Gawain to a hill so plain. The earth opened and closed again - Then Gawain was afraid. The dark came on and the light is gone: Thunder, lightning, snow, and rain, Of those enough they had.
35	What if that man is deficient in his wits? Then little honor would be allotted to you If you should destroy him.” Then spoke the Turk with angry words Saying, “Com on the better of you two, Though you be as fierce as a wild boar. . .	70	Then spoke Sir Gawain and sighed sorely: “Such weather I never saw before this In any place where I have stood.”
	<i>[At this point about half a page of the story is missing; Gawain enters into a sworn agreement to trade blows (apparently without weapons) with the Turk. He strikes his blow, but the return blow by the Turk is postponed.]</i>		<i>[Again at this point a half page is missing. The storms seem a preliminary test. Gawain endures them, and accepts instruction from the Turk, and is then allowed to proceed to the mysterious castle.]</i>
	<i>N.B. comments regarding missing sections are taken from Hahn’s edition.</i>		

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<p>75</p> <p>80</p> <p>85</p> <p>90</p> <p>95</p> <p>100</p> <p>105</p> <p>110</p>	<p>“ . . . made no answer to them But only unto me.”</p> <p>To the castle they then rode. Sir Gawain dismounted from his steed, For the Turk had no horse.</p> <p>There they found chambers, rooms, and halls, Richly arrayed with fabrics were the walls, Handsome to look upon.”</p> <p>A table was laid out in that place; All manner of meat and drink there was For men who might find it. Sir Gawain would have fallen to that food, The Turk told him to leave it out of caution; Then Gawain became unhappy.</p> <p>Gawain said, “Sir, I wonder That you may none of these foods spare, And there is such great plenty here. Yet I wonder even more, truthfully, That I do not see man or maiden, Woman of child.</p> <p>I would rather of my own will Eat of this fair meat my fill Than have all the gold in Christendom.” The Turk went forth and did not tarry; Meat and drink he brought forth And it was pleasant to see it come.</p> <p>He said, “Eat, Gawain, & make yourself ready. Truly, before you get any more food You will both work and sweat. Eat, Gawain, and spare yourself nothing!” Sir Gawain ate since he thought it well to do so And well he liked his food.</p> <p>He drank ale, and wine after. He said, “I will be ready at your request Without need for boast or threat. But one thing would I ask: Give me my blow and let me go my way. I would prefer to be here any longer.</p> <p><i>[Another half page is missing at this point. The Turk refuses to allow Gawain to conclude the bargain by receiving his return blow. Instead he asks that Gawain accompany him to the Isle of Man.]</i></p>	<p>115</p> <p>120</p> <p>125</p> <p>130</p> <p>135</p> <p>140</p> <p>145</p> <p>150</p>	<p>There rested a boat and . . . Sir Gawain left behind his horse There was nothing else he could do.</p> <p>The Turke said to Sir Gawain, “He will be here when you come here again – I make promise to you – In about an hour, as men tell me.” They were sailed over the sea: The Turk said, “Gawain make haste!</p> <p>“Here we are without any harm But now begins the fulfillment of our contract, When we shall see adventures.” He let Gawain see a castle fair; Such as he never saw before that year, Not in any country for sure.</p> <p>The Turk said to Sir Gawain “Yonder dwells the King of the Isle of Man A heathen sultan is he.</p> <p>With him he has a hideous group Of giants strong and stout And ugly to look upon. If one were to seek far and near As far as the ends of the earth He would not find such a company.</p> <p>“Many marvels will you see there Such as you never saw before In all the world over. You will see a tennis ball That no knight in Arthur’s hall Is able to strike a blow against.</p> <p>“And other marvels there are more. We will be absolved before we go Do not doubt that.</p> <p>And if you take my advice I will help you in time of need For anything I can see There will be one else so strong in battle. But I will bring you again to . . .</p> <p><i>[Another half page is missing here. After these reassurances, Gawain accompanies the Turk into the Castle of the King of Man where he is met with verbal assaults.]</i></p>
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<p>155</p> <p>160</p> <p>165</p> <p>170</p> <p>175</p> <p>180</p> <p>185</p> <p>190</p> <p>195</p>	<p>. . . “Sir Gawain fierce and strong, How fares your uncle King Arthur, And all his company? And that Bishop, Sir Baldwin Who will not let my goods alone But spoils them every day? “He preached much about a Crown of Thorns; He will curse the day he was born If I ever catch him. I anger more at the priests In England, not at the lords who feast; They go around in their rich clothes. “And I intend with great anger To burn the clergy in a fire And punish them as much as I want. Sit down, Sir Gawain, at the table.” Sir Gawain answered at that word, Saying, “No, I will not do so, “I do not think an adventurous knight Should in a king’s hall sit Before you see some marvel.” The King said, “Gawain, may you have good fortune! Go fetch me my tennis ball, For I will play and see what happens.” They brought it out without a doubt. With it there came a huge crowd Of giants great and many; All the giants were there then Taller by half than Sir Gawain, I tell you without a doubt. There were seventeen giants bold of blood, Who of Gawain thought little that was good When they thought with him to play. All the giants thought then To have dashed out Sir Gawain’s brains. May God help him as he may! The ball of brass was made for a giant’s hand There was not a man in all of England Who was able to carry it . . . <i>[In a missing section, Gawain defeats the giants at tennis with the help of the Turk, who ends by pummeling one of the giants.]</i> . . . and stabbed a giant in the hall So that he did groan gruesomely. The King said, “Bear away this tall staff For such a man I have never seen. Yet he will be assailed more before he goes “I told you, so help me – With the three adventures, and then no more Before me at this time”</p>	<p>200</p> <p>205</p> <p>210</p> <p>215</p> <p>220</p> <p>225</p> <p>230</p> <p>235</p>	<p>Then there stood amongst them all A free-standing fireplace in the King’s hall With iron bars great in strength. There was laid in that fireplace Coals and wood that cost a lot That upon it did rest. A giant asked Gawain to give it a try, And said, “Gawain, begin the game - You know how it should be! And afterwards when you are done, I trust you will be matched soon Either with the Turk or with me. “A great giant, I know, Could lift this fireplace with his hand And set it down easily again.” Sire Gawain was never so afraid Since he was a mere mortal man, And cried out to God in his thoughts. Gawain unto the Turk did say “Lift this fireplace – if do so you may – That is so fineley wrought.” Gawain’s companion did to it leap And grabbed it by the handles great And about his head he threw it. Three times around his head he swung it So that the coals and the red brands . . . <i>[In a missing half page the Turk completes his victory in the second contest, twirling the hot fireplace above his head. He then clothes himself in a garment of invisibility to accompany Gawain as the King of Man leads him to the final challenge. Here, a giant threatens Gawain.]</i> “. . . saw of great might And were strong in battle. “I [Giant] have slain them through my skill, And now Gawain I will kill you, And then will I have killed all the flower of chivalry. There were none who ever returned Any more than you will, though you are fierce, Nor none that belong any more to King Arthur.” The Turk was made invisible; No man could see him without a doubt, He was dressed in such a cloth. He heard their speech both less and more; And he thought they would find him there When they felt his presence.</p>
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<p>240</p> <p>245</p> <p>250</p> <p>255</p> <p>260</p> <p>265</p> <p>270</p> <p>275</p> <p>280</p> <p>285</p>	<p>Then Gawain to a spot by the king was led Where there was a cauldron of boiling lead, That bubbled up high; And in front of it a giant did stand With an iron pitchfork in his hand, That was hideous to see.</p> <p>The giant that looked so fierce That Gawain had never seen one as fierce Not anywhere in any country. The King to the giant then said, “Here is no one but us two Let us see your best.”</p> <p>When the giant saw that Gawain’s companion Was there, he leapt and writhed and, and shouted then, “Alas That he came in Gawain’s place”. Sir Gawain’s companion leapt to him And with great strength picked up him and cast him into the lead.</p> <p>With an iron pitchfork made of steel He held him down a great while Until the Giant was scalded to death. Then Sir Gawain unto the King did say, “Unless you will agree to our law (Christianity) your time is up.”</p> <p>The King spit on Sir Gawain the knight. With that the Turk picked him upright And into the fire did he fling, And said to Sir Gawain at the last “Don’t worry Master, all the peril is past! But we should not tarry too long . . .”</p> <p><i>[In a missing half page, Gawain and the Turk apparently move quickly to another part of the Castle, where captives have been magically imprisoned. The Turk then, instead of taking the return blow at Gawain to which he is entitled, requests that Gawain deliver a sword stroke that would behead him.]</i></p> <p>He brought forth a basin of gold Such as an Emperor might use to wash, As was befitting his rank.</p> <p>He took a sword of noble metal Saying, If ever I did anything for you Do this for me in recompense: Take here this sword of steel That in battle bites so well, And with it strike off my head.”</p> <p>“I forbid it!” said Sir Gawain, “For I would rather not have you slain For all the gold so red.”</p> <p>“Enough, Sir Gawain! I have no fear. But in this basin let me bleed, That basin that stands here in this place,</p> <p>“And you will see a new turn of events, With the help of the Virgin Mary that mild maid, who saved us all from dread.” He drew forth the brand of steel That in battle bites well, And with it he (Gawain) stroke off his (the Turk’s) head.</p>	<p>290</p> <p>295</p> <p>300</p> <p>305</p> <p>310</p> <p>315</p> <p>320</p> <p>325</p> <p>330</p> <p>335</p>	<p>And when the blood into the basin did fall, He (the Turk) stood up a stalwart Knight That day, I dare say, And sung, “Te Deum Laudimus’ – Worship be to our Lord Jesus Who saved us all from ruin!</p> <p>“Ah! Sir Gawain! Blessed be you! For all the service I have done you, You have repaid me well.” The he took Gawain by the hand And many a worthy man they encountered Whom they had never met before.</p> <p>He said, “Sir Gawain without a threat Sit down boldly at your meal, And I will eat with you. Ladies all, be of good cheer: Each one of you will go to your own dear In all haste that might be.</p> <p>“First we will to King Arthur’s hall, And soon after your husbands shall we send for In the countries where they are; There the will . . .</p> <p>[In another missing section, the process of liberating the chivalric captives continues with the return to Arthur's court.] “Thus we have brought seventeen handsome ladies who were left in great danger, And we have brought them out.”</p> <p>Then they sent for their husbands quickly And each one took his own wife, And humbly did they bow, And thanked the two knights and the King (Arthur) And said they would be at their bidding all throughout England.</p> <p>Sir Gromer (the Turk) kneeled upon his knee Saying “Sir King, if it be your will, Crown Gawain the King of the Isle of Man.” Sir Gawain kneeled down nearby, And said “Lord, no, not I; Give it to him if he wants.</p> <p>“For I never purposed to be a King, Never in all my life, While I am a living man.” He said, “Sir Gromer, you take it, For Gawain will never be a King For any craft that I have.”</p> <p>Thus ends the tale that I meant to tell Of Arthur and his knights keen Who were hardy and generous. God give good lives to those far and near Who love to hear of such things! Amen for Cahrity.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The End</p>
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