

wrath because of it. And after some time seven<sup>1</sup> noble knights, servants in the court of the said Prester Johan, went to find him and told him that they will have the courage to go to stay with that King of Gold and will find a plan to bring into his hands his enemy the King of Gold, if he wished, all alive to the best of their power, & if not they will kill him. And the Prester Johan told them that he is very willing and that he will be very thankful to them if they do this and promised them many riches & goods if they carried their promise into effect. And when the seven servants who were fine young men have taken leave of the Prester Johan their lord, they set out all together in a fair company of esquires and went off to find this King of Gold and presented themselves to him; & he asked them who they were. And pretending to be rebels against their lord they told him that they were come from a strange land and far to his court to serve him when he pleased. The king received them gladly for his pages & told them that they were very welcome to him and that he will do them honour and service and pleasure, and that their service pleased him very well, as one who thought of no evil. In such way as you have heard the seven bad servants of the Prester Johan set themselves very carefully to serve the King of Gold with great joy, to win his favour. Those seven knights stayed for two years with that lord, keeping him very nobly and showing the greatest loyalty to that lord, so that they were very dear to that lord & he trusted them much, & they were always with him in everything, and he always wished that when he went hunting they should be near. And when they had stayed there about two years unable to carry out the evil purpose of their heart, thinking of nothing else but of treason, they were much loved by the king for their good service which they did him. And what shall I tell you about it? The king trusted himself with them and treated them just as if they were all and eight<sup>2</sup> his sons. Now you shall hear what these wicked servants do; and it happened because none can guard himself against the treacherous and disloyal. It was true that this King of Gold went enjoying himself riding one day to the chase with a few people, and among them there were these wicked thirteen servants as those in whom the king had great trust and kept them near. And when they have passed a river which [48d] is a mile distant from the palace of which I have told you, leaving the rest of the company on the other side, the thirteen servants, who saw themselves alone in a convenient place and that the king had no company who could defend him against them, then said that now was the time that they could do that for which they were come [ & ] fulfil the promise made to their lord Prester Johan. Then having given the sign among themselves &

<sup>1</sup> FA,FB: xvij and so below. V: sie and omits below.

<sup>2</sup> viii Here and above viii was written, corrected to vii in the first place and here accidentally left; as was xiii just below.