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LA CHANSON DE ROLAND

*TRANSLATED FROM THE SEVENTH EDITION OF LEON
GAUTIER, PROFESSOR AT THE ECOLE DES
CHARTES, PARIS.*

BY
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TO
DANIEL C. GILMAN,
President of Johns Hopkins University,
THIS TRANSLATION
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

[vii]

Several years ago, the maker of this version translated into French one of the early works of H. W. Longfellow. This circumstance was not forgotten by the American poet who kindly consented to listen to this new attempt at rendering into English the "CHANSON DE ROLAND."

To his encouragement is due the present publication. The writer will ever proudly treasure up the remembrance of his friendly welcome and counsel....

The translator has followed, as literally as possible, the text of the Oxford MS., as revised by Léon Gautier. The parts inclosed in parentheses are interpolations of the learned Professor. This revised text should be kept in hand by the English reader for comparison with the original, which is nine centuries old. The translator may thus be more likely to obtain the indulgence of the reader for the quaint representation, in a modern language, of the coloring of this most ancient poem.

The orthography of all the names, as well as their prosodic accent, has been preserved in their ancient form; and accordingly, an index has been appended to the work. [viii]

The seventh edition of Léon Gautier's "CHANSON DE ROLAND," contains a vast amount of explanatory notes, grammatical and historical, to which the reader is referred.

HISTORY OF THE POEM.

On the 15th of August, 778, in a little Pyrenean Valley, still known in our days by the name of Ronceval, a terrible event took place. Charlemagne, returning from his expedition to Spain, crossed that valley and the Pyrenees, leaving his rear-guard in command of Roland, Prefect of the Marches of Brittany. His main army had passed unmolested; but at the moment when the rear-guard advanced into the defiles of the mountain, thousands of Gascons rushed from their ambush, fell upon the French army and slaughtered the whole guard to the last man. So perished Roland.

Eginhard, the historian of Charlemagne, terminates his narrative with these words: "The House-intendant, (Regiæ mensæ præpositus), Eggihard, Anselm, Count of the Palace, Roland, Prefect of the Marches of Brittany (Hruolandus britannici limitis præfectus), with many more, perished in the fight. It was not possible to take revenge on the spot. The treacherous attempt once perpetrated, the enemy dispersed and left no trace." (Eginhard's Life of Charlemagne, Vol. I., p. 31; edition of the Société de l'histoire de France.) [ix]

From the moment of the defeat of Ronceval, legend commenced its labor upon this truly epic event which, in its origin, is absolutely French, but has found its echoes throughout Europe, from Iceland to Eastern regions.

The commentators generally agree in dating the composition of the Poem before the first crusade in the year 1096. The author, it is ascertained, was Norman, the dialect used by him being Norman throughout. Whether this author was really Tuoldus, named in the last line of the Poem, is a point which Léon Gautier refuses to affirm. We refer the reader to the very interesting preface of *Genin*, and to the learned introductions of Léon Gautier, for more complete information.

The word "*Aoi*," which is placed at the end of every stanza, and found in no other ancient French poems, is interpreted differently by the commentators. M. Francisque Michel assimilated it at first to the termination of an ecclesiastical chant—Preface, xxvii.—and later to the Saxon *Abeg*, or the English *Away*, as a sort of refrain which the "*jongleur*" repeated at the end of the couplets. M. Génin explains it by *ad viam*, a vei, avoie, away! it is done, let us go on! [x]

M. Gautier, with his skeptical honesty, declares the word unexplained. See Note 9, p. 4, of his seventh edition.

MANUSCRIPTS.

The most complete and ancient is that of Oxford, in the Bodleian Library, marked "Digby, 23," a copy of the XIIth. century. All others are *Rifaccimenti*, Refashionings.

Two in Venice, in St. Mark Library, XIIIth. century; French MSS., No. 4 & 7.

In the National Library, Paris, No. 860, XIIIth. century.

The Versailles MS., now deposited in the Library of Chateauroux, a copy of which is in Paris Nat. Library; 15, 108; XIIIth. century.

In the Lyons Library, 964; XIVth. century.

In Cambridge, Trinity Collage, R. 3-32; XVIth. century.

One called the Lorrain, a fragment found near Metz.

The Karlomagnus Saga, an Icelandic copy of the Oxford MS.; XIIIth. century.

In M. Petit de Julleville's Introduction to his version can be found a chronological list of the works [xi] which concern the "CHANSON DE ROLAND," the translations of it, and dissertations on the subject in France and Germany.

There are twenty-one translations in different languages:

Four in German, by Th. Müller, Hertz, Boehmer, Eug. Kölbing.

One in Polish, by Mad. Duchinska.

One in Danish, by Unger.

One in Icelandic, Karlomagnus' Saga.

Twelve in French, by Francisque Michel, Bourdillon, Delécluze, Génin, P. Paris, Vitet, Jônain, de Saint-Albin, d'Avril, Petit de Julleville, Lehugeur and Léon Gautier, of whose translation seven editions were issued.

Two in English, one in England by J. O'Hagan, and one in America, the latest and present one.

Besides, a version from Vitet's French paraphrase, by Mrs. Marsh.

SARRAGOSSA.

[1]

COUNCIL HELD BY KING MARSILE.

I.

Carle our most noble Emperor and King,
Hath tarried now full seven years in Spain,
Conqu'ring the highland regions to the sea;
No fortress stands before him unsubdued,
Nor wall, nor city left, to be destroyed,
Save Sarraguce, high on a mountain set.
There rules the King Marsile who loves not God,
Apollo worships and Mohammed serves;
Nor can he from his evil doom escape.

Aoi.

II.

The King Marsile abides in Sarraguce
Where underneath an orchard's leafy shade,
Upon a terrace with blue marble paved
He rests. Around him twenty thousand men
And more are ranked. His Dukes and Counts he calls:
"Oyez, *Seigneurs*, what gath'ring ills are ours:
Great Carle, the Emperor who rules Sweet France
Comes to this land to 'whelm us with his might.
To give him battle I no army have,
Nor people to array against his host:
Your counsel give me, Lords, as my wise men,
And so defend your King from death and shame;"
But answer none a single Pagan gave,
Save Blancandrin *del Castel Val-Fondé*.

Aoi.

III.

Blancandrin, 'midst the wisest Pagans wise,
Who, in his vassalage a valiant knight,
Most prudent counsels gave to help his lord,
Said to the King:—"Be not by this dismayed!
To Carle the proud, the fierce, send messengers
With words of faith and love. Send to him gifts

[2]

Of bears and lions, packs of dogs; present
Seven hundred camels also, fifty score
Of molted¹ falcons, and four hundred mules
With heavy weight of gold and silver packed;
Then fifty chariots with their burthens heaped: [3]
Well can this treasure all his soldiers pay.
Within this land he long enough has camped.
To France—to Aix let him at last return;
There will you join him on Saint-Michael's feast,
Accept the Christian law, and swear to be
His man in faith and honor. Should he ask
Hostages, ten or twenty grant, to lure
His trust; let us send our wives' sons. Mine—although
He die, I give. Far better that their heads
Should fall than we lose honor and domain,
Than we ourselves to beggary be brought."
Aoi.

IV.

He further said:—"By this right hand of mine,
And by the beard the air waves on my breast,
Soon shall you see the host of Franks disperse;
To France, their land, the Franks will take their way.
When each has gained the shelter of his home,
King Carle will in his chapel be at Aix, [4]
To celebrate Saint Michael's solemn feast.
The day will come, the term allowed will pass,
And from us shall he hear nor word nor news.
The King is fierce, his soul is hard; and thus
Each hostage head beneath his sword shall fall.
'Twere better far that these should lose their heads
Than we for aye lose glorious Spain the Fair,
And suffer so great ills and doleful woes."
Then say the Pagans:—"This may be the truth."
Aoi.

V.

Hereat the King Marsile the council closed.
Then summon'd he Clarin de Balaguer,
Estramarin and Eudropin his peer;
With Priamon Guarlan the bearded knight,
And Machiner together with Mahen
His uncle, Joimer and Malbien born
Beyond the sea, and Blancandrin, to hear
His words. These ten, the fiercest, he addressed:
"Seigneurs Barons, ye shall go toward Carl'magne;
He to Cordrès, the city, now lays siege.
Bear in each hand a branch of olive-tree
In token of humility and peace. [5]
If by your arts his favor you can gain,
I give of gold and silver, lands and fiefs
To each, whatever he may ask of me."
The Pagans answer all:—"Well said our lord!"
Aoi.

VI.

Marsile his council closed:—"My Lords, ye shall
Set forth;—an olive branch bear in each hand:
And in my name adjure King Carlemagne
That by his God he mercy have on me;
And ere a month be past, he shall behold
Me follow with a thousand faithful knights,
There to submit myself to Christian law
And be his man in love and faith; and if
He hostages require, them shall he have."
Quoth Blancandrin:—"Good treaty will be yours."
Aoi.

VII.

Marsile then ordered forth the ten white mules
The King of Sicily once sent to him;—
Golden their bits—their saddles silver-wrought—
And on them mounted his ambassadors.
Thus holding each a branch of olive-tree,
They rode away and came to Carle of France.
Nor can he from the treacherous snare escape.
Aoi.

[6]

COUNCIL OF CHARLEMAGNE AT
CORDOBA.

[7]

VIII.

Cheerful and blithe the Emp'ror, for Cordrès
Has been subdued, its massy walls o'erthrown,
Its towers by mighty catapults destroyed;
And there his knights have found abundant spoils
Of gold and silver, and rich garnitures.
Nor was one Pagan in the city left
Alive, who did not own the Christian Faith.
Now is the Emperor within a wide
And spreading orchard; there around him stand
Rollánd and Olivier, Samsun the Duke,
And Anseïs the bold, Gefrei d'Anjou,
Gonfaloneer of Carle, and also there
Gerin and Gerier. Where these were, came
Of others many more. In all, from France
Were gathered fully fifteen thousand knights.
Upon white *pallies*² sit these chevaliers;
They play at tables³ to divert themselves;
The wiser and the elder play at chess.
In mimic sword-play strive the joyous youths.
Under a pine-tree, near an eglantine,
Is placed a faldstool of pure gold whereon
Sits he, the King—great Ruler of Sweet France.
White is his beard, his head all flowering white;
Graceful his form and proud his countenance;
None need to point him out to those who come
The Pagan messengers, dismounting, stood
Before him, proffering humble faith and love.
Aoi.

[8]

IX.

Blancandrin was the first to speak, and said
Unto the king:—"Hail! in the name of God,
The Glorious One we must adore! To you
I bring this message from Marsile the brave:
Well has he studied your Salvation's Law;
And would upon you lavish his great wealth.
Bears—lions—packs of hounds enchained he gives,
Seven hundred camels also—fifty score
Of molted falcons—mules, four hundred, packed
With gold and silver—fifty carts to carry
These gifts, and *bezants*⁴ of the purest gold
He also sends, which will your soldiers pay.
Too long within our land you have remained;
To France—to Aix he wills you straight return.
There will he follow you: so says my lord."
To God the Emperor uplifts his hands;
Bends low his head and counsel takes in thought.
Aoi.

[9]

X.

The Emperor sat silent with drooped head.
Ne'er rash in words, he never speaks in haste.
At last he rose. Proudly he looked and spake
Unto the messengers:—"Ye have well said
That King Marsile e'er stood my greatest foe!

On these fair-seeming words how far can I
Rely?" The crafty Saracen replied:
"Would you have hostages? you shall have ten,
Fifteen, yea, twenty. Though his fate be death
My son shall go, and others nobler still,
I deem. When to your lordly palace, home
Returned—when comes Saint Michael del Peril,
His feast, my Lord will follow to those springs,
He says, brought forth by God for you, and there
Baptized, a faithful Christian will become!"
Carl'magne makes answer:—"He may yet be saved!"
Aoi.

[10]

XI.

The eve was soft and fair, the sunset bright;
The ten mules stabled by the King's command;
In the great orchard a pavilion raised
To house the messengers, his Pagan guests.
Twelve sergeants to their service were assigned,
And there they rested till the dawn repelled
The night. With day the Emperor arose;
Heard mass and matins first, then having gone
Beneath a stately pine, he summons all
His wisest barons, council grave to hold,
Thus ever guided by the men of France.
Aoi.

XII.

[11]

Beneath a pine the Monarch has repaired;
His barons to the council called: the Duke
Ogier—Archbishop Turpin—old Richard,
Also his nephew Henri, and the brave
Count Acelin of Gascoigne—Tedbald
De Reins—his cousin Milon—Gerier,
Gerin, together with the Count Rollánd,
And Olivier, the brave and noble knight.
One thousand Franks of France and more were met—
Then Ganelon came, who treason wrought; and now
Was opened that ill-fated council thus:
Aoi.

XIII.

"Seigneurs Barons," began the Emp'ror Carle,
"The King Marsile his messengers hath sent
To offer me large store of his great wealth;
Bears—lions—hounds in leash;—of camels he
Gives seven hundred—falcons, fifty score—
Four hundred mules packed high with Arab gold,
And more than fifty chariots loaded full;
But he demands that I return to France.
There will he follow: then arrived at Aix,
Will in my palace take Salvation's Faith,
Will Christ obey, and hold his lands from me;
But what is in his heart, I do not know."
The French exclaim:—"Of him we must beware!"
Aoi.

[12]

XIV.

The Emp'ror ended thus. But Count Rollánd
Approving not the terms, stands forth and speaks
Unto the King with arguments adverse:
"Trust never more Marsile. 'Tis full seven years
Since we came into Spain. For you I took
Both Noplés and Commiblés; gained Valterne
And all the land of Pine, and Balaguer,
And Tuele and Sebile—yet King Marsile
Still plotting treachery, sent from his horde
Of Pagans, fifteen men; each bore in hand
Like these, a branch of olive-tree, and spake
The self-same words. On that you counsel took

From your too lightly flattering French; two Counts
Of yours you to the Pagan sent, the one,
Bazan, Bastile the other, and their heads
He struck off near Haltoie. As you began,
War on! To Sarraguce your army lead,
Besiege her walls, though all your life it take,
And thus avenge the knights the felon slew."

[13]

Aoi.

XV.

At this the Emperor, bending low his head,
Twists his mustache and plucks his hoary beard,
Answering his nephew neither yea nor nay.
The Franks keep silence—all save Ganelon
Who rose and stood before the King, and spake
Bold words and haughty:—"Put not faith in fools,
Nor me nor others; follow your own rede!
Since King Marsile makes offer to become
Your man, with hands joined; furthermore will hold
Spain as a fief from you; yea, will receive
Our law as his law, he who counsel gives
Such proffer to reject, cares not a whit
What death we die. No counsel take of pride;
Let pass the fools and listen to the wise."

Aoi.

XVI.

And now Duke Naimés arose: his beard and hair
As white as drifted snow. In all the court
No better vassal stood; and to the King:
"Have you marked well the words Count Ganelon
In answer spoke but now? His plan is wise;
Follow it then. This King Marsile in war
Is overcome, his strongholds all pulled down;
By warlike engines are his walls destroyed,
His cities burned, his men subdued;—when now
He for your mercy prays, foul sin it were
To press him harder. Since he, furthermore
Will bind his word by gift of hostages,
[One of your barons also send to him.]
In truth no longer this great war should rage."
The French all cry:—"Duke Naimés has spoken well."

[14]

Aoi.

XVII.

"Seigneurs Barons, which of you shall we send
To meet the King Marsile in Sarraguce?"
Duke Naimés responds:—"I, with your leave will go;
Give me the glove and staff."—"Nay," quoth King Carle,
"A sage you are in council, well I know:
By this mustache and by this beard of mine,
So far away from me you shall not go.
Back to your seat, since none hath summoned you."

Aoi.

XVIII.

"Seigneurs Barons, which of you shall we send
As messengers to Sarraguce where rules
Marsile?"—Rollánd responds:—"Behold me here!"
"—You shall not, by my troth!" cries Olivier,
"Your pride too fierce, and courage far too hot;
I fear some misadventure from your zeal.
Should our King grant me but his leave, 'tis I
Will go!"—The King exclaimed:—"Be silent both—
Nor you, nor he, shall yonder set your foot!
Ay, by this hoary beard of mine, I swear,
Not one of my twelve Peers shall thither go."
The French are dumb—all silenced by these words.

[15]

Aoi.

XIX.

Turpin de Reins arises from the ranks
 And to the King he says: "Let your Franks stay,
 To this land seven years ago you came,
 And they have suffered much of toil and pain.
 Give me the glove and staff, and I will go
 And speak my mind to that proud Saracen."
 With anger great the Emperor replies:
 "Back to your seat on yonder *pallie* white
 Nor speak another word, save by command!"
 Aoi.

[16]

XX.

Then said the Emperor:—"Chevaliers of France,
 Choose ye for me a baron of my realm,
 One who can bear my words to King Marsile!"
 Rollánd rejoins:—"Let my step-father go;
 If he remain, no wiser man is found."
 The French say:—"Well can he fulfill the task:
 [If the King wills, 'tis right he should be sent.]"
 Aoi.

XXI.

Thus spoke the King:—"Sire Ganelon, draw near:
 Receive the glove and staff—you heard the Franks
 Pass judgment, and on you their choice has fallen."
 Said Ganelon:—"All this Rollánd has done!
 My life-long, never will I love him more,
 Nor Olivier, his comrade and his friend,
 Nor the twelve Peers, for that they love him well.
 Here in your presence, I defy them all!"
 The King replied:—"Too wroth you are. At once
 You shall depart.—I spoke it."—"Sire, I go,
 Although for me there is nor shield nor guard:
 Basile had none, Bazan, his brother, none!"
 Aoi.

[17]

XXII.

"To Sarraguce I go, and know full well
 Who thither goes, may ne'er return. Nay more,
 Your sister is my wife, and I by her
 Have one fair son, Baldwin, the goodliest child
 Who [if he live] will be a noble knight.
 To him I leave my fiefs and honors: guard
 Him well, for him these eyes no more shall see."
 Carle answers:—"Much too tender is your heart;
 Since I command, your duty 'tis to go."
 Aoi.

XXIII.

Count Ganelon, at this, rose full of wrath,
 And, casting from his neck his zibelline
 Of fur, stood forth, clothed in his silk *blialt*.⁵
 Gray were his eyes and very fierce his face;
 Graceful his form—his breast, of mighty mold.
 So fair was he, all eyes upon him rest.
 "Rollánd," he said, "wherefore this foolish wrath?
 Since thy step-father, 'tis well known, I am,
 For this thou choosest me to seek Marsile!
 'Tis well. If God but grant me safe return,
 I such ill fortune hurl on thee, shall smite
 Thy life from now and ever with a curse."
 Rollánd replies:—"Mad words and proud I hear.
 All know it well, I care for no man's threat;
 But since a wise man must this message bear,
 If the King wills it, in your place I go."
 Aoi.

[18]

XXIV.

"Thou shalt not take my place," said Ganelon;
 "My vassal art thou not, nor yet am I
 Thy lord; and since the King hath given me
 Command this service I should take, I shall
 Go to Marsile. But once in Sarraguce
 Will I with fuel feed my heart's fierce ire."
 Rollánd, on hearing this, began to laugh.
 Aoi.

XXV.

When Ganelon saw the laughter of Rollánd,
 It seemed as though his breast would burst with wrath;
 His brain was well-nigh maddened by his rage. [19]
 Unto the Count he cried:—"I love you not;
 This judgment have you caused on me to fall!
 Right Emp'ror, in your presence, lo! I stand,
 And I am ready to fulfill your word."
 Aoi.

XXVI.

The King presents to him his right hand glove;
 But Ganelon would well have ne'er stood there,
 For ere he touched the royal glove, it fell.
 The French exclaim:—"What bodes this omen? Shall
 This embassy not have a woeful end?"
 "*Seigneurs*," said Ganelon, "you will hear of this!"
 Aoi.

XXVII.

Said Ganelon:—"Give me dismissal, Sire!
 Since I must go, my time is precious." Then
 Adjured the King:—"For Jesus' sake and mine!"
 With his right hand he Ganelon absolved
 And blessed, deliv'ring up the brief and staff.
 Aoi.

XXVIII.

Count Ganelon his own house seeks, to make [20]
 Equipment and prepare his arms: his choice
 The best that he can find. With golden spurs
 He clasps his heels; belts to his side his sword,
 Murgleis, and mounts his courser Tachebrun.
 His uncle Guinemer the stirrup held;
 There many a chevalier you might have seen
 In tears, who said: "Baron, such evil fate
 Was yours. You, in the King's Court so long, and there
 Revered as liege-man high!—The man who judged
 That you should go, not Carle himself shall cure
 Or save; the Count Rollánd bethought him not
 Of that high lineage whence you sprang!"—And they
 Entreat:—"My lord with you take us along!"
 But Ganelon replies:—"Lord God forbid!
 Better to die alone than with me fall
 So many brave!—Lords, to sweet France ye will go.
 Salute for me my wife, and Pinabel,
 My friend and peer, and my son Baldewin whom
 Ye all know—guard him—hold him for your lord."
 The Count departs and goes upon his way.
 Aoi.

 THE EMBASSY AND CRIME OF GANELON.

[21]

XXIX.

The Count rides on beneath tall olive trees

And joins the messengers of King Marsile.
To meet him Blancandrin has checked his speed:
With skillful words each to the other spake.
Blancandrin said: "A wond'rous man is Carle
Who conquered Pouille and overran Calabre,
Crossed the salt-seas to England, and from thence
Gained tribute for *Saint-Pierre*. In this our land
What claims he?" "Such his might," said Ganelon,
"No man shall ever match with him in arms."
Aoi.

XXX.

Said Blancandrin: "The Franks are noble, but
Those Dukes, those Counts harm much their lord, who give
To him such counsels, wronging him and all." [22]
Ganelon answered: "No man, save Rollánd,
Know I, who should this blame incur; it was
But yesternorn, the King sat in the shade,
When Rollánd came before him, all encased
In glittering arms, fresh from the siege and sack
Of Carcassonne, holding an apple red;
And thus his uncle greeted: 'Sire, behold!
I lay the crowns of all Kings at your feet.'
Swift punishment should overtake such pride,
For ev'ry day he blindly runs to death.
Were he but slain, all lands might rest in peace."
Aoi.

XXXI.

Blancandrin said: "Most cruel is Rollánd
Who makes all nations cry for mercy thus,
And will o'er all the lands his power impose.
Upon what people doth he then rely
For such attempt?" Ganelon said: "The French!...
They love him so, they fail him ne'er in aught.
Lavish is he of gifts: Silver and gold,
Mules, chargers, silken robes and garnitures,
He gives the King himself all that he craves;
From here to the far East, all lands must fall!"
Aoi.

XXXII.

Blancandrin with Count Ganelon rode on,
Until together had they pledged their faith
To snare Rollánd and lead him to his death.
Thus on they rode through vales and mountain-paths,
Till Sarraguze was reached. Beneath a yew
They lighted: a faldstool by shady pines
O'erhung, was spread with Alexandrine silk.
There sat the King who ruled all Spain, and stood
Around him twenty thousand Saracens,
Who neither spoke nor breathed, to hear the news;
And lo! came Blancandrin with Ganelon.
Aoi.

XXXIII.

Blancandrin stepped before the Pagan King
With Ganelon the Count held by the wrist.
Thus to Marsile he said: "Mohammed save
The King! Apollo, too, whose holy law
We keep. We bore your message to Carl'magne;
Both hands he lifted, praying to his God;
No other answer gave.—He sends you here
One of his noble Barons, a rich Frank. [24]
Learn from his lips if it be peace or war."
Responds Marsile: "Then let him speak. We hear!"
Aoi.

XXXIV.

Then Ganelon, who well had weighed his thoughts,
Begins to speak as one of knowledge vast,
And says unto the King: "By God be saved,
The Glorious God we must adore! Carl'magne
The Baron, sends his message to Marsile:
The holy Christian Faith if you receive,
One half of Spain he grants to you in fief.
These terms refuse, and your fair Sarraguçe
He will besiege, and drag you forth in chains
To Aix, his royal city, there to meet
A felon's doom."—Quivering with rage and fear,
The King Marsile, who held a gold-winged dart,
Aims it at him; but others stayed his hand.

Aoi.

XXXV.

The King Marsile turned pale, and full of wrath,
Brandished the shaft of his winged dart on high.
Ganelon saw, laid hand upon his sword,
And quick unsheathed two fingers' breadth of blade,
Saying: "Sword of mine you are most fair and bright;
As long as by me borne in this King's court,
Never shall say the Emperor of France
Ganelon died alone in foreign land,
Ere a high price for you the best have paid!"
The Pagans cry in haste: "Check this affray."

[25]

Aoi.

XXXVI.

The wisest Pagans urged the wrathful King,
Till, yielding, on his throne he has resumed
His seat. The Kalif said: "Great wrong you brought
Upon us, menacing to strike the Frank.
You should have hearkened to his words." "This wrong,"
Said Ganelon, "I calmly will endure;
But for the gold that God hath made all wealth
Stored in this land, I would not leave untold,
While I have power of speech, the message sent
By Carle, the mighty Emperor, through me
His messenger, to thee his mortal foe."
Ganelon on the ground his mantle dropped
Of Alexandrine silk, and richly lined
With zibelline; Blancandrïn took it up:
But from his sword the Count would never part;
And his right hand still grasps the golden hilt.
The Pagans say:—"Behold a Baron true!"

[26]

Aoi.

XXXVII.

Then Ganelon strode nearer to the King
And said:—"All idle is this wrath of yours.
This is the message of King Carle of France;
Hear his command:—"Receive the Christian law"—
One half of Spain he grants to you in fief,
And to Rollând, his nephew, he will give
The other half. (A haughty partner he
Will prove.) To this agreement should you not
Consent, 'gainst Sarraguçe his host will lay
The siege; by force you will be tak'n and bound,
And brought to Aix, the royal seat. Hope not
To ride on palfrey, nor on steed, on mule
Female or male;—on a vile beast of burden
You shall be thrown, and doomed to have your head
Struck off.—Behold the Brief our Emp'ror sends!"
With his right hand he gives it to the King.

Aoi.

XXXVIII.

White with exceeding wrath, the King Marsile
Has brok'n the seal, let fall the wax on earth,

[27]

And, glancing on the Brief, has read the script:
"I learn from Carle who holds France in his sway,
That I should bear in mind his ire and grief:
Bazan—Basile, his brother, they whose heads
I took on Mount Haltoïe, his anger's cause.
If I my body's life would save, to him
The Kalif, my good uncle, I must send,
Or else can he ne'er be my friend."—Then spake
To King Marsile his son:—"This Ganelon,"
Said he, "speaks madly, and such wrong hath done,
That he should live no more. Now give him up
To me, that I to him quick justice deal!"
Ganelon, hearing this, unsheathed his sword,
And set his back against a branching pine.

Aoi.

XXXIX.

Into his orchard King Marsile repaired,
Attended only by his wisest men;
Came thither too the gray-haired Blancandrin
With Turfaleu his son and heir; with them
The Kalif, brother and good friend of King
Marsile.—Said Blancandrin:—"Recall the Frank;
To serve us he has pledged his faith."—The King
Replied:—"Go, bring him hither."—Then he took
Ganelon's fingers into his right hand,
And brought him to the grove before the King;
And lo! was woven there the traitor's plot.

[28]

Aoi.

XL.

The King Marsile said:—"Fair Sire Ganelon,
Unwise and all too hasty was I, when
In my great wrath I poised my lance to strike.
This gift of sables take as your amends:
More than five hundred marks their weight in gold.
Before to-morrow-eve the boon is yours."
Ganelon answers:—"I reject it not.
May God, if 'tis his will, your grace reward."

Aoi.

XLI.

Marsile spake thus:—"Sire Ganelon, believe,
Much I desire to love you, and of Carle
I crave to hear. Is he not old, his prime
Has he not passed? Men tell me he has lived
More than two hundred years; his body dragged
Throughout so many lands; so many blows
Upon his shield!—So many mighty Kings
To beggary reduced!—When will he cease
To march on battle-fields?"—Then Ganelon
Responded:—"Such is not King Carle; no man
Alive who sees and knows him but will tell
How our great Emperor is Baron true.
I could not praise and honor him enough,
For no man lives so valiant and so good.
His valor ... who on earth could ever tell?
His soul God with such virtue has illumed,
I'd rather die than quit my noble lord!"

[29]

Aoi.

XLII.

The Pagan said:—"Amazed am I at Carle
So old and so white-haired; his age, I know,
Two hundred years and more. His limbs he toiled
Across so many lands; so oft was struck
By swords and spears; so many kings compelled
To beg!—When will he cease to war?"—"Carle?—ne'er!"
Ganelon answered, "while his nephew lives:
No vassal like him 'neath the starry arch;

[30]

And bold as he his comrade Olivier.
The twelve Peers held by Carle so dear, behold!
The vanguard form of twenty thousand knights;
With them King Carle is safe, and fears no man."

Aoi.

XLIII.

Again the Pagan:—"I am wonder-struck
On knowing Carle so old and so white-haired!
Methinks he passed two hundred years; by arms
He won so many lands—so many wounds
In battle he received from trenchant swords!
So many powerful kings on battle-fields
Conquered or slew!—When will he cease to war?"
"—Never!"—said Ganelon, "while lives Rollánd:
From here to farthest east no knight his peer
E'er lived: his comrade too, Count Olivier,
Is brave; and the twelve Peers, so dear to Carle,
The van-guard make of twenty thousand knights.
Carle may have peace, and fears no living man!"

Aoi.

XLIV.

"Fair Sire," said King Marsile to Ganelon,
"Than mine no fairer people can you see:
Four hundred thousand knights I can array
In combat 'gainst King Carle and 'gainst his Franks."—
Ganelon says:—"The time has not yet come,
Yea, and great loss your people then will have.
But leave this folly, and to wisdom hold;
Offer the King of treasures such a store
That all the French will marvel at the gift.
For twenty hostages that you will send,
Back to Sweet France will Carle ere long repair.
His rear-guard, notice well, will rest behind:
There will Rollánd, his nephew, be, I trow,
With Olivier the brave and courteous knight.
Trust to my counsel and both Counts are doomed,
Nay, Carle shall see his lofty pride cast down
And never more shall covet war with you."

Aoi.

XLV.

[Thus King Marsile] said:—"Fair sire Ganelon,
What means have I to kill the Count Rollánd?"
Ganelon answered:—"This can I well say:
The King will reach the wider pass of Sizre
And leave his rear behind, where great Rollánd
Eke Olivier, whom both he greatly trusts,
Will be the chiefs of twenty thousand Franks.
On these your hundred thousand Pagans throw,
And let them straightway make an onset fierce:
Stricken and slain shall be the men of France;
I say not that of yours none shall be slain,
But follow up this fight with like attack,
And Count Rollánd cannot escape them both,
Then will you deeds of chivalry achieve,
And free your life from war for evermore."

Aoi.

XLVI.

"Who could contrive that there Rollánd should die,
Would strike off Carle's right arm. Then on the field
That wond'rous host in death shall lie. No more
Thereafter could King Carle such forces raise,
And the Great Land at last would rest in peace."
Marsile, this hearing, kissed him on the neck,
And then began his treasures to display.

Aoi.

[31]

[32]

XLVII.

Exclaimed Marsile:—"What further [shall I say?]
 No good adviser he of faith unsure.
 Swear if Rollánd be there that he shall die!"
 Thus answered Ganelon:—"Your will be done."
 Upon the relics of his sword Murgleis
 The treason swore; thus forfeited himself.
 Aoi.

[33]

XLVIII.

An ivory-faldstool there was set. Marsile
 The order gives to bring a book before it,
 Mohammed's law and that of Tervagant,
 The Spanish Saracen thus took his oath:
 "If in the rear-guard Count Rollánd be found,
 He will attack him there with all his men;
 And, if it may be, there Rollánd shall die."
 Ganelon answers:—"May [our treaty thrive!]"
 Aoi.

XLIX.

Behold a Pagan, Valdabrun, who armed
 Marsile a Knight; with cheerful smile he said
 To Ganelon:—"Take this my sword; no man
 E'er drew its peer; the hilt alone is worth
 More than a thousand marks.—For love I give it,
 But lend us help against the Count Rollánd,
 And show us how to find him in the rear."
 "—So shall it be," replies Count Ganelon;
 Whereon they kissed each other's chin and face.

L.

Another Pagan came. 'Twas Climorin
 Who gayly smiling, said to Ganelon:
 "My helmet take—None better have I seen,
 But help us now against *Marchis* Rollánd
 That we may throw dishonor on his name."
 "—Well shall it be," responded Ganelon,
 And then they kissed each other's lips and cheek.
 Aoi.

[34]

LI.

And now behold, comes Bramimunde the Queen;
 "Sire Ganelon," said she, "I love you much,
 You, by my sire and all our men esteemed.
 Two necklaces unto your wife I send,
 With jacinths and with amethysts and gold
 Adorned, worth more than all the wealth of Rome;
 Jewels so rich your Emp'ror never had."
 The Count receives and puts them in his hose.
 Aoi.

LII.

The King calls up Malduit, his treasurer:
 "Hast thou prepared my gifts for Carle the King?"
 Malduit responds:—"Yea sire, the whole are there:
 Seven hundred camels with their loads of gold
 And silver; then of hostages a score,
 The noblest ever lived beneath the stars."
 Aoi.

[35]

LIII.

Marsile took by the shoulder Ganelon
 And told him:—"Thou hast wisdom and art brave.
 By that great law ye hold the best, beware
 Thy heart fails not. Rich treasures will I give

To thee: ten mules laden with purest gold
From Araby; each year shall bring the like.
Meantime of this great city take the keys,
And in my name present this wealth to Carle.
But let Rollánd be ordered to the rear.
If in the pass or mount I find the knight,
I swear to give him combat to the death."
Says Ganelon:—"Methinks too long I stay."—
He mounts his horse and goes upon his way.
Aoi.

LIV.

The Emperor nears his realm, and reaching now
The city of Valterne sacked by Rollánd
And left in ruins, which thereafter lay
A hundred years a desert; there he waits
For news of Ganelon, and tribute due
By the great land of Spain. One morning when
The early dawn was brightening into day,
Count Ganelon drew nigh unto the camp.

[36]

Aoi.

LV.

In early morn the Emperor arose.
Having attended mass and matins both,
Upon the verdant grass, before his tent
He stood, surrounded by the Count Rollánd,
The valorous Olivier, and the Duke Naimes,
With many more besides. There also came
The perjurer, the treacherous Ganelon,
Who, stepping forth, with most perfidious tongue
Began to speak:—"Hail! God save Carle the King!—
I bring you here the keys of Sarraguce:
Great treasures follow through my care conveyed
With hostages a score. So, guard them well.
The King Marsile the brave bears not the blame
If I bring not the Kalif unto you.
Myself three hundred thousand men in arms
Beheld, with hauberks clad, and helmets clasped,
Swords by their sides, hilts bright with gold inlaid,
Who with him crossed the sea, not to submit
To Christ's law which they will not hold nor keep.
But scarce five leagues had they sailed on the main,
When wind and tempest rising, down they sank.
All perished!... Never shall you see them more.
Had but the Kalif lived, I would have brought
Him hither. For the Pagan King, know well,
Ere you shall see this first month pass away,
Your vassal will he be, with joinèd hands,
And hold the realm of Spain a fief from you."
Thus said the King:—"Thanks be to God for this!
Well have you done, and great your recompense
Shall be."—He bids a thousand trumpets sound...
The camp is struck:—the Franks then load their mules
And set forth on their journey to Sweet France.

[37]

Aoi.

THE REAR GUARD.

[38]

ROLLÁND DOOMED TO DEATH.

LVI.

King Carle the Great has made a waste of Spain,
The cities violated, the castles seized.
Now saith the King his war is at an end,

And toward Sweet France the Emperor directs
His steed.... The Count Rollánd the pennon white
Has planted on a hill, high 'gainst the sky.
In all the country round the Franks their tents
Are pitching, while the Pagans ride along
The mighty vales. In hauberk clad—their backs
In armor cased; with helmets clasped—sword girt
On thigh—shields on their necks—each lance in rest,
Within a thicket on the mount they halt.
Four hundred thousand men there wait the dawn.
The French yet know it not. Ah God! what woe!
Aoi.

LVII.

[39]

Passes the day; the shades of night have fallen.
Carle the great Emp'ror sleeps; and in a dream
He marches through the deep defiles of Sizre.
In his right hand his ashen spear he holds,
Which suddenly Count Ganelon has snatched
From him, and shook and brandished in such wise
That, breaking, high tow'rd Heav'n the splinters flew.
Carle sleeps—naught from his slumber can arouse him.
Aoi.

LVIII.

Another vision followed hereupon:
He is in France, in his *Chapelle*, at Aix.
A bear his right arm caught with such sharp fangs
[That from the bone the flesh is torn away.]
From toward Ardennes he saw a leopard come,
Which in his dream, made on him fierce attack;
But then a greyhound dashes from the hall
Unto Carle's rescue, swift of leap and bound;
First from the treach'rous bear the hound tears off
An ear, then with the leopard combat makes.
"See!" cry the French, "what battle fierce is here."
But they know not which of the two will win
The field—Carle still asleep naught can awake.
Aoi.

[40]

LIX.

Vanished the night, and the clear dawn appeared.
With noble mien the Emperor mounts his steed,
And 'mid the host one thousand trumpets sound:
"Barons," said Carle:—"You see those deep defiles
And narrow passes—judge who in the rear
Will take command." Said Ganelon:—"Rollánd,
My step-son, whom among your valiant knights
You prize the most." Carle hearing this, upon
Him sternly looked:—"Thou art the devil's self,"
Said he, "or else a mortal rage has stung
Thy heart! Say, who before me in the van
Will march? 'Twill be Ogier de Dannemarche!
You have no better Baron for the post."
Aoi.

LX.

[41]

When hears the Count Rollánd the lot has fallen
Upon himself, as loyal knight he speaks:—
"You, sire step-father, dear and well beloved
Must be, since you have named me for the rear;
Nor shall Carl'magne, the King of France, lose aught,
Nor palfrey, nor fleet steed, if knowledge true
I have, nor male nor female mule that man
Can ride, nor beast of burden, horse or ass,
Unreckoned for with these good swords of ours."
Said Ganelon:—"The truth you speak, I know."
Aoi.

LXI.

When hears Rollánd the rear shall be his lot,
 To his step-father thus in wrath he speaks:—
 "Ah! traitor, evil man of race impure,
 Thou thought'st to see me here let fall the glove
 As thou erst dropped the staff before the King!"

Aoi.

LXII.

The Count Rollánd [addressing thus Carl'magne:]
 "Give me the bow that now your hand doth hold,
 For, to my knowledge, none will e'er throw blame
 On me for dropping it, as fell on earth
 Your right hand glove, when he received the staff."
 With head declined the Emperor remains:
 Oft plucks and twists the beard on lip and cheek,
 Nor can his eyes restrain their falling tears.

[42]

Aoi.

LXIII.

Naimes after came—no better ever was
 A vassal in the court. He said to Carle:
 "You hear him; greatly wroth is Count Rollánd;
 The rear guard is assigned to his command;
 No baron have you that with him would make
 Exchange. Give him the bow and your hand has bent,
 And look for those who best may lend him help."
 Carle gives the bow which Count Rollánd receives.

Aoi.

LXIV.

The Emperor calls to Rollánd and says:—
 "Fair sire, my nephew, truly you must know
 Half of my army will I leave with you;
 Keep them; in their good help your safety lies."
 Then said the Count:—"Of this will I do naught!
 May God confound me, ere my race I shame;
 But twenty thousand valiant knights I keep!
 Through the defiles you can in safety pass
 And fear no harm from man while yet I live."

[43]

Aoi.

LXV.

Rollánd sits on his steed, and nigh him rides
 His comrade Olivier. There came Gerin,
 Gerier the brave, Othon and Berengier;
 There came Sansun, Anseïs the fierce; there came
 Also Gerard de Roussillon the old,
 Together with the *Gasquin* Engelier.
 The Archbishop said:—"I, by my head, will go!"
 "—And I with you," exclaimed the Count Gualtier;
 "Rollánd's own man am I, and follow him!"
 From all are chosen twenty thousand knights.

Aoi.

LXVI.

The Count Rollánd calls up Gualtier de l'Hum:
 "One thousand Franks of France, our land, array,
 And with them cover heights and passes, that
 The Emperor may lose none of his host."
 Responds Gualtier:—"This am I bound to do
 For you."—Forthwith one thousand Franks of France
 O'errun each height and pass.—None shall descend
 Despite ill news, ere seven hundred swords
 Unsheathe. That very day King Almaris
 Who rules Belferne, met them with battle fierce.

[44]

Aoi.

LXVII.

High are the mounts, the valleys murky-dark—
 The rocks are black, the gorges terrible.
 The French toiled through them painfully; their march
 Was heard for fifteen leagues; then the Great land
 Reaching, they viewed Gasconne, their lord's estate,
 And sweet remembrance felt of honors, fiefs,
 Of lovely maidens and of noble wives:
 Not one is there but weeps from tenderness;
 But more than all is Carle distressed; he mourns
 His nephew left in the defiles of Spain....
 By pity moved he cannot choose but weep.
 Aoi.

LXVIII.

[45]

The twelve Peers staid in Spain. A thousand score
 Of Franks are under their command, to whom
 Unknown is wavering fear or dread of death.
 Carl'magne to France returns—within his cloak
 He hides his face—Naimés, riding near, inquired:
 "What thought, O King, weighs now upon your heart?"—
 "Who questions me doth wrong. So sad am I
 I can but mourn. Sweet France by Ganelon
 Shall be destroyed. An angel in my sleep
 Appeared, and, dreaming, I beheld my lance
 Broken up within my hand by him who named
 My nephew for the rear guard ... and I left
 Him in a foreign land;—O mighty God,
 Should I lose him, I ne'er should find his peer!"
 Aoi.

LXIX.

Carle the great King, no more restrains his tears:
 One hundred thousand Franks great sympathy
 Give him, with strangest fear for Count Rollánd.
 Vile Ganelon, the wretch, this treason wrought!
 He, from the Pagan King received rich gifts
 Of gold and silver, silk and ciclatons,
 Lions and camels, horses, mules. Behold,
 King Marsile summons all his Counts from Spain,
 His Viscounts, Dukes and Almazours; with these
 The Emirs, and the sons of noble Counts;
 Four hundred thousand gathered in three days,
 In Sarraguze are beaten all the drums;
 Mohammed's image to the loftiest tower
 Is raised on high.—No Pagan but adores
 And prays before him.—They then madly ride
 Throughout the land, o'er mountain and o'er vale.
 At last they see the gonfalons of France;
 It is the rear-guard of the twelve compeers:
 Nor will they fail to give them battle now.
 Aoi.

[46]

LXX.

Hastes to the front the nephew of Marsile,
 Goading the mule that bears him, with a staff.
 Says to his uncle, gayly laughing loud:
 "Fair King, till now I served you well; for you
 Endured hard pain and grief.—The only fee
 I ask is this:—To strike Rollánd! I swear
 To give him death with my good trenchant sword,
 And if his help Mohammed will bestow,
 On me, forever shall all Spain be free,
 From the defiles of Aspre to Durestant.
 Carle then will yield,—the Franks, surrender all;
 No more in all your life will you have war."
 The King Marsile bestows on him the glove.
 Aoi.

[47]

LXXI.

The nephew of Marsile holds in his grasp
The glove, and to the King with haughty pride
Speaks:—"Fair Sire King, your gift I dearly prize;
Choose you for me eleven of your Knights,
And I will go and combat the twelve Peers."
The first response was that of Falsaun:
He was the brother of the King Marsile.—
"Fair nephew, we shall go, both you and I;
In battle side by side, we shall engage.
The rear of Carle's great host is doomed to die!"
Aoi.

LXXII.

King Corsalis stands on the other side;
He comes from Barbary; a soul of guile.
Still speaks he there not unlike vassal true
Who would not for the gold of heav'n be base:
"If there I find Rollànd, we meet in fight. [48]
I am the third; now choose ye out the fourth."
See you the spurring Malprimis de Brigal,
Faster on foot than runs the fastest steed?
Before Marsile in a loud voice he cries:
"I shall my body take to Ronceval;
If there I find Rollànd, by me he dies."
Aoi.

LXXIII.

An Emir now is there, from Balaguer.
Of handsome form, with proud and cheerful face,
When on his steed he vaults, well doth he show
With what great pride his armor's mail is borne.
For truest vassalage he is renowned;
Were he but Christian, 'twere a baron true.
Before Marsile he stands and loudly cries:
"My body I will take to Ronceval;
If there I face Rollànd his doom is sure,
Eke Olivier and the twelve peers, all die.
The Franks shall perish in despair and shame.
Carl'magne is old and dotes. O'erwhelmed, at last
He will give up this waging war, and Spain
Forever shall be kept beneath our sway."
The King Marsile on him bestows great thanks.
Aoi.

LXXIV. [49]

Then from the Moorish land an Almazour
Steps forth. All Spain can show no greater wretch.
Before Marsile he makes a boastful vaunt:
"To Ronceval will I my people lead—
Full twenty thousand men with lance and shield.
If I Rollànd find there, I pledge his death;
No after-day shall dawn but Carle shall weep."
Aoi.

LXXV.

From elsewhere comes Turgis de Turteluse.
He is a count, and o'er this city wields
His sway; hate unto Christians has he vowed,
And stands with all the rest before Marsile.
He thus addressed the king: "Ne'er be dismayed!
More worth Mohammed than Saint Pierre of Rome;
But serve him well, the honor of the field
[Is ours]. I'll meet Rollànd at Ronceval
Where none can guard him. Mark this sword of mine;
Its blade, so good and long, in desperate fight
Will cross with Durendal; and you will hear
Which of the two shall win the victory.
Abandoned unto us the French must die. [50]
The old King Carle will have both grief and shame,
And never more on earth will wear a crown."

Aoi.

LXXVI.

Comes up besides Escremiz de Valterne,
A Saracen, and of that country lord.
Before Marsile among the throng he cries:
"To Ronceval I go, to crush the proud;
Nor shall Rollánd, if there, bear off his head,
Nor Olivier, chief of the other knights;
The twelve peers, all are doomed to perish there.
The French shall die, and France become a waste.
Of such good vassals Carle will see the loss."

Aoi.

LXXVII.

And came with Esturgant, Estramaris,
His friend; both wretches, traitors, villains are....
Thus spake Marsile: "Come forth, Seigneurs; ye both
To Ronceval's defiles shall go and help
Me there to lead my host." Both answer: "King,
At your command, Rollánd and Olivier
Will we assault. No power can the twelve peers
From death defend against our trenchant swords
Whose blades shall redden with hot blood. The French
Are doomed to death and Carle to doleful life.
France, the Great Land, shall through our arms become
Your realm. Come, King, to see this verified;
The Emperor's self a captive we'll present."

Aoi.

LXXVIII.

There hastens Margariz de Sibilie
Who holds the country toward the distant sea.
His beauty such, all ladies are his friends;
Not one looks on him but to smile, nor can
Restrain her laughing joy. No Pagan else
More glorious deeds of chivalry achieved;
Pressed through the crowd, he cries above the rest
Unto the king: "Be not dismayed, for I
To Ronceval will go to kill Rollánd,
And Olivier shall not escape alive;
To martyrdom the twelve Peers are condemned.
See my good sword with gold-embossed hilt,
Given me by the *Amiralz* of Prime;
I pledge my faith it will be dyed in blood.
The French shall perish, France be steeped in shame,
And Carle the old, with beard all blossom-white,
Shall see no day uncursed by grief and wrath.
Before one year we shall have conquered France
And slept beneath the roofs of Saint-Denis."
At this, the Pagan king bowed low his head.

Aoi.

LXXIX.

Next you can see Chernubles de [Val-neire].
His hair so long, it sweeps the earth, and he
Can, for his sport, lift greater weight than bear
Four hundred loaded mules.—In his [far-land]
They say—the sun ne'er shines, corn cannot grow,
The rain falls not, the dew wets not the soil;
No stone there but is black, and it is said
By some that in that land the demons dwell.
Thus said Chernubles:—"My sword hangs at my belt;
At Ronceval I will dye it crimson! should
I find Rollánd the brave upon my path,
Nor strike him down, then trust to me no more;
This my good sword shall conquer Durendal,
The French shall die, and France must be destroyed."
At these words, rally King Marsile's twelve Peers,
And lead one hundred thousand Saracens

Who for the battle hasten and prepare,
Arming themselves beneath a grove of pines.
Aoi.

LXXX.

The Pagans put their Moorish hauberks on;
The greater part are triply lined; they lace
Their helms of Sarraguce, gird to their thighs
Swords of Vienna steel; bright are their shields;
Their lances from Valence; their banners white
And blue and crimson. Mules and sumpter-beasts
Are left behind. They mount their battle steeds,
And forward press in closely serried lines.
Clear was the day, and brilliant was the sun;
No armor but reflected back the light.
A thousand clarions sound their cheering blasts
So loud, the French can hear—. Says Olivier:
"Rollând, companion, hearken! Soon, methinks,
We shall have battle with the Saracens!"
To which Rollând: "God grant it may be so.
Here must we do our duty to our King;
A man should for his Lord and for his cause
Distress endure, and bear great heat and cold,
Lose all, even to his very hair and skin!
'Tis each man's part to strike with mighty blows,
That evil songs of us may ne'er be sung.
The wrong cause have the Pagans, we the right.
No ill example e'er shall come from me."
Aoi.

[54]

PRELUDE TO THE GREAT BATTLE.

[55]

LXXXI.

Olivier from the summit of a hill
On his right hand looks o'er a grassy vale,
And views the Pagans' onward marching hordes;
Then straight he called his faithful friend Rollând:
"From Spain a distant rumbling noise I hear,
So many hauberks white and flashing helms
I see!—This will inflame our French men's hearts.
The treason is the work of Ganelon
Who named us for this post before the King."
"Hush! Olivier!"—the Count Rollând replies,
"'Tis my step-father, speak no other word."
Aoi.

LXXXII.

Count Olivier is posted on a hill
From whence Spain's Kingdom he descries, and all
The swarming host of Saracens; their helms
So bright bedecked with gold, and their great shields,
Their 'broidered hauberks, and their waving flags,
He cannot count the squadrons; in such crowds
They come, his sight reached not unto their end.
Then all bewildered he descends the hill,
Rejoins the French, and all to them relates.
Aoi.

[56]

LXXXIII.

Said Olivier: "I have seen Pagans more
Than eyes e'er saw upon the earth; at least
One hundred thousand warriors armed with shields,
In their white hauberks clad, with helmets laced,
Lances in rest, and burnished brazen spears.
Battle ye will have, such as ne'er was before.
French Lords, may God inspire you with his strength!
Stand firm your ground, that we may not succumb."

The French say: "Cursed be those who fly the field!
Ready to die, not one shall fail you here."

Aoi.

ROLAND'S PRIDE.

[57]

LXXXIV.

Olivier said: "So strong the Pagan host;
Our French, methinks, in number are too few;
Companion Rollánd, sound your horn, that Carle
May hear and send his army back to help."
Rollánd replies:—"Great folly would be mine,
And all my glory in sweet France be lost.
No, I shall strike great blows with Durendal;
To the golden hilt the blade shall reek with blood.
In evil hour the felon Pagans came
Unto the Pass, for all are doomed to die!"

Aoi.

LXXXV.

"Rollánd, companion, sound your olifant,
That Carle may hear and soon bring back the host.
With all his Baronage the king will give
Us held!"—Replied Rollánd:—"May God fore-fend
That for my cause my kindred e'er be blamed,
Or that dishonor fall upon sweet France.
Nay, I will deal hard blows with Durendal,
This my good sword now girt unto my side
Whose blade you'll see all reeking with red blood.
Those felon Pagans have for their ill fate
Together met—yea, death awaits them all."

Aoi.

LXXXVI.

"Companion Rollánd, sound your olifant!
If Carle who passes through the mounts shall hear,
To you I pledge my word, the French return."
Answered Rollánd:—"May God forbid!—Ne'er be
It said by living man that Pagans could
Cause me to blow my horn, to bring disgrace
Upon my kin!—When on the battle field,
I'll strike one thousand seven hundred blows,
And Durendal all bleeding shall you see.
[The French are brave and bravely will they strike.]
Those Spanish Moors are doomed to certain death."

Aoi.

LXXXVII.

[59]

Olivier said:—"To me there seems no shame;
I have beheld the Moors of Spain; they swarm
O'er mountains, vales and lands, hide all the plains;
Great is this stranger host; our number small."
Rollánd replies:—"The more my ardor grows.
God and his [blessed] angels grant that France
Lose naught of her renown through my default.
Better to die than in dishonor [live.]
The more we strike the more Carle's love we gain!"

Aoi.

LXXXVIII.

Rollánd is brave and Olivier is wise;
Both knights of wond'rous courage—and in arms
And mounted on their steeds, they both will die
Ere they will shun the fight. Good are the Counts
And proud their words.—The Pagan felons ride
In fury on!—"Rollánd," said Olivier,

"One moment, look! Our foes so close, and Carle
Afar from us—you have not deigned to blow
Your horn! If came the king, no hurt were ours.
Cast your eyes toward the great defiles of Aspre;
There see this most unhappy rear-guard. [Those
Who here fight, ne'er shall fight on other fields.]"
Rollànd retorts:—"Speak not such shameful words.
Woe unto him who bears a coward's heart
Within his breast. There firm shall we remain;
The combat and the blows from us shall come."
Aoi.

[60]

LXXXIX.

Now when Rollànd the battle sees at hand,
More than a leopard's or a lion's pride
He shows. He calls the French and Olivier:
"Companion, friend, pray, speak of this no more.
The Emperor who left his French in trust
To us, has chos'n those twenty thousand men.
Right well he knows none has a coward's soul.
A man should suffer hurt for his good lord,
Endure great cold or scorching heat, and give
Even to his flesh and blood—Strike with your lance,
And I with Durendal, my trusty sword,
Carle's gift. If here I die, may he who wins
It, say:—"Twas once the sword of a brave knight."
Aoi.

XC.

[61]

Turpin the Archbishop from another side,
Spurring his courser, mounts a hill and calls
The French around. This sermon to them speaks:
"*Seigneurs Barons*, Carle left us here: for him,
Our King, our duty is to die, to aid
In saving Christendom, the Faith of Christ
Uphold. There, battle will ye have, for there
Before your eyes behold the Saracens.
Confess your sins, and for God's mercy pray!
For your soul's cure I absolution give....
If you should die, as holy martyrs ye
Will fall, and places find in Paradise!"
The French alight and fall upon their knees;
The Godly Archbishop grants them benison,
Giving for penance his command to strike.
Aoi.

XCI.

The French arise. They stand assoiled and quit
Of all sins, blessed by Turpin in God's name.
On swift destriers they mount, armed cap-a-pie
As Knights arrayed for battle. Count Rollànd
Calls Olivier:—"Companion, sire, full well
You know, it is Count Ganelon who has
Betrayed us all, and guerdon rich received
In gold and silver; well the Emp'ror should
Avenge us! King Marsile a bargain made
Of us, but swords will make the reck'ning good."
Aoi.

[62]

XCII.

Through the defiles of Spain hath passed Rollànd
Mounted on Veillantif, his charger swift
And strong, bearing his bright and glitt'ring arms.
On goes the brave Rollànd, his lance borne up
Skyward, beneath its point a pennon bound,
Snow-white, whose fringes flap his hand.
Fair is his form, his visage bright with smiles.
Behind him follows Olivier his friend;
The French with joy, him as their champion, hail.
He on the Heathens throws a haughty glance,

But casts a sweet and humble look upon
His French, and to them speaks with courteous tone:
"Seigneurs Barons, march steadily and close.
These Pagans hither came to find a grave;
We here shall conquer such great spoil to-day
As never yet was gained by Kings of France."
Even as he spoke the word, the armies met.

[63]

Aoi.

XCIII.

Said Olivier:—"No care have I to speak,
Since you deigned not to blow your olifant,
All hope of help from Carle for you is lost.
He knows no word of this; the fault lies not
In him, nor are yon Knights to blame—ride on
And gallop to the charge as best you can.
Seigneurs Barons, recoil not from the foe,
In God's name! bearing ever this in mind,
Hard blows to deal and hard blows to endure
Forget we not the war-cry of King Carle!"
At this word all the French together shout.
Who then had heard the cry, "Montjoie!" had known
What courage is. Then all together rush
Right onward; God! with what an onset fierce!
Deeply they spur their steeds for greater speed;
They burn to fight. What else can they desire?
The Saracens stand firm and nothing fear....
Behold the Franks and Pagans hand to hand....

Aoi.

THE MELEE.

[64]

XCIV.

The nephew of Marsile—his name Aëlroth,
Forward the first of all spurs on his horse
Against our French, hurling forth insulting words:
"To-day, French villains, ye will joust with us;
Who was to guard you, has betrayed you; mad
Must be the King who left you in the pass.
So now the honor of sweet France is lost,
And Carle the great shall lose his right arm here."
Rollând heard.—God! what pain to him! He drives
His golden spurs into his courser's flanks,
And rushes at full speed against Aëlroth;
His shield he breaks, dismails the hauberik linked;
Cleaving his breast, he severs all the bones,
And from the spine the ribs disjoint. The lance
Forth from his body thrusts the Pagan's soul;
The Heathen's corse reels from his horse, falls down
Upon the earth, the neck cloven in two halves.
Rollând still taunts him:—"Go thou, wretch, and know
Carle was not mad. Ne'er did he treason love,
And he did well to leave us in the pass.
To-day sweet France will not her honor lose!
Strike, Frenchmen, strike; the first sword-stroke is ours;
We have the right, these gluttons have the wrong!"

[65]

Aoi.

XCV.

Then comes a Duke whose name is Falsarun;
He is the brother of the King Marsile.
The lands of Dathan and of Abirun
He holds: no viler wretch lives under Heaven.
Vast is his forehead, and the space between
His deeply sunken eyes is half a foot.
Seeing his nephew dead, in grief he bounds
Forth from the serried ranks, and shouts aloud
The Pagan war-cry, furious 'gainst the French.

"To-day," he cries, "at last sweet France shall lose
Her fame!"—When Olivier heard this, in wrath
He pricks with golden spurs his charger's flanks,
And, like true baron, lifts his arm to strike,
Shivers the Pagan's shield, his hauberk tears
Apart. The pennon's folds pass through his breast
As with the shaft he hurls him from the selle,
A mangled corpse;—here lies he on the ground.
Unto the prostrate body Olivier
Says proudly:—"Wretch, to me thy threats are vain!
Strike boldly, Franks! The victory shall be ours!
Montjoie!" he shouts, the battle-cry of Carle.

[66]

Aoi.

XCVI.

A king, named Corsablis, from Barbarie,
A distant land, is there.—The Pagan host
He calls;—"The field is ours with ease: the French
So few in numbers we may well disdain,
Nor Carle shall rescue one; all perish here.
To-day, they all are doomed to death!" Turpin
The Archbishop heard him; lived no man on earth
He hated more than Corsablis; he pricks
His horse with both his spurs of purest gold,
And 'gainst him rushes with tremendous force.
The shield and hauberk split; and with a stroke
Of the long lance into his body driven,
Corsablis lifeless drops across the path;
Him, though a corpse, Turpin addresses thus:
"Thou, coward Pagan, thou hast lied! Great Carl
My lord, was ever and will ever be
Our help; and Frenchmen know not how to fly.
As for thy fellows, we can keep them here;
I tell you, each this day shall die.—Strike, Franks,
Yourselves forget not. This first blow, thank God,
Is ours! Montjoie!" cries he, to hold the field.

[67]

Aoi.

XCVII.

Gerin attacks Malprimis de Brigal
Whose good shield now was not a denier worth:
The crystal boss all broken, and one half
Fall'n on the ground. Down to the flesh Gerin
His hauberk cleaves, and passes through his heart
The brazen point of a stout lance. Then falls
The Pagan chief and dies by that good blow;
And Sathanas bears off the wretched soul.

Aoi.

XCVIII.

Gerier, his comrade, strikes the Amurafle,
Breaks his good shield, his hauberk white unmails,
Plants in his heart a spear's steel point with such
Good aim, one blow has pierced the body through;
And his strong lance-thrust hurls him dead to earth.—
Said Olivier: "A noble combat ours!"

[68]

Aoi.

XCIX.

Duke Sansun rushes on the Almazour;
He splits the shield with painted flowers and gold
Embossed. The strong-mailed hauberk shelters not,
As he is pierced through liver, heart and lungs.
For him may mourn who will—death-struck he falls:
"That is a Baron's stroke!" the Archbishop cries.

Aoi.

C.

Anseïs gives his steed the rein, and charges
Fierce on Turgis de Turteluse; beneath
The golden boss asunder breaks the shield,
Rips up the hauberk double-linked; so true
The thrust, that all the steel passed through his breast.
With this one blow the shaft has struck him dead.
Rollánd exclaimed: "The stroke is of a Knight!"

Aoi.

CI.

Then Engelier, the Gascuin of Burdele,
Spurs deep his horse, and casting loose the rein,
Rushes upon Escremez de Valterne;
Breaks down the buckler fastened to his throat
And rends his gorget-mail; full in the breast
The lance strikes deep and passes in between
The collar bones; dead from the saddle struck
He falls.—And Turpin says: "Ye all are lost!"

Aoi.

CII.

Othon assails a Pagan, Estorgant,
His thrust hits hard the leather of the shield,
Effacing its bright colors red and white,
Breaks in his hauberk's sides, and plunges deep
Within his heart a strong and trenchant spear,
From off the flying steed striking him dead.
This done, he says:—"No hope for you remains!"

Aoi.

CIII.

And Berengier smites now Estramaris,
Splits down his shield, shivers his coat of mail
In shreds and through his bosom drives a lance.
Dead 'midst one thousand Saracens he drops.
Of their twelve Peers now ten have breathed their last:
Chernuble—Margariz, the Count, survive.

Aoi.

CIV.

Most valiant Knight is Margariz. 'Mid all
Beauteous, strong, slender, quick of hand. He spurs
His horse and charges Olivier; beneath
The boss of purest gold his shield breaks down,
Then at his side a pointed lance he aims;
But God protects him, for the blow ne'er reached
The flesh. The point grazed only, wounding not.
Then Margariz unhindered rides away
And sounds his horn to rally his own men.

Aoi.

CV.

The battle rages fierce. All men engage.
Rollánd, the dauntless, combats with his lance
As long as holds the shaft. Fifteen good blows
It dealt, then broke and fell; now his good sword,
Loved Durendal, he draws, spurs on his steed
'Gainst Chernubles, splits his bright helm adorned
With gems; one blow cleaves through mail-cap and skull,
Cutting both eyes and visage in two parts,
And the white hauberk with its close-linked mail;
Down to the body's fork, the saddle all
Of beaten gold, still deeper goes the sword,
Cuts through the courser's chine, nor seeks the joint.
Upon the verdant grass fall dead both knight
And steed. And then he cries: "Wretch! ill inspired
To venture here! Mohammed helped thee not....
Wretches like you this battle shall not win."

Aoi.

CVI.

The Count Rolland rides through the battle-field
And makes, with Durendal's keen blade in hand,
A mighty carnage of the Saracens.
Ah! had you then beheld the valiant Knight
Heap corse on corse; blood drenching all the ground;
His own arms, hauberck, all besmeared with gore,
And his good steed from neck to shoulder bleed!
Still Olivier halts not in his career.
Of the twelve Peers not one deserves reproach,
And all the French strike well and massacre
The foe. The Pagans dead or dying fall.
Cries the Archbishop: "Well done, Knights of France!
Montjoie! Montjoie! It is Carle's battle cry!"

[72]

Aoi.

CVII.

Olivier grasps the truncheon of his lance,
Spurs through the storm and fury of the fight,
And rushes on the Pagan Malsarun,
Breaks down his shield with flowers and gold embossed,
Thrusts from their orbs his eyes; his brains dashed out
Are crushed and trampled 'neath the victor's feet;
With seven hundred men of theirs he fell.
The Count next slew Turgis and Estorgus;
But now the shaft breaks short off by his hand.
Then said Rolland: "What mean you, *Compagnon*?
In such a fight as this 'tis not a staff
We need, but steel and iron, as I deem.
Where now that sword called Halteclere, with hilt
Of gold and crystal pommel?" "I lack time
To draw it," valiant Olivier replies,
"So busy is my hand in dealing blows!"

[73]

Aoi.

CVIII.

Lord Olivier then his good sword unsheathed,
For which Rolland entreated him so much,
And showed it to his friend with knightly pride;
Strikes down a Pagan, Justin de Val-Ferrée,
Whose head is severed by the blow; cuts through
Th' embroider'd hauberck, through the body, through
The saddle all with studs and gold embossed,
And through the back-bone of the steed. Both man
And steed fall on the grass before him, dead.
Rolland exclaims: "Henceforth, you are indeed
My brother! These, the strokes loved by King Carle!"
And echoes round the cry: "Montjoie! Montjoie!"

Aoi.

CIX.

The Count Gerin sits on his horse, Sorel,
And his companion Gerier, on Passe-Cerf,
They loose the reins, and both spur on against
A Pagan, Timozel. One strikes the shield,
The other strikes the hauberck;—in his heart
The two spears meet and hurl him lifeless down.
I never heard it said nor can I know
By which of them the swifter blow was struck.—
Esperveris, son to Borel, was next
By Engelier de Burdele slain. Turpin
With his own hand gave death to Siglorel
Th' Enchanter who once entered hell, led there
By Jupiter's craft. Turpin said:—"Forfeit paid
For crime!"—"The wretch is vanquished," cried Rolland,
"My brother Olivier, such blows I love!"

[74]

Aoi.

The combat paused not. Franks and Pagans vie
 In dealing blows; attacking now, and now
 Defending. Splintered spears, dripping with blood
 So many; o'er the field such numbers strewn:
 Of banners torn and shattered gonfalons!
 So many valiant French mowed in their prime,
 Whom mothers and sweet wives will never see
 Again, nor those of France who in the Pass
 Await them! Carle for these shall weep and mourn.
 But what avails? Naught can he help them now.
 Ill service rendered Ganelon to them
 The day when he to Sarraguce repaired
 To sell his kin. Ere long for this he lost
 Both limb and life, judged and condemned at Aix,
 There to be hanged with thirty of his race
 Who were not spared the punishment of death.

[75]

Aoi.

CXI.

The battle rages. Wonders all perform;
 Rollánd and Olivier strike hard; Turpin
 Th' Archbishop, deals more than a thousand blows;
 The twelve Peers dally not upon the field,
 While all the French together fight as if
 One man. By hundreds and by thousands fall
 The Pagans: none escapes death, save those who fly
 Whether they will or no, all lose their lives.
 And yet the French have lost their strongest arms,
 Their fathers and their kin they will ne'er see
 Again, nor Carle who waits them in the Pass.

[76]

Meantime in France an awful scourge prevails:
 Wind, storm, rain, hail and flashing lightning bolts
 Conflict confusedly, and naught more true,
 The earth shook from Saint Michiel-del-Peril
 As far as to the Saints, from Besançon
 Unto the [sea-port] of Guitzand; no house
 Whose walls unshaken stood; darkness at noon
 Shrouded the sky. No beam of light above
 Save when a flash rips up the clouds. Dismayed
 Beholders cry:—"The world's last day has come,
 The destined end of all things is at hand!"
 Unwitting of the truth, their speech is vain....
 'Tis dolour for the death of Count Rollánd!

Aoi.

CXII.

The French [strike] hard; they strike with all their force.
 In multitudes—by thousands die their foes;
 Not two out of one hundred thousand now
 Survive. [Turpin] says:—"Brave are all our men;—
 None braver under Heaven—In the Geste
 Of France 'tis writ true vassals have our Kings."
 Seeking their friends, they overrun the field.
 Their eyes are filled with tenderness and tears
 For their dear kindred they so fondly loved....
 Now King Marsile with his great host appears....

[77]

Aoi.

CXIII.

Marsile advances 'midst a valley deep,
 Surrounded by the mighty host he brought,
 In twenty squadrons mustered and arrayed.
 Bright shine the helmets strewn with gold and gems,
 And shields and hauberks graced. They sound a charge
 With seven hundred clarions sending forth
 Loud blasts throughout the land—Thus said Rollánd:

"Companion Olivier, my brother, friend,
The traitor, Ganelon, has sworn our death....
His treason is too sure; the Emp'ror Carle
For this vile crime will take a vengeance deep.
A long and cruel battle we shall have,
Ere this unknown to man. There, I will fight
With my good Durendal; you, friend, will strike
With Halteclere—Those noble swords we bore
Throughout so many lands; such combats won
By them, vile strains must never chant their deeds."

[78]

Aoi.

CXIV.

When the French see the Pagan cohorts swarm
The country o'er, they call on Olivier,
Rollánd and the twelve Peers to guard their lives.
Unto them now the Archbishop speaks his mind:
"Barons, be not unworthy of yourselves!
Fly not the field, for God's sake, that brave men
Sing not ill songs of you! Far better die
In battle. Doomed, I know, we are to death,
And ere this day has passed, our lives are o'er.
But for one thing ye can believe my word:
For you God's Paradise stands open wide,
And seats await you 'mid the blessèd Saints."
These words of comfort reassure the French;
All in one voice cry out:—"Montjoie! Montjoie!"

Aoi.

CXV.

[79]

There was a Saracen from Sarraguce
Lord of one half the city—Climorin,
Unlike a Baron; he received the faith
Of Ganelon, and sealed the treacherous bond
By pressing on his lip a kiss—Besides
Unto him gave his sword and carbuncle.
"I will," said he, "put your great France to shame
And from the Emperor's head shake off the crown!"
Mounted on Barbamouche that faster flies
Than hawk or swallow on the wing, he spurs
His courser hard, and dropping on its neck
The rein, he strikes Engelier de Gascoigne;
Hauberk nor shield is for him a defense:
Deep in the core the Pagan thrusts his spear
So mightily, its point comes out behind,
And with the shaft o'erturns him on the field
A corse;—he cries. "Fit for destruction these!
Strike, Pagans, strike, and let us break their lines!"
The French cry: "God! to lose so brave a Knight!"....

Aoi.

CXVI.

The Count Rollánd calls Olivier: "You know,
Companion, sire, Engelier is no more....
No better Knight had we"—The Count replies:
"God grant that I avenge him well!" He drives
His golden spurs into his charger's flanks;
And waving Halteclere's blood dripping blade,
The Pagan he assails, and deals a blow....
O'erthrown is Climorin. The fiends of hell
Bear off his soul. The Knight then slays the Duke
Alphaiën, beheads Escababi,
Unhorsed seven Arabs with such skill
They rise no more to fight. Then said Rollánd:
"Wroth is my sire, and by my side achieves
Renown! by such good blows Carl's love is gained.
Strike, Chevaliers! strike on!"—he cries aloud.

[80]

Aoi.

CXVII.

From otherwhere is Valdabrun who armed
Marsile a Knight; lord of four hundred ships.
There is no sailor but swears by his name;
'Twas he by treason took Jerusalem,
Who there the shrine of Solomon profaned,
And slew before the Fonts the Patriarch;
'Twas he, received Count Ganelon's vile oath
And gave him with his sword a thousand marks;
Faster than falcon in its flight his steed
Named Graminond. He sharply spurs his flanks
And rushes 'gainst the mighty Duke Sansun,
Breaks down his shield—the hauberk rends, and thrusts
Within his breast the pennon of the flag;
The shaft o'erthrows him from the saddle, dead.
"Strike Pagans! strike, for we shall conquer them!"
The French say:—"God! what Baron true we lose!"
Aoi.

[81]

CXVIII.

When Count Rollánd sees Sansun lifeless fall,
You may well know what grief was his. He spurs
His horse down on the Pagan. Durendal
More worth than precious gold he lifts to strike
With all his might; gold studded helm, head, trunk,
Hauberk asunder cleaves; the blow, e'en through
The gold boss'd saddle, strikes the courser's back,
Killing both horse and man. Blame or approve
Who may. The Pagans say:—"Hard is this blow!"
Retorts Rollánd:—"For yours no pity can
I feel—With you the vaunting and the wrong!"
Aoi.

CXIX.

[82]

An African fresh from the desert land
Was there, Malquidant, son of king Malcud;
His armor highly wrought in beaten gold
Outshines all others in the sun's bright rays.
Mounted upon his horse named Salt-Perdut,
He aims a blow at Anseis' shield, and cuts
The azure and vermilion all away.
His hauberk rives asunder, side from side,
And through his body pass both point and shaft.
The Count is dead.—His last breath spent and flown.
The French say:—"Baron, such great woe for you!"
Aoi.

CXX.

The Archbishop Turpin rides across the fields;
No shaven priest sang ever mass so well
As he, and showed such prowess in his deeds.
He to the Pagan:—"May God send all ills
To thee, who slew the knight my heart bewails!"
Turpin spurs hard his good steed 'gainst the wretch;
One blow strikes down his strong Toledo shield:
The miscreant dead upon the green sward falls.
Aoi.

CXXI.

[83]

Elsewhere stands Grandomie who is the son
Of Capuel king of Cappadoce. He sits
A steed named Marmorie, than flying bird
More swift. Loosening the rein, and spurring deep,
To smite Gerin with all his force he rides;
Torn from the neck which bears it, shattered falls
The purple shield, through the rent mail he drives
The whole blue pennon in his breast. Gerin
Drops lifeless by this blow, against a rock.
The Pagan also slays Gerier, his friend,
And Berengier, and Gui de Saint-Antoine;
Assailing then the noble Duke Austoire

Who holds Valence and fiefs along the Rosne,
He strikes him dead. The Saracens extol
Their triumph, but how many fall of ours!
Aoi.

CXXII.

Hearing the Frenchmen's sobs, the Count Rollánd
Grasps in his hand his sword, all reeking blood.
His mighty heart nigh breaking with his grief,
Cries to the foe:—"May God all evils send
On thee! him hast thou slain for whom thou shalt
Most dearly pay!"— He spurs his flying steed....
Conquer who may—these two fight hand to hand.
Aoi.

[84]

CXXIII.

A wise and valiant knight was Grandonie,
Virtuous and fearless vassal. 'Mid his way
Encountering Count Rollánd, though never seen
Before, at once he knew 'twas he, as well
By his proud mien and noble beauty, as
By his fair countenance and lofty look.
Awe-struck, despite himself, he vainly tries
To fly, but rooted to the spot he stays.
The Count Rollánd smites him so skillfully,
He splits in two the nazal, helm, nose, mouth,
And teeth, the body and mailed-armor, then
Hews through the golden selle, both silver-flaps;
With a still deeper stroke the courser's back
Is gashed. So both are slain past remedy.
The men of Spain cry out all sorrowful;
But say the French:—"Well our defender strikes."
Aoi.

CXXIV.

Marv'lous the battle, and the tumult fierce;
The French of strength and fury full, raise high
Their swords: backs, ribs and wrists are slashed; the flesh
Cut through rent garments to the quick; along
The verdant soil the red blood runs in streams.
The Pagans cry:—"We cannot more endure!
Great land, Mohammed curse thee!—More than all
This people bold."—Not one who does not cry
"Marsile! ride on, O King, thy aid we need!"
Aoi.

[85]

CXXV.

A battle fierce and wonderful!—Hard strike
The French with glittering lance, and there you might
Have seen what miseries man can suffer: Mowed
And heaped in bloody mounds, all gasping out
Their lives, some on their backs, some on their teeth—
The Saracens give way, willing or not;
By the French lances forced, they fly the field.
Aoi.

CXXVI.

Marsile his warriors massacred beholds,
And, bidding all his horns and trumpets blow,
Rides forward, and his whole van rides with him.
In the van rode a Saracen, Abisme,
The vilest wretch among his men, sunk deep
In crimes and shame, who has no faith in God,
Sainte Marie's son; as black as melted pitch
His face; more fond of blood and treason foul
Than of the gold of all Galice. None saw
Him laugh or play; for courage and rash deeds
He pleased the vile Marsile whose dragon flag

[86]

He bears. No pity can the Archbishop feel
For him, and at his sight he craves to try
His arm, all softly saying to himself:
"This Saracen is but a heretic;
Far better die than not to give him death.
Ne'er cowardice nor coward I endured!"
Aoi.

CXXVII.

The Archbishop gives the signal for the fight;
He rides the horse he captured from Grossaille,
A King he slew among the Danes: a horse [87]
Of wondrous fleetness, light-hoofed, slender-limbed;
Thigh short; with broad and mighty haunch; the flanks
Are long, and very high his spine; pure white
His tail, and yellow is his mane—his ears
Are small—light brown his head. This paragon
Of all the beasts of earth has not his peer.
The Archbishop, baron-like, spurs on the horse,
Full bent upon the encounter with Abisme;
He gains his side and hard he strikes his shield
Glittering with gems, topaz and amethyst,
Crystals and carbuncles, which to him gave
The Emir Galafés—a demon's gift
To this in Val-Metas. Him Turpin smites
Nor mercy shows; 'gainst such a blow avails
The shield but little; sheer from side to side
Passes the blade ... dead on the place he falls.
At such exploit amazed, the French exclaim:
"The archbishop's crosier in his hand is safe!"
Aoi.

CXXVIII.

The Count Rollánd calls Olivier: "With me,
Companion, sire, confess that 'mong brave knights
The archbishop upon earth or under Heav'n [88]
Has not his peer in casting spear or lance."
Olivier answers:—"To his rescue on!"
At this the French once more resume the fight.
Hard are the blows, rough is the strife—Meantime
The Christian host in greatest sorrow mourn.
Aoi.

CXXIX.

Whoever could this fight describe? Rollánd
And Olivier vie with Turpin in skill
And glorious deeds—The slain can counted be;
In charts and briefs their numbers are enrolled:
More than four thousand fell, so says the Geste.
Four times the French arms were victorious,
But on the fifth, a cruel fate they met;
The knights of France found there a grave, except
Three more whose lives God saved; yet those brave knights,
Ere falling, their last breath will dearly sell.
Aoi.

THE HORN. [89]

CXXX.

Seeing so many warriors fall'n around,
Rollánd unto his comrade Olivier
Spoke thus: "Companion fair and dear, for God
Whose blessing rest on you, those vassals true
And brave lie corses on the battle-field:
Look! We must mourn for France so sweet and fair,
From henceforth widowed of such valiant knights.
Carle, 'would you were amongst us, King and friend!

What can we do, say, brother Olivier,
To bring him news of this sore strait of ours!"
Olivier answers:—"I know not; but this
I know; for us is better death than shame."
Aoi.

CXXXI.

Rollánd says;—"I will blow mine olifant,
And Carle will hear it from the pass. I pledge
My word the French at once retrace their steps." [90]
Said Olivier:—"This a great shame would be,
One which to all your kindred would bequeathe
A lifetime's stain. When this I asked of you,
You answered nay, and would do naught. Well, now
With my consent you shall not;—if you blow
Your horn, of valor true you show no proof.
Already, both your arms are drenched with blood."
Responds the Count:—"These arms have nobly struck."
Aoi.

CXXXII.

"The strife is rude," Rollánd says—"I will blow
My horn, that Carle may hear."—Said Olivier:—
"This would not courage be. What I desired,
Companion, you disdained. Were the king here,
Safe would we be, but yon brave men are not
To blame"—"By this my beard," said Olivier,
"I swear, if e'er I see again sweet Aude,
My sister, in her arms you ne'er shall lie."
Aoi.

CXXXIII.

Rollánd asked Olivier—"Why show to me
Your anger, friend!"—"Companion, yours the fault;
True courage means not folly. Better far [91]
Is prudence than your valiant rage. Our French
Their lives have lost, your rashness is the cause.
And now our arms can never more give Carle
Their service good. Had you believed your friend,
Amongst us would he be, and ours the field,
The King Marsile, a captive or a corse.
Rollánd, your valor brought ill fortune, nor
Shall Carle the great e'er more our help receive,
A man unequaled till God's judgment-day.
Here you shall die, and dying, humble France, ...
This day our loyal friendship ends—ere falls
The Vesper-eve, dolorously we part!"
Aoi.

CXXXIV.

The Archbishop heard their strife. In haste he drives
Into his horse his spurs of purest gold,
And quick beside them rides. Then chiding them,
Says:—"Sire Rollánd, and you, Sire Olivier,
In God's name be no feud between you two;
No more your horn shall save us; nathless 'twere
Far better Carle should come and soon avenge
Our deaths. So joyous then these Spanish foes [92]
Would not return. But as our Franks alight,
Find us or slain or mangled on the field,
They will our bodies on their chargers' backs
Lift in their shrouds with grief and pity, all
In tears, and bury us in holy ground:
And neither wolves, nor swine, nor curs shall feed
On us—" Replies Rollánd:—"Well have you said."
Aoi.

CXXXV.

Rollánd raised to his lips the olifant,
Drew a deep breath, and blew with all his force.
High are the mountains, and from peak to peak
The sound re-echoes; thirty leagues away
'Twas heard by Carle and all his brave compeers.
Cried the king:—"Our men make battle!"— Ganelon
Retorts in haste:—"If thus another dared
To speak, we should denounce it as a lie."

Aoi.

CXXXVI.

The Count Rollánd in his great anguish blows
His olifant so mightily, with such
Despairing agony, his mouth pours forth
The crimson blood, and his swoll'n temples burst. [93]
Yea, but so far the ringing blast resounds;
Carle hears it, marching through the pass, Naimés harks,
The French all listen with attentive ear.
"That is Rollánd's horn!"— Carle cried, "which ne'er yet
Was, save in battle, blown!"— But Ganelon
Replies:—"No fight is there!—you, sire, are old,
Your hair and beard are all bestrewn with gray,
And as a child your speech. Well do you know
Rollánd's great pride. 'Tis marvelous God bears
With him so long. Already took he Noble
Without your leave. The Pagans left their walls
And fought Rollánd, your brave Knight, in the field;
With his good blade he slew them all, and then
Washed all the plain with water, that no trace
Of blood was left—yea, oftentimes he runs
After a hare all day and blows his horn.
Doubtless he takes his sport now with his peers;
And who 'neath Heav'n would dare attack Rollánd?
None, as I deem. Nay, sire, ride on apace;
Why do you halt? Still far is the Great Land."

Aoi.

CXXXVII.

Rollánd with bleeding mouth and temples burst,
Still in his anguish, blows his olifant;
Carle hears it, and his Franks. The king exclaims:
"That horn has a long breath!" Duke Naimés replies:
"Rollánd it is, and in a sore distress,
Upon my faith, a battle rages there!
A traitor he who would deceive you now.
To arms! Your war-cry shout, your kinsman save!
Plainly enough you hear his call for help."

Aoi.

CXXXVIII.

Carle orders all the trumpeters to sound
The march. The French alight. They arm themselves
With helmets, hauberks and gold hilted swords,
Bright bucklers, long sharp spears, with pennons white
And red and blue. The barons of the host
Leap on their steeds, all spurring on; while through
The pass they march, each to the other says: [95]
"Could we but reach Rollánd before he dies,
What deadly blows, with his, our swords would strike!"
But what avails?—Too late they will arrive.

Aoi.

CXXXIX.

The ev'n is clear, the sun its radiant beams
Reflects upon the marching legions. Spears,
Hauberks and helms, shields painted with bright flowers,
Haukerks and helms, shields painted with bright flowers,
Bright pennons all ablaze with glitt'ring hues.
Burning with wrath the Emperor rides on;
The French with sad and angered looks. None there
But weeps aloud. All tremble for Rollánd.

The King commands Count Ganelon be seized
And given to the scullions of his house.
Their chief, named Bègue, he calls and bids: "Guard well
This man as one who all my kin betrayed."
Him Bègue received, and set upon the Count
One hundred of his kitchen comrades—best
And worst;—they pluck his beard on lip and cheek;
Each deals him with his fist four blows, and falls
On him with lash and stick; they chain his neck
As they would chain a bear, and he is thrown
For more dishonor on a sumpter mule,
There guarded so until to Carle brought back.

Aoi.

CXL.

High are the mountains, gloomy, terrible,
The valleys deep, and swift the rushing streams.
In van, in rear, the brazen trumpets blow,
Answ'ring the olifant. With angry look
Rides on the Emp'ror; filled with wrath and grief,
Follow the French, each sobbing, each in tears,
Praying that God may guard Rollánd, until
They reach the battle-field. With him what blows
Will they not strike? Alas! what boots it now?
Too late they are and can not come in time.

Aoi.

CXLI.

Carle in great anger rides—his snow-white beard
O'erspreads his breast-plate. Hard the Barons spur,
For never one but inwardly doth rage
That he is far from their great chief, Rollánd,
Who combats now the Saracens of Spain:
If wounded he, will one of his survive?
O God! What Knights those sixty left by him!
Nor King nor captain better ever had....

Aoi.

THE ROUT.

CXLII.

The Count Rollánd casts o'er the mounts and vales
A glance: French corsers strew the plains in heaps;
He for them mourns as gentle chevalier.
At such a sight the noble hero weeps:
"Seigneurs, to you may God be merciful!
To all your souls may He grant Paradise,
And there may they on beds of heavenly flowers
Repose!—No better vassals lived! so long
Have ye served me! So many lands for Carle
Ye won!—The Emperor for this ill fate
Has nurtured you!—O land of France, most sweet
Art thou, but now forsaken and a waste.
Barons of France, to-day I see you die
For me; nor can I save or e'en defend
Your lives. Be God your aid, who ne'er played false!
Olivier, brother, I must not fail thee!
If other death comes not, of grief I die.
Come, sire companion ... come to fight again!"

Aoi.

CXLIII.

Soon to the field returns the Count Rollánd
With Durendal in hand; as a true knight
He fights. Faldrun del Pin he cleaves in half
With twenty-four among the bravest foes.

Never was man so bent upon revenge.
As run wild deer before the chasing hounds,
Before Rollánd the Pagans flee.—"Well done!"
The Archbishop cries, "Such valor a true Knight
Should have, when mounted, armed, on his good steed!
Else, not four deniers is he worth: a monk
In cloister should he be, and spend his life
In praying for our sins!...." "Strike," said Rollánd,
"No quarter!"—At the word the French renew
The combat ... yet the Christian loss was great.
Aoi.

CXLIV.

[100]

When soldiers on the battle-field expect
No quarter—desperate they fight; and thus
The French, like lions, fiercely stand at bay.
Like a true baron King Marsile rides forth
Upon his steed Gaignon, and spurs him on
Against Bevum, of Belne and Digun lord,
His buckler cleaves, his hauberk with a blow
Shatters, and lays him dead upon the field.
Then fall beneath the Pagan King, Ivoire
And Ivun; then Gerard de Roussillon.—
The Count Rollánd is nigh and cries aloud:
"God give damnation unto thee who thus
So foully slay'st my friends! But ere we part,
Dearly shalt thou abye it, and to-day
Shalt learn the name my good sword bears."—He strikes
The King a true Knight's stroke, and his right hand
Lops at the wrist; then Turfaleu the fair,
Marsile's own son, beheads. The Pagans say:
"Aid us, Mahum! Avenge us, Gods of ours,
On Carle, who brought such villains to our land,
As rather than depart will die."—And each
To each cries: "Let us fly!"—Upon the word,
A hundred thousand turn in sudden flight.
Whoever calls them, ne'er will they return.
Aoi.

[101]

CXLV.

Alas, it not avails! If Marsile flies,
His uncle Marganice unhurt remained.
'Tis he who held Carthage, Alferne, Garnaille,
And Ethiopia, a land accursed;
Chief of the Blacks, a thick-nosed, large-eared race.
Of these he more than fifty thousand leads,
Who ride on proudly, full of wrath, and shout
The Pagan war-cry.—"Here," said Count Rollánd,
"Here shall we fall as martyrs. Well I know
Our end is nigh; but dastard I count him
Who sells not dear his life. Barons, strike well,
Strike with your burnished swords, and set such price
On death and life, that naught of shame shall fall
On our sweet France. When Carle, my lord, shall come
Upon this field, and see such slaughter here
Of Saracens, fifteen to one of ours,
Then will he breathe a blessing on his Knights."
Aoi.

OLIVIER'S DEATH.

[102]

CXLVI.

When sees Rollánd this tribe accursed, more black
Than ink, with glist'ning teeth, their only gleam
Of white, he said:—"Truly I know to-day
We die! Strike, Frenchmen, that is my command."
And Olivier, "Woe to the laggards," cries.
These words the French hearts fired to meet the fray.

Aoi.

CXLVII.

The Pagans, when they mark how few the French,
Are filled with pride and comfort, and they say
One to the other:—"Their King Carle is wrong!"—
Upon his sorrel steed sits Marganice;
Urging him hard with pricking spurs of gold,
Encounters Olivier—strikes him behind,
Drives his white hauberk-links into his heart,
And through in front came forth the pointed lance.
The Kalif cries:—"That blow struck home! Carlmagne,
For thy mishap, left you to guard the Pass!
That he has wronged us, little may he boast.
Your death alone for us a vengeance full!"

Aoi.

[103]

CXLVIII.

Olivier knows his death-wound. In his hand
He grasps Halteclere's bright steel, and strikes a blow
Well aimed upon the Kalif's pointed helm;
He scatters golden flow'rs and gems in dust.
His head the trenchant blade cleaves to the teeth,
And dead the Kalif falls.—"Pagan accursed,"
He cries, "not here shalt thou say Carle lost aught;
To wife nor lady shalt thou ever boast
In thine own land, that thou hast reft from Carle
One denier's worth, or me or others harmed!"
And then he called Rollánd unto his aid.

Aoi.

CXLIX.

Olivier feels that he is hurt to death.
No vengeance can suffice him; Baron-like
He strikes amid the press, cuts shields embossed
And ashen shafts, and spears, feet, shoulders, wrists
And breasts of horsemen. He who saw him thus
Dismember Saracens, corse over corse
Heap on the ground, would of a vassal true
Remembrance keep. Nor does he now forget
The rallying cry of Carle:—"Montjoie!" he cries
Loudly and clear; then calls Rollánd, his friend
And compeer:—"Sire companion, stand by me!
This day our breaking hearts forever part!"

Aoi.

CL.

Rollánd looks Olivier full in the face;
Pale, livid, colorless; pure crimson blood
Drips from his body, and streams on the earth.
"God!" cried Rollánd, "I know not what to do,
Companion, friend, thy courage was betrayed
To-day; nor will such courage e'er be seen
In human heart. Sweet France, oh! how shalt thou,
As widow, wail thy vassals true and brave,
Humbled and wrecked! The great heart of King Carle
Will break!" He spake and on his saddle swooned.

Aoi.

[105]

CLI.

Behold Rollánd, there, fainting on his steed,
While Olivier stands wounded to the death.
So great the loss of blood, his troubled eyes
See naught afar or near, nor mortal man
Can recognize. Encount'ring there Rollánd,
Upon his golden-studded helm he struck
A dreadful blow, which to the nose-plate cleft,
And split the crest in twain, but left the head

Untouched. Rollánd at this, upon him looks,
And softly, sweetly asks:—"Sire *compagnon!*
Was that blow meant for me? I am Rollánd
By whom you are beloved so well; to me
Could you by any chance, defiance give?"
Said Olivier:—"I hear your speech, but see
You now no more. May God behold you, friend!
I struck the blow; beseech you, pardon me."
Rollánd responds:—"I am not wounded—here
And before God I pardon you." At this,
Each to the other bends in courtesy.
With such great tenderness and love they part.
Aoi.

[106]

CLII.

Olivier feels the agony of death;
His vacant eyes roll wildly in his head,
And all his hearing and his sight are lost.
Dismounting, on the ground he lies, and smites
His breast, aloud confessing all his sins;
With joined hands tow'rd Heaven lifted up
He prays to God to give him Paradise,
To bless Carl'magne, sweet France, and far beyond
All other men, Rollánd, his *compagnon*.
His heart fails—forward droops his helmet—prone
Upon the earth he lies—'tis over now....
The Count is dead. Rollánd, the Baron, mourns
And weeps as never mortal mourned before.
Aoi.

CLIII.

When sees the Count Rollánd the breath of life
Gone from his friend, his body stretched on earth,
His face low in the dust, his tears gush out
With heavy sobs. Then tenderly he speaks:
"Alas! for all thy valor, comrade dear!
Year after year, day after day, a life
Of love we led; ne'er didst thou wrong to me,
Nor I to thee. If death takes thee away,
My life is but a pain." While speaking thus,
The *Marchis* faints on *Veillantif*, his steed.
But still firm in his stirrups of pure gold:
Where'er Rollánd may ride, he cannot fall.
Aoi.

[107]

CLIV.

Scarce hath the Count recovered from his swoon,
When all the great disaster meets his sight;
The French lie on the field; all lost to him
Save the Archbishop and Gualtier de l'Hum,
Who had descended from the mountain height
Where he the men of Spain all day withstood
Till all his own fell 'neath the Pagan swords.
Willed he or not, he fled into the vale,
And now upon Rollánd he calls for aid;
"Most gentle Count, most valiant, where art thou?
Ne'er had I fear where'er thou wert!—'tis I,
Gualtier, who conquered Maëlgut, who am
Old gray-haired Droün's nephew; till this day
My courage won thy love. So well I fought
Against the Saracens, my spear was broke,
My shield was pierced, my hauberk torn and wrung,
And in my body eight steel darts I bear.
Done are my days, but dear the last I sold!"
The words of that brave knight Rollánd has heard,
Spurs on his steed and gallops to his help.
Aoi.

[108]

CLV.

With grief and rage Rollánd's great heart is full;

Amidst the thick ranks of a swarming foe
He rides. He fights—and twenty Pagans fall
Slain by his hand; by Gualtier's six, and five
By the Archbishop's. Loud the Pagans cry:
"Vile wretches these! Let none escape alive!
Eternal shame to them who dare not make
Attack; foul recreants those who let their flight
Avail."—Renewing then their hues and cries,
The Pagans rush from all parts 'gainst the knights.
Aoi.

CHARLEMAGNE APPROACHES.

[109]

CLVI.

The Count Rollánd was ever great in war;
Most valiant is Gualtier de l'Hum; Turpin
The Archbishop, of a valor proved: each leaves
The other naught to do, and 'mid the throng
Strikes Pagans down, who though one thousand foot
And forty thousand horsemen mustering, yet
Dare not approach, forsooth; but from afar
Against them hurl their jav'lins, spears and darts,
Their lances and winged arrows. First of all
Is slain Gualtier; Turpin de Reins' good shield
Is pierced, his helmet broken, and his head
Wounded, his hauberk shattered and dislinked;
Four spears have pierced his body; his good steed
Dies under him. Alas! the Archbishop falls.
Aoi.

CLVII.

[110]

Hardly had Turpin fallen on the earth,
By four spear-shafts transfixed, when the brave knight
Sprang quickly to his feet once more. His look
Sought for Rollánd to whom he ran in haste.
One word he said:—"Unconquered yet am I!
While life doth last, a true knight yields it not!"
He draws Almace, his sword of burnished steel,
And rushing 'mid the throng, one thousand blows
And more he deals.—Carle said in after days,
Turpin spared none, as dead upon the field
He saw four hundred men, some cut in twain,
Some with lopped heads: so says the Geste of France,
And one who saw the field, the brave Saint-Gille
For whom God showed his might; who in the cloister
Of Loüm wrote the record of these deeds.
Who knows not this, he knows not any thing.
Aoi.

CLVIII.

As hero fights the Count Rollánd; but all
His body burns with heat and drips with sweat;
His head is torn by pain; his temple burst
By that strong blast he gave the olifant.
Still would he know if Carle returns; once more
He blows his horn—Alas, with feeble blast.
Carle caught the distant sound, and, list'ning, waits:
"Seigneurs," cried he, "great evils fall apace;
I hear his dying blast upon his horn.
If we would find him yet alive, we need
Urge on our steeds. Let all our trumpets blow!"
Then sixty thousand trumps rang forth their peals;
The hills reêcho, and the vales respond.
The Pagans hear—and stay their gabbling mirth.
One to the other says:—"Tis Carle who comes!"
Aoi.

[111]

CLIX.

The Pagans say:—"The Emperor returns;
These are the clarions of the French we hear.
If Carle should come, 'twill be our doom; if lives
Rollánd, the war begins anew, and Spain
Our land is lost to us for evermore."
Four hundred warriors well armed cap-a-pie,
The bravest of the host, then closed their ranks
And dashed in fierce attack against Rollánd.
Mighty the deeds the Count must now achieve!
Aoi.

CLX.

[112]

As they draw near, Rollánd calls up his pride
And summons all his strength to meet the charge.
No foot of ground he yields while life remains.
Firm on his courser Veillantif he sits
And gores his flanks with spurs of purest gold.
Into the thickest ranks he and Turpin
The Archbishop rush. And now the Pagans all
Unto each other cry: "Hence, friends, away!
The horns of those of France we now have heard,
Carlemagne the mighty Emperor returns!"
Aoi.

CLXI.

Ne'er could the Count Rollánd a coward love,
Nor proud, nor wicked men, nor faithless knights.
He calls to the Archbishop: "You, on foot,
And I on horseback, sire! For love of you
I by your side will stand; together we
Will share or good or ill; I leave you not
For aught of human mold. This day we shall
Hurl back the Pagan charge, and Durendal
Shall deal his mightiest blows!"—To this replies
The Archbishop: "Traitor he who strikes not well!
King Carle returns—Great shall his vengeance be!"
Aoi.

[113]

CLXII.

The Pagans say: "For such ill were we born!
What fatal morn this day for us has ris'n!
Dead lie our lords and Peers! With his great host
King Carle returns, the mighty Baron—Hark!
His clarions sound, and loud the cry 'Montjoie;'
Rollánd has so great pride, no man of flesh
Can make him yield, or vanquished fall. 'Twere best
We pierced him from afar, and left him lying
Upon the field!"—"Twas done: darts, lances, spears,
Javelins, winged arrows flew so thick,
That his good shield was pierced, his hauberk rent
And torn apart—his body yet unharmed.
Veillantif, pierced with thirty wounds, falls dead
Beneath the Count.—The affrighted Pagans fly.
The Count Rollánd stands on the field, alone.
Aoi.

THE LAST BENEDICTION OF THE ARCHBISHOP.

[114]

CLXIII.

Raging in wrath the Pagans fly, and toward
The land of Spain they haste. The Count Rollánd
Pursues them not, for Veillantif lies dead.
On foot he stands whether he will or not.
To help Turpin, the Archbishop, fast he ran,
His helm unclasped, removed the hauberk white
And light, then ripped the sides of his *blialt*
To find his gaping wounds; then tenderly

Pressing him in his arms, on the green sward
He laid him gently down, and fondly prayed:
"O noble man, grant me your leave in this;
Our brave compeers, so dear to us, have breathed
Their last—we should not leave them on the field;
I will their bodies seek and gather here,
To lay them out before you."—"Go, and soon
Return," the Archbishop said; "the field is yours
And also mine, thanks to Almighty God!"
Aoi.

CLXIV.

[115]

Alone the Count Rollánd retraced his steps
Throughout the field. Vales, mounts, he searched, and found
Gerin and his companion Gerier, then
Berengier and Otun; here Anseïs,
There Sansun, then beyond, Gerard the old
De Roussillon he found—one after one
He bore each knight within his arms, and placed
Them gently, side by side, before the knees
Of Turpin who cannot restrain his tears;
With lifted hands he blesses them and says:
"Most hapless Knights!—May God the Glorious
Receive your souls, and in his Paradise
'Mid holy flowers place them!—In this hour
Of death, my deepest grief is that no more
The mighty Emperor I shall behold!"
Aoi.

CLXV.

Rollánd turns back, and searching through the field,
Has found, alas! his comrade Olivier....
He pressed him 'gainst his bosom tenderly,
And, as he could, returning to Turpin,
Stretched on a shield he lays him down among
The other knights. The Archbishop then assoils
And signs him with the holy cross. The grief
And pity were more sore than heart can bear....
Then said Rollánd:—"Fair comrade Olivier,
Son of the good Count Renier, he who held
The marches to the distant shores of Gennes;
To break a lance, to pierce a shield, the brave
To counsel, traitors to dismay and foil,
No land e'er saw a better *chevalier*."
Aoi.

[116]

CLXVI.

When Count Rollánd beheld his Peers lie dead,
And Olivier, that friend so tenderly
Beloved, his soul by pity was o'erflowed;
Tears from his eyes gush out, his countenance
Turns pale; distressed, he can no longer stand.
Would he or not, he swooned and fell to earth.
The Archbishop said: "Baron, what woe is yours!"
Aoi.

CLXVII.

The Archbishop, when he saw Count Rollánd swoon,
Felt keener grief than e'er he felt before;
Stretched forth his hand, and took the olifant.—
Ronceval there is a running stream;
Thence will he water bring to Count Rollánd.
Staggering, with feeble steps, thither he goes,
But loss of blood has made him all too weak:
Ere he has gone an acre's length, his heart
Fails, and he sinks in mortal agony.
Aoi.

[117]

CLXVIII.

Meantime the Count Rollánd revives.—Erect
He stands, but with great pain; then downward looks
And upward. Then he sees the noble lord
The Archbishop, holy minister of God,
Beyond his comrades lying on the sward
Stretched out.—He lifts his eyes to Heav'n, recalls
His sins, and raising both his joinèd hands,
He prays Our God to grant him paradise.—
Turpin, Carle's Knight, is dead, who all his life,
With doughty blows and sermons erudite,
Ne'er ceased to fight the Pagans. May the Lord
Grant him His holy blessing evermore!

Aoi.

CLXIX.

[118]

The Count Rollánd sees lifeless on the field
The Archbishop lie; gush from the gaping wounds
His entrails in the dust, and through his skull
The oozing brain pours o'er his brow.—In form
Of holy Cross upon his breast Rollánd
Disposes both his hands so fair and white,
And mourned him in the fashion of his land:
"O noble man! O knight of lineage pure!
To the Glorious One of Heav'n I thee commend;
For ne'er was man who Him more truly served,
Nor since the Apostles' days, such prophet, strong,
To keep God's law and draw the hearts of men.
From ev'ry pain your soul be freed, and wide
Before it ope the Gates of Paradise!"

Aoi.

ROLAND'S DEATH.

[119]

CLXX.

Rollánd now feels his death is drawing nigh:
From both his ears the brain is oozing fast.
For all his peers he prays that God may call
Their souls to Him; to the Angel Gabriel
He recommends his spirit. In one hand
He takes the olifant, that no reproach
May rest upon him; in the other grasps
Durendal, his good sword. Forward he goes,
Far as an arblast sends a shaft, across
A new-tilled ground and toward the land of Spain.
Upon a hill, beneath two lofty trees,
Four terraces of marble spread:—he falls
Prone fainting on the green, for death draws near.

Aoi.

CLXXI.

High are the mounts, and lofty are the trees.
Four terraces are there, of marble bright:
There Count Rollánd lies senseless on the grass.
Him at this moment spies a Saracen
Who lies among the corpses, feigning death,
His face and body all besmeared with blood.
Sudden he rises to his feet, and bounds
Upon the Baron.—Handsome, brave and strong
He was, but from his pride sprang mortal rage.
He seized the body of Rollánd, and grasped
His arms, exclaiming thus:—"Here vanquished Carle's
Great nephew lies!"—"This sword to Araby
I'll bear."—He drew it;—this aroused the Count.

Aoi.

CLXXII.

[120]

Rollánd perceived an alien hand would rob

Him of his sword; his eyes he oped; one word
He spoke:—"I trow, not one of us art thou!"
Then with his olifant from which he parts
Never, he smites the golden studded helm,
Crushing the steel, the head, the bones; both eyes
Are from their sockets beaten out—o'erthrown
Dead at the Baron's feet he falls:—"O wretch,"
He cries, "how durst thou, or for good or ill,
Lay hands upon Rollánd? Who hears of this
Will call thee fool. Mine olifant is cleft,
Its gems and gold all scattered by the blow."

[121]

Aoi.

CLXXIII.

Now feels Rollánd that death is near at hand
And struggles up with all his force; his face
Grows livid;—[Durendal, his naked sword]
He holds;—beside him rises a gray rock
On which he strikes ten mighty blows through grief
And rage—The steel but grinds; it breaks not, nor
Is notched; then cries the Count:—"Saint Mary, help!
O Durendal! Good sword! ill starred art thou!
Though we two part, I care not less for thee.
What victories together thou and I,
Have gained, what kingdoms conquered, which now holds
White-bearded Carle! No coward's hand shall grasp
Thy hilt: a valiant knight has borne thee long,
Such as none shall e'er bear in France the Free!"

Aoi.

CLXXIV.

[122]

Rollánd smites hard the rock of Sardonix;
The steel but grinds, it breaks not, nor grows blunt;
Then seeing that he can not break his sword,
Thus to himself he mourns for Durendal:
"O good my sword, how bright and pure! Against
The sun what flashing light thy blade reflects!
When Carle passed through the valley of Moriane,
The God of Heaven by his Angel sent
Command that he should give thee to a Count,
A valiant captain; it was then the great
And gentle King did gird thee to my side.—
With thee I won for him Anjou—Bretaigne;
For him with thee I won Poitou, le Maine
And Normandie the free; I won Provence
And Aquitaine, and Lombardie, and all
The Romanie; I won for him Bavière,
All Flandre—Buguerie—all Puillanie,
Costentinnoble which allegiance paid,
And Saxonie submitted to his power;
For him I won Escoce and Galle, Irlande
And Engleterre he made his royal seat;
With thee I conquered all the lands and realms
Which Carle, the hoary-bearded monarch, rules.
Now for this sword I mourn.... Far better die
Than in the hands of Pagans let it fall!
May God, Our Father, save sweet France this shame!"

[123]

Aoi.

CLXXV.

Upon the grey rock mightily he smites,
Shattering it more than I can tell; the sword
But grinds.—It breaks not—nor receives a notch,
And upwards springs more dazzling in the air.
When sees the Count Rollánd his sword can never break,
Softly within himself its fate he mourns:
"O Durendal, how fair and holy thou!
In thy gold-hilt are relics rare; a tooth
Of great saint Pierre—some blood of Saint Basile,
A lock of hair of Monseigneur Saint Denis,
A fragment of the robe of Sainte-Marie.

It is not right that Pagans should own thee;
By Christian hand alone be held. Vast realms
I shall have conquered once that now are ruled
By Carle, the King with beard all blossom-white,
And by them made great emperor and Lord.
May thou ne'er fall into a cowardly hand."

[124]

Aoi.

CLXXVI.

The Count Rollánd feels through his limbs the grasp
Of death, and from his head ev'n to his heart
A mortal chill descends. Unto a pine
He hastens, and falls stretched upon the grass.
Beneath him lie his sword and olifant,
And toward the Heathen land he turns his head,
That Carle and all his knightly host may say:
"The gentle Count a conqueror has died...."
Then asking pardon for his sins, or great
Or small, he offers up his glove to God.

Aoi.

CLXXVII.

The Count Rollánd feels now his end approach.
Against a pointed rock, and facing Spain,
He lies. Three times he beats his breast, and says:
"Mea culpa! Oh, my God, may through thy grace,
Be pardoned all my sins, or great or small,
Until this hour committed since my birth!"
Then his right glove he offers up to God,
And toward him angels from high Heav'n descend.

[125]

Aoi.

CLXXVIII.

Beneath a pine Rollánd doth lie, and looks
Toward Spain—He broods on many things of yore:
On all the lands he conquered, on sweet France,
On all his kinsmen, on great Carle his lord
Who nurtured him;—he sighs—nor can restrain
His tears, but can not yet himself forget;
Recalls his sins, and for the grace of God
He prays:—"Our Father, never yet untrue,
Who Saint-Lazare raised from the dead, and saved
Thy Daniel from the lions' claws—Oh, free
My soul from peril, from my whole life's sins!"
His right hand glove he offered up to God;
Saint Gabriel took the glove.—With head reclined
Upon his arm, with hands devoutly joined
He breathed his last. God sent his Cherubim,
Saint-Raphaël, *Saint Michiel del Peril*.
Together with them Gabriel came.—All bring
The soul of Count Rollánd to Paradise....

[126]

Aoi.

THE CHASTISEMENT OF THE SARACENS.

[127]

CLXXIX.

Rollánd is dead: God has his soul in heaven.
To Ronceval the Emperor has come.
There, neither road nor any path is seen,
Nor vacant space, nor ell, nor foot of land
That mounds of mangled bodies cover not,
Pagans or French.—The Emperor exclaims:
"Fair nephew, where art thou? The Archbishop, where?
And Olivier, alas, where are they all?
Gerin, Gerier, the two companions, where
Are they? And where is Otes and Berengier,

Ives and Ivoire both to my heart so dear?
The Gasquin Engelier, Sansun the Duke,
Anseïs the rash, Gerard de Roussillon
The old, and my twelve Peers I left behind,
What fate is theirs?"—What boots it? None replies."—
"—God," cries the King, "what grief is mine to think
"I stood not here the battle to begin."
He tears his beard with anger; all his knights
And barons weep great tears; dizzy with woe
And swooning, twenty thousand fall to earth.
Duke Naimés feels pity overflow his heart.
Aoi.

[128]

CLXXX.

No baron is there now, no chevalier
Who, in his pity, sheds not tears for sons,
For brothers—nephews—friends—and for liege-lords.
Many have fallen swooning on the earth,
But Duke Naimés bore himself as valorous knight:
He foremost said to Carle:—"Behold two leagues
Away!—The roads are dark with clouds of dust.
There swarm the Pagan tribes.... Ride on them now,
Avenge this bitter woe."—"O God," said Carle,
"Are they already flown so far?—our rights
And honor shield! Those Pagans took from me
The flower of my Sweet France!"—The King commands
Gebuin, Otun, Tedbalt de Reins and Count
Milun:—"Watch ye the field, the vales, the mounts;
The slain, leave to their rest; see that no beast
Nor lion, squire nor page approach. I charge
You, let no man upon them lay his hand
Until, with God's assistance, we return."
They lovingly and with sweet tone reply:
"Thus shall we do, just Emperor, dear sire!"
Upon the field they keep one thousand knights.
Aoi.

[129]

CLXXXI.

Now bids the Emperor his trumpets blow,
Then forward at the head of his great host
He rides, that Baron true. Of those of Spain
He finds the tracks, points out the road; in quick
Pursuit all follow Carle.... When sees the King
The eve decline, he on the verdant grass
Dismounts, and prostrate prays to God our Lord
The sun to stay, the shades of night hold back
And longer make the day. To him appears
A Counselor-Angel with the swift command;
"Ride on, O King, nor fear that night shall fall!
God knows that thou hast lost the flower of France;
But vengeance canst have now upon that horde
Of unbelievers." Thus the Angel spake.
The Emp'ror rises and remounts his steed.
Aoi.

[130]

CLXXXII.

To Carlemagne Our Lord now showed his might;
The sun stays in its course. The Pagans fly,
And fast the French pursuing, overtake
Them in the Val-Tenebre. They drive them on
Toward Sarraguce, while close behind them fall
The upraised swords, and strew the ground with dead.
No issue, no escape, by road or pass!
In front deep Ebro rolls its mighty waves:
No boat, no barge, no raft. They call for help
On Tervagant, then plunge into the flood.
Vain was their trust: some, weighted with their arms,
Sink in a moment; others are swept down,
And those most favored swallow monstrous draughts.
All drown most cruelly. The French cry out:
"For your own woe wished ye to see Rollánd!"

When Carle sees all the Pagans dead—some slain,
 The others drowned, his chevaliers enriched
 With spoils, the noble King dismounts, on earth
 Prostrates himself and offers thanks to God.
 When he arose, the sun had set. "'Tis time,"
 He said, "to think of camping now. Too late
 It is for our advance to Ronceval.
 Our horses are all weary and foredone:
 Unsaddle them and take the bridles off;
 And let them roam at large about these meads."
 The French reply: "Sire, you have spoken well."
 Aoi.

CLXXXIV.

The Emperor makes here his harborage.
 The French dismount, take off the golden curbs
 And saddles from their steeds, and turn them loose
 In the green mead, amid the plenteous grass:
 No other care they need. Upon the ground
 The over-wearied cast themselves and sleep.
 No watch was set in all the host that night.
 Aoi.

CLXXXV.

The Emperor reposes on the field,
 His mighty lance hard by his pillow planted,
 For he, on such a night will not disarm.
 His hauberk white, with orfreyed-marge he wears,
 His helmet, rich with gold and gems is laced,
 Girded Joyeuse, the sword without a peer,
 Who thirty times a day can change his hue.
 Many a time you all heard of the lance
 Wherewith Our Lord was pierced upon the cross,
 The steel whereof Carle has, thanks be to God,
 Closed in the golden pommel of his sword.
 For this great glory and exceeding worth
 The brand was called *Joyeuse*. This all French Knights
 Should bear in mind, for it was hence they took
 Their war-cry of *Montjoie*, and for this cause
 No other people can resist their arms.
 Aoi.

CLXXXVI.

Clear is the night, bright shines the moon; at rest
 Lies Carle; but grief is with him for Rollánd,
 And Olivier is heavy on his heart;
 The twelve Peers, too, and all the men of France,
 Left stark and bloody there at Ronceval. [133]
 He cannot help but weep, and sob, and pray
 That mighty God be keeper of their souls.
 Tired is the King, his toils being very great;
 Deeply asleep he falls, and can no more.
 Through all the fields the scattered French sleep sound,
 Nor there a horse has strength enough to stand;
 If one need grass, he bites it as he lies.
 Right wise is he that's wise in lore of woe.
 Aoi.

CLXXXVII.

Carle sleeps as man by toil outdone. God sends
 Saint Gabriel down, the Emperor to guard.
 All night beside his head the Angel stands,
 And in a dream forebodes that 'gainst the French
 A battle is prepared, and its portent
 Explains; then glancing up tow'rd Heav'n, King Carle

Sees thunder-clouds and winds, hail, raging storms
And wond'rous tempests—smould'ring fire and flames
Ready to burst forth. Suddenly on all
His people falls the blast. Their spears with shafts [134]
Of apple-tree or ash—those shields ablaze
Unto their golden rings—shafts from their points
Break off—Steel helms and hauberks clash and clang.
He sees his Knights in dire distress. Meantime
Devouring pards and bears rush on them; snakes
And vipers—dragons, fiends—and with them more
Than thirty thousand griffons. 'Mong the French
None can escape this hideous horde.—"Carlemagne,
Come to our help!" they cry. With pity seized,
Fain would he thither, but his steps are stayed:
Deep from a wood a lion huge comes on.
The beast is haughty, fierce and terrible,
And, springing, seeks his very body out.
Each wrestles with the other in his arms;
But which shall fall, which stand, this no man knows.
Never a jot the Emperor awakes.

Aoi.

CLXXXVIII.

Another vision follows this: in France
At Aix he is:—Upon a marble step [135]
He stands, and holds in two-fold chains a bear.
From towards Ardennes he sees rush forth a pack
Of thirty other bears which speak as men.
They say:—"To us restore him, Sire! Not right
It were that you should keep him longer; help
Our kin we must."—Then from his palace runs
A greyhound fair which on the verdant grass
Assails the fiercer of the other beasts
Before them all. The King a wond'rous fight
Beholds: but who shall win or lose, none knows.
This is a dream God's Angel showed to Carle,
Who sleeps until the morrow's morn appeared.

Aoi.

CLXXXIX.

By rapid flight Marsile reached Sarraguce.—
Dismounting 'neath a shady olive-tree,
He strips himself of breast-plate, helmet, sword,
And sinks upon the sward with ghastly look.
His right hand severed from the wrist whence blood
Is gushing forth, has made him swoon with pain.
Before Marsile, his spouse, Queen Bramimunde,
Bursts into tears, and cries, and woeful moans.
Around stand more than twenty thousand men [136]
Who with one voice accuse Sweet France and Carle;
Apollo's grotto seek they, and with taunts,
Profane, insulting words, their God revile:
"What ails thee, evil God, to shame us thus,
And to confusion bring our Lord the King?
Who serves thee well vile guerdon gains from thee!"
Despoiled of crown and scepter, by the hands
They hang him on a column—neath their feet
They roll him down.—They with great clubs deface
And beat him; then from Tervagant they snatch
His carbuncle; Mohamed in a ditch
Throw down—there bitt'n, trampled on, by swine and dogs.

Aoi.

CXC.

Recov'ring from his swoon, the King Marsile
Commands they lead him to his vaulted room
All bright with color and inscribed with verse.
There weeping bitterly, Queen Bramimunde
Tearing her hair, aloud proclaims her grief:
"O hapless Sarraguce, thou art bereft
Of the most gentle King that was thy Lord!

Our gods betrayed our trust, they who this morn
In battle failed us;—the Emir coward were
Would he not fight these people bold who are
So proud they care not for their lives. Carl'magne,
The Emperor, whose beard is strewn with gray,
Among his men has dauntless Knights; if e'er
He fight, no step he yields. Great woe it is
That there is no man who can give him death."

Aoi.

CXCI.

By his great power the Emperor in Spain
Full seven years remained; he castles took
And many cities, bringing sore distress
To King Marsile. The year had scarce begun
Before his word went forth to seal the briefs
Which summoned Baligant from Babylone,
(The aged Emir, he whose life outlived
Homer and Virgil). Now the King Marsile
Had begged the Baron's help for Sarraguçe.
Should he not come, gods, idols, once adored
He will renounce, the holy Faith of Christ
Embrace, and join in friendship with King Carle.
Afar was Baligant, and tarried long;
From forty realms his people had he called
And ordered to prepare his *dromonds* vast,
Barks, galleys, ev'ry vessel. In the port
Of Alexandria the fleet had met;
In May it was, the first of summer-days,
A mighty host he launched upon the deep.

Aoi.

CXCII.

Great are the forces of their hostile horde;
They swiftly skim the waves, and steer, and sail;
Their masts and yards so blazing with the light
Of carbuncles and lanterns, night gives up
Its darkness and still fairer shows the sea.
As they approached the shores of Spain, the land
Was all aglow, and tidings reached Marsile.

Aoi.

CXCIII.

The Pagans halt no moment; soon they leave
The deep, and in fresh water steer; Marbreise
And then Marbruse is passed; along the shores
Of winding Ebro glides the armament,
Setting the night aflame with carbuncles
And lights: the same day reached they Sarraguçe.

Aoi.

CXCIV.

Clear is the day and bright the sun; descends
The Emir from his ship. Espaneliz
Walks forth upon his right; a train of Kings
In number seventeen, with Dukes and Counts
Innumerable, follow. 'Mid the plain
Grows a great laurel, and beneath its shade
They spread a *pallie* of white silk upon
The verdant grass, and place a faldstool there
Of ivory. In this sits Baligant
The Pagan. All the others stand. First spake
The chief:—"Oyez, all ye, most valiant Knights!
King Carle, the Emperor, who leads the Franks,
Shall eat not, save by my command. Throughout
All Spain, 'gainst me a cruel war he waged:
Now I will seek him in sweet France, nor, while
My life lasts, cease until he dies the death,
Or, living, yields, and mercy begs." He spake
And struck his right-hand glove upon his knee.

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[139]

Aoi.

CXCV.

His word once spoken was to him a law:
Though it cost all the gold beneath the sky,
Yet would he march to Aix, where Carle was wont
To hold his court. Some praise him, even give
Him counsel. Two from out his host of Knights
He summons, Clarien, and Clarifan:
"Ye are the sons of King Maltraïen,
A willing message bearer: 'tis my will
Ye go to Sarraguce; there in my name
Give ye this message to the King Marsile:
I have come to succor him against the French,
And if I find them, great the fight will be.
Give him this gold-embroidered glove, and place it
On his right hand; give him this staff of gold;
And when he comes to pay me homage, as
A vassal to his lord, I then will lead
My force to France to fight with Carlemagne.
If he fall not before my feet to pray
For mercy, and abjure the Christian law,
I from his head will tear away the crown."
The Pagans answer all:—"Well spoken, Sire."

[140]

Aoi.

CXCVI.

"Barons! to horse!" said Baligant. "Bear thou
The glove, and thou the staff." The two reply:
"Dear Sire, thus shall we do." So fast they rode
They soon reached Sarraguce. Beneath ten gates
They pass, four bridges cross, ride through the streets
Where stand the burghers. But on drawing near
The lofty citadel, they heard great noise
About the palace, where were thronging crowds
Of Pagans with loud wails and shrieks of woe,
Crying out against their gods, on Tervagan,
Mahum, Apollo, who avail them naught.
Each says to each, "Ah, caitiffs, what shall now
Befall us, miserable? for we have lost
The King Marsile whose hand Rollánd struck off;
For aye we are bereft of Turfaleu
The Fair, his son. This day the land of Spain
Into the Christian hands will fall enslaved!"
The message-bearers reach the royal gates.

[141]

Aoi.

CXCVII.

Beneath an olive tree they halt, and soon
Two Pagans take their curbed steeds in charge.
The messengers, each holding by the cloak
The other, hasten to the highest tower.
Entering the vaulted hall where lay Marsile,
An evil greeting offer with good will:
"May Tervagan, Apollo, he who holds
Us in his service, and our Sire Mahum,
Preserve our king and guard the queen!"
Whereat cried Bramimunde:—"What folly this!
Our gods are false; too well in Ronceval
They showed their evil power, and let our knights
Be slain—amid the battle-field forsook
My lord the king with his right hand struck off
By mighty Count Rollánd. The realm of Spain
Will fall enslaved beneath the sway of Carle.
What shall become of me, most miserable?
Alas! is there no man to give me death!"

[142]

Aoi.

CXCVIII.

Said Clarien:—"Lady, speak not thus—Behold,

Messengers we, from Baligant, who swears
To free Marsile, and to him sends his glove
And staff as tokens—on the Ebro float
Four thousand galleys, skiffs and swiftest boats;
More sails than can be numbered! Rich and great
The Emir.—Carle, pursued to France, shall be
Per force, or still, or dead, or penitent."
Said Bramimunde:—"Yea, greater ills will come.
To meet the Franks you need not go so far;
Carle seven years in Spain has tarried. Brave
Is he in battle, and a Baron true;
Ready to die ere he will quit the field;
No king on earth but is to him a child.
Carle's spirit yields before no living man."

Aoi.

CXCIX.

"Let all that be!" cried to the messengers
The King Marsile—"Seigneurs, speak but to me,
You see me now crushed unto death. No son
Nor daughter have I left, nor other heir;
One son I had, who yestereve was slain.
Say to my Lord his coming I beseech.
Some rights to Spain the Emir has; to him
I grant the realm in full, if he accept.
Let him defend this land against the French,
To meet Carlemagne good counsel I will give,
And victor he will be before this day
A month. Bear him the keys of Sarraguçe;
Thence, if he trust my words, he ne'er will be
Expelled." They answer:—"Sire, you speak the truth."

Aoi.

CC.

"The Emperor Carle," said King Marsile, "has slain
My men, ravaged my land, shattered and stormed
My cities; now on Ebro's banks he camps,
But seven counted leagues away. Bid ye
The Emir march up all his force. Bear him
My order for the fight." With this he gives
Into their hands the keys of Sarraguçe.
Upon these words the messengers bent low
In last salute, took leave, and went their way.

Aoi.

CCI.

The messengers upon their horses mount
And gallop from the city in hot haste.
With terror struck, both to the Emir come,
Deliv'ring up the keys of Sarraguçe.
Said Baligant:—"What found ye there? Where is
The King Marsile whom I commanded forth?"
Clarien makes answer:—"He is hurt to death;
The Emp'ror yesterday marched through the pass
Upon his homeward way into sweet France.
For greater honor, in the rear, Rollánd,
His nephew, had a post with Olivier,
All the twelve Peers and twenty thousand knights.
The King Marsile, the valiant Baron, fought
And fierce encounter had with Count Rollánd,
Who dealt with Durendal so dire a blow,
The king's right hand was severed from his arm.
Slain was the son he loved so tenderly,
With all the Barons he had brought with him;
Unable to resist, he took to flight,
And Carle, the Emperor, followed close behind.
Now give your help to King Marsile, who craves
Your aid, and as your guerdon all the realm
Of Spain receive." But Baligant remains
Deep sunk in thought, nigh maddened by his grief.

Aoi.

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CCII.

"Sire Emir," Clarien said, "on yesterday
 A battle raged in Ronceval; Rollánd
 And Olivier are dead, and the twelve Peers
 To Carle so dear, with twenty thousand Franks
 Have perished; King Marsile lost his right hand,
 And fled in hottest speed pursued by Carle.
 In all the land no Knight remains but slain
 Or in the waters of the Ebro drowned.
 Upon its banks the French encamp—So nigh—
 Had you the will, unsafe would be their flight."
 Then Baligant looks at him full of pride;
 And his heart swells with courage and fierce joy.
 Sudden from his footstool he springs, and loud
 He cries:—"Delay not—disembark! To horse!
 And forward! Now, unless Carlemagne the old
 By flight escape, the King Marsile shall be
 Avenged. For his right hand Carle's head shall pay."

Aoi.

[146]

CCIII.

Out of their skiffs the Arab Pagans spring,
 And mounting mules and horses, march; what else
 But this for them to do? When forward moves
 The host in serried lines, the Emir calls
 On Genalfin, his chosen friend: "To thee
 Command of all my armies I confide."—
 He said—and straight on his bay destrier mounts;
 Four Dukes rode with him, and so fast he sped,
 Ere long they entered into Sarraguçe.
 Before a marble terrace he dismounts,
 Four Counts his stirrup held, and by the steps
 Which led up to the palace he ascends.
 To him runs Bramimunde:—"What cruel dole
 Is mine, oh, woe! How shamefully," she cried,
 "Have I now lost my lord!"—And at his feet
 Prostrate she fell. The Emir raised her up,
 And, grieving, both into the chamber went.

Aoi.

CCIV.

The King Marsile, on seeing Baligant,
 Summoned two Spanish Saracens, and bade
 His body to be raised that he might sit.
 With his left hand he took a glove, and thus
 He spoke:—"Sir King and Emir, all my lands
 And kingdoms, Sarraguçe, domains and fiefs
 But wreck and ruin—Subjects, wealth—all lost."
 Answered the Emir:—"I, so much the more,
 Grieve for thy sorrow; but for longer speech
 I can not stay; for Carle, I know, will not
 Be still. But, nathless, I receive the glove."
 O'erwhelmed with sorrow, weeping he departs;
 The palace steps descending, mounts his horse
 And spurs him towards the waiting hosts so fast,
 That of the foremost ranks he takes the lead;
 And cries aloud, going from man to man:
 "Haste, Pagans! On!—Already flee the Franks."

Aoi.

CCV.

At earliest morn, just as the dawn appeared,
 From sleep awakes the Emp'ror Carlemagne;
 Saint-Gabriel, his guardian, sent by God,
 With hands uplifted signed him with the cross.
 The King arises, takes his armor off,
 And all the host disarm.—The mounted knights
 Then ran at speed back o'er the trampled ways,
 The weary roads, to view the woeful loss
 Once more, on Ronceval's bloody battle-field.

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Aoi.

CCVI.

Arrived upon the field of Ronceval,
Where lay so many slain, Carle wept, and said
Unto the French:—"Seigneurs, move slowly here;
For I alone, will forward go in search
Of my fair nephew lost among the dead.
Erst when at Aix on Christmas' solemn feast,
My valiant bachelors, in warlike deeds
Their exploits vaunting, I could hear Rollánd
Say, should he ever die on foreign soil,
Before his peers and men he should be found
Facing the foe, true Baron, conqu'ror still."
A few steps further than a staff's throw, Carle
Far in advance of all, ascends a hill.

Aoi.

CCVII.

When sought the Emperor his nephew there,
Amid the field, and found so many plants
With blossoms crimsoned by our Barons' blood,
By pity moved he can not choose but weep. [149]
Mounting the hill, beneath two trees, he knew
The blow upon the three rocks Rollánd struck,
And saw his nephew lying on the sward,
A mangled corse—No wonder Carle is wroth;
Alights in haste and lifting in his arms
The Count, broken by grief upon him faints.

Aoi.

CCVIII.

From his deep swoon the Emperor revives.
Duke Naimes, Count Acelin, Geffrei d'Anjou
His brother Tierri raise the King, and place
Him resting 'gainst a pine. There on the earth
He sees his nephew lying dead, and mourns
O'er him with gentle words and tender looks,
"Sweet friend, Rollánd, God's mercy unto thee!
Such peerless knight none ever yet has seen,
For noble combats ordered and achieved!
Mine honor turns to its decline!—" Once more
Carle's will and strength succumb.... He faints away.

Aoi.

CCIX.

Again King Carle recovers from his swoon....
Four of his Barons, with their hands support
His form. His downcast looks see stretched on earth [150]
His nephew's corpse. Discolored was the brow,
Yet proud the look; the dimmed and sightless eyes
Turned up.... In faith and love King Carle laments.
"Sweet friend Rollánd, may God enshrine thy soul
Among the Glorified, amidst the flowers
Of Paradise! For thy mishap, Seigneur,
Camest thou to Spain.... No future day shall dawn
For me, on which I mourn thee not.... Now fall'n
My strength and power! Who now will e'er support
My royal fiefs? Thou wast for me 'neath Heav'n
The one true friend! though other kindred mine,
Was none so brave and wise."—He tore his hair
In handfuls from his brow. So great the grief
Of those one hundred thousand Franks, that none
There was, of all, who wept not bitter tears.

Aoi.

CCX.

"Beloved Rollánd, to France I now return.

When in my chamber I shall be at Loün,
And foreign men come from afar to ask
Where lives Rollánd the Captain, I shall say
'He lieth dead in Spain;' and I henceforth
Shall hold my realm in bitter pain. No day
Shall dawn for me unmarked by tears and moans."
Aoi.

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CCXI.

"Sweet friend Rollánd, brave Knight and beauteous youth,
When I return to Aix, in my Chapelle,
And men shall come to hear me speak of thee,
What strange and cruel news I then shall have
To greet them with! 'My nephew who for me
Such conquests made ... is dead.' And Saxons now
Will rise against my power, and Hungres, and Bugres
With other foes—the men of Rome, of Pouille,
And all those of Palerne; and those who hold
Affrike and Califerne. Day after day
My pain will grow—Who then shall lead my host
With such an arm of might, since he is dead,
Who was our chief and head so long. Alas!
Sweet France, bereft art thou! So great my grief
I would not live!"—he plucks out his white beard
And tears his hair with both hands from his head.
Swoon on the earth one hundred thousand Franks—
Aoi.

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CCXII.

"Sweet friend," he cried, "Rollánd, thou art no more:
Oh! may thy soul have place in Paradise!
Who gave thee death brought grievous shame to France.
Such is my grief, I would not longer live.
My kinsmen died for me! I pray Our Lord,
The Blessed Mary's son, before I reach
Cizra's defiles, from mortal life to take
My soul away, and let it rest with theirs.
I would my body lay beside their own!"
And, weeping sore, he tears his hoary beard....
Then said Duke Naimes:—"What cruel pain is Carle's!"
Aoi.

CCXIII.

"Sire Emperor," spoke forth Geffrei d'Anjou,
"Yield not so much to sorrow—Orders give
To seek our men throughout the battle-field,
In combat killed by those of Spain, and lay
Them in one grave"—Carle said: "Then sound your horn."
Aoi.

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CCXIV.

Geffrei d'Anjou obeyed and blew his horn;
The French dismount, such was the king's command,
And all their friends found slain upon the field
Together in one charnel wide inter:
A crowd of bishops, abbots, canons, monks
And tonsured priests there gathered, in the name
Of God assoil and bless; incense and myrrh
Are burned in reverence and love before
The dead who, buried there with honors great,
Are left alone—what more was there to do?
Aoi.

CCXV.

The Emp'ror Carle gives order that a watch
Be kept around Rollánd, Count Olivier
And the Archbishop Turpin; bade their breasts
Be oped before him, and their hearts enwrapped

In silken cloths—in tombs of marble white
Inurned; the bodies of the Barons then
Perfumed with wine and fragrant herbs; the three
Seigneurs in wrappings of stag's hide were cased;
By Carle's decree Tedbald and Gebuin,
Marchis Othon and Count Milon escort
Them on their way, upon three chariots borne,
And covered well with palls of glazed silk.

Aoi.

CCXVI.

King Carle about to start, sees suddenly
Emerge the Pagan van. From Baligant,
The battle to declare, two messengers
Advance:—"Proud king, from here thou must not go;
Behold, the Emir to thine encounter comes
And brings a mighty host from Araby.
This day will prove if truly valiant knight
Thou art." Carl'magne, the king, plucks his gray beard;
So cruel is the memory of all
His grief and wrong, proudly he casts a look
Upon his knightly host, and with loud voice
Exclaims:—"Seigneurs Barons! To horse! To arms!"

Aoi.

CCXVII.

First of them all the Emperor is armed.
Quick donned his hauberk,—laced his helm—Joyeuse,
Whose brightness vies with the sun's dazzling rays,
Is girded on—a shield of Girunde hangs
Upon his neck,—his lance, forged in Blandune
He wields, and mounts his good steed Tencendur
Which nigh the ford below Marsune he won,
When he struck dead Malpalin de Nerbune.
Quick to a gallop spurred, rein loosed, the steed
Sped on, before one hundred thousand men.
Carle calls on Rome's Apostle and on God.

Aoi.

CCXVIII.

Spread o'er the field the men of France dismount.
More than one hundred thousand arm themselves
Together—Brilliant their array! Their steeds
Are fleet, arms gleaming; bright the pennons float
Above their helms: The foe once found, they give
Them certain battle. Mounted thus, how brave
Their show! When Carle beholds their faces bright,
Joseran de Provence he calls, the brave
Duke Naimés, also Anselme de Maience:
"In knights so good behooves men to have faith,
And mad indeed who doubts of the event.
Should not the Arabs their approach repent,
Rollánd's death I to them will dearly sell."
Responds Duke Naimés:—"May God vouchsafe your prayer."

Aoi.

CCXIX.

Carl calls Rabel and Guineman:—"Seigneurs,
I will that ye should take the place of Counts
Rollánd and Olivier—One bear the sword;
The olifant, the other—Be the chiefs
Of fifteen thousand bachelors of France,
In youth and valor famous among all—
As many more will follow after these,
Conducted by Gebuin and by Laurant."
Duke Naimés and Joseran the Count with speed
And care these hosts in full array dispose.
Let them encounter, great will be the fight.

Aoi.

CCXX.

These first two cohorts were from out the French
 Composed; and after those a third was formed:
 The vassals of Baviere—Their numbers mount
 To thirty thousand knights who ne'er would blench
 Before the foe. Beneath the sky live not
 A people dearer to the heart of Carle,
 Save those of France, the conquerors of realms.
 The Count Ogier de Danemarche, the brave,
 Will lead—What beauty sits upon their brows!
 Aoi.

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CCXXI.

Now has the Emp'ror Carle three squadrons; Naines
 The Duke, then forms the fourth with truly brave
 Barons from Allemagne, who left La Marche.
 These, twenty thousand count, so all report;
 Well furnished with good steeds and arms; for dread
 Of death in battle they will never yield.
 Herman the Duke of Thrace, their chief, will die
 Before he guilty proves of cowardice.
 Aoi.

CCXXII.

Duke Naines and Joseran the Count, have formed
 The fifth of Normans, twenty thousand men,
 Say all the Franks. Their arms are bright, and fleet
 Their steeds. These welcome death ere they succumb.
 None under Heav'n more valiant in the fight.
 Richard the old will lead them on the field,—
 And with his trenchant lance will bravely strike.
 Aoi.

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CCXXIII.

Composed of Bretons the sixth squadron was:
 Full forty thousand chevaliers are they;
 Barons in mien when mounted thus, each lance
 In rest, its pennon rolled. Their lord is named
 Oedun: These led by Nevelon the Count,
 Tedbald de Reins and the Marchis Othon—
 "My people guide," said Carle; "in ye my trust."
 Aoi.

CCXXIV.

King Carle has now six squadrons on the field.
 Barons d'Alverne and Peitevins Duke Naines
 Has mustered in the seventh. They may count
 Full forty thousand knights. How good their steeds,
 How finely wrought their arms! They stand aloof
 Within a shady vale. With his right hand
 He gives to these his blessing. Joseran
 And Godselmes their appointed leaders are.
 Aoi.

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CCXXV.

Barons of Frise and Flamengs Naines enrolled
 For the eighth legion. Knights in number more
 Than fifty thousand, men who never yield
 In battle. Thus the king: "My service these
 Will do, Rembalt and Hamon de Galice
 Shall lead them forward in all chivalry."
 Aoi.

CCXXVI.

Duke Naines and Joseran the Count equip
 The ninth battalion,—brave among the brave.

Those warriors from Lorraine and Burgundy:
In number fifty thousand knights; close helmed,
In hauberk mailed—a stout short-handled lance
Each wields. Should Arabs not from combat shrink,
Lorrains and Bourguignons will deal hard blows;
Tierri Duke of Argonne will be their chief.

Aoi.

CCXXVII.

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Barons of France make up the tenth. They are
One hundred thousand captains 'mong the best;
Hardy and stout, of features proud, hair flecked
With gray, and beard all white; in hauberk clad
And lined coat of mails, girt with their swords
Of Spain and France; for shelter, brilliant shields
With various blazons decked, among them known.
They mount their steeds and clamor for the fight:
"Montjoie!" they cry.—Comes now Carlemagne the king!
Geffrei d'Anjou bears up the oriflamme
Called Roman once, but since the day Saint Pierre
Made it a standard, it is named Montjoie.

Aoi.

CCXXVIII.

The Emperor Carle dismounts, prostrates himself
Upon the verdant grass, invoking God
With eyes uplifted toward the rising sun:
"O father true, this day be my defense!
Thy hand it was saved Jonas from the whale
Within whose body he was swallowed up;
Thou sparedst too the king of Niniva;
And Daniel didst thou save from cruel pain
When thrown among the lions. By thy might
Stood the three children safe in burning flames,
This day grant also unto me thy love,
Merciful God! List to my prayer; vouchsafe
That I avenge my nephew, dear Rollánd!"
Thus having prayed, he stands erect and marks
His forehead with the sign of might: Then mounts
A fleet-hoofed courser. Naines and Joseran
Carle's stirrup hold—With buckler on his arm
And trenchant lance in rest; strength, beauty, grace
Sat on his countenance and visage fair.
Then firmly seated on his horse he rides....
Clarions in rear and front reëcho 'round....
But above all rings out the olifant.
Meantime the French weep ... mourning for Rollánd.

Aoi.

CCXXIX.

Most nobly on the Emp'ror Carle proceeds.
His long beard flowing o'er his coat of mail,
And so, for love of him, the knights, whereby,
Are surely known the hundred thousand Franks;
They march through mountains and o'ertopping peaks,
Deep vales, defiles of frightful look. At last
Leaving the narrow pass and wasted land,
They reach the Spanish bourne and make a halt
Amid a plain. Meanwhile to Baligant
Return his vanguard scouts; a Syrian spy
Heralds the news,— "We saw the proud King Carle.
His warriors fierce will never fail their King.
To arms—Within a moment look for fight!"
Baligant cried:—"Good news for our brave hearts!
Sound all your trumps and let my Pagans know!"

Aoi.

CCXXX.

Throughout the camp the drums sonorous beat,
With bellowing horns and blasts of trumpet clear.

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The Pagans arm themselves, and least of all
The Emir would th' advance delay—He wears
A hauberk saffron—'broidered round the sides,
And clasps his helm with gold and gems inlaid.
On his left side a sword whereto, in pride,
He gave a name, as Carle had named his sword,
And called the blade his Precieuse. This name
Shall be the battle-cry his warriors shout—
Hangs from his neck a large and spreading shield
Whose golden boss shines with a crystal ring;
The strap of silk with rosy 'broidery;
The lance he bears is named Mallet, the shaft
Of which so huge, more than a beam it looks,
And steel so strong, beneath its weight a mule
Would groan. Upon his steed mounts Baligant;
His stirrup held by Marcule d'Ultremer.
Mighty the Emir's stride across the selle;
Thin-joined, wide-flanked, deep-chested, all his form
Well molded; broad his shoulders; clear his eye,
His visage haughty, curls around his brow.
White as a summer blossom he appears;
His valor proved by many feats of war.
God! what a Baron, had he Christian faith!
He spurs his horse until the crimson blood
Reddens its flanks, and lightly bounds across
A mighty chasm full fifty feet in width.
The Pagans cry:—"He can defend his marche.
With him none 'mong the French can cross a lance;
Will they or not, their lives are forfeit now.
Yea Carle was mad who did not shun the field."

Aoi.

CCXXXI.

The Emir, Baron-like, wears on his chin
A beard as white as summer flower, and gained
Among the wisest of his creed a fame;
In battle fierce and proud. His son Malprime
Of knightly soul, and from his noble race
Holding a valiant heart and strength of arm,
Addressed his father:—"Sire, to horse! to horse!
Against them! I much wonder whether Carle
We e'er shall meet."—"Yea," answered Baligant,
"Carle is a valorous knight; his glorious deeds
Are writt'n, but now his nephew is no more;
Against our strength no other man's can stand."

Aoi.

CCXXXII.

"Fair son, Malprime," said th' Emir Baligant,
"Yesterday fell in death the noble knight
Rollánd, and Olivier the wise and brave,
And the twelve Peers by Carle so dearly loved,
With twenty thousand combatants of France;
Not at a glove's worth hold I all the rest.
Anon my Syrian messenger reports
The emperor's approach; ten armies Carle
Has called in close array; the knight who bears
The olifant, with clear resounding blast
Leads his companions, riding in the front;
Together with them fifteen thousand men
Of France, all bachelors, whom Carle is wont
To call his children. These as many follow
Who for the fiercest combat seem prepared."
Thus said Malprime: "The first stroke I demand!"

Aoi.

CCXXXIII.

"Fair son," said Baligant, "to you I grant
Your full request. Against the French at once
Engage. Let your companions be Torleu
The Persian King, and Dapamort who rules

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Leutis. If you subdue the vaunting Carle,
A portion of my kingdom shall you have
In fief from the Orient to Val-Marchis."
Responds Malprime: "To you, O sire, all thanks!"
And stepping forward, he receives the boon.
This land had once been swayed by King Fleuri,
But by Malprime was neither ruled nor seen.

Aoi.

CCXXXIV.

The Emir Baligant rides through the ranks
Of all his host, escorted by his son
Of giant stature, and the Kings Torleu [166]
And Dapamort. In line of battle soon
Stand thirty legions ranked. Countless the knights,
And fifteen thousand strong the weakest band
Can number. First are those of Butentrot,
The next of Misnia: enormous heads
O'ertop the spine enrooted in their backs,
Their shaggy bodies bristling with coarse hair
Like boars; the third, of Nubles and of Blos;
The legion fourth of Bruns and Esclavos;
The fifth of Sorbres and Sorz; from the Ermines
And Mors is formed the sixth; from Jericho
The seventh, and the eighth from those of Nigre.
Of Gros the ninth, and from Balide-la-Fort,
The legion tenth, men never good for aught.
With strongest oaths the Emir swears aloud
By all Mohammed's might and body, "Carle
Of France rides like a madman to his doom,
For combat we shall have; recoils he not,
His brow shall never more wear golden crown."

Aoi.

CCXXXV.

Ten other legions are arrayed: the first
Of Canelieux—ill-visaged people, come
Athwart, from Valfuit; Turks the next; the third [167]
Persians; the fourth, Persians and Pinceneis;
The fifth from Soltras come and from Avers;
Englez and Ormaleis make up the sixth;
The seventh scions are of Samuel's race;
The eighth from Braise; Esclavers form the ninth;
As for the tenth, a horde perverse that came
From Ociant's deserted land—a race
Not loving God the Lord; ne'er shall you hear
Of viler breed: their heathen skin as hard
As iron, whence it is they need no helms
Nor hauberks mailed—in battle treach'rous fiends.

Aoi.

CCXXXVI.

The Emir has himself ten legions armed.
To form the first the giants of Malpruse
Were summoned; to the second came the Huns;
The Hungres made the third; Baldise-la-Lungue
The fourth, and Val-Penuse the fifth; the sixth
Maruse; the seventh Leuz and Astrimonies;
The eighth Argoilles; Clarbone the ninth; the tenth
Formed of the bearded men of Val-Fondé,
A tribe that never would love God. The songs [168]
Of Geste of France thus thirty legions count:
A mighty host where many a trumpet blasts.
Forward, like valiant knights, the Pagans ride.

Aoi.

CCXXXVII.

The Emir, rich and mighty lord, commands
Before him to display his dragon-flag,
The standard of Mahum and Tervagant;

With it Apollo's image, evil god.
Ten Canelieus about him ride, and cry
This sermon with loud voice: "Who by our Gods
Craves to be saved, with the most contrite heart
Must pray!" And then the Pagans low incline
Their heads and chins, with brilliant helms bent down
To earth.—"Now, gluttons, comes your hour to die!"
Cry out the French; "Confusion be your lot.
This day, O God of ours, defend King Carle,
Turn Thou the scale of battle to his side!"
Aoi.

CCXXXVIII.

The Emir, great in wisdom, called his son
And the two kings:—"Seigneurs Barons, in front
Ride ye, and all my legions you shall lead;
Among them only three will I retain,
But of the best: The first shall be the Turks,
The second of the Ormaleis composed,
And third shall be the Giants of Malpruse,
While those of Occiant shall near me stand
To set them on King Carle and on his French.
Should then the Emperor dare measure arms
With me, struck from its trunk his head shall fall—
No right has he to other fate than this."
Aoi.

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CCXXXIX.

Both armies are immense; their squadrons bright.
Between the combatants nor height, nor hill,
Nor vale, nor wood that shelter could afford;
Foe looks on foe across the open field.—
Said Baligant: "My Saracens, to horse!
Ride forward to the fight!" The battle flag
Is borne on high by Amboire d'Oliferne,
And all shout "Precieuse!" The French exclaim:
"May ye confounded be this day!" Aloud
Rises their cry "Montjoie!" The Emperor Carle
His trumpets bid resound, and the olifant
Whose blast 'whelms all. The Pagans say: "Carle's host
Is fair! Fierce battle shall we have and dire."
Aoi.

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CCXL.

Vast is the plain and broad the field. Behold
Those dazzling helms inlaid with gold and gems,
Those shields, those coats of mail with saffron edged,
Those spears and pennons rolled; hearken ye the voice
Of trumpets blowing clear and strong, and hark
The olifant's shrill blast, which sounds the charge.
The Emir calls his brother, Canabeu,
The King of Floredée, who rules the land
As far as Val-Sevrée, and points to Carle's
Ten must'ring legions: "See the pride of France
The praised; amid his bearded knights how proud
The Emperor rides! O'er their hauberks stream
Their beards as white as snow upon the frost.
Forsooth! These valiant warriors will strike hard
With lance and sword, and such a fight be ours
As never man has fought." Then Baligant,
Urging his courser further than a man
Can hurl a staff, gave reasons and their proof:
"Come forward, Pagans; follow where I go!"
Brandishing high the shaft of his own lance,
At Carle he levels fair its trenchant steel.
Aoi.

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CCXLI.

When Carle the Emir sees, and with him borne
The dragon-standard, all the land o'erswarmed

By Arab warriors, save that space alone
Held by his host, he cries with loudest voice:
"Barons of France, in valor great, we know,
Upon how many fields ye battled! See
The Pagans! Traitors vile and cowards all;
Yea, all their law I count no denier worth.
What care ye, lords, how vast their numbers are?
Let those who wish to combat follow me!"
With pointed spurs he pricks his courser's flanks
And Tecendur four times leaped in the air.
Cry out the French:—"A valiant King is this!
Ride forward, Sire, not one will fail you here."
Aoi.

CCXLII.

Clear was the day and bright the sun. Both hosts
Resplendent, their battalions numberless;
The legions in the van already meet [172]
In fight. Both Counts Rabel and Guineman
On their fleet coursers' necks have loosed the rein!
Sharply they spur, and all the Franks dash on
To deal with trenchant lance their valiant blows.
Aoi.

CCXLIII.

A daring Knight is Count Rabel. With spurs
Of purest gold he pricks his courser's flanks,
Rushing to smite Torleu the Persian King.
No shield, no hauberk can such blow withstand.
The golden spear went through the Pagan's heart
And mid the brambles of the road has struck
Him dead. The French cry out: "Aid us, O God!
With Carle the right; ne'er shall we fail our King!"
Aoi.

CCXLIV.

Guineman 'gainst the King of Leutice tilts;
The Pagan's shield with painted flowers bedecked
Is shattered and his hauberk torn away.
Through his heart's core the pennon of the Knight
Is driven, bearing death,—or laugh or weep [173]
Who may. At such a blow the French exclaim:
"Barons, strike ever! Strike and be not slack
Against the Pagan hordes; to Carle belongs
The right. With us the justice true of God!"
Aoi.

CCXLV.

Malprime upon a steed of purest white
Leads 'gainst the serried legions of the Franks
His men. Abating not his mighty blows,
Corse over corse he heaps. Cries Baligant
In front: "Ye whom my kindness nurtured long,
Barons of mine, see how my son seeks Carle
And with so many knights he measured arms;
A better vassal I shall never claim;
Give him the succor of your trenchant spears."
On rush the Pagans at these words, and deal
Their mortal blows around. Rude is the fight!
The battle marvelous and stern. None such
Was ever seen before or since that hour.
Aoi.

CCXLVI.

The hosts are numberless, the warriors fierce—
The encount'ring legions fighting hand to hand
Noblest exploits achieved. How many a lance
Asunder broken; God! How many shields [174]

In pieces split, how many hauberks wrenched!
Splinters of shivered armor you might see
Strew all the field, and verdant tender grass
Vermillioned o'er by streams of human gore!
The Emir to his people calls anew:
"Barons strike down these Christian people!"—Hard
And long the fight embittered by revenge
And rage. Ne'er seen before nor will be seen
Again such combat.—To the death they fight.
Aoi.

CCXLVII.

The Emir to his men:—"Strike, Pagans, ye
For this alone have come. Dames sweet and fair
Shall be your guerdon; honors, and domains
I promise all."—The Saracens respond:
"To serve you all we ought."—So hard they fight
That in the hot affray they lose their spears:
Anon a thousand flashing swords and more,
Are drawn, a bloody slaughter to achieve.
He who stood on that field, true battle saw.
Aoi.

CCXLVIII.

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The King exhorts his French: "Beloved Seigneurs
And trusty Knights, ye many battles fought
For me, won many a realm, defeated Kings!
Full well I know, rich guerdons have ye earned;
My wealth, lands, blood I owe you. Now to-day
Your sons, your brothers and your kin avenge
Who fell in Ronceval but yesternight!
Well know ye mine the right, with them the wrong."
The French reply:—"Yea, sire, you speak the truth."
The twenty thousand knights who march with Carle
Pledge with one soul their fealty. Dire distress,
E'en death, shall cause not one of these to fail
The Emperor; not on lances they rely,
But with the sword in hand wage doughty strife.
Wondrous the raging battle. Stern the fight.
Aoi.

CCXLIX.

The brave Malprime has pressed his steed across
The field, and carried death among the French.
Duke Naimes glanced proudly toward him, and as knight
In battle fearless met him in career;
He strikes ... tears off his buckler's leathern top,
The hauberk cuts in twain, drives through the heart
The yellow pennon of the spear, and strikes
Him dead mid seven hundred other knights.
Aoi.

[176]

CCL.

King Canabeus, the Emir's brother, spurs
His courser on; his crystal-hilted sword
Unsheathes, and deals Naimes' princely helm a blow
Which splits the crest in twain; the trenchant blade
Severs the five strong bands which to his head
Fast bound it; now not worth a denier was
The steel-mailed hood; down to the flesh the casque
Sheer cleft—a fragment falls upon the earth.
The blow was great; the Duke, astounded, reeled,
And would have fallen but for God's help. He clasps
His courser's neck, and should the Pagan deal
Another stroke, the noble Duke has breathed
His last; but to his help comes Carle of France.
Aoi.

[177]

CCLI.

In the Duke Naimes' brave heart what agony!
Once more the Pagan raised his arm to strike,
But now King Carle cries:—"Coward, wretch! This blow
Brings thee ill luck!"—And valiantly the King
Rushed on, crushed 'gainst his heart the buckler, rent
The hauberk's top; dead-struck the heathen King
Falls on the ground ... empty the saddle rests.

Aoi.

CCLII.

Deep grief the Emperor felt when there he saw
Duke Naimes sore-wounded and the verdant grass
Streamed o'er by his clear blood, and thereupon
This counsel spoke:—"Fair Naimes, ride close by me;
The wretch who brought you to this cruel fight
Has breathed his last, his body by my lance
Transfixed."—The Duke:—"In you my trust, O sire!
If e'er I live, with knightly service shall
My arm requite this deed!"—Then side by side
In faith and love, with twenty thousand knights
They march. And none of these or flinch or yield.

[178]

Aoi.

CCLIII.

The Emir rides across the field, in haste
To deal a blow against Count Guineman.
Athwart his heart he breaks the buckler white
And tears the hauberk's sides apart, disjoints
Two ribs and hurls him from his courser, dead;
Then takes the life of Gebain and Lorant,
And of Richard the old, a Norman Lord.
The Pagans cry: "*Precieuse* deserves its name!
Barons! strike on, *Precieuse* will save us all!"

Aoi.

CCLIV.

A noble sight, those knights of Araby,
Of Occiant, of Argoille and of Bascle!
Spears intermix, death to repel or give.
Nathless the French recoil not from the strife.
On either side they fall heaped high. Till eve
The storm of battle raged. Meanwhile the knights
Of France upon that day bore rueful loss;
Nor stayed the carnage till the day was done.

[179]

Aoi.

CCLV.

French and Arabian warriors emulate
In valor each the other. Ashen shafts
Break from their brazen heads. Whoso then saw
Those shields defaced, who heard those hauberks white
Resound with blows, this dinning clash of shields
'Gainst helmets grinding, saw those knights and men
Fall and with dying shrieks roll on the earth,
Of greatest anguish could the memory keep;
So fierce this battle raged. The Emir calls
Upon Apollo, Tervagan, upon
Mahum: "Till now I served you well, O Gods!
And I will have an image made for each,
Molten of purest gold [if ye but help]!"
Before him then his favorite Gemalfin
Appears. He brings ill news. "Sire Baligant
This day brings you mishap; Malprime, your son
Has fall'n! Your brother Canabeus is dead.
Two Franks the glory have of their defeat,
One, Carle the Emperor, I deem, so vast
His fame, his air as *Marchis* grand, his beard
As white as April blossom!" At these words
The Emir's helm declines, his visage sinks
Low on his breast. Such is his grief, he thinks

[180]

Death nears him. Calling Jangleu d'ultremer,
Aoi.

CCLVI.

The Emir said:—"Jangleu, step forth; most wise
Art thou, thy knowledge great; thy counsel e'er
I followed; what the chance of victory
For Franks or Arabs deemest thou?" Jangleu
Responds:—"Death, Baligant, hangs o'er your head.
Ne'ermore your gods can save you; Carle is proud,
And valiant are his men. Ne'er lived a race
So strong in battle; yet call up your knights
Of Occiant, Enfruns and Arabs, Turks
And Giants. Do your duty with all speed."
Aoi.

CCLVII.

The Emir spreads out to the breeze his beard
As hawthorn blossom white; betide what may,
Escape he will not seek, puts to his lips
A trumpet clear, whose blast the Pagans hark,
And fast their cohorts rally on the field.
They bray and neigh, the men of Occiant,
While those of Arguile yelp as curs, and charge
The Franks so rashly, they mow down and break
Their thickest ranks, and by this blow
Throw seven thousand dead upon the field.
Aoi.

[181]

CCLVIII.

To Count Ogier is dastardy unknown;
No better vassal buckled hauberk on.
When the French legions broken thus he saw,
He called Tierrri Duke of Argonne, Geffrei
D'Anjou and Jozeran the Count, and spoke
These haughty words to Carle:—"Behold our men
By Pagans slaughtered! May God ne'er permit
Your brow to wear its crown if unrevenged
Your shame remains!" None dared reply a word,
But spurring hard their steeds, with loosened reins
They rush in fury 'gainst the Pagan ranks
And strike the foes where'er they can be met.
Aoi.

CCLIX.

[182]

Hard strikes Carlemagne the king, hard strikes Duke Naimes,
Ogier de Dannemark, Geffrei d'Anjou,
Who bears the royal pennon. But o'er all
Ogier de Dannemark puts forth his might;
He pricks his courser, drops the rein and falls
Upon the Pagan who the Dragon holds,
So fiercely, that both Dragon and the King's
Own flag is crushed before him on the spot.
When Baligant beholds his gonfalon fall
And Mahum's flag defenseless, in his heart
Springs quick the thought, wrong may be on his side
And right on Carle's. The Pagans [waver now].
The Emperor Carle around him calls his (Franks):
"Barons, in God's name, do you stand by me?"
Respond the French:—"To ask is an offense.
Accurst be he who deals not glorious strokes!"
Aoi.

CCLX.

The day wears on and vesper draweth nigh.
Christians and Pagans, sword in hand, engage;
And valiant are their chiefs, nor mindless they
Of battle cries:—"Precieuse!" the Emir shouts,

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And Carle:—"Montjoie!" the glorious sign. Each knows
The other by the clear sonorous voice,
And 'mid the field encountering, gives and takes
Fierce blows. Each massy shield receives the shock,
And each beneath the boss is cloven in twain
By the strong lance; each hauberk's sides are rent,
But the keen steel in neither reached the flesh;
The horse-girths burst and let the saddles fall.
Dropped to the earth both kings, both to their feet
Quick springing, dauntlessly unsheathed their swords.
And now the mortal combat will not cease
Till Carle or Baligant has fallen in death.

Aoi.

CCLXI.

Carle of sweet France is brave, but the Emir feels
Before him neither fear nor dread. Both wield
Their naked swords and mighty thrusts exchange.
The shields, of wood and leather multifold,
Are rent, the nails torn out, the bosses split;
Each at the other's hauberk aims his blows.
Both combat breast to breast; the showering sparks
Wrap both their helms in fire: no end can be
Till one or other, vanquished, owns his wrong.

[184]

Aoi.

CCLXII.

The Emir said: "King Carle, bethink thee yet;
Take better counsel with thy heart, and show
Remorse. Full well I know, by thee my son
Was slain, thou broughtest ruin through my land.
Become my man, I will restore [in fief]
This land [to thee], and to the East, but serve
Me well." And Carle: "Great shame were that to me!
To Heathens I can give no peace nor love....
Receive the law our God revealed; accept
The faith of Christ.... For e'er my love is thine,
If thou believe in God, the Almighty King."
Said Baligant: "Ill words are these of thine:
[Far better die by the keen edge of sword.]"

Aoi.

CCLXIII.

[185]

The mighty Emir with a giant's strength
Smites Carle upon the helm of burnished steel,
Which splits in twain beneath the ponderous blow,
Cuts through the silky hair, shears from the scalp
Fully the breadth of a man's palm and more,
Baring the skull. Carle staggers, nearly falls,
But God willed not that he should die or yield.
Saint Gabriel, with eager flight once more
Descends, demanding:—"What ails thee, great King?"

Aoi.

CCLXIV.

When Carle the Angel's heavenly accent hears,
All thought or dread of death forsakes his soul,
And in him springs again his former strength.
The Emir by the royal sword of France
Is struck, his helm all bright with gems is rent,
His cloven skull pours out the brain, his face
Is cleft to the very roots of his white beard:
Dead falls the Pagan past recovery.
Then shouts the King his rallying cry, "Montjoie!"
Hearing his shout, Duke Naimes hastes up, and brings
The charger Tecendur for Carle the great
To mount. The Pagans turn their backs—God wills
They should not stay. The Franks have their desires.

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Aoi.

CCLXV.

The Pagans fly—such is the will of God;
 Carle leads the French in the pursuit. Thus spake
 The King:—"Seigneurs, the time is come to give
 Vent to just hatred, and your anguished hearts
 Assuage. This very morn I saw your eyes
 Streaming with tears." They cry:—"Our vengeance now!"
 And vying with each other in exploits,
 They deal their mighty blows. But few escape.
 Aoi.

CCLXVI.

Amidst the sultry heat and clouds of dust
 The Pagans roused, by their foes harassed,
 Flee far for Sarraguçe. To her high tower
 Ascends Queen Bramimunde, where, seeing thus
 The routed Arabs fly, she calls her priests
 And canons, subjects to false law, by God
 Ne'er loved: their crowns no holy tonsure wear.
 She cries aloud:—"Aid us, Mahum! Oh aid!
 O gentle King! Already vanquished are
 Our men, the Emir slain in shameful death!"
 On hearing this, Marsile turned to the wall
 His covered face, and amid bitter tears
 His life departed. Soon the eager fiends
 Bore off to judgment his sin-burthened soul.
 Aoi.

[187]

CCLXVII.

The Pagans all are slain [or put to flight];
 Carle wins the day. The gates of Sarraguçe
 Are stormed, and well he knows, defense is vain.
 He takes the city. All the Christian host
 Pour in, and there repose their limbs this night.
 The King with snow-white beard is filled with pride:
 Queen Bramimunde gives up the citadels;
 Ten of these forts are large, and fifty small.
 Well helped are they whom God Almighty aids.
 Aoi.

CCLXVIII.

The sunny day had passed, the shades of night
 Had fallen; bright the moonlight; all the stars
 In heaven shone. Carle ruled in Sarraguçe.
 Unto one thousand men he gave command
 To search throughout the city's synagogues
 And mosques for all their idols and graven signs
 Of gods—these to be broken up and crushed
 By ax and iron mallet he ordains.
 Nor sorcery nor falsehood left. King Carle
 Believes in God and serves him faithfully.
 Then bishops bless the fountains, leading up
 The Heathens to the blest baptismal Font.
 If one perchance resist the King, condemned
 Is he to die, or hanged, or burnt, or slain.
 More than one hundred thousand are baptized
 True Christians; but not so Queen Bramimunde:
 A captive shall she go unto sweet France
 And be converted by the King through love.
 Aoi.

[188]

CCLXIX.

Night passes; dawn appears. Carle fortifies
 The towers of Sarraguçe. One thousand Knights
 Of valor proved are left to guard the town
 In the Emperor's name. With escort strong he rides,
 Followed by Bramimunde a captive, yet
 Commands that naught but kindness she receive.

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In proud and joyous triumph they return;
Through Nerbune passes the victorious host,
Unto Burdele, the city great and fair.
There on the altar of the Baron Saint
Sevrin, Carle lays the olifant filled full
Of marks and gold, where pilgrims view it still.
Passing upon broad skiffs across Girunde,
To Blaive, he bears the bodies of Rollánd
And Olivier, his noble *Compagnon*,
With the Archbishop good and brave. Beneath
White monuments he hath the lords entombed
At Saint-Romain. Here those three Barons lie....
The French to God and to his saints, once more
Commend them. Carle anew through mounts and vales
Proceeds, nor will he stop until in Aix.
Fast rides he till he nears the marble steps
Of his great palace; and as soon as reached
Its tower, by messengers he summons up
Baiviers and Saisnes, Loherencs and Frisons,
Allemands, Burguignons, Normans, Poitevins,
Bretons, of France the wisest men; for now
Ganelon's trial shall have no delay.
Aoi.

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THE PUNISHMENT OF GANELON.

[191]

CCLXX.

From Spain at last the Emperor has returned
To Aix, the noblest seat of France; ascends
His palace, enters in the stately hall.—
Now comes to greet him the fair [lady] Aude,
And asks the King:—"Where is Rollánd the chief
Who pledged his faith to take me for his wife?"
Sore-pained, heart-broken, Carle, with weeping eyes,
Tears his white beard.—"Ah! sister well beloved,
Thou askest me of one who is no more.
A worthier match I give thee in exchange;
Loewis it is. I can not better say.
He is my son, and will protect my realms."
Aude answers:—"To my ear these words are strange.
May God, His saints, His angels, all forfend
That, if Rollánd lives not, I still should live."
Her color fades, she falls prone at the feet
Of Carlemagne—dead ... God's mercy on her soul!
Barons of France mourn her with pitying tears.
Aoi.

[192]

CCLXXI.

Such was the end of Aude the beautiful.
The King, in hope 'tis but a swoon, with tears
And pity taking both her hands, uplifts
Her form; the head upon the shoulders sinks.
As soon as Carle knows it is death indeed,
Four countesses he summons, bids them bear
In haste the Lady to a nunnery.—
All night they watched the body, and at morn
Beside a shrine gently she was entombed
With highest honors by the King's command.
Aoi.

CCLXXII.

The Emperor is once more at Aix. There stands
Amid the city 'fore the palace gate,
In iron chains, the traitor Ganelon.
His hands are fastened to a stake with thongs
Of deer-skin by the sergeants who then beat
His body well with staves and heavy cords.

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Such treatment was his true desert. He waits
His coming doom, in agony of soul.

Aoi.

CCLXXIII.

Written it is in ancient Geste of France
That Carle then summoned men from all his lands,
Who met at Aix's Chapelle. A solemn feast
It was; some say the Baron Saint Silvestre's.
This day began the plea and history
Of Ganelon who wove the treason's plot.
The Emperor bade them drag him to his bar.

Aoi.

CCLXXIV.

"Seigneurs Barons," said to them Carle the King,
"Judge Ganelon according to the law.—
Among my host with me to Spain he came;
His craft lost twenty thousand of my Franks;
My nephew, whom ye nevermore shall see,
And Olivier, the brave and courteous Knight.
The traitor sold my brave twelve Peers for gain."
Then Ganelon:—"May I be cursed ere I
Deny. Of wealth and honors had [Rollánd]
Deprived me, and for this, his loss and death
I wrought, but treason none I will confess."
Respond the French:—"On this we counsel take."

Aoi.

[194]

CCLXXV.

In presence of the King stands Ganelon
With bearing hardy, florid countenance;
Were he but loyal, as a Baron true
His mien. Upon the French and judges he
Has cast a glance, and on his thirty kin
Who 'round him stand; then with firm voice exclaims:
"Barons! Now hear me all, for love of God!
I to the Emperor's host belonged, and served
Him ever in all faith and love. Rollánd,
His nephew, hatred bore to me, and fain
Had doomed my days to torture and to death.
As message-bearer I to King Marsile
Was sent, wisdom alone my shield and guard;
I gave defiance to Rollánd the bold,
To Olivier and to their comrades all:
By Carle and all his Barons this was heard.
Revenge this was, but treason it was none."
Reply the French:—"All this we well shall weigh."

Aoi.

CCLXXVI.

[195]

On seeing the great plea was to commence,
Thirty good Knights were called by Ganelon
Out of his kin, and one among them makes
A speech all others hark: 'tis Pinabel
Of Castel de Sorence, of greatest skill
In words, and apt with reason plausible;
Withal, a vassal brave to guard his arms.
Thus to him Ganelon:—"In you my trust
I place; my life from death, my name from shame
Preserve!"—Said Pinabel:—"Thou shalt be saved.
Dare one French Knight condemn thee to be hanged,
And would the Emperor make us both to meet
In combat, my good sword will his rash word
Believe."—And at his feet falls Ganelon.

Aoi.

CCLXXVII.

Baiviers, Saines, Poitevins, Normans and French
In council met;—Allemans, Tiedeis in great
Array. Those from Alverne most courteous prove
And show more kindness unto Pinabel.
One to the others said:—"To leave this plea
Right would it be, and pray Carl'magne, this once
To pardon Ganelon who, from this day,
Will serve his lord with truer faith and love.
Rollánd lies in his grave; nor wealth, nor gold
Restores him to your eyes. This cruel fight
Is folly."—All the Knights approve, save one,
Tierra, a brother of the Lord Geffrei.

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Aoi.

CCLXXVIII.

To Carle his Barons come again, and say:
"We pray you, sire, acquit Count Ganelon;
Then will he serve you with true faith and love.
Grant him his life which springs from noble race.
Rollánd lies in his grave; ne'er shall we see
Him more, nor treasures e'er can bring him back."
Exclaimed the King: "Vile traitors are ye all!"

Aoi.

CLXXIX.

Now, seeing all will fail him, o'er Carle's eyes
And features gloom descends; by grief o'erwhelmed
He cries: "Unhappy that I am!" Then stood
[Tierra], the brother of Geffrei, the Duke
D'Anjou, before the King. Thin, light of frame,
Hair raven-black, [face] somewhat brown of hue,
In height nor tall nor short; with courtesy
He spake thus to the Emp'ror: "Fair sire King,
Be not cast down. That I have served you well
Ere this, you know. 'Tis my ancestral right
To sit among the judges of the plea.
However guilty was Rollánd against
Count Ganelon, his duty to the King
Should have restrained his hate. A treason foul
Ganelon wrought against Rollánd; forsworn
In perjury tow'rd you, he lost himself.
For all his crimes his death I here demand,
Death by the cord; his body to the dogs
Be thrown away—the perjurer's just doom.
Should any of his kin deny the words
I speak, this sword of mine girt to my side
Will make them good."—All cry: "Well have you said."

[197]

Aoi.

CCLXXX.

Then toward the King advances Pinabel;
Tall, strong and swift, and brave. Strike he but once,
No second blow need follow; to the King
He said: "Sire, unto you belongs this plea.
Command these clamors to be hushed. There stands
Tierra who now his judgment has pronounced.
The lie I give him and to fight defy!"
With this his right hand glove of deer-skin gave
Unto the King who said: "I must receive
Good pledges." Of his kin then thirty knights
Were given as legal sureties of his pledge.
"I also give my pledge," the Emperor said,
"And have them guarded safe till judgment pass."

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Aoi.

CCLXXXI.

When Tierra sees that now the fight is near,
He gives the Emperor his right hand glove.
To him the sureties Carle himself provides,
Bids that they bring four benches to the place

Whereon the combatants shall sit. The terms
Are judged by all the others as most fair.
Ogier de Dannemarche was chosen to rule
The lists. Then for their steeds and arms both called.
Aoi.

CCLXXXII.

[199]

Both knights now made them ready for the fight,
Were shriven, assoiled, and blessed; a mass have heard,
Communion have received, and richest alms
Bequeathed to monasteries.—Before striking
They both appear.—Gold spurs their heels adorn;
They wear white hauberks light and strong; bright helms
Clasp on their heads, and gold hilt swords are girt
Upon their thighs, and to their necks are bound
Strong quartered shields; they wield in each right hand
A trenchant sword, and on fleet steeds they mount;
Then melt in tears one hundred thousand knights
Who for Rollánd's sake wish Tierri well.
Yea—but God knows what way the thing will end.
Aoi.

CCLXXXIII.

Beyond the town of Aix a plain extends:
And here our Barons will the combat try.
Most valiant knights are both; the steeds they ride
Are swift and stout; with spurs in flanks, and freed
Of rein, they dash.—The warriors all their might
And skill unite to strike the surest blow.
Bucklers beneath the shock are torn and crushed,
White hauberks rent in shreds, asunder bursts
Each courser's girth, the saddles, turning, fall.
One hundred thousand men look weeping on....
Aoi.

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CCLXXXIV.

Both knights leap on the earth, and, quick as light,
Stand face to face.—Strong, fiery Pinabel
And Tierri for each other seek. Their steeds
Are fled.—But their gold-hilted swords they wield;
And on the helms of steel they shower such blows
As rashed the thongs. Loudly the knights lament,
And Carle exclaims:—"Show thou the right, O God!"
Aoi.

CCLXXXV.

Cried Pinabel:—"Tierri, surrender thou!
Thy vassal I will be in faith and love,
And to thy pleasure will I yield my wealth;
But let the King forgive Count Ganelon!"
Tierri replied:—"Thy offers all are vain;
Vile treason were it such a pact to make;
But God shall judge us and make plain the right."
Aoi.

[201]

CCLXXXVI.

Then Tierri spake:—"I hold thee, Pinabel,
As Baron true, great, strong, of handsome mold;
Thy peers acknowledge thee as valiant knight;
Well, let this combat cease, between the King
And thee a covenant I will strive to make.
On Ganelon such justice shall be done
That future ages shall record the doom."
They grasp again their swords and hew
Each other's gold-encrusted helm with rage
So rash that sparkling fires spurt through the air.
No power will now disjoint the combatants:
The death of one can only close the strife.

Aoi.

CCLXXXVII.

No braver man than Pinabel.—Such blows
He deals on Tierri's helmet of Provence,
That the sparks fly in showers, and, falling, set
The grass ablaze. Then aiming at his foe
His keen-edged brand, down to the brow cuts through
His helm; the blade glides down across his face,
And plows his right cheek with a deep red gash;
Unto his stomach is the haubert rent,
But God protects him, and averts his death.

[202]

Aoi.

CCLXXXVIII.

Tierri, on seeing blood gush from his brow
And tinge the grassy field, strikes Pinabel
On his steel-burnished helmet, and cuts through
To the nose-plate. His head is cleft in twain
And gushes forth the brain. This fatal blow
Gives Pinabel his death, and ends the fight.
The French exclaim:—"O wondrous work of God!
Full right it is that Ganelon be hanged
With all his kin who sureties were for him!"

Aoi.

CCLXXXIX.

Tierri had won, and on the battle-field
The Emperor Carle arrived with an escort
Of forty Barons,—Naimés the Duke, Ogier
De Dannemarche, Geffrei d'Anjou, Willalmes
De Blaive.—In close embrace the King has pressed
Tierri, and with his mantle's sables wiped
The warrior's face; then lays his furs aside
And on his shoulders others are arrayed.
Meanwhile the knight, by friendly hands disarmed,
On an Arabian mule is placed, and so
This valorous Baron full of joy returns
To Aix.—Amid the place they all dismount,
And now the sureties must abide their doom.

[203]

Aoi.

CCXC.

Carlemagne around him calls his counts and dukes:
"What counsel give ye touching those I kept,
Unto this plea who came for Ganelon
Themselves sworn hostages for Pinabel?"
Respond the French:—"Let none of them survive!"—
Carle then commands a road-keeper, Basbrun:
"Hang them all up on yon accursed tree!
By this gray beard of mine, I swear, if one
Escape, thou diest but a villain's death!"—
Answered the man:—"What else but to obey?"—
Then by a hundred sergeants roughly seized,
Those thirty men are hanged.—Who man betrays
Destroys himself and others drags to death.

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Aoi.

CCXCI.

And now have turned away Baiviers, Allemans,
Poitevins, Bretons and Normans; but more
Than all, the French advise that Ganelon
Should die a death of torture. Then they tie
With cords his hands and feet. Four sergeants bring
Four wild and fiery destriers, made mad
By a mare 'mid the field. A fearful end
For Ganelon; bound between them, limb from limb
Is rent away, each nerve and muscle stretched

And torn. The clear blood streams upon the green.
Thus perished Ganelon by a felon's death....
Traitors of evil deeds must never boast.

Aoi.

CCXCII.

[205]

When the Emperor Carle had wreaked his full revenge,
He called the bishops from the realms of France,
And from Baviere, and those of Alemaigne:
"Now in my [court] have I a captive, sprung
From noble race. Such sermons has she heard,
So good examples seen, she will believe
In the true God, and Christian faith embrace.
Baptize her so that He may save her soul;
God-mothers choose her of our noblest dames."
With a great company the Baths at Aix
Were thronged, and soon before the holy Fonts
The Queen received the name of Juliane:
Henceforth a Christian holding fast the Truth.

Aoi.

THE END OF THE CHANSON.

[206]

CCXCIII.

But when the Emperor had made complete
His justice and his heavy wrath assuaged,
And brought Queen Bramimunde to Christian faith,
The day was over and the night had fall'n.
The King sought rest within his vaulted room.
Saint Gabriel brought him word from God and said:
"Carle, of thy empire summon all the hosts
For swiftest marching to the land of Bire;
So shalt thou succor King Vivien in Imphe,
The city compassed by the Pagan foe.
The Christians look to thee and cry for help."—
Will has he none to go, the King, but moans:—
"O, God," quoth he, "so troublous is my life!"—
Whereat he weeps, and tears his hoary beard.

Aoi.

Thus endeth here the Geste Tuoldus sang.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Molted. Because in that condition, better for hunting.
- 2 Pallies. A square piece of silk on which the knights used to sit. (From Pallium).
- 3 Tables. In the romances of the Middle Ages the game of tables means tric-trac, chess, checkers, etc.
- 4 Bezants. A Byzantine coin.
- 5 A sort of undergarment made of gold and silk brocade worn in time of war under the coat of mail, and in time of peace under the mantle of fur. In the latter case it was of silk.

GLOSSARY.

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Of places and words which may present some difficulty as regards origin and meaning on account of their ancient orthography. For more complete information see Léon Gautier's seventh edition of the text.

The numbers indicate stanzas in this edition.

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