

# The Harvard Classics, Volume 49, Epic and Saga eBook

## The Harvard Classics, Volume 49, Epic and Saga

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# Page 1

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## THE HARVARD CLASSICS

*Edited by Charles W. Eliot LLD.*

### EPIC AND SAGA

THE SONG OF ROLAND

### THE DESTRUCTION OF DA DERGA'S HOSTEL

WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES

### VOLUME 49

1910

### THE SONG OF ROLAND

TRANSLATED BY

### JOHN O'HAGAN

*INTRODUCTORY NOTE*



*In the year 778 A.D., Charles the Great, King of the Franks, returned from a military expedition into Spain, whither he had been led by opportunities offered through dissensions among the Saracens who then dominated that country. On the 15th of August, while his army was marching through the passes of the Pyrenees, his rear-guard was attacked and annihilated by the Basque inhabitants of the mountains, in the valley of Roncesvaux. About this disaster many popular songs, it is supposed, soon sprang up; and the chief hero whom they celebrated was Hrodland, Count of the Marches of Brittany.*

There are indications that the earliest of these songs arose among the Breton followers of Hrodland or Roland; but they spread to Maine, to Anjou, to Normandy, until the theme became national. By the latter part of the eleventh century, when the form of the "Song of Roland" which we possess was probably composed, the historical germ of the story had almost disappeared under the mass of legendary accretion. Charlemagne, who was a man of thirty-six at the time of the actual Roncesvaux incident, has become in the poem an old man with a flowing white beard, credited with endless conquests; the Basques have disappeared, and the Saracens have taken their place; the defeat is accounted for by the invention of the treachery of Ganelon; the expedition of 777-778 has become a campaign of seven years; Roland is made the nephew of Charlemagne, leader of the twelve peers, and is provided with a faithful friend Oliver, and a betrothed, Alda.

The poem is the first of the great French heroic poems known as "chansons de geste." It is written in stanzas of various length, bound together by the vowel-rhyme known as assonance. It is not possible to reproduce effectively this device in English, and the author of the present translation has adopted what is perhaps the nearest equivalent—the romantic measure of Coleridge and Scott.



## Page 2

Simple almost to bareness in style, without subtlety or high imagination, the Song of Roland is yet not without grandeur; and its patriotic ardor gives it a place as the earliest of the truly national poems of the modern world.\_

### THE SONG OF ROLAND

#### PART I

##### THE TREASON OF GANELON

### SARAGOSSA. THE COUNCIL OF KING MARSIL

I

The king our Emperor Carlemaine,  
Hath been for seven full years in Spain.  
From highland to sea hath he won the land;  
City was none might his arm withstand;  
Keep and castle alike went down—  
Save Saragossa, the mountain town.  
The King Marsilius holds the place,  
Who loveth not God, nor seeks His grace:  
He prays to Apollin, and serves Mahound;  
But he saved him not from the fate he found.

II

In Saragossa King Marsil made  
His council-seat in the orchard shade,  
On a stair of marble of azure hue.  
There his courtiers round him drew;  
While there stood, the king before,  
Twenty thousand men and more.  
Thus to his dukes and his counts he said,  
“Hear ye, my lords, we are sore bested.  
The Emperor Karl of gentle France  
Hither hath come for our dire mischance.  
Nor host to meet him in battle line,  
Nor power to shatter his power, is mine.  
Speak, my sages; your counsel lend:  
My doom of shame and death forefend.”



But of all the heathens none spake word  
Save Blancandrin, Val Fonde's lord.

III

Blancandrin was a heathen wise,  
Knightly and valiant of enterprise,  
Sage in counsel his lord to aid;  
And he said to the king, "Be not dismayed:  
Proffer to Karl, the haughty and high,  
Lowly friendship and fealty;  
Ample largess lay at his feet,  
Bear and lion and greyhound fleet.  
Seven hundred camels his tribute be,  
A thousand hawks that have moulted free.  
Let full four hundred mules be told,  
Laden with silver enow and gold  
For fifty waggons to bear away;  
So shall his soldiers receive their pay.  
Say, too long hath he warred in Spain,—  
Let him turn to France—to his Aix—again.  
At Saint Michael's feast you will thither speed,  
Bend your heart to the Christian creed,  
And his liegeman be in duty and deed.  
Hostages he may demand  
Ten or twenty at your hand.  
We will send him the sons whom our wives have nursed;  
Were death to follow, mine own the first.  
Better by far that they there should die  
Than be driven all from our land to fly,  
Flung to dishonor and beggary."



## Page 3

### IV

“Yea,” said Blancandrin, “by this right hand,  
And my floating beard by the free wind fanned,  
Ye shall see the host of the Franks disband  
And hie them back into France their land;  
Each to his home as beseemeth well,  
And Karl unto Aix—to his own Chapelle.  
He will hold high feast on Saint Michael’s day  
And the time of your tryst shall pass away.  
Tale nor tidings of us shall be;  
Fiery and sudden, I know, is he:  
He will smite off the heads of our hostages all:  
Better, I say, that their heads should fall  
Than we the fair land of Spain forego,  
And our lives be laden with shame and woe.”  
“Yea,” said the heathens, “it may be so.”

### V

King Marsil’s council is over that day,  
And he called to him Clarin of Balaguet,  
Estramarin, and Eudropin his peer,  
Bade Garlon and Priamon both draw near,  
Machiner and his uncle Maheu—with these  
Joimer and Malbien from overseas,  
Blancandrin for spokesman,—of all his men  
He hath summoned there the most felon ten.  
“Go ye to Carlemaine,” spake their liege,—  
“At Cordres city he sits in siege,—  
While olive branches in hand ye press,  
Token of peace and of lowliness.  
Win him to make fair treaty with me,  
Silver and gold shall your guerdon be,  
Land and lordship in ample fee.”  
“Nay,” said the heathens, “enough have we.”

### VI

So did King Marsil his council end.  
“Lords,” he said, “on my errand wend;  
While olive branches in hand ye bring,  
Say from me unto Karl the king,  
For sake of his God let him pity show;



And ere ever a month shall come and go,  
With a thousand faithful of my race,  
I will follow swiftly upon his trace,  
Freely receive his Christian law,  
And his liegemen be in love and awe.  
Hostages asks he? it shall be done.”  
Blancandrin answered, “Your peace is won.”

## VII

Then King Marsil bade be dight  
Ten fair mules of snowy white,  
Erst from the King of Sicily brought  
Their trappings with silver and gold inwrought—  
Gold the bridle, and silver the selle.  
On these are the messengers mounted well;  
And they ride with olive boughs in hand,  
To seek the Lord of the Frankish land.  
Well let him watch; he shall be trepanned.

At Cordres. CARLEMAINE'S council

## VIII

King Karl is jocund and gay of mood,  
He hath Cordres city at last subdued;  
Its shattered walls and turrets fell  
By Catapult and mangonel;  
Not a heathen did there remain  
But confessed him Christian or else was slain.  
The Emperor sits in



## Page 4

an orchard wide,  
Roland and Olivier by his side:  
Samson the duke, and Anseis proud;  
Geoffrey of Anjou, whose arm was vowed  
The royal gonfalon to rear;  
Gerein, and his fellow in arms, Gerier;  
With them many a gallant lance,  
Full fifteen thousand of gentle France.  
The cavaliers sit upon carpets white,  
Playing at tables for their delight:  
The older and sager sit at the chess,  
The bachelors fence with a light address.  
Seated underneath a pine,  
Close beside an eglantine,  
Upon a throne of beaten gold,  
The lord of ample France behold;  
White his hair and beard were seen,  
Fair of body, and proud of mien,  
Who sought him needed not ask, I ween.  
The ten alight before his feet,  
And him in all observance greet.

### IX

Blancandrin first his errand gave,  
And he said to the king, "May God you save,  
The God of glory, to whom you bend!  
Marsil, our king, doth his greeting send.  
Much hath he mused on the law of grace,  
Much of his wealth at your feet will place—  
Bears and lions, and dogs of chase,  
Seven hundred camels that bend the knee,  
A thousand hawks that have moulted free,  
Four hundred mules, with silver and gold  
Which fifty wains might scantily hold,  
So shall you have of the red bezants  
To pay the soldiers of gentle France.  
Overlong have you dwelt in Spain,—  
To Aix, your city, return again.  
The lord I serve will thither come,  
Accept the law of Christendom,  
With clasped hands your liegeman be,



And hold his realm of you in fee.”  
The Emperor raised his hands on high,  
Bent and bethought him silently.

X

The Emperor bent his head full low;  
Never hasty of speech I trow;  
Leisurely came his words, and slow,  
Lofty his look as he raised his head:  
“Thou hast spoken well,” at length he said.  
“King Marsil was ever my deadly foe,  
And of all these words, so fair in show,  
How may I the fulfilment know?”  
“Hostages will you?” the heathen cried,  
“Ten or twenty, or more beside.  
I will send my son, were his death at hand,  
With the best and noblest of all our land;  
And when you sit in your palace halls,  
And the feast of St. Michael of Peril falls,  
Unto the waters will come our king,  
Which God commanded for you to spring;  
There in the laver of Christ be laved.”  
“Yea!” said Karl, “he may yet be saved.”

XI



## Page 5

Fair and bright did the evening fall:  
The ten white mules were stabled in stall;  
On the sward was a fair pavilion dressed,  
To give to the Saracens cheer of the best;  
Servitors twelve at their bidding bide,  
And they rest all night until morning tide.  
The Emperor rose with the day-dawn clear,  
Failed not Matins and Mass to hear,  
Then betook him beneath a pine,  
Summoned his barons by word and sign:  
As his Franks advise will his choice incline.

XII

Under a pine is the Emperor gone,  
And his barons to council come forth anon:  
Archbishop Turpin, Duke Ogier bold  
With his nephew Henry was Richard the old,  
Gascony's gallant Count Acelin,  
Tybalt of Rheims, and Milo his kin,  
Gerein and his brother in arms, Gerier,  
Count Roland and his faithful fere,  
The gentle and valiant Olivier:  
More than a thousand Franks of France  
And Ganelon came, of woful chance;  
By him was the deed of treason done.  
So was the fatal consult begun.

XIII

"Lords my barons," the Emperor said,  
"King Marsil to me hath his envoys sped.  
He proffers treasure surpassing bounds,  
Bears and lions, and leashed hounds;  
Seven hundred camels that bend the knee;  
A thousand hawks that have moulted free;  
Four hundred mules with Arab gold,  
Which fifty wains might scantily hold.  
But he saith to France must I wend my way:  
He will follow to Aix with brief delay,  
Bend his heart unto Christ's belief,  
And hold his marches of me in fief;  
Yet I know not what in his heart may lie."  
"Beware! beware!" was the Franks' outcry.



## XIV

Scarce his speech did the Emperor close,  
When in high displeasure Count Roland rose,  
Fronted his uncle upon the spot,  
And said, "This Marsil, believe him not:  
Seven full years have we warded in Spain;  
Commibles and Noples for you have I ta'en,  
Tudela and Sebilie, cities twain;  
Valtierra I won, and the land of Pine,  
And Balaguet fell to this arm of mine.  
King Marsil hath ever a traitor been:  
He sent of his heathens, at first fifteen.  
Bearing each one on olive bough,  
Speaking the self-same words as now.  
Into council with your Franks you went,  
Lightly they flattered your heart's intent;  
Two of your barons to him you sent,—  
They were Basan and Basil, the brother knights:  
He smote off their heads on Haltoia's heights.  
War, I say!—end as you well began,  
Unto Saragossa lead on your van;  
Were the siege to last your lifetime through,  
Avenge the nobles this felon slew."

## XV



## Page 6

The Emperor bent him and mused within,  
Twisted his beard upon lip and chin,  
Answered his nephew nor good nor ill;  
And the Franks, save Ganelon, all were still:  
Hastily to his feet he sprang,  
Haughtily his words outrang:—  
“By me or others be not misled,—  
Look to your own good ends,” he said.  
“Since now King Marsil his faith assures,  
That, with hands together clasped in yours,  
He will henceforth your vassal be,  
Receive the Christian law as we,  
And hold his realm of you in fee,  
Whoso would treaty like this deny,  
Recks not, sire, by what death we die:  
Good never came from counsel of pride,—  
List to the wise, and let madmen bide.”

### XVI

Then his form Duke Naimes upreared,  
White of hair and hoary of beard.  
Better vassal in court was none.  
“You have hearkened,” he said, “unto Ganelon.  
Well hath Count Ganelon made reply;  
Wise are his words, if you bide thereby.  
King Marsil is beaten and broken in war;  
You have captured his castles anear and far,  
With your engines shattered his walls amain,  
His cities burned, his soldiers slain:  
Respite and ruth if he now implore,  
Sin it were to molest him more.  
Let his hostages vouch for the faith he plights,  
And send him one of your Christian knights.  
'Twere time this war to an ending came.”  
“Well saith the duke!” the Franks exclaim.

### XVII

“Lords my barons, who then were best  
In Saragossa to do our hest?”  
“I,” said Naimes, “of your royal grace,  
Yield me in token your glove and mace.”  
“Nay—my sagest of men art thou:



By my beard upon lip and chin I vow  
Thou shalt never depart so far from me:  
Sit thee down till I summon thee.”

XVIII

“Lords my barons, whom send we, then,  
To Saragossa, the Saracen den?”  
“I,” said Roland, “will blithely go.”  
“Nay,” said Olivier; “nay, not so.  
All too fiery of mood thou art;  
Thou wouldst play, I fear me, a perilous part.  
I go myself, if the king but will.”  
“I command,” said Karl, “that ye both be still.  
Neither shall be on this errand bound,  
Nor one of the twelve—my peers around;  
So by my blanching beard I swear.”  
The Franks are abashed and silent there.

XIX

Turpin of Rheims from amid the ranks  
Said: “Look, my liege, on your faithful Franks:  
Seven full years have they held this land,  
With pain and peril on every hand.  
To me be the mace and the glove consigned;  
I will go this Saracen lord to find,  
And freely forth will I speak my mind.”  
The Emperor answered in angry plight,  
“Sit thee down on that carpet white;  
Speak not till I thy speech invite.”



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XX

“My cavaliers,” he began anew,  
“Choose of my marches a baron true,  
Before King Marsil my best to do.”  
“Be it, then,” said Roland, “my stepsire Gan,  
In vain ye seek for a meeter man.”  
The Franks exclaim, “He is worth the trust,  
So it please the king it is right and just.”  
Count Ganelon then was with anguish wrung,  
His mantle of fur from his neck he flung,  
Stood all stark in his silken vest,  
And his grey eyes gleamed with a fierce unrest  
Fair of body and large of limb,  
All in wonderment gazed on him.  
“Thou madman,” thus he to Roland cried,  
“What may this rage against me betide?  
I am thy stepsire, as all men know,  
And thou doom’st me on hest like this to go;  
But so God my safe return bestow,  
I promise to work thee scathe and strife  
Long as thou breathest the breath of life.”  
“Pride and folly!” said Roland, then.  
“Am I known to wreck of the threats of men?  
But this is work for the sagest head.  
So it please the king, I will go instead.”

XXI

“In *my* stead?—never, of mine accord.  
Thou art not my vassal nor I thy lord.  
Since Karl commands me his hest to fill,  
Unto Saragossa ride forth I will;  
Yet I fear me to wreak some deed of ill,  
Thereby to slake this passion’s might.”  
Roland listened, and laughed outright.

XXII

At Roland’s laughter Count Ganelon’s pain  
Was as though his bosom were cleft in twain.  
He turned to his stepson as one distraught:  
“I do not love thee,” he said, “in aught;  
Thou hast false judgment against me wrought.



O righteous Emperor, here I stand  
To execute your high command.”

XXIII

“Unto Saragossa I needs must go;—  
Who goeth may never return, I know;—  
Yet withal, your sister is spouse of mine,  
And our son—no fairer of mortal line—  
Baldwin bids to be goodly knight;  
I leave him my honors and fiefs of right.  
Guard him—no more shall he greet my sight”  
Saith Karl, “Thou art over tender of heart.  
Since I command it, thou shalt depart.”

XXIV

“Fair Sir Gan,” the Emperor spake,  
“This my message to Marsil take:  
He shall make confession of Christ’s belief,  
And I yield him, full half of Spain in fief;  
In the other half shall Count Roland reign.  
If he choose not the terms I now ordain,  
I will march unto Saragossa’s gate,  
Besiege and capture the city straight,  
Take and bind him both hands and feet,  
Lead him to Aix, to my royal seat,  
There to be tried and judged and slain,  
Dying a death of disgrace and pain.  
I have sealed the scroll of my command.  
Deliver it into the heathen’s hand.”



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XXV

“Gan,” said the Emperor, “draw thou near:  
Take my glove and my baton here;  
On thee did the choice of thy fellows fall.”  
“Sire, ’twas Roland who wrought it all.  
I shall not love him while life may last,  
Nor Olivier his comrade fast,  
Nor the peers who cherish and prize him so,—  
Gage of defiance to all I throw.”  
Saith Karl, “Thine anger hath too much sway.  
Since I ordain it, thou must obey.”  
“I go, but warranty none have I  
That I may not like Basil and Basan die.”

XXVI

The Emperor reached him his right-hand glove;  
Gan for his office had scanty love;  
As he bent him forward, it fell to ground:  
“God, what is this?” said the Franks around;  
“Evil will come of this quest we fear.”  
“My lords,” said Ganelon, “ye shall hear.”

XXVII

“Sire,” he said, “let me wend my way;  
Since go I must, what boots delay?”  
Said the king, “In Jesus’ name and mine!”  
And his right hand sained him with holy sign.  
Then he to Ganelon’s grasp did yield  
His royal mace and missive sealed.

XXVIII

Home to his hostel is Ganelon gone,  
His choicest of harness and arms to don;  
On his charger Taschebrun to mount and ride,  
With his good sword Murgleis girt at side.  
On his feet are fastened the spurs of gold,  
And his uncle Guinemer doth his stirrup hold.  
Then might ye look upon cavaliers  
A-many round him who spake in tears.  
“Sir,” they said, “what a woful day!



Long were you ranked in the king's array,  
A noble vassal as none gainsay.  
For him who doomed you to journey hence  
Carlemagne's self shall be scant defence;  
Foul was the thought in Count Roland's mind,  
When you and he are so high affined.  
Sir," they said, "let us with you wend."  
"Nay," said Ganelon, "God forefend.  
Liefer alone to my death I go,  
Than such brave bachelors perish so.  
Sirs, ye return into France the fair;  
Greeting from me to my lady bear,  
To my friend and peer Sir Pinabel,  
And to Baldwin, my son, whom ye all know well,—  
Cherish him, own him your lord of right."  
He hath passed on his journey and left their sight.

The embassy and crime of Ganelon

XXIX

Ganelon rides under olives high,  
And comes the Saracen envoys nigh.  
Blancandrin lingers until they meet,  
And in cunning converse each other greet.  
The Saracen thus began their parle:  
"What a man, what a wondrous man is Karl!  
Apulia—Calabria—all subdued,  
Unto England crossed he the salt sea rude,  
Won for Saint Peter his tribute fee;  
But what in our marches maketh he?"  
Ganelon said, "He is great of heart,  
Never man shall fill so mighty a part."



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XXX

Said Blancandrin, "Your Franks are high of fame,  
But your dukes and counts are sore to blame.  
Such counsel to their lord they give,  
Nor he nor others in peace may live."  
Ganelon answered, "I know of none,  
Save Roland, who thus to his shame hath done.  
Last morn the Emperor sat in the shade,  
His nephew came in his mail arrayed,—  
He had plundered Carcassonne just before,  
And a vermeil apple in hand he bore:  
'Sire,' he said, 'to your feet I bring  
The crown of every earthly king.'  
Disaster is sure such pride to blast;  
He setteth his life on a daily cast.  
Were he slain, we all should have peace at last."

XXXI

"Ruthless is Roland," Blancandrin spake,  
"Who every race would recreant make.  
And on all possessions of men would seize;  
But in whom doth he trust for feats like these?"  
"The Franks! the Franks!" Count Ganelon cried;  
"They love him, and never desert his side;  
For he lavisheth gifts that seldom fail,  
Gold and silver in countless tale,  
Mules and chargers, and silks and mail,  
The king himself may have spoil at call.  
From hence to the East he will conquer all."

XXXII

Thus Blancandrin and Ganelon rode,  
Till each on other his faith bestowed  
That Roland should be by practice slain,  
And so they journeyed by path and plain,  
Till in Saragossa they bridle drew,  
There alighted beneath a yew.  
In a pine-tree's shadow a throne was set;  
Alexandrian silk was the coverlet:  
There the monarch of Spain they found,  
With twenty thousand Saracens round,



Yet from them came nor breath nor sound;  
All for the tidings they strained to hear,  
As they saw Blancandrin and Ganelon near.

XXXIII

Blancandrin stepped before Marsil's throne,  
Ganelon's hand was in his own.  
"Mahound you save," to the king he said,  
"And Apollin, whose holy law we dread!  
Fairly your errand to Karl was done;  
But other answer made he none,  
Save that his hands to Heaven he raised,  
Save that a space his God he praised;  
He sends a baron of his court,  
Knight of France, and of high report,  
Of him your tidings of peace receive."  
"Let him speak," said Marsil, "we yield him leave."

XXXIV

Gan had bethought him, and mused with art;  
Well was he skilled to play his part;  
And he said to Marsil, "May God you save,  
The God of glory, whose grace we crave!  
Thus saith the noble Carlemaine:  
You shall make in Christ confession plain.  
And he gives you in fief full half of Spain;

## Page 10

The other half shall be Roland's share  
(Right haughty partner, he yields you there);  
And should you slight the terms I bear,  
He will come and gird Saragossa round,  
You shall be taken by force and bound,  
Led unto Aix, to his royal seat,  
There to perish by judgment meet,  
Dying a villainous death of shame."  
Over King Marsil a horror came;  
He grasped his javelin, plumed with gold,  
In act to smite, were he not controlled.

XXXV

King Marsil's cheek the hue hath left,  
And his right hand grasped his weapon's heft.  
When Ganelon saw it, his sword he drew  
Finger lengths from the scabbard two.  
"Sword," he said, "thou art clear and bright;  
I have borne thee long in my fellows' sight,  
Mine emperor never shall say of me,  
That I perished afar, in a strange countrie,  
Ere thou in the blood of their best wert dyed."  
"Dispart the mellay," the heathens cried.

XXXVI

The noblest Saracens thronged amain,  
Seated the king on his throne again,  
And the Algalif said, "'Twas a sorry prank,  
Raising your weapon to slay the Frank.  
It was yours to hearken in silence there."  
"Sir," said Gan, "I may meetly bear,  
But for all the wealth of your land arrayed,  
For all the gold that God hath made,  
Would I not live and leave unsaid,  
What Karl, the mightiest king below,  
Sends, through me, to his mortal foe."  
His mantle of fur, that was round him twined,  
With silk of Alexandria lined,



Down at Blancandrin's feet he cast,  
But still he held by his good sword fast,  
Grasping the hilt by its golden ball.  
"A noble knight," say the heathens all.

XXXVII

Ganelon came to the king once more.  
"Your anger," he said, "misserves you sore.  
As the princely Carlemaine saith, I say,  
You shall the Christian law obey.  
And half of Spain you shall hold in fee,  
The other half shall Count Roland's be,  
(And a haughty partner 'tis yours to see).  
Reject the treaty I here propose,  
Round Saragossa his lines will close;  
You shall be bound in fetters strong,  
Led to his city of Aix along.  
Nor steed nor palfrey shall you bestride,  
Nor mule nor jennet be yours to ride;  
On a sorry sumpter you shall be cast,  
And your head by doom stricken off at last.  
So is the Emperor's mandate traced,"—  
And the scroll in the heathen's hand he placed.

XXXVIII

Discolored with ire was King Marsil's hue;  
The seal he brake and to earth he threw,  
Read of the scroll the tenor clear.  
"So Karl the Emperor writes me here.

## Page 11

Bids me remember his wrath and pain  
For sake of Basan and Basil slain,  
Whose necks I smote on Haltoia's hill;  
Yet, if my life I would ransom still,  
Mine uncle the Algalif must I send,  
Or love between us were else at end."  
Then outspake Jurfalez, Marsil's son:  
"This is but madness of Ganelon.  
For crime so deadly his life shall pay;  
Justice be mine on his head this day."  
Ganelon heard him, and waved his blade,  
While his back against a pine he stayed.

XXXIX

Into his orchard King Marsil stepped.  
His nobles round him their station kept:  
There was Jurfalez, his son and heir,  
Blancandrin of the hoary hair,  
The Algalif, truest of all his kin.  
Said Blancandrin, "Summon the Christian in;  
His troth he pledged me upon our side."  
"Go," said Marsil, "be thou his guide."  
Blancandrin led him, hand-in-hand,  
Before King Marsil's face to stand.  
Then was the villainous treason planned.

XL

"Fair Sir Ganelon," spake the king,  
"I did a rash and despighteous thing,  
Raising against thee mine arm to smite.  
Richly will I the wrong requite.  
See these sables whose worth were told  
At full five hundred pounds of gold:  
Thine shall they be ere the coming day."  
"I may not," said Gan, "your grace gainsay.  
God in His pleasure will you repay."

XLI



“Trust me I love thee, Sir Gan, and fain  
Would I hear thee discourse of Carlemaine.

He is old, methinks, exceedingly old;  
And full two hundred years hath told;  
With toil his body spent and worn,  
So many blows on his buckler borne,  
So many a haughty king laid low,  
When will he weary of warring so?”

“Such is not Carlemaine,” Gan replied;  
“Man never knew him, nor stood beside,  
But will say how noble a lord is he,  
Princely and valiant in high degree.  
Never could words of mine express  
His honor, his bounty, his gentleness,  
'Twas God who graced him with gifts so high.  
Ere I leave his vassalage I will die.”

XLII

The heathen said, “I marvel sore  
Of Carlemaine, so old and hoar,  
Who counts I ween two hundred years,  
Hath borne such strokes of blades and spears,  
So many lands hath overrun,  
So many mighty kings undone,  
When will he tire of war and strife?”

“Not while his nephew breathes in life  
Beneath the cope of heaven this day  
Such vassal leads not king’s array.  
Gallant and sage is Olivier,  
And all the twelve, to Karl so dear,  
With twenty thousand Franks in van,  
He feareth not the face of man.”



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XLIII

“Strange,” said Marsil, “seems to me,  
Karl, so white with eld is he,  
Twice a hundred years, men say,  
Since his birth have passed away.  
All his wars in many lands,  
All the strokes of trenchant brands,  
All the kings despoiled and slain,—  
When will he from war refrain?”  
“Not till Roland breathes no more,  
For from hence to eastern shore,  
Where is chief with him may vie?  
Olivier his comrades by,  
And the peers, of Karl the pride,  
Twenty thousand Franks beside,  
Vanguard of his host, and flower:  
Karl may mock at mortal power.”

XLIV

“I tell thee, Sir Gan, that a power is mine;  
Fairer did never in armor shine,  
Four hundred thousand cavaliers,  
With the Franks of Karl to measure spears.”  
“Fling such folly,” said Gan, “away;  
Sorely your heathen would rue the day.  
Proffer the Emperor ample prize,  
A sight to dazzle the Frankish eyes;  
Send him hostages full of score,  
So returns he to France once more.  
But his rear will tarry behind the host;  
There, I trow, will be Roland’s post—  
There will Sir Olivier remain.  
Hearken to me, and the counts lie slain;  
The pride of Karl shall be crushed that day,  
And his wars be ended with you for aye.”

XLV

“Speak, then, and tell me, Sir Ganelon,  
How may Roland to death be done?”  
“Through Cizra’s pass will the Emperor wind,  
But his rear will linger in march behind;



Roland and Olivier there shall be,  
With twenty thousand in company.  
Muster your battle against them then,  
A hundred thousand heathen men.  
Till worn and spent be the Frankish bands,  
Though your bravest perish beneath their hands.  
For another battle your powers be massed,  
Roland will sink, overcome at last.  
There were a feat of arms indeed,  
And your life from peril thenceforth be freed.”

XLVI

“For whoso Roland to death shall bring,  
From Karl his good right arm will wring,  
The marvellous host will melt away,  
No more shall he muster a like array,  
And the mighty land will in peace repose.”  
King Marsil heard him to the close;  
Then kissed him on the neck, and bade  
His royal treasures be displayed.

XLVII

What said they more? Why tell the rest?  
Said Marsil, “Fastest bound is best;  
Come, swear me here to Roland’s fall.”  
“Your will,” said Gan, “be mine in all.”  
He swore on the relics in the hilt  
Of his sword Murgleis, and crowned his guilt.

XLVIII



## Page 13

A stool was there of ivory wrought.  
King Marsil bade a book be brought,  
Wherein was all the law contained  
Mahound and Termagaunt ordained.  
The Saracen hath sworn thereby,  
If Roland in the rear-guard lie,  
With all his men-at-arms to go,  
And combat till the count lay low.  
Sir Gan repeated, "Be it so."

XLIX

King Marsil's foster-father came,  
A heathen, Valdabrun by name.  
He spake to Gan with laughter clear.  
"My sword, that never found its peer,—  
A thousand pieces would not buy  
The riches in the hilt that lie,—  
To you I give in guerdon free;  
Your aid in Roland's fall to see,  
Let but the rear-guard be his place."  
"I trust," said Gan, "to do you grace."  
Then each kissed other on the face.

L

Next broke with jocund laughter in,  
Another heathen, Climorin.  
To Gan he said, "Accept my helm,  
The best and trustiest in the realm,  
Conditioned that your aid we claim  
To bring the marchman unto shame."  
"Be it," said Ganelon, "as you list."  
And then on cheek and mouth they kissed.

LI

Now Bramimonde, King Marsil's queen,  
To Ganelon came with gentle mien.  
"I love thee well, Sir Count," she spake,  
"For my lord the king and his nobles' sake.  
See these clasps for a lady's wrist,  
Of gold, and jacinth, and amethyst,  
That all the jewels of Rome outshine;



Never your Emperor owned so fine;  
These by the queen to your spouse are sent.”  
The gems within his boot he pent.

LII

Then did the king on his treasurer call,  
“My gifts for Karl, are they ready all?”  
“Yea, sire, seven hundred camels’ load  
Of gold and silver well bestowed,  
And twenty hostages thereby,  
The noblest underneath the sky.”

LIII

On Ganelon’s shoulder King Marsil leant.  
“Thou art sage,” he said, “and of gallant bent;  
But by all thy holiest law deems dear,  
Let not thy thought from our purpose veer.  
Ten mules’ burthen I give to thee  
Of gold, the finest of Araby;  
Nor ever year henceforth shall pass  
But it brings thee riches in equal mass.  
Take the keys of my city gates,  
Take the treasure that Karl awaits—  
Render them all; but oh, decide  
That Roland in the rear-guard bide;  
So may I find him by pass or height,  
As I swear to meet him in mortal fight.”  
Cried Gan, “Meseemeth too long we stay,”  
Sprang on his charger and rode away.

LIV



## Page 14

The Emperor homeward hath turned his face,  
To Gailne city he marched apace,  
(By Roland erst in ruins strown—  
Deserted thence it lay and lone,  
Until a hundred years had flown).  
Here waits he, word of Gan to gain  
With tribute of the land of Spain;  
And here, at earliest break of day,  
Came Gan where the encampment lay.

LV

The Emperor rose with the day dawn clear,  
Failed not Matins and Mass to hear,  
Sate at his tent on the fair green sward,  
Roland and Olivier nigh their lord,  
Duke Naimés and all his peers of fame.  
Gan the felon, the perjured, came—  
False was the treacherous tale he gave,—  
And these his words, “May God you save!  
I bear you Saragossa’s keys,  
Vast the treasure I bring with these,  
And twenty hostages; guard them well,  
The noble Marsil bids me tell—  
Not on him shall your anger fall,  
If I fetch not the Algalif here withal;  
For mine eyes beheld, beneath their ken,  
Three hundred thousand armed men,  
With sword and casque and coat of mail,  
Put forth with him on the sea to sail,  
All for hate of the Christian creed,  
Which they would neither hold nor heed.  
They had not floated a league but four,  
When a tempest down on their galleys bore  
Drowned they lie to be seen no more.  
If the Algalif were but living wight,  
He had stood this morn before your sight.  
Sire, for the Saracen king I say,  
Ere ever a month shall pass away,  
On into France he will follow free,  
Bend to our Christian law the knee,  
Homage swear for his Spanish land,  
And hold the realm at your command.”  
“Now praise to God,” the Emperor said,



“And thanks, my Ganelon, well you sped.”  
A thousand clarions then resound,  
The sumpter-mules are girt on ground,  
For France, for France the Franks are bound.

LVI

Karl the Great hath wasted Spain,  
Her cities sacked, her castles ta'en;  
But now “My wars are done,” he cried,  
“And home to gentle France we ride.”  
Count Roland plants his standard high  
Upon a peak against the sky;  
The Franks around encamping lie.  
Alas! the heathen host the while,  
Through valley deep and dark defile,  
Are riding on the Chistians' track,  
All armed in steel from breast to back;  
Their lances poised, their helmets laced,  
Their falchions glittering from the waist,  
Their bucklers from the shoulder swung,  
And so they ride the steeps among,  
Till, in a forest on the height,  
They rest to wait the morning light,  
Four hundred thousand crouching there.  
O God! the Franks are unaware.



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LVII

The day declined, night darkling crept,  
And Karl, the mighty Emperor, slept.  
He dreamt a dream: he seemed to stand  
In Cizra's pass, with lance in hand.  
Count Ganelon came athwart, and lo,  
He wrenched the aspen spear him fro,  
Brandished and shook it aloft with might,  
Till it brake in pieces before his sight;  
High towards heaven the splinters flew;  
Karl awoke not, he dreamed anew.

LVIII

In his second dream he seemed to dwell  
In his palace of Aix, at his own Chapelle.  
A bear seized grimly his right arm on,  
And bit the flesh to the very bone.  
Anon a leopard from Arden wood,  
Fiercely flew at him where he stood.  
When lo! from his hall, with leap and bound,  
Sprang to the rescue a gallant hound.  
First from the bear the ear he tore,  
Then on the leopard his fangs he bore.  
The Franks exclaim, "'Tis a stirring fray,  
But who the victor none may say."  
Karl awoke not—he slept away.

LIX

The night wore by, the day dawn glowed,  
Proudly the Emperor rose and rode,  
Keenly and oft his host he scanned.  
"Lords, my barons, survey this land,  
See the passes so straight and steep:  
To whom shall I trust the rear to keep?"  
"To my stepson Roland:" Count Gan replied.  
"Knight like him have you none beside."  
The Emperor heard him with moody brow.  
"A living demon," he said, "art thou;  
Some mortal rage hath thy soul possessed.  
To head my vanguard, who then were best?"



“Ogier,” he answered, “the gallant Dane,  
Braver baron will none remain.”

LX

Roland, when thus the choice he saw,  
Spake, full knightly, by knightly law:  
“Sir Stepsire, well may I hold thee dear,  
That thou hast named me to guard the rear;  
Karl shall lose not, if I take heed,  
Charger, or palfrey, or mule or steed,  
Hackney or sumpter that groom may lead;  
The reason else our swords shall tell.”  
“It is sooth,” said Gan, “and I know it well.”

LXI

Fiercely once more Count Roland turned  
To speak the scorn that in him burned.  
“Ha! deem’st thou, dastard, of dastard race,  
That I shall drop the glove in place,  
As in sight of Karl thou didst the mace?”

LXII

Then of his uncle he made demand:  
“Yield me the bow that you hold in hand;  
Never of me shall the tale be told,  
As of Ganelon erst, that it failed my hold.”  
Sadly the Emperor bowed his head,  
With working finger his beard he spread,  
Tears in his own despite he shed.

LXIII



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But soon Duke Naimés doth by him stand—  
No better vassal in all his band.

“You have seen and heard it all, O sire,  
Count Roland waxeth much in ire.  
On him the choice for the rear-guard fell,  
And where is baron could speed so well?  
Yield him the bow that your arm hath bent,  
And let good succor to him be lent.”  
The Emperor reached it forth, and lo!  
He gave, and Roland received, the bow.

LXIV

“Fair Sir Nephew, I tell thee free.  
Half of my host will I leave with thee.”  
“God be my judge,” was the count’s reply,  
“If ever I thus my race belie.  
But twenty thousand with me shall rest,  
Bravest of all your Franks and best;  
The mountain passes in safety tread,  
While I breathe in life you have nought to dread.”

LXV

Count Roland sprang to a hill-top’s height,  
And donned his peerless armor bright;  
Laced his helm, for a baron made;  
Girt Durindana, gold-hilted blade;  
Around his neck he hung the shield,  
With flowers emblazoned was the field;  
Nor steed but Veillantif will ride;  
And he grasped his lance with its pennon’s pride.  
White was the pennon, with rim of gold;  
Low to the handle the fringes rolled.  
Who are his lovers men now may see;  
And the Franks exclaim, “We will follow thee.”

LXVI

Roland hath mounted his charger on;  
Sir Olivier to his side hath gone;  
Gerein and his fellow in arms, Gerier;  
Otho the Count, and Berengier,  
Samson, and with him Anseis old,



Gerard of Roussillon, the bold.  
Thither the Gascon Engelier sped;  
"I go," said Turpin, "I pledge my head;"  
"And I with thee," Count Walter said;  
"I am Roland's man, to his service bound."  
So twenty thousand knights were found.

LXVII

Roland beckoned Count Walter then.  
"Take of our Franks a thousand men;  
Sweep the heights and the passes clear,  
That the Emperor's host may have nought to fear."  
"I go," said Walter, "at your behest,"  
And a thousand Franks around him pressed.  
They ranged the heights and passes through,  
Nor for evil tidings backward drew,  
Until seven hundred swords outflew.  
The Lord of Belferna's land, that day,  
King Almaris met him in deadly fray.

LXVIII

Through Roncesvalles the march began;  
Ogier, the baron, led the van;  
For them was neither doubt nor fear,  
Since Roland rested to guard the rear,  
With twenty thousand in full array:  
Theirs the battle—be God their stay.  
Gan knows all; in his felon heart  
Scarce hath he courage to play his part.



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LXIX

High were the peaks, and the valleys deep,  
The mountains wondrous dark and steep;  
Sadly the Franks through the passes wound,  
Full fifteen leagues did their tread resound.  
To their own great land they are drawing nigh,  
And they look on the fields of Gascony.  
They think of their homes and their manors there,  
Their gentle spouses and damsels fair.  
Is none but for pity the tear lets fall;  
But the anguish of Karl is beyond them all.  
His sister's son at the gates of Spain  
Smites on his heart, and he weeps amain.

LXX

On the Spanish marches the twelve abide,  
With twice ten thousand Franks beside.  
Fear to die have they none, nor care:  
But Karl returns into France the fair;  
Beneath his mantle his face he hides.  
Naimés, the duke, at his bridle rides.  
"Say, sire, what grief doth your heart oppress?"  
"To ask," he said, "brings worse distress;  
I cannot but weep for heaviness.  
By Gan the ruin of France is wrought.  
In an angel's vision, last night, methought  
He wrested forth from my hand the spear:  
'Twas he gave Roland to guard the rear.  
God! should I lose him, my nephew dear,  
Whom I left on a foreign soil behind,  
His peer on earth I shall never find!"

LXXI

Karl the Great cannot choose but weep,  
For him hath his host compassion deep;  
And for Roland, a marvellous boding dread.  
It was Gan, the felon, this treason bred;  
He hath heathen gifts of silver and gold,  
Costly raiment, and silken fold,  
Horses and camels, and mules and steeds.—  
But lo! King Marsil the mandate speeds,



To his dukes, his counts, and his vassals all,  
To each almasour and amiral.  
And so, before three suns had set,  
Four hundred thousand in muster met.  
Through Saragossa the tabors sound;  
On the loftiest turret they raise Mahound:  
Before him the Pagans bend and pray,  
Then mount and fiercely ride away,  
Across Cerdagna, by vale and height,  
Till stream the banners of France in sight,  
Where the peers of Carlemaine proudly stand,  
And the shock of battle is hard at hand.

LXXII

Up to King Marsil his nephew rode,  
With a mule for steed, and a staff for goad:  
Free and joyous his accents fell,  
“Fair Sir King, I have served you well.  
So let my toils and my perils tell.  
I have fought and vanquished for you in field.  
One good boon for my service yield,—  
Be it mine on Roland to strike the blow;  
At point of lance will I lay him low;  
And so Mohammed to aid me deign,  
Free will I sweep the



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soil of Spain,

From the gorge of Aspra to Dourestan,  
Till Karl grows weary such wars to plan.  
Then for your life have you won repose.”  
King Marsil on him his glove bestows.

LXXIII

His nephew, while the glove he pressed,  
Proudly once more the king addressed.  
“Sire, you have crowned my dearest vow;  
Name me eleven of your barons now,  
In battle against the twelve to bide.”  
Falsaron first to the call replied;  
Brother to Marsil, the king, was he;  
“Fair Sir nephew, I go with thee;  
In mortal combat we front, to-day,  
The rear-guard of the grand array.  
Foredoomed to die by our spears are they.”

LXXIV

King Corsablis the next drew nigh,  
Miscreant Monarch of Barbary;  
Yet he spake like vassal staunch and bold—  
Blench would he not for all God’s gold.  
The third, Malprimis, of Brigal’s breed,  
More fleet of foot than the fleetest steed,  
Before King Marsil he raised his cry,  
“On unto Roncesvalles I:  
In mine encounter shall Roland die.”

LXXV

An Emir of Balaguet came in place,  
Proud of body, and fair of face;  
Since first he sprang on steed to ride,  
To wear his harness was all his pride;  
For feats of prowess great laud he won;  
Were he Christian, nobler baron none.  
To Marsil came he, and cried aloud,  
“Unto Roncesvalles mine arm is vowed;



May I meet with Roland and Olivier,  
Or the twelve together, their doom is near.  
The Franks shall perish in scathe and scorn;  
Karl the Great, who is old and worn,  
Weary shall grow his hosts to lead,  
And the land of Spain be for ever freed.”  
King Marsil’s thanks were his gracious meed.

LXXVI

A Mauritanian Almasour  
(Breathed not in Spain such a felon Moor)  
Stepped unto Marsil, with braggart boast:  
“Unto Roncesvalles I lead my host,  
Full twenty thousand, with lance and shield.  
Let me meet with Roland upon the field,  
Lifelong tears for him Karl shall yield.”

LXXVII

Turgis, Count of Tortosa came.  
Lord of the city, he bears its name.  
Scathe to the Christian to him is best,  
And in Marsil’s presence he joined the rest.  
To the king he said, “Be fearless found;  
Peter of Rome cannot mate Mahound.  
If we serve him truly, we win this day;  
Unto Roncesvalles I ride straightway.  
No power shall Roland from slaughter save:  
See the length of my peerless glaive,  
That with Durindana to cross I go,  
And who the victor, ye then shall know.  
Sorrow and shame old Karl shall share,  
Crown on earth never more shall wear.”



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LXXVIII

Lord of Valtierra was Escremis;  
Saracen he, and the region his;  
He cried to Marsil, amid the throng,  
"Unto Roncesvalles I spur along,  
The pride of Roland in dust to tread,  
Nor shall he carry from thence his head;  
Nor Olivier who leads the band.  
And of all the twelve is the doom at hand.  
The Franks shall perish, and France be lorn,  
And Karl of his bravest vassals shorn."

LXXIX

Estorgan next to Marsil hied,  
With Estramarin his mate beside.  
Hireling traitors and felons they.  
Aloud cried Marsil, "My lords, away  
Unto Roncesvalles, the pass to gain,  
Of my people's captains ye shall be twain."  
"Sire, full welcome to us the call,  
On Roland and Olivier we fall.  
None the twelve from their death shall screen,  
The swords we carry are bright and keen;  
We will dye them red with the hot blood's vent  
The Franks shall perish and Karl lament.  
We will yield all France as your tribute meet.  
Come, that the vision your eyes may greet;  
The Emperor's self shall be at your feet."

LXXX

With speed came Margaris—lord was he  
Of the land of Sibilie to the sea;  
Beloved of dames for his beauty's sake,  
Was none but joy in his look would take,  
The goodliest knight of heathenesse,—  
And he cried to the king over all the press,  
"Sire, let nothing your heart dismay;  
I will Roland in Roncesvalles slay,  
Nor thence shall Olivier scathless come,  
The peers await but their martyrdom.  
The Emir of Primis bestowed this blade;



Look on its hilt, with gold inlaid:  
It shall crimsoned be with the red blood's trace:  
Death to the Franks, and to France disgrace!  
Karl the old, with his beard so white,  
Shall have pain and sorrow both day and night;  
France shall be ours ere a year go by;  
At Saint Denys' bourg shall our leaguer lie."  
King Marsil bent him reverently.

LXXXI

Chernubles is there, from the valley black,  
His long hair makes on the earth its track;  
A load, when it lists him, he bears in play,  
Which four mules' burthen would well outweigh.  
Men say, in the land where he was born  
Nor shineth sun, nor springeth corn,  
Nor falleth rain, nor droppeth dew;  
The very stones are of sable hue.  
'Tis the home of demons, as some assert.  
And he cried, "My good sword have I girt,  
In Roncesvalles to dye it red.  
Let Roland but in my pathway tread,  
Trust ye to me that I strike him dead,  
His Durindana beat down with mine.  
The Franks shall perish and France decline."  
Thus were mustered King Marsil's peers,  
With a hundred thousand heathen spears.  
In haste to press to the battle on,  
In a pine-tree forest their arms they don.



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LXXXII

They don their hauberks of Saracen mould,  
Wrought for the most with a triple fold;  
In Saragossa their helms were made;  
Steel of Vienne was each girded blade;  
Valentia lances and targets bright,  
Pennons of azure and red and white.  
They leave their sumpters and mules aside,  
Leap on their chargers and serried ride.  
Bright was the sunshine and fair the day;  
Their arms resplendent gave back the ray.  
Then sound a thousand clarions clear,  
Till the Franks the mighty clangor hear,  
"Sir Comrade," said Olivier, "I trow  
There is battle at hand with the Saracen foe."  
"God grant," said Roland, "it may be so.  
Here our post for our king we hold;  
For his lord the vassal bears heat and cold,  
Toil and peril endures for him,  
Risks in his service both life and limb.  
For mighty blows let our arms be strung,  
Lest songs of scorn be against us sung.  
With the Christian is good, with the heathen ill:  
No dastard part shall ye see me fill."

## PART II

The prelude of the great  
battle

Roncesvalles

LXXXIII

Olivier clomb to a mountain height,  
Glanced through the valley that stretched to right;  
He saw advancing the Saracen men,  
And thus to Roland he spake agen:  
"What sights and sounds from the Spanish side,  
White gleaming hauberks and helms in pride?  
In deadliest wrath our Franks shall be!  
Ganelon wrought this perfidy;



It was he who doomed us to hold the rear.”  
“Hush,” said Roland; “O Olivier,  
No word be said of my stepsire here.”

[Footnote 1: The stanzas of the translation not found in the Oxford Ms., but taken from the stanzas inserted from other versions by M. Gautier, are, as regards Part II, the following: Stanzas 113, 114, 115, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123, 126, 127, 139, 143, 144, 145, 146, 163.]

LXXXIV

Sir Olivier to the peak hath clomb,  
Looks far on the realm of Spain therefrom;  
He sees the Saracen power arrayed,—  
Helmets gleaming with gold inlaid,  
Shields and hauberks in serried row,  
Spears with pennons that from them flow.  
He may not reckon the mighty mass,  
So far their numbers his thought surpass.  
All in bewilderment and dismay,  
Down from the mountain he takes his way,  
Comes to the Franks the tale to say.

LXXXV

“I have seen the paynim,” said Olivier.  
“Never on earth did such host appear:  
A hundred thousand with targets bright,  
With helmets laced and hauberks white,  
Erect and shining their lances tall;

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Such battle as waits you did ne'er befall.  
My Lords of France, be God your stay,  
That you be not vanquished in field to-day."  
"Accursed," say the Franks, "be they who fly  
None shall blench from the fear to die."

Roland's pride

LXXXVI

"In mighty strength are the heathen crew,"  
Olivier said, "and our Franks are few;  
My comrade, Roland, sound on your horn;  
Karl will hear and his host return."  
"I were mad," said Roland, "to do such deed;  
Lost in France were my glory's meed.  
My Durindana shall smite full hard,  
And her hilt be red to the golden guard.  
The heathen felons shall find their fate;  
Their death, I swear, in the pass they wait."

LXXXVII

"O Roland, sound on your ivory horn,  
To the ear of Karl shall the blast be borne:  
He will bid his legions backward bend,  
And all his barons their aid will lend."  
"Now God forbid it, for very shame,  
That for me my kindred were stained with blame,  
Or that gentle France to such vileness fell:  
This good sword that hath served me well,  
My Durindana such strokes shall deal,  
That with blood encrimsoned shall be the steel.  
By their evil star are the felons led;  
They shall all be numbered among the dead."

LXXXVIII

"Roland, Roland, yet wind one blast!  
Karl will hear ere the gorge be passed,



And the Franks return on their path full fast.”  
“I will not sound on mine ivory horn:  
It shall never be spoken of me in scorn,  
That for heathen felons one blast I blew;  
I may not dishonor my lineage true.  
But I will strike, ere this fight be o’er,  
A thousand strokes and seven hundred more,  
And my Durindana shall drip with gore.  
Our Franks will bear them like vassals brave  
The Saracens flock but to find a grave.”

LXXXIX

“I deem of neither reproach nor stain.  
I have seen the Saracen host of Spain,  
Over plain and valley and mountain spread,  
And the regions hidden beneath their tread.  
Countless the swarm of the foe, and we  
A marvellous little company.”  
Roland answered him, “All the more  
My spirit within me burns therefore.  
God and his angels of heaven defend  
That France through me from her glory bend.  
Death were better than fame laid low.  
Our Emperor loveth a downright blow.”

XC

Roland is daring and Olivier wise,  
Both of marvellous high emprise;  
On their chargers mounted, and girt in mail,  
To the death in battle they will not quail.  
Brave are the counts, and their words are high,  
And the Pagans are fiercely



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riding nigh.

“See, Roland, see them, how close they are,  
The Saracen foemen, and Karl how far!  
Thou didst disdain on thy horn to blow.  
Were the king but here we were spared this woe.  
Look up through Aspra’s dread defile,  
Where standeth our doomed rear-guard the while;  
They will do their last brave feat this day,  
No more to mingle in mortal fray.”  
“Hush!” said Roland, “the craven tale—  
Foul fall who carries a heart so pale;  
Foot to foot shall we hold the place,  
And rain our buffets and blows apace.”

Xci

When Roland felt that the battle came,  
Lion or leopard to him were tame;  
He shouted aloud to his Franks, and then  
Called to his gentle compeer agen.  
“My friend, my comrade, my Olivier,  
The Emperor left us his bravest here;  
Twice ten thousand he set apart,  
And he knew among them no dastard heart.  
For his lord the vassal must bear the stress  
Of the winter’s cold and the sun’s excess—  
Peril his flesh and his blood thereby:  
Strike thou with thy good lance-point and I,  
With Durindana, the matchless glaive  
Which the king himself to my keeping gave,  
That he who wears it when I lie cold  
May say ’twas the sword of a vassal bold.”

Xcii

Archbishop Turpin, above the rest,  
Spurred his steed to a jutting crest.  
His sermon thus to the Franks he spake:—  
“Lords, we are here for our monarch’s sake;  
Hold we for him, though our death should come;  
Fight for the succor of Christendom.  
The battle approaches—ye know it well,



For ye see the ranks of the infidel.  
Cry *mea culpa*, and lowly kneel;  
I will assoil you, your souls to heal.  
In death ye are holy martyrs crowned.”  
The Franks alighted, and knelt on ground;  
In God’s high name the host he blessed,  
And for penance gave them—to smite their best.

XCIII

The Franks arose from bended knee,  
Assoiled, and from their sins set free;  
The archbishop blessed them fervently:  
Then each one sprang on his bounding barb,  
Armed and laced in knightly garb,  
Apparelled all for the battle line.  
At last said Roland, “Companion mine,  
Too well the treason is now displayed,  
How Ganelon hath our band betrayed.  
To him the gifts and the treasures fell;  
But our Emperor will avenge us well.  
King Marsil deemeth us bought and sold;  
The price shall be with our good swords told.”

Xciv

Roland rideth the passes



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through,

On Veillantif, his charger true;  
Girt in his harness that shone full fair,  
And baron-like his lance he bare.  
The steel erect in the sunshine gleamed,  
With the snow-white pennon that from it streamed;  
The golden fringes beat on his hand.  
Joyous of visage was he, and bland,  
Exceeding beautiful of frame;  
And his warriors hailed him with glad acclaim.  
Proudly he looked on the heathen ranks,  
Humbly and sweetly upon his Franks.  
Courteously spake he, in words of grace—  
“Ride, my barons, at gentle pace.  
The Saracens here to their slaughter toil:  
Reap we, to-day, a glorious spoil,  
Never fell to Monarch of France the like.”  
At his word, the hosts are in act to strike.

XCV

Said Olivier, “Idle is speech, I trow;  
Thou didst disdain on thy horn to blow.  
Succor of Karl is far apart;  
Our strait he knows not, the noble heart:  
Not to him nor his host be blame;  
Therefore, barons, in God’s good name,  
Press ye onward, and strike your best,  
Make your stand on this field to rest;  
Think but of blows, both to give and take,  
Never the watchword of Karl forsake.”  
Then from the Franks resounded high—  
“*Montjoie!*” Whoever had heard that cry  
Would hold remembrance of chivalry.  
Then ride they—how proudly, O God, they ride!—  
With rowels dashed in their coursers’ side.  
Fearless, too, are their paynim foes.  
Frank and Saracen, thus they close.

The mellay

Xcvi



King Marsil's nephew, Aelroth his name,  
Vaunting in front of the battle came,  
Words of scorn on our Franks he cast:  
"Felon Franks, ye are met at last,  
By your chosen guardian betrayed and sold,  
By your king left madly the pass to hold.  
This day shall France of her fame be shorn,  
And from Karl the mighty his right arm torn."  
Roland heard him in wrath and pain!—  
He spurred his steed, he slacked the rein,  
Drave at the heathen with might and main,  
Shattered his shield and his hauberk broke,  
Right to the breast-bone went the stroke;  
Pierced him, spine and marrow through,  
And the felon's soul from his body flew.  
A moment reeled he upon his horse,  
Then all heavily dropped the corse;  
Wrenched was his neck as on earth he fell,  
Yet would Roland scorn with scorn repel.  
"Thou dastard! never hath Karl been mad,  
Nor love for treason or traitors had.  
To guard the passes he left us here,  
Like a noble king and chevalier.  
Nor shall France this day her fame forego.  
Strike in, my barons; the foremost blow  
Dealt in the fight doth to us belong:  
We have the right and these dogs the wrong."



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Xcvii

A duke was there, named Falsaron,  
Of the land of Dathan and Abiron;  
Brother to Marsil, the king, was he;  
More miscreant felon ye might not see.  
Huge of forehead, his eyes between,  
A span of a full half-foot, I ween.  
Bitter sorrow was his, to mark  
His nephew before him lie slain and stark.  
Hastily came he from forth the press,  
Raising the war-cry of heathenesse.  
Braggart words from his lips were tost:  
"This day the honour of France is lost."  
Hotly Sir Olivier's anger stirs;  
He pricked his steed with golden spurs,  
Fairly dealt him a baron's blow,  
And hurled him dead from the saddle-bow.  
Buckler and mail were reft and rent,  
And the pennon's flaps to his heart's blood went.  
He saw the miscreant stretched on earth:  
"Caitiff, thy threats are of little worth.  
On, Franks! the felons before us fall;  
*Montjoie!*" 'Tis the Emperor's battle-call.

XCVIII

A king was there of a strange countrie,  
King Corsablis of Barbary;  
Before the Saracen van he cried,  
"Right well may we in this battle bide;  
Puny the host of the Franks I deem,  
And those that front us, of vile esteem.  
Not one by succor of Karl shall fly;  
The day hath dawned that shall see them die."  
Archbishop Turpin hath heard him well;  
No mortal hates he with hate so fell:  
He pricked with spurs of the fine gold wrought,  
And in deadly passage the heathen sought;  
Shield and corselet were pierced and riven,  
And the lance's point through his body driven;  
To and fro, at the mighty thrust,  
He reeled, and then fell stark in dust.  
Turpin looked on him, stretched on ground.



“Loud thou liest, thou heathen hound!  
King Karl is ever our pride and stay;  
Nor one of the Franks shall blench this day,  
But your comrades here on the field shall lie;  
I bring you tidings: ye all shall die.  
Strike, Franks! remember your chivalry;  
First blows are ours, high God be praised!”  
Once more the cry, “*Montjoie!*” he raised.

Xcix

Gerein to Malprimis of Brigal sped,  
Whose good shield stood him no whit in stead;  
Its knob of crystal was cleft in twain,  
And one half fell on the battle plain.  
Right through the hauberk, and through the skin,  
He drave the lance to the flesh within;  
Prone and sudden the heathen fell,  
And Satan carried his soul to hell.

C

Anon, his comrade in arms, Gerier,  
Spurred at the Emir with levelled spear;  
Severed his shield and his mail apart,—  
The lance went through them, to pierce his heart.  
Dead on the field at the blow he lay.  
Olivier said, “’Tis a stirring fray.”



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CI

At the Almasour's shield Duke Samson rode—  
With blazon of flowers and gold it glowed;  
But nor shield nor cuirass availed to save,  
When through heart and lungs the lance he drave.  
Dead lies he, weep him who list or no.  
The Archbishop said, "'Tis a baron's blow."

CII

Anseis cast his bridle free;  
At Turgis, Tortosa's lord, rode he:  
Above the centre his shield he smote,  
Brake his mail with its double coat,  
Speeding the lance with a stroke so true,  
That the iron traversed his body through.  
So lay he lifeless, at point of spear.  
Said Roland, "Struck like a cavalier."

CIII

Engelier, Gascon of Bordeaux,  
On his courser's mane let the bridle flow;  
Smote Escremis, from Valtierra sprung,  
Shattered the shield from his neck that swung;  
On through his hauberk's ventral pressed,  
And betwixt his shoulders pierced his breast.  
Forth from the saddle he cast him dead.  
"So shall ye perish all," he said.

CIV

The heathen Estorgan was Otho's aim:  
Right in front of his shield he came;  
Rent its colors of red and white,  
Pierced the joints of his harness bright,  
Flung him dead from his bridle rein.  
Said Otho, "Thus shall ye all be slain."

CV

Berengier smote Estramarin,  
Planting his lance his heart within,



Through shivered shield and hauberk torn.  
The Saracen to earth was borne  
Amid a thousand of his train.  
Thus ten of the heathen twelve are slain;  
But two are left alive I wis—  
Chernubles and Count Margaris.

## CVI

Count Margaris was a valiant knight,  
Stalwart of body, and lithe and light:  
He spurred his steed unto Olivier,  
Brake his shield at the golden sphere,  
Pushed the lance till it touched his side;  
God of his grace made it harmless glide.  
Margaris rideth unhurt withal,  
Sounding his trumpet, his men to call.

## CVII

Mingled and marvellous grows the fray,  
And in Roland's heart is no dismay.  
He fought with lance while his good lance stood;  
Fifteen encounters have strained its wood.  
At the last it brake; then he grasped in hand  
His Durindana, his naked brand.  
He smote Chernubles' helm upon,  
Where, in the centre, carbuncles shone:  
Down through his coif and his fell of hair,  
Betwixt his eyes came the falchion bare,  
Down through his plated harness fine,  
Down through the Saracen's chest and chine,  
Down through the saddle with gold inlaid,  
Till sank in the living horse the blade,  
Severed the spine where



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no joint was found,  
And horse and rider lay dead on ground.  
“Caitiff, thou earnest in evil hour;  
To save thee passeth Mohammed’s power.  
Never to miscreants like to thee  
Shall come the guerdon of victory.”

### CVIII

Count Roland rideth the battle through,  
With Durindana, to cleave and hew;  
Havoc fell of the foe he made,  
Saracen corse upon corse was laid,  
The field all flowed with the bright blood shed;  
Roland, to corselet and arm, was red—  
Red his steed to the neck and flank.  
Nor is Olivier niggard of blows as frank;  
Nor to one of the peers be blame this day,  
For the Franks are fiery to smite and slay.  
“Well fought,” said Turpin, “our barons true!”  
And he raised the war-cry, “*Montjoie!*” anew.

### CIX

Through the storm of battle rides Olivier,  
His weapon, the butt of his broken spear,  
Down upon Malseron’s shield he beat,  
Where flowers and gold emblazoned meet,  
Dashing his eyes from forth his head:  
Low at his feet were the brains bespread,  
And the heathen lies with seven hundred dead!  
Estorgus and Turgin next he slew,  
Till the shaft he wielded in splinters flew.  
“Comrade!” said Roland, “what makest thou?  
Is it time to fight with a truncheon now?  
Steel and iron such strife may claim;  
Where is thy sword, Hauteclere by name,  
With its crystal pommel and golden guard?”  
“Of time to draw it I stood debarred,  
Such stress was on me of smiting hard.”

### CX



Then drew Sir Olivier forth his blade,  
As had his comrade Roland prayed.  
He proved it in knightly wise straightway,  
On the heathen Justin of Val Ferree.  
At a stroke he severed his head in two,  
Cleft him body and harness through;  
Down through the gold-incrusted selle,  
To the horse's chine, the falchion fell:  
Dead on the sward lay man and steed.  
Said Roland, "My brother, henceforth, indeed!  
The Emperor loves us for such brave blows!"  
Around them the cry of "*Montjoie!*" arose.

CXI

Gerein his Sorel rides; Gerier  
Is mounted on his own Pass-deer:  
The reins they slacken, and prick full well  
Against the Saracen Timozel.  
One smites his cuirass, and one his shield,  
Break in his body the spears they wield;  
They cast him dead on the fallow mould.  
I know not, nor yet to mine ear was told.  
Which of the twain was more swift and bold.  
Then Espreveris, Borel's son,  
By Engelier unto death was done.  
Archbishop Turpin slew Siglorei,  
The wizard, who erst had been in hell,  
By Jupiter thither in magic led.  
"Well have we 'scaped," the archbishop said:  
"Crushed is the caitiff," Count Roland replies,  
"Olivier, brother, such strokes I prize!"



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CXII

Furious waxeth the fight, and strange;  
Frank and heathen their blows exchange;  
While these defend, and those assail,  
And their lances broken and bloody fail.  
Ensign and pennon are rent and cleft,  
And the Franks of their fairest youth bereft,  
Who will look on mother or spouse no more,  
Or the host that waiteth the gorge before.  
Karl the Mighty may weep and wail;  
What skilleth sorrow, if succour fail?  
An evil service was Gan's that day,  
When to Saragossa he bent his way,  
His faith and kindred to betray.  
But a doom thereafter awaited him—  
Amerced in Aix, of life and limb,  
With thirty of his kin beside,  
To whom was hope of grace denied.

CXIII

King Almaris with his band, the while,  
Wound through a marvellous strait defile,  
Where doth Count Walter the heights maintain  
And the passes that lie at the gates of Spain.  
"Gan, the traitor, hath made of us,"  
Said Walter, "a bargain full dolorous."

CXIV

King Almaris to the mount hath clomb,  
With sixty thousand of heathendom.  
In deadly wrath on the Franks they fall,  
And with furious onset smite them all:  
Routed, scattered, or slain they lie.  
Then rose the wrath of Count Walter high;  
His sword he drew, his helm he laced,  
Slowly in front of the line he paced,  
And with evil greeting his foeman faced.

CXV



Right on his foemen doth Walter ride,  
And the heathen assail him on every side;  
Broken down was his shield of might,  
Bruised and pierced was his hauberk white;  
Four lances at once did his body wound:  
No longer bore he—four times he swooned;  
He turned perforce from the field aside,  
Slowly adown the mount he hied,  
And aloud to Roland for succour cried.

## CXVI

Wild and fierce is the battle still:  
Roland and Olivier fight their fill;  
The Archbishop dealeth a thousand blows  
Nor knoweth one of the peers repose;  
The Franks are fighting commingled all,  
And the foe in hundreds and thousands fall;  
Choice have they none but to flee or die,  
Leaving their lives despighteously.  
Yet the Franks are reft of their chivalry,  
Who will see nor parent nor kindred fond,  
Nor Karl who waits them the pass beyond.

## CXVII

Now a wondrous storm o'er France hath passed,  
With thunder-stroke and whirlwind's blast;  
Rain unmeasured, and hail, there came,  
Sharp and sudden the lightning's flame;  
And an earthquake ran—the sooth I say,  
From Besancon city to Wissant Bay;  
From Saint Michael's



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Mount to thy shrine, Cologne,  
House unrifted was there none.  
And a darkness spread in the noontide high—  
No light, save gleams from the cloven sky.  
On all who saw came a mighty fear.  
They said, "The end of the world is near."  
Alas, they spake but with idle breath,—  
'Tis the great lament for Roland's death.

### CXVIII

Dread are the omens and fierce the storm,  
Over France the signs and wonders swarm:  
From noonday on to the vesper hour,  
Night and darkness alone have power;  
Nor sun nor moon one ray doth shed,  
Who sees it ranks him among the dead.  
Well may they suffer such pain and woe,  
When Roland, captain of all, lies low.  
Never on earth hath his fellow been,  
To slay the heathen or realms to win.

### CXIX

Stern and stubborn is the fight; Staunch are the Franks with the sword to smite; Nor is there one but whose blade is red, "*Montjoie!*" is ever their war-cry dread. Through the land they ride in hot pursuit, And the heathens feel 'tis a fierce dispute.

### CXX

In wrath and anguish, the heathen race  
Turn in flight from the field their face;  
The Franks as hotly behind them strain.  
Then might ye look on a cumbered plain:  
Saracens stretched on the green grass bare,  
Helms and hauberks that shone full fair,  
Standards riven and arms undone:  
So by the Franks was the battle won.  
The foremost battle that then befell—  
O God, what sorrow remains to tell!

### CXXI



With heart and prowess the Franks have stood;  
Slain was the heathen multitude;  
Of a hundred thousand survive not two:  
The archbishop crieth, "O staunch and true!  
Written it is in the Frankish geste,  
That our Emperor's vassals shall bear them best."  
To seek their dead through the field they press,  
And their eyes drop tears of tenderness:  
Their hearts are turned to their kindred dear.  
Marsil the while with his host is near.

## CXXII

Distraught was Roland with wrath and pain;  
Distraught were the twelve of Carlemaine—  
With deadly strokes the Franks have striven,  
And the Saracen horde to the slaughter given;  
Of a hundred thousand escaped but one—  
King Margaris fled from the field alone;  
But no disgrace in his flight he bore—  
Wounded was he by lances four.  
To the side of Spain did he take his way,  
To tell King Marsil what chanced that day.

## CXXIII



## Page 29

Alone King Margaris left the field,  
With broken spear and pierced shield,  
Scarce half a foot from the knob remained,  
And his brand of steel with blood was stained;  
On his body were four lance wounds to see:  
Were he Christian, what a baron he!  
He sped to Marsil his tale to tell;  
Swift at the feet of the king he fell:  
"Ride, sire, on to the field forthright,  
You will find the Franks in an evil plight;  
Full half and more of their host lies slain,  
And sore enfeebled who yet remain;  
Nor arms have they in their utmost need:  
To crush them now were an easy deed,"  
Marsil listened with heart aflame.  
Onward in search of the Franks he came.

### CXXIV

King Marsil on through the valley sped,  
With the mighty host he has marshalled.  
Twice ten battalions the king arrayed:  
Helmets shone, with their gems displayed,  
Bucklers and braided hauberks bound,  
Seven thousand trumpets the onset sound;  
Dread was the clangor afar to hear.  
Said Roland, "My brother, my Olivier,  
Gan the traitor our death hath sworn,  
Nor may his treason be now forborne.  
To our Emperor vengeance may well belong,—  
To us the battle fierce and strong;  
Never hath mortal beheld the like.  
With my Durindana I trust to strike;  
And thou, my comrade, with thy Hauteclere:  
We have borne them gallantly elsewhere.  
So many fields 'twas ours to gain,  
They shall sing against us no scornful strain."

### CXXV

As the Franks the heathen power descried,  
Filling the champaign from side to side,  
Loud unto Roland they made their call,  
And to Olivier and their captains all,



Spake the archbishop as him became:  
“O barons, think not one thought of shame;  
Fly not, for sake of our God I pray.  
That on you be chaunted no evil lay.  
Better by far on the field to die;  
For in sooth I deem that our end is nigh.  
But in holy Paradise ye shall meet,  
And with the innocents be your seat.”  
The Franks exult his words to hear,  
And the cry “*Montjoie!*” resoundeth clear.

CXXVI

King Marsil on the hill-top bides,  
While Grandonie with his legion rides.  
He nails his flag with three nails of gold:  
“Ride ye onwards, my barons bold.”  
Then loud a thousand clarions rang.  
And the Franks exclaimed as they heard the clang—  
“O God, our Father, what cometh on!  
Woe that we ever saw Ganelon:  
Fouly, by treason, he us betrayed.”  
Gallantly then the archbishop said,  
“Soldiers and lieges of God are ye,  
And in Paradise shall your guerdon be.



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To lie on its holy flowerets fair,  
Dastard never shall enter there.”  
Say the Franks, “We will win it every one.”  
The archbishop bestoweth his benison.  
Proudly mounted they at his word,  
And, like lions chafed, at the heathen spurred.

### CXXVII

Thus doth King Marsil divide his men:  
He keeps around him battalions ten.  
As the Franks the other ten descry,  
“What dark disaster,” they said, “is nigh?  
What doom shall now our peers betide?”  
Archbishop Turpin full well replied.  
“My cavaliers, of God the friends,  
Your crown of glory to-day He sends,  
To rest on the flowers of Paradise,  
That never were won by cowardice.”  
The Franks made answer, “No cravens we,  
Nor shall we gainsay God’s decree;  
Against the enemy yet we hold,—  
Few may we be, but staunch and bold.”  
Their spurs against the foe they set,  
Frank and paynim—once more they met.

### CXXVIII

A heathen of Saragossa came.  
Full half the city was his to claim.  
It was Climorin: hollow of heart was he,  
He had plighted with Gan in perfidy,  
What time each other on mouth they kissed,  
And he gave him his helm and amethyst.  
He would bring fair France from her glory down  
And from the Emperor wrest his crown.  
He sate upon Barbamouche, his steed,  
Than hawk or swallow more swift in speed.  
Pricked with the spur, and the rein let flow,  
To strike at the Gascon of Bordeaux,



Whom shield nor cuirass availed to save.  
Within his harness the point he drave,  
The sharp steel on through his body passed,  
Dead on the field was the Gascon cast.  
Said Climorin, "Easy to lay them low:  
Strike in, my pagans, give blow for blow."  
For their champion slain, the Franks cry woe.

CXXIX

Sir Roland called unto Olivier,  
"Sir Comrade, dead lieth Engelier;  
Braver knight had we none than he."  
"God grant," he answered, "revenge to me."  
His spurs of gold to his horse he laid,  
Grasping Hauteclere with his bloody blade.  
Climorin smote he, with stroke so fell,  
Slain at the blow was the infidel.  
Whose soul the Enemy bore away.  
Then turned he, Alphaïen, the duke, to slay;  
From Escababi the head he shore,  
And Arabs seven to the earth he bore.  
Saith Roland, "My comrade is much in wrath;  
Won great laud by my side he hath;  
Us such prowess to Karl endears.  
Fight on, fight ever, my cavaliers."

CXXX



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Then came the Saracen Valdabrun,  
Of whom King Marsil was foster-son.  
Four hundred galleys he owned at sea,  
And of all the mariners lord was he.  
Jerusalem erst he had falsely won,  
Profaned the temple of Solomon,  
Slaying the patriarch at the fount.  
'Twas he who in plight unto Gan the count,  
His sword with a thousand coins bestowed.  
Gramimond named he the steed he rode,  
Swifter than ever was falcon's flight;  
Well did he prick with the sharp spurs bright,  
To strike Duke Samson, the fearless knight.  
Buckler and cuirass at once he rent,  
And his pennon's flaps through his body sent;  
Dead he cast him, with levelled spear.  
"Strike, ye heathens; their doom is near."  
The Franks cry woe for their cavalier.

CXXXI

When Roland was ware of Samson slain,  
Well may you weet of his bitter pain.  
With bloody spur he his steed impelled,  
While Durindana aloft he held,  
The sword more costly than purest gold;  
And he smote, with passion uncontrolled,  
On the heathen's helm, with its jewelled crown,—  
Through head, and cuirass, and body down,  
And the saddle embossed with gold, till sank  
The griding steel in the charger's flank;  
Blame or praise him, the twain he slew.  
"A fearful stroke!" said the heathen crew.  
"I shall never love you," Count Roland cried,  
"With you are falsehood and evil pride."

CXXXII

From Afric's shore, of Afric's brood,  
Malquiant, son of King Malcus stood;  
Wrought of the beaten gold, his vest  
Flamed to the sun over all the rest.  
Saut-perdu hath he named his horse,  
Fleeter than ever was steed in course;



He smote Anseis upon the shield,  
Cleft its vermeil and azure field,  
Severed the joints of his hauberk good,  
In his body planted both steel and wood.  
Dead he lieth, his day is o'er,  
And the Franks the loss of their peer deplore.

CXXXIII

Turpin rideth the press among;  
Never such priest the Mass had sung,  
Nor who hath such feats of his body done.  
“God send thee,” he said, “His malison!  
For the knight thou slewest my heart is sore.”  
He sets the spur to his steed once more,  
Smites the shield in Toledo made,  
And the heathen low on the sward is laid.

CXXXIV

Forth came the Saracen Grandonie,  
Bestriding his charger Marmorie;  
He was son unto Cappadocia's king,  
And his steed was fleeter than bird on wing.  
He let the rein on his neck decline,  
And spurred him hard against Count Gerein,  
Shattered the vermeil shield he bore,  
And his armor of proof



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all open tore;

In went the pennon, so fierce the shock,  
And he cast him, dead, on a lofty rock;  
Then he slew his comrade in arms, Gerier,  
Guy of Saint Anton and Berengier.  
Next lay the great Duke Astor prone.  
The Lord of Valence upon the Rhone.  
Among the heathen great joy he cast.  
Say the Franks, lamenting, "We perish fast."

CXXXV

Count Roland graspeth his bloody sword:  
Well hath he heard how the Franks deplored;  
His heart is burning within his breast.  
"God's malediction upon thee rest!  
Right dearly shalt thou this blood repay."  
His war-horse springs to the spur straightway,  
And they come together—go down who may.

CXXXVI

A gallant captain was Grandonie,  
Great in arms and in chivalry.  
Never, till then, had he Roland seen,  
But well he knew him by form and mien,  
By the stately bearing and glance of pride,  
And a fear was on him he might not hide.  
Fain would he fly, but it skills not here;  
Roland smote him with stroke so sheer,  
That it cleft the nasal his helm beneath,  
Slitting nostril and mouth and teeth,  
Cleft his body and mail of plate,  
And the gilded saddle whereon he sate,  
Deep the back of the charger through:  
Beyond all succor the twain he slew.  
From the Spanish ranks a wail arose,  
And the Franks exult in their champion's blows.

CXXXVII



The battle is wondrous yet, and dire,  
And the Franks are cleaving in deadly ire;  
Wrists and ribs and chines afresh,  
And vestures, in to the living flesh;  
On the green grass streaming the bright blood ran,  
"O mighty country, Mahound thee ban!  
For thy sons are strong over might of man."  
And one and all unto Marsil cried,  
"Hither, O king, to our succor ride."

## CXXXVIII

Marvellous yet is the fight around,  
The Franks are thrusting with spears embrowned;  
And great the carnage there to ken,  
Slain and wounded and bleeding men,  
Flung, each by other, on back or face.  
Hold no more can the heathen race.  
They turn and fly from the field apace;  
The Franks as hotly pursue in chase.

## CXXXIX

Knightly the deeds by Roland done,  
Respite or rest for his Franks is none;  
Hard they ride on the heathen rear,  
At trot or gallop in full career.  
With crimson blood are their bodies stained,  
And their brands of steel are snapped or strained;  
And when the weapons their hands forsake,  
Then unto trumpet and horn they take.  
Serried they charge, in power and pride;  
And the Saracens cry—"May ill betide  
The hour we came on this fatal track!"  
So on our host do they turn the back,  
The Christians cleaving them as they fled,  
Till to Marsil stretcheth the line of dead.



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CXL

King Marsil looks on his legions strown,  
He bids the clarion blast be blown,  
With all his host he onward speeds:  
Abime the heathen his vanguard leads.  
No felon worse in the host than he,  
Black of hue as a shrivelled pea;  
He believes not in Holy Mary's Son;  
Full many an evil deed hath done.  
Treason and murder he prizeth more  
Than all the gold of Galicia's shore;  
Men never knew him to laugh nor jest,  
But brave and daring among the best—  
Endeared to the felon king therefor;  
And the dragon flag of his race he bore.  
The archbishop loathed him—full well he might,—  
And as he saw him he yearned to smite,  
To himself he speaketh, low and quick,  
“This heathen seems much a heretic;  
I go to slay him, or else to die,  
For I love not dastards or dastardy.”

CXLI

The archbishop began the fight once more;  
He rode the steed he had won of yore,  
When in Denmark Grossaille the king he slew.  
Fleet the charger, and fair to view:  
His feet were small and fashioned fine,  
Long the flank, and high the chine,  
Chest and croup full amply spread,  
With taper ear and tawny head,  
And snow-white tail and yellow mane:  
To seek his peer on earth were vain.  
The archbishop spurred him in fiery haste,  
And, on the moment Abime he faced,  
Came down on the wondrous shield the blow,  
The shield with amethysts all aglow,  
Carbuncle and topaz, each priceless stone;  
'Twas once the Emir Galafir's own;  
A demon gave it in Metas vale;  
But when Turpin smote it might nought avail—  
From side to side did his weapon trace,



And he flung him dead in an open space.  
Say the Franks, "Such deeds beseem the brave.  
Well the archbishop his cross can save."

CXLII

Count Roland Olivier bespake:  
"Sir comrade, dost thou my thought partake?  
A braver breathes not this day on earth  
Than our archbishop in knightly worth.  
How nobly smites he with lance and blade!"  
Saith Olivier, "Yea, let us yield him aid;"  
And the Franks once more the fight essayed.  
Stern and deadly resound the blows.  
For the Christians, alas, 'tis a tale of woes!

CXLIII

The Franks of France of their arms are reft,  
Three hundred blades alone are left.  
The glittering helms they smite and shred,  
And cleave asunder full many a head;  
Through riven helm and hauberk rent,  
Maim head and foot and lineament.  
"Disfigured are we," the heathens cry.  
"Who guards him not hath but choice to die."  
Right unto Marsil their way they take.

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“Help, O king, for your people’s sake!”  
King Marsil heard their cry at hand,  
“Mahound destroy thee, O mighty land;  
Thy race came hither to crush mine own.  
What cities wasted and overthrown,  
Doth Karl of the hoary head possess!  
Rome and Apulia his power confess,  
Constantinople and Saxony;  
Yet better die by the Franks than flee.  
On, Saracens! recreant heart be none;  
If Roland live, we are all foredone.”

### CXLIV

Then with the lance did the heathens smite  
On shield and gleaming helmet bright;  
Of steel and iron arose the clang,  
Towards heaven the flames and sparkles sprang;  
Brains and blood on the champaign flowed;  
But on Roland’s heart is a dreary load,  
To see his vassals lie cold in death;  
His gentle France he remembereth,  
And his uncle, the good King Carlemaine;  
And the spirit within him groans for pain.

### CXLV

Count Roland entered within the prease,  
And smote full deadly without surcease;  
While Durindana aloft he held,  
Hauberk and helm he pierced and quelled,  
Intrenching body and hand and head.  
The Saracens lie by the hundred dead,  
And the heathen host is discomfited.

### CXLVI

Valiantly Olivier, elsewhere,  
Brandished on high his sword Hauteclere—  
Save Durindana, of swords the best.



To the battle proudly he him addressed.  
His arms with the crimson blood were dyed.  
“God, what a vassal!” Count Roland cried.  
“O gentle baron, so true and leal,  
This day shall set on our love the seal!  
The Emperor cometh to find us dead,  
For ever parted and severed.  
France never looked on such woful day;  
Nor breathes a Frank but for us will pray,—  
From the cloister cells shall the orisons rise,  
And our souls find rest in Paradise.”  
Olivier heard him, amid the throng,  
Spurred his steed to his side along.  
Saith each to other, “Be near me still;  
We will die together, if God so will.”

## CXLVII

Roland and Olivier then are seen  
To lash and hew with their falchions keen;  
With his lance the archbishop thrusts and slays,  
And the numbers slain we may well appraise;  
In charter and writ is the tale expressed—  
Beyond four thousand, saith the geste.  
In four encounters they sped them well:  
Dire and grievous the fifth befell.  
The cavaliers of the Franks are slain  
All but sixty, who yet remain;  
God preserved them, that ere they die,  
They may sell their lives full hardily.

The horn

## CXLVIII



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As Roland gazed on his slaughtered men,  
He bespake his gentle compeer agen:  
"Ah, dear companion, may God thee shield!  
Behold, our bravest lie dead on field!  
Well may we weep for France the fair,  
Of her noble barons despoiled and bare.  
Had he been with us, our king and friend!  
Speak, my brother, thy counsel lend,—  
How unto Karl shall we tidings send?"  
Olivier answered, "I wist not how.  
Liefer death than be recreant now."

CXLIX

"I will sound," said Roland, "upon my horn,  
Karl, as he passeth the gorge, to warn.  
The Franks, I know, will return apace."  
Said Olivier, "Nay, it were foul disgrace  
On your noble kindred to wreak such wrong;  
They would bear the stain their lifetime long.  
Erewhile I sought it, and sued in vain;  
But to sound thy horn thou wouldst not deign.  
Not now shall mine assent be won,  
Nor shall I say it is knightly done.  
Lo! both your arms are streaming red."  
"In sooth," said Roland, "good strokes I sped."

CL

Said Roland, "Our battle goes hard, I fear;  
I will sound my horn that Karl may hear."  
"Twere a deed unknighly," said Olivier;  
"Thou didst disdain when I sought and prayed:  
Saved had we been with our Karl to aid;  
Unto him and his host no blame shall be:  
By this my beard, might I hope to see  
My gentle sister Alda's face,  
Thou shouldst never hold her in thine embrace."

CLI

"Ah, why on me doth thine anger fall?"  
"Roland, 'tis thou who hast wrought it all.  
Valor and madness are scarce allied,—



Better discretion than daring pride.  
All of thy folly our Franks lie slain,  
Nor shall render service to Karl again,  
As I implored thee, if thou hadst done,  
The king had come and the field were won;  
Marsil captive, or slain, I trow.  
Thy daring, Roland, hath wrought our woe.  
No service more unto Karl we pay,  
That first of men till the judgment day;  
Thou shalt die, and France dishonored be  
Ended our loyal company—  
A woful parting this eve shall see.”

## CLII

Archbishop Turpin their strife hath heard,  
His steed with the spurs of gold he spurred,  
And thus rebuked them, riding near:  
“Sir Roland, and thou, Sir Olivier,  
Contend not, in God’s great name, I crave.  
Not now availeth the horn to save;  
And yet behoves you to wind its call,—  
Karl will come to avenge our fall,  
Nor hence the foemen in joyance wend.  
The Franks will all from their steeds descend;  
When they find us slain and martyred here,  
They will raise our



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bodies on mule and bier,  
And, while in pity aloud they weep,  
Lay us in hallowed earth to sleep;  
Nor wolf nor boar on our limbs shall feed.”  
Said Roland, “Yea, ’tis a goodly rede.”

### CLIII

Then to his lips the horn he drew,  
And full and lustily he blew.  
The mountain peaks soared high around;  
Thirty leagues was borne the sound.  
Karl hath heard it, and all his band.  
“Our men have battle,” he said, “on hand.”  
Ganelon rose in front and cried,  
“If another spake, I would say he lied.”

### CLIV

With deadly travail, in stress and pain,  
Count Roland sounded the mighty strain.  
Forth from his mouth the bright blood sprang,  
And his temples burst for the very pang.  
On and onward was borne the blast,  
Till Karl hath heard as the gorge he passed,  
And Naimes and all his men of war.  
“It is Roland’s horn,” said the Emperor,  
“And, save in battle, he had not blown.”  
“Battle,” said Ganelon, “is there none.  
Old are you grown—all white and hoar;  
Such words bespeak you a child once more.  
Have you, then, forgotten Roland’s pride,  
Which I marvel God should so long abide,  
How he captured Noples without your hest?  
Forth from the city the heathen pressed,  
To your vassal Roland they battle gave,—  
He slew them all with the trenchant glaive,  
Then turned the waters upon the plain,  
That trace of blood might none remain.  
He would sound all day for a single hare:  
’Tis a jest with him and his fellows there;  
For who would battle against him dare?



Ride onward—wherefore this chill delay?  
Your mighty land is yet far away.”

CLV

On Roland’s mouth is the bloody stain,  
Burst asunder his temple’s vein;  
His horn he soundeth in anguish drear;  
King Karl and the Franks around him hear.  
Said Karl, “That horn is long of breath.”  
Said Naimes, “’Tis Roland who travaileth.  
There is battle yonder by mine avow.  
He who betrayed him deceives you now.  
Arm, sire; ring forth your rallying cry,  
And stand your noble household by;  
For you hear your Roland in jeopardy.”

CLVI

The king commands to sound the alarm.  
To the trumpet the Franks alight and arm;  
With casque and corselet and gilded brand,  
Buckler and stalwart lance in hand,  
Pennons of crimson and white and blue,  
The barons leap on their steeds anew,  
And onward spur the passes through;  
Nor is there one but to other saith,  
“Could we reach but Roland before his death,  
Blows would we strike for him grim and great.”  
Ah! what availeth!—’tis all too late.



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CLVII

The evening passed into brightening dawn.  
Against the sun their harness shone;  
From helm and hauberk glanced the rays,  
And their painted bucklers seemed all ablaze.  
The Emperor rode in wrath apart.  
The Franks were moody and sad of heart;  
Was none but dropped the bitter tear,  
For they thought of Roland with deadly fear.—  
Then bade the Emperor take and bind  
Count Gan, and had him in scorn consigned  
To Besgun, chief of his kitchen train.  
“Hold me this felon,” he said, “in chain.”  
Then full a hundred round him pressed,  
Of the kitchen varlets the worst and best;  
His beard upon lip and chin they tore,  
Cuffs of the fist each dealt him four,  
Roundly they beat him with rods and staves;  
Then around his neck those kitchen knaves  
Flung a fetterlock fast and strong,  
As ye lead a bear in a chain along;  
On a beast of burthen the count they cast,  
Till they yield him back to Karl at last.

CLVIII

Dark, vast, and high the summits soar,  
The waters down through the valleys pour.  
The trumpets sound in front and rear,  
And to Roland’s horn make answer clear.  
The Emperor rideth in wrathful mood,  
The Franks in grievous solicitude;  
Nor one among them can stint to weep,  
Beseeching God that He Roland keep,  
Till they stand beside him upon the field,  
To the death together their arms to wield.  
Ah, timeless succor, and all in vain!  
Too long they tarried, too late they strain.

CLIX

Onward King Karl in his anger goes;  
Down on his harness his white beard flows.



The barons of France spur hard behind;  
But on all there presseth one grief of mind—  
That they stand not beside Count Roland then,  
As he fronts the power of the Saracen.  
Were he hurt in fight, who would then survive?  
Yet three score barons around him strive.  
And what a sixty! Nor chief nor king  
Had ever such gallant following.

CLX

Roland looketh to hill and plain,  
He sees the lines of his warriors slain,  
And he weeps like a noble cavalier,  
“Barons of France, God hold you dear,  
And take you to Paradise’s bowers,  
Where your souls may lie on the holy flowers;  
Braver vassals on earth were none,  
So many kingdoms for Karl ye won;  
Years a-many your ranks I led,  
And for end like this were ye nurtured.  
Land of France, thou art soothly fair;  
To-day thou liest bereaved and bare;  
It was all for me your lives you gave,  
And I was helpless to shield or save.  
May the great God save you who cannot lie.  
Olivier, brother, I stand thee by;  
I die of grief, if I ’scape unslain:  
In, brother, in to the fight again.”



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CLXI

Once more pressed Roland within the fight,  
His Durindana he grasped with might;  
Faldron of Pui did he cleave in two,  
And twenty-four of their bravest slew.  
Never was man on such vengeance bound;  
And, as flee the roe-deer before the hound,  
So in face of Roland the heathen flee.  
Saith Turpin, "Right well this liketh me.  
Such prowess a cavalier befits,  
Who harness wears, and on charger sits;  
In battle shall he be strong and great,  
Or I prize him not at four deniers' rate;  
Let him else be monk in a cloister cell,  
His daily prayers for our souls to tell."  
Cries Roland, "Smite them, and do not spare."  
Down once more on the foe they bear,  
But the Christian ranks grow thinned and rare.

CLXII

Who knoweth ransom is none for him,  
Maketh in battle resistance grim;  
The Franks like wrathful lions strike,  
But King Marsil beareth him baron-like;  
He bestrideth his charger, Gaignon hight,  
And he pricketh him hard, Sir Beuve to smite,  
The Lord of Beaune and of Dijon town,  
Through shield and cuirass, he struck him down:  
Dead past succor of man he lay.  
Ivon and Ivor did Marsil slay;  
Gerard of Roussillon beside.  
Not far was Roland, and loud he cried,  
"Be thou forever in God's disgrace,  
Who hast slain my fellows before my face,  
Before we part thou shalt blows essay,  
And learn the name of my sword to-day."  
Down, at the word, came the trenchant brand,  
And from Marsil severed his good right hand:  
With another stroke, the head he won  
Of the fair-haired Jurfalez, Marsil's son.  
"Help us, Mahound!" say the heathen train,  
"May our gods avenge us on Carlemaine!



Such daring felons he hither sent,  
Who will hold the field till their lives be spent.”  
“Let us flee and save us,” cry one and all,  
Unto flight a hundred thousand fall,  
Nor can aught the fugitives recall.

CLXIII

But what availeth? though Marsil fly,  
His uncle, the Algalif, still is nigh;  
Lord of Carthagera is he,  
Of Alferna's shore and Garmalie,  
And of Ethiopia, accursed land:  
The black battalions at his command,  
With nostrils huge and flattened ears,  
Outnumber fifty thousand spears;  
And on they ride in haste and ire,  
Shouting their heathen war-cry dire.  
“At last,” said Roland, “the hour is come,  
Here receive we our martyrdom;  
Yet strike with your burnished brands—accursed  
Who sells not his life right dearly first;  
In life or death be your thought the same,  
That gentle France be not brought to shame.  
When the Emperor hither his steps hath bent,  
And he sees the Saracens' chastisement,  
Fifteen of their dead against our one,  
He will breathe on our souls his benison.”



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Death of Olivier

CLXIV

When Roland saw the abhorred race,  
Than blackest ink more black in face,  
Who have nothing white but the teeth alone,  
“Now,” he said, “it is truly shown,  
That the hour of our death is close at hand.  
Fight, my Franks, ’tis my last command.”  
Said Olivier, “Shame is the laggard’s due.”  
And at his word they engage anew.

CLXV

When the heathen saw that the Franks were few,  
Heart and strength from the sight they drew;  
They said, “The Emperor hath the worse.”  
The Algalif sat on a sorrel horse;  
He pricked with spurs of the gold refined,  
Smote Olivier in the back behind.  
On through his harness the lance he pressed,  
Till the steel came out at the baron’s breast.  
“Thou hast it!” the Algalif, vaunting, cried,  
“Ye were sent by Karl in an evil tide.  
Of his wrongs against us he shall not boast;  
In thee alone I avenge our host.”

CLXVI

Olivier felt the deadly wound,  
Yet he grasped Hauteclere, with its steel embrowned;  
He smote on the Algalif’s crest of gold,—  
Gem and flowers to the earth were rolled;  
Clave his head to the teeth below,  
And struck him dead with the single blow.  
“All evil, caitiff, thy soul pursue.  
Full well our Emperor’s loss I knew;  
But for thee—thou goest not hence to boast  
To wife or dame on thy natal coast,  
Of one denier from the Emperor won,  
Or of scathe to me or to others done.”  
Then Roland’s aid he called upon.



## CLXVII

Olivier knoweth him hurt to death; The more to vengeance he hasteneth; Knightly as ever his arms he bore, Staves of lances and shields he shore; Sides and shoulders and hands and feet,— Whose eyes soever the sight would greet, How the Saracens all disfigured lie, Corpse upon corpse, each other by, Would think upon gallant deeds; nor yet Doth he the war-cry of Karl forget— "*Montjoie!*" he shouted, shrill and clear; Then called he Roland, his friend and peer, "Sir, my comrade, anear me ride; This day of dolor shall us divide."

## CLXVIII

Roland looked Olivier in the face,—  
Ghastly paleness was there to trace;  
Forth from his wound did the bright blood flow,  
And rain in showers to the earth below.  
"O God!" said Roland, "is this the end  
Of all thy prowess, my gentle friend?  
Nor know I whither to bear me now:  
On earth shall never be such as thou.  
Ah, gentle France, thou art overthrown,  
Reft of thy bravest, despoiled and lone;  
The Emperor's loss is full indeed!"  
At the word he fainted upon his steed.

## CLXIX



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See Roland there on his charger swooned,  
Olivier smitten with his death wound.  
His eyes from bleeding are dimmed and dark,  
Nor mortal, near or far, can mark;  
And when his comrade beside him pressed,  
Fiercely he smote on his golden crest;  
Down to the nasal the helm he shred,  
But passed no further, nor pierced his head.  
Roland marvelled at such a blow,  
And thus bespake him soft and low:  
"Hast thou done it, my comrade, wittingly?  
Roland who loves thee so dear, am I,  
Thou hast no quarrel with me to seek?"  
Olivier answered, "I hear thee speak,  
But I see thee not. God seeth thee.  
Have I struck thee, brother? Forgive it me."  
"I am not hurt, O Olivier;  
And in sight of God, I forgive thee here."  
Then each to other his head has laid,  
And in love like this was their parting made.

CLXX

Olivier feeleth his throe begin;  
His eyes are turning his head within,  
Sight and hearing alike are gone.  
He alights and couches the earth upon;  
His *Mea Culpa* aloud he cries,  
And his hands in prayer unto God arise,  
That he grant him Paradise to share,  
That he bless King Karl and France the fair,  
His brother Roland o'er all mankind;  
Then sank his heart, and his head declined,  
Stretched at length on the earth he lay,—  
So passed Sir Olivier away.  
Roland was left to weep alone:  
Man so woful hath ne'er been known.

CLXXI

When Roland saw that life had fled,  
And with face to earth his comrade dead,  
He thus bewept him, soft and still:  
"Ah, friend, thy prowess wrought thee ill!



So many days and years gone by  
We lived together, thou and I:  
And thou hast never done me wrong,  
Nor I to thee, our lifetime long.  
Since thou art dead, to live is pain.”  
He swooned on Veillantif again,  
Yet may not unto earth be cast,  
His golden stirrups held him fast.

CLXXII

When passed away had Roland's swoon,  
With sense restored, he saw full soon  
What ruin lay beneath his view.  
His Franks have perished all save two—  
The archbishop and Walter of Hum alone.  
From the mountain-side hath Walter flown,  
Where he met in battle the bands of Spain,  
And the heathen won and his men were slain  
In his own despite to the vale he came;  
Called unto Roland, his aid to claim.  
“Ah, count! brave gentleman, gallant peer!  
Where art thou? With thee I know not fear.  
I am Walter, who vanquished Maelgut of yore,  
Nephew to Drouin, the old and hoar.  
For knightly deeds I was once thy friend.  
I fought the Saracen



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to the end;

My lance is shivered, my shield is cleft,  
Of my broken mail are but fragments left.  
I bear in my body eight thrusts of spear;  
I die, but I sold my life right dear."  
Count Roland heard as he spake the word,  
Pricked his steed, and anear him spurred.

CLXXIII

"Walter," said Roland, "thou hadst affray  
With the Saracen foe on the heights to-day.  
Thou wert wont a valorous knight to be:  
A thousand horsemen gave I thee;  
Render them back, for my need is sore."  
"Alas, thou seest them never more!  
Stretched they lie on the dolorous ground,  
Where myriad Saracen swarms we found,—  
Armenians, Turks, and the giant brood  
Of Balisa, famous for hardihood,  
Bestriding their Arab coursers fleet,  
Such host in battle 'twas ours to meet;  
Nor vaunting thence shall the heathen go,—  
Full sixty thousand on earth lie low.  
With our brands of steel we avenged us well,  
But every Frank by the foeman fell.  
My hauberk plates are riven wide,  
And I bear such wounds in flank and side,  
That from every part the bright blood flows,  
And feebler ever my body grows.  
I am dying fast, I am well aware:  
Thy liegeman I, and claim thy care.  
If I fled perforce, thou wilt forgive,  
And yield me succor while thou dost live."  
Roland sweated with wrath and pain,  
Tore the skirts of his vest in twain,  
Bound Walter's every bleeding vein.

CLXXIV

In Roland's sorrow his wrath arose,  
Hotly he struck at the heathen foes,



Nor left he one of a score alive;  
Walter slew six, the archbishop five.  
The heathens cry, "What a felon three!  
Look to it, lords, that they shall not flee.  
Dastard is he who confronts them not;  
Craven, who lets them depart this spot."  
Their cries and shoutings begin once more,  
And from every side on the Franks they pour.

CLXXV

Count Roland in sooth is a noble peer;  
Count Walter, a valorous cavalier;  
The archbishop, in battle proved and tried,  
Each struck as if knight there were none beside.  
From their steeds a thousand Saracens leap,  
Yet forty thousand their saddles keep;  
I trow they dare not approach them near,  
But they hurl against them lance and spear,  
Pike and javelin, shaft and dart.  
Walter is slain as the missiles part;  
The archbishop's shield in pieces shred,  
Riven his helm, and pierced his head;  
His corselet of steel they rent and tore,  
Wounded his body with lances four;  
His steed beneath him dropped withal:  
What woe to see the archbishop fall!

CLXXVI



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When Turpin felt him flung to ground,  
And four lance wounds within him found,  
He swiftly rose, the dauntless man,  
To Roland looked, and nigh him ran.  
Spake but, "I am not overthrown—  
Brave warrior yields with life alone."  
He drew Almace's burnished steel,  
A thousand ruthless blows to deal.  
In after time, the Emperor said  
He found four hundred round him spread,—  
Some wounded, others cleft in twain;  
Some lying headless on the plain.  
So Giles the saint, who saw it, tells,  
For whom High God wrought miracles.  
In Laon cell the scroll he wrote;  
He little weets who knows it not.

### CLXXVII

Count Roland combateth nobly yet,  
His body burning and bathed in sweat;  
In his brow a mighty pain, since first,  
When his horn he sounded, his temple burst;  
But he yearns of Karl's approach to know,  
And lifts his horn once more—but oh,  
How faint and feeble a note to blow!  
The Emperor listened, and stood full still.  
"My lords," he said, "we are faring ill.  
This day is Roland my nephew's last;  
Like dying man he winds that blast.  
On! Who would aid, for life must press.  
Sound every trump our ranks possess."  
Peal sixty thousand clarions high,  
The hills re-echo, the vales reply.  
It is now no jest for the heathen band.  
"Karl!" they cry, "it is Karl at hand!"

### CLXXVIII

They said, "'Tis the Emperor's advance,  
We hear the trumpets resound of France.  
If he assail us, hope in vain;  
If Roland live, 'tis war again,  
And we lose for aye the land of Spain."



Four hundred in arms together drew,  
The bravest of the heathen crew;  
With serried power they on him press,  
And dire in sooth is the count's distress.

CLXXIX

When Roland saw his coming foes,  
All proud and stern his spirit rose;  
Alive he shall never be brought to yield:  
Veillantif spurred he across the field,  
With golden spurs he pricked him well,  
To break the ranks of the infidel;  
Archbishop Turpin by his side.  
"Let us flee, and save us," the heathen cried;  
"These are the trumpets of France we hear—  
It is Karl, the mighty Emperor, near."

CLXXX

Count Roland never hath loved the base,  
Nor the proud of heart, nor the dastard race,—  
Nor knight, but if he were vassal good,—  
And he spake to Turpin, as there he stood;  
"On foot are you, on horseback I;  
For your love I halt, and stand you by.  
Together for good and ill we hold;  
I will not leave you for man of mould.  
We will pay the heathen their onset back,  
Nor shall Durindana of blows be slack."  
"Base," said Turpin, "who spares to smite:  
When the Emperor comes, he will all requite."



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CLXXXI

The heathens said, "We were born to shame.  
This day for our disaster came:  
Our lords and leaders in battle lost,  
And Karl at hand with his marshalled host;  
We hear the trumpets of France ring out,  
And the cry '*Montjoie!*' their rallying shout.  
Roland's pride is of such a height,  
Not to be vanquished by mortal wight;  
Hurl we our missiles, and hold aloof."  
And the word they spake, they put in proof,—  
They flung, with all their strength and craft,  
Javelin, barb, and plumed shaft.  
Roland's buckler was torn and frayed,  
His cuirass broken and disarrayed,  
Yet entrance none to his flesh they made.  
From thirty wounds Veillantif bled,  
Beneath his rider they cast him, dead;  
Then from the field have the heathen flown:  
Roland remaineth, on foot, alone.

THE LAST BENEDICTION OF THE ARCHBISHOP

CLXXXII

The heathens fly in rage and dread;  
To the land of Spain have their footsteps sped;  
Nor can Count Roland make pursuit—  
Slain is his steed, and he rests afoot;  
To succor Turpin he turned in haste,  
The golden helm from his head unlaced,  
Ungirt the corselet from his breast,  
In stripes divided his silken vest;  
The archbishop's wounds hath he stanch'd and bound,  
His arms around him softly wound;  
On the green sward gently his body laid,  
And, with tender greeting, thus him prayed:  
"For a little space, let me take farewell;  
Our dear companions, who round us fell,  
I go to seek; if I haply find,  
I will place them at thy feet reclined."  
"Go," said Turpin; "the field is thine—  
To God the glory, 'tis thine and mine."



CLXXXIII

Alone seeks Roland the field of fight,  
He searcheth vale, he searcheth height.  
Ivon and Ivor he found, laid low,  
And the Gascon Engelier of Bordeaux,  
Gerein and his fellow in arms, Gerier;  
Otho he found, and Berengier;  
Samson the duke, and Anseis bold,  
Gerard of Roussillon, the old.  
Their bodies, one after one, he bore,  
And laid them Turpin's feet before.  
The archbishop saw them stretched arow,  
Nor can he hinder the tears that flow;  
In benediction his hands he spread:  
"Alas! for your doom, my lords," he said,  
"That God in mercy your souls may give,  
On the flowers of Paradise to live;  
Mine own death comes, with anguish sore  
That I see mine Emperor never more."

CLXXXIV



## Page 44

Once more to the field doth Roland wend,  
Till he findeth Olivier his friend;  
The lifeless form to his heart he strained,  
Bore him back with what strength remained,  
On a buckler laid him, beside the rest,  
The archbishop assoiled them all, and blessed.  
Their dole and pity anew find vent,  
And Roland maketh his fond lament:  
“My Olivier, my chosen one,  
Thou wert the noble Duke Renier’s son,  
Lord of the March unto Rivier vale.  
To shiver lance and shatter mail,  
The brave in council to guide and cheer,  
To smite the miscreant foe with fear,—  
Was never on earth such cavalier.”

CLXXXV

Dead around him his peers to see,  
And the man he loved so tenderly,  
Fast the tears of Count Roland ran,  
His visage discolored became, and wan,  
He swooned for sorrow beyond control.  
“Alas,” said Turpin, “how great thy dole!”

CLXXXVI

To look on Roland swooning there,  
Surpassed all sorrow he ever bare;  
He stretched his hand, the horn he took,—  
Through Roncesvales there flowed a brook,—  
A draught to Roland he thought to bring;  
But his steps were feeble and tottering,  
Spent his strength, from waste of blood,—  
He struggled on for scarce a rood,  
When sank his heart, and drooped his frame,  
And his mortal anguish on him came.

CLXXXVII

Roland revived from his swoon again; On his feet he rose, but in deadly pain; He looked on high, and he looked below, Till, a space his other companions fro, He beheld the baron, stretched on sward, The archbishop, vicar of God our Lord. *Mea Culpa* was Turpin’s cry, While he raised his hands to heaven on high, Imploring Paradise to gain.



So died the soldier of Carlemaine,— With word or weapon, to preach or fight, A  
champion ever of Christian right, And a deadly foe of the infidel. God's benediction  
within him dwell!

CLXXXVIII

When Roland saw him stark on earth  
(His very vitals were bursting forth,  
And his brain was oozing from out his head),  
He took the fair white hands outspread,  
Crossed and clasped them upon his breast,  
And thus his plaint to the dead addressed,—  
So did his country's law ordain:—  
“Ah, gentleman of noble strain,  
I trust thee unto God the True,  
Whose service never man shall do  
With more devoted heart and mind:  
To guard the faith, to win mankind,  
From the apostles' days till now,  
Such prophet never rose as thou.  
Nor pain or torment thy soul await,  
But of Paradise the open gate.”

THE DEATH OF ROLAND

CLXXIX



## Page 45

Roland feeleth his death is near,  
His brain is oozing by either ear.  
For his peers he prayed—God keep them well;  
Invoked the angel Gabriel.  
That none reproach him, his horn he clasped;  
His other hand Durindana grasped;  
Then, far as quarrel from crossbow sent,  
Across the march of Spain he went,  
Where, on a mound, two trees between,  
Four flights of marble steps were seen;  
Backward he fell, on the field to lie;  
And he swooned anon, for the end was nigh.

CXC

High were the mountains and high the trees,  
Bright shone the marble terraces;  
On the green grass Roland hath swooned away.  
A Saracen spied him where he lay:  
Stretched with the rest he had feigned him dead,  
His face and body with blood bespread.  
To his feet he sprang, and in haste he hied,—  
He was fair and strong and of courage tried,  
In pride and wrath he was overbold,—  
And on Roland, body and arms, laid hold.  
“The nephew of Karl is overthrown!  
To Araby bear I this sword, mine own.”  
He stooped to grasp it, but as he drew,  
Roland returned to his sense anew.

CXCI

He saw the Saracen seize his sword;  
His eyes he oped, and he spake one word—  
“Thou art not one of our band, I trow,”  
And he clutched the horn he would ne'er forego;  
On the golden crest he smote him full,  
Shattering steel and bone and skull,  
Forth from his head his eyes he beat,  
And cast him lifeless before his feet.  
“Miscreant, makest thou then so free,  
As, right or wrong, to lay hold on me?  
Who hears it will deem thee a madman born;  
Behold the mouth of mine ivory horn



Broken for thee, and the gems and gold  
Around its rim to earth are rolled.”

## CXCII

Roland feeleth his eyesight reft,  
Yet he stands erect with what strength is left;  
From his bloodless cheek is the hue dispelled,  
But his Durindana all bare he held.  
In front a dark brown rock arose—  
He smote upon it ten grievous blows.  
Grated the steel as it struck the flint,  
Yet it brake not, nor bore its edge one dint.  
“Mary, Mother, be thou mine aid!  
Ah, Durindana, my ill-starred blade,  
I may no longer thy guardian be!  
What fields of battle I won with thee!  
What realms and regions ’twas ours to gain,  
Now the lordship of Carlemaine!  
Never shalt thou possessor know  
Who would turn from face of mortal foe;  
A gallant vassal so long thee bore,  
Such as France the free shall know no more.”

## CXCIII



## Page 46

He smote anew on the marble stair.  
It grated, but breach nor notch was there.  
When Roland found that it would not break,  
Thus began he his plaint to make.  
“Ah, Durindana, how fair and bright  
Thou sparklest, flaming against the light!  
When Karl in Maurienne valley lay,  
God sent his angel from heaven to say—  
‘This sword shall a valorous captain’s be,’  
And he girt it, the gentle king, on me.  
With it I vanquished Poitou and Maine,  
Provence I conquered and Aquitaine;  
I conquered Normandy the free,  
Anjou, and the marches of Brittany;  
Romagna I won, and Lombardy,  
Bavaria, Flanders from side to side,  
And Burgundy, and Poland wide;  
Constantinople affianced vowed,  
And the Saxon soil to his bidding bowed;  
Scotia, and Wales, and Ireland’s plain,  
Of England made he his own domain.  
What mighty regions I won of old,  
For the hoary-headed Karl to hold!  
But there presses on me a grievous pain,  
Lest thou in heathen hands remain.  
O God our Father, keep France from stain!”

### CXCIV

His strokes once more on the brown rock fell,  
And the steel was bent past words to tell;  
Yet it brake not, nor was notched the grain,  
Erect it leaped to the sky again.  
When he failed at the last to break his blade,  
His lamentation he inly made.  
“Oh, fair and holy, my peerless sword,  
What relics lie in thy pommel stored!  
Tooth of Saint Peter, Saint Basil’s blood,  
Hair of Saint Denis beside them strewed,  
Fragment of holy Mary’s vest.  
’Twere shame that thou with the heathen rest;  
Thee should the hand of a Christian serve  
One who would never in battle swerve.  
What regions won I with thee of yore,



The empire now of Karl the hoar!  
Rich and mighty is he therefore.”

CXCV

That death was on him he knew full well; Down from his head to his heart it fell. On the grass beneath a pine-tree's shade, With face to earth, his form he laid, Beneath him placed he his horn and sword, And turned his face to the heathen horde. Thus hath he done the sooth to show, That Karl and his warriors all may know, That the gentle count a conqueror died. *Mea Culpa* full oft he cried; And, for all his sins, unto God above, In sign of penance, he raised his glove.

CXCVI

Roland feeleth his hour at hand;  
On a knoll he lies towards the Spanish land.  
With one hand beats he upon his breast:  
“In thy sight, O God, be my sins confessed.  
From my hour of birth, both the great and small,  
Down to this day, I repent of all.”  
As his glove he raises to God on high,  
Angels of heaven descend him nigh.



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CXCVII

Beneath a pine was his resting-place,  
To the land of Spain hath he turned his face,  
On his memory rose full many a thought—  
Of the lands he won and the fields he fought;  
Of his gentle France, of his kin and line;  
Of his nursing father, King Karl benign;—  
He may not the tear and sob control,  
Nor yet forgets he his parting soul.  
To God's compassion he makes his cry:  
"O Father true, who canst not lie,  
Who didst Lazarus raise unto life agen,  
And Daniel shield in the lions' den;  
Shield my soul from its peril, due  
For the sins I sinned my lifetime through."  
He did his right-hand glove uplift—  
Saint Gabriel took from his hand the gift;  
Then drooped his head upon his breast,  
And with clasped hands he went to rest.  
God from on high sent down to him  
One of his angel Cherubim—  
Saint Michael of Peril of the sea,  
Saint Gabriel in company—  
From heaven they came for that soul of price,  
And they bore it with them to Paradise.

### PART III

THE REPRISALS

THE CHASTISEMENT OF THE SARACENS

CXCVIII

Dead is Roland; his soul with God.  
While to Roncesvalles the Emperor rode,  
Where neither path nor track he found,  
Nor open space nor rood of ground,  
But was strewn with Frank or heathen slain,  
"Where art thou, Roland?" he cried in pain:  
"The Archbishop where, and Olivier,  
Gerein and his brother in arms, Gerier?"



Count Otho where, and Berengier,  
Ivon and Ivor, so dear to me;  
And Engelier of Gascony;  
Samson the duke, and Anseis the bold;  
Gerard, of Roussillon, the old;  
My peers, the twelve whom I left behind?"  
In vain!—No answer may he find.  
"O God," he cried, "what grief is mine  
That I was not in front of this battle line!"  
For very wrath his beard he tore,  
His knights and barons weeping sore;  
Aswoon full fifty thousand fall:  
Duke Naimes hath pity and dole for all.

## CXCIX

Nor knight nor baron was there to see  
But wept full fast, and bitterly;  
For son and brother their tears descend,  
For lord and liege, for kin and friend;  
Aswoon all numberless they fell,  
But Naimes did gallantly and well.  
He spake the first to the Emperor—  
"Look onward, sire, two leagues before,  
See the dust from the ways arise,—  
There the strength of the heathen lies.  
Ride on; avenge you for this dark day."  
"O God," said Karl, "they are far away!  
Yet for right and honor, the sooth ye say.  
Fair France's flower they have torn from me."

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To Otun and Gebouin beckoned he,  
To Tybalt of Rheims, and Milo the count.  
“Guard the battle-field, vale, and mount—  
Leave the dead as ye see them lie;  
Watch, that nor lion nor beast come nigh,  
Nor on them varlet or squire lay hand;  
None shall touch them, 'tis my command,  
Till with God's good grace we return again.”  
They answered lowly, in loving strain,  
“Great lord, fair sire, we will do your hest,”  
And a thousand warriors with them rest.

CC

The Emperor bade his clarions ring,  
Marched with his host the noble king.  
They came at last on the heathens' trace,  
And all together pursued in chase;  
But the king of the falling eve was ware:  
He alighted down in a meadow fair,  
Knelt on the earth unto God to pray  
That he make the sun in his course delay,  
Retard the night, and prolong the day.  
Then his wonted angel who with him spake,  
Swiftly to Karl did answer make,  
“Ride on! Light shall not thee forego;  
God seeth the flower of France laid low;  
Thy vengeance wreak on the felon crew.”  
The Emperor sprang to his steed anew.

CCI

God wrought for Karl a miracle:  
In his place in heaven the sun stood still.  
The heathens fled, the Franks pursued,  
And in Val Tenebres beside them stood;  
Towards Saragossa the rout they drave,  
And deadly were the strokes they gave.  
They barred against them path and road;  
In front the water of Ebro flowed:



Strong was the current, deep and large,  
Was neither shallop, nor boat, nor barge.  
With a cry to their idol Termagaunt,  
The heathens plunge, but with scanty vaunt.  
Encumbered with their armor's weight,  
Sank the most to the bottom, straight;  
Others floated adown the stream;  
And the luckiest drank their fill, I deem:  
All were in marvellous anguish drowned.  
Cry the Franks, "In Roland your fate ye found."

CCII

As he sees the doom of the heathen host,  
Slain are some and drowned the most,  
(Great spoil have won the Christian knights),  
The gentle king from his steed alights,  
And kneels, his thanks unto God to pour:  
The sun had set as he rose once more.  
"It is time to rest," the Emperor cried,  
"And to Roncesvalles 'twere late to ride.  
Our steeds are weary and spent with pain;  
Strip them of saddle and bridle-rein,  
Free let them browse on the verdant mead."  
"Sire," say the Franks, "it were well indeed."

CCIII



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The Emperor hath his quarters ta'en,  
And the Franks alight in the vacant plain;  
The saddles from their steeds they strip,  
And the bridle-reins from their heads they slip;  
They set them free on the green grass fair,  
Nor can they render them other care.  
On the ground the weary warriors slept;  
Watch nor vigil that night they kept.

CCIV

In the mead the Emperor made his bed,  
With his mighty spear beside his head,  
Nor will he doff his arms to-night,  
But lies in his broidered hauberk white.  
Laced is his helm, with gold inlaid,  
Girt on Joyeuse, the peerless blade,  
Which changes thirty times a day  
The brightness of its varying ray.  
Nor may the lance unspoken be  
Which pierced our Saviour on the tree;  
Karl hath its point—so God him graced—  
Within his golden hilt enchased.  
And for this honor and boon of heaven,  
The name Joyeuse to the sword was given;  
The Franks may hold it in memory.  
Thence came "*Montjoie*," their battle-cry,  
And thence no race with them may vie.

CCV

Clear was the night, and the fair moon shone.  
But grief weighed heavy King Karl upon;  
He thought of Roland and Olivier,  
Of his Franks and every gallant peer,  
Whom he left to perish in Roncesvale,  
Nor can he stint but to weep and wail,  
Imploring God their souls to bless,—  
Till, overcome with long distress,  
He slumbers at last for heaviness.  
The Franks are sleeping throughout the meads;  
Nor rest on foot can the weary steeds—  
They crop the herb as they stretch them prone.—  
Much hath he learned who hath sorrow known.



## CCVI

The Emperor slumbered like man forespent,  
While God his angel Gabriel sent  
The couch of Carlemaine to guard.  
All night the angel kept watch and ward,  
And in a vision to Karl presaged  
A coming battle against him waged.  
'Twas shown in fearful augury;  
The king looked upward to the sky—  
There saw he lightning, and hail, and storm,  
Wind and tempest in fearful form.  
A dread apparel of fire and flame,  
Down at once on his host they came.  
Their ashen lances the flames enfold,  
And their bucklers in to the knobs of gold;  
Grated the steel of helm and mail.  
Yet other perils the Franks assail,  
And his cavaliers are in deadly strait.  
Bears and lions to rend them wait,  
Wiverns, snakes and fiends of fire,  
More than a thousand griffins dire;  
Enfuri'd at the host they fly.  
"Help us, Karl!" was the Franks' outcry,  
Ruth and sorrow the king beset;  
Fain would he aid, but



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was sternly let.

A lion came from the forest path,  
Proud and daring, and fierce in wrath;  
Forward sprang he the king to grasp,  
And each seized other with deadly clasp;  
But who shall conquer or who shall fall,  
None knoweth. Nor woke the king withal.

### CCVII

Another vision came him o'er:  
He was in France, his land, once more;  
In Aix, upon his palace stair,  
And held in double chain a bear.  
When thirty more from Arden ran,  
Each spake with voice of living man:  
"Release him, sire!" aloud they call;  
"Our kinsman shall not rest in thrall.  
To succor him our arms are bound."  
Then from the palace leaped a hound,  
On the mightiest of the bears he pressed,  
Upon the sword, before the rest.  
The wondrous fight King Karl may see,  
But knows not who shall victor be.  
These did the angel to Karl display;  
But the Emperor slept till dawning day.

### CCVIII

At morning-tide when day-dawn broke,  
The Emperor from his slumber woke.  
His holy guardian, Gabriel,  
With hand uplifted sained him well.  
The king aside his armor laid,  
And his warriors all were disarrayed.  
Then mount they, and in haste they ride,  
Through lengthening path and highway wide  
Until they see the doleful sight  
In Roncesvalles, the field of fight.

### CCIX



Unto Roncesvalles King Karl hath sped,  
And his tears are falling above the dead;  
"Ride, my barons, at gentle pace,—  
I will go before, a little space,  
For my nephew's sake, whom I fain would find.  
It was once in Aix, I recall to mind,  
When we met at the yearly festal-tide,—  
My cavaliers in vaunting vied  
Of stricken fields and joustings proud,—  
I heard my Roland declare aloud,  
In foreign land would he never fall  
But in front of his peers and his warriors all,  
He would lie with head to the foeman's shore,  
And make his end like a conqueror."  
Then far as man a staff might fling,  
Clomb to a rising knoll the king.

CCX

As the king in quest of Roland speeds,  
The flowers and grass throughout the meads  
He sees all red with our baron's blood,  
And his tears of pity break forth in flood.  
He upward climbs, till, beneath two trees,  
The dints upon the rock he sees.  
Of Roland's corse he was then aware;  
Stretched it lay on the green grass bare.  
No marvel sorrow the king oppressed;  
He alighted down, and in haste he pressed,  
Took the body his arms between,  
And fainted: dire his grief I ween.

CCXI



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As did reviving sense begin,  
Naimés, the duke, and Count Acelin,  
The noble Geoffrey of Anjou,  
And his brother Henry nigh him drew.  
They made a pine-tree's trunk his stay;  
But he looked to earth where his nephew lay,  
And thus all gently made his dole:  
"My friend, my Roland, God guard thy soul!  
Never on earth such knight hath been,  
Fields of battle to fight and win.  
My pride and glory, alas, are gone!"  
He endured no longer; he swooned anon.

### CCXII

As Karl the king revived once more,  
His hands were held by barons four.  
He saw his nephew, cold and wan;  
Stark his frame, but his hue was gone;  
His eyes turned inward, dark and dim;  
And Karl in love lamented him:  
"Dear Roland, God thy spirit rest  
In Paradise, amongst His blest!  
In evil hour thou soughtest Spain:  
No day shall dawn but sees my pain,  
And me of strength and pride bereft.  
No champion of mine honor left;  
Without a friend beneath the sky;  
And though my kindred still be nigh,  
Is none like thee their ranks among."  
With both his hands his beard he wrung.  
The Franks bewailed in unison;  
A hundred thousand wept like one.

### CCXIII

"Dear Roland, I return again  
To Laon, to mine own domain;  
Where men will come from many a land,  
And seek Count Roland at my hand.  
A bitter tale must I unfold—  
'In Spanish earth he lieth cold,'  
A joyless realm henceforth I hold,  
And weep with daily tears untold."



## CCXIV

“Dear Roland, beautiful and brave,  
All men of me will tidings crave,  
When I return to La Chapelle.  
Oh, what a tale is mine to tell!  
That low my glorious nephew lies.  
Now will the Saxon foeman rise;  
Bulgar and Hun in arms will come,  
Apulia’s power, the might of Rome,  
Palermitan and Afric bands,  
And men from fierce and distant lands.  
To sorrow sorrow must succeed;  
My hosts to battle who shall lead,  
When the mighty captain is overthrown?’  
Ah! France deserted now, and lone.  
Come, death, before such grief I bear.”  
Once more his beard and hoary hair  
Began he with his hands to tear;  
A hundred thousand fainted there.

## CCXV

“Dear Roland, and was this thy fate?  
May Paradise thy soul await.  
Who slew thee wrought fair France’s bane:  
I cannot live, so deep my pain.  
For me my kindred lie undone;  
And would to Holy Mary’s Son,  
Ere I at Cizra’s gorge alight,  
My soul may take its parting flight:  
My spirit would with theirs abide;  
My body rest their dust beside.”  
With sobs his hoary beard he tore.  
“Alas!” said Naines, “for the Emperor.”



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CCXVI

“Sir Emperor,” Geoffrey of Anjou said,  
“Be not by sorrow so sore misled.  
Let us seek our comrades throughout the plain,  
Who fell by the hands of the men of Spain;  
And let their bodies on biers be borne.”  
“Yea,” said the Emperor. “Sound your horn.”

CCXVII

Now doth Count Geoffrey his bugle sound,  
And the Franks from their steeds alight to ground  
As they their dead companions find,  
They lay them low on biers reclined;  
Nor prayers of bishop or abbot ceased,  
Of monk or canon, or tonsured priest.  
The dead they blessed in God’s great name,  
Set myrrh and frankincense aflame.  
Their incense to the dead they gave,  
Then laid them, as beseemed the brave—  
What could they more?—in honored grave.

CCXVIII

But the king kept watch o’er Roland’s bier  
O’er Turpin and Sir Olivier.  
He bade their bodies opened be,  
Took the hearts of the barons three,  
Swathed them in silken cerements light,  
Laid them in urns of the marble white.  
Their bodies did the Franks enfold  
In skins of deer, around them rolled;  
Laved them with spices and with wine,  
Till the king to Milo gave his sign,  
To Tybalt, Otun, and Gebouin;  
Their bodies three on biers they set,  
Each in its silken coverlet.

\* \* \* \* \*

CCXIX



To Saragossa did Marsil flee.  
He alighted beneath an olive tree,  
And sadly to his serfs he gave  
His helm, his cuirass, and his glaive,  
Then flung him on the herbage green;  
Came nigh him Bramimonde his queen.  
Shorn from his wrist was his right hand good;  
He swooned for pain and waste of blood.  
The queen, in anguish, wept and cried,  
With twenty thousand by her side.  
King Karl and gentle France they cursed;  
Then on their gods their anger burst.  
Unto Apollin's crypt they ran,  
And with revilings thus began:  
"Ah, evil-hearted god, to bring  
Such dark dishonor on our king.  
Thy servants ill dost thou repay."  
His crown and wand they wrench away,  
They bind him to a pillar fast,  
And then his form to earth they cast,  
His limbs with staves they bruise and break:  
From Termagaunt his gem they take:  
Mohammed to a trench they bear,  
For dogs and boars to tread and tear.

CCXX

Within his vaulted hall they bore  
King Marsil, when his swoon was o'er;  
The hall with colored writings stained.  
And loud the queen in anguish plained,  
The while she tore her streaming hair,  
"Ah, Saragossa, reft and bare,  
Thou seest thy noble



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king o'erthrown!

Such felony our gods have shown,  
Who failed in fight his aids to be.  
The Emir comes—a dastard he,  
Unless he will that race essay,  
Who proudly fling their lives away.  
Their Emperor of the hoary beard,  
In valor's desperation reared,  
Will never fly for mortal foe.

Till he be slain, how deep my woe[2]!"

[Footnote 2: Here intervenes the episode of the great battle fought between Charlemagne and Baligant, Emir of Babylon, who had come, with a mighty army, to the succor of King Marsil his vassal. This episode has been suspected of being a later interpolation. The translation is resumed at the end of the battle, after the Emir had been slain by Charlemagne's own hand, and when the Franks enter Saragossa in pursuit of the Saracens.]

\* \* \* \* \*

CCXXI

Fierce is the heat and thick the dust.  
The Franks the flying Arabs thrust.  
To Saragossa speeds their flight.  
The queen ascends a turret's height.  
The clerks and canons on her wait,  
Of that false law God holds in hate.  
Order or tonsure have they none.  
And when she thus beheld undone  
The Arab power, all disarrayed,  
Aloud she cried, "Mahound us aid!  
My king! defeated is our race,  
The Emir slain in foul disgrace."  
King Marsil turns him to the wall,  
And weeps—his visage darkened all.  
He dies for grief—in sin he dies,  
His wretched soul the demon's prize.

CCXXII

Dead lay the heathens, or turned to flight,  
And Karl was victor in the fight.  
Down Saragossa's wall he brake—



Defence he knew was none to make.  
And as the city lay subdued,  
The hoary king all proudly stood,  
There rested his victorious powers.  
The queen hath yielded up the towers—  
Ten great towers and fifty small.  
Well strives he whom God aids withal.

CCXXIII

Day passed; the shades of night drew on,  
And moon and stars refulgent shone.  
Now Karl is Saragossa's lord,  
And a thousand Franks, by the king's award,  
Roam the city, to search and see  
Where mosque or synagogue may be.  
With axe and mallet of steel in hand,  
They let nor idol nor image stand;  
The shrines of sorcery down they hew,  
For Karl hath faith in God the True,  
And will Him righteous service do.  
The bishops have the water blessed,  
The heathen to the font are pressed.  
If any Karl's command gainsay,  
He has him hanged or burned straightway.  
So a hundred thousand to Christ are won;  
But Bramimonde the queen alone  
Shall unto France be captive brought,  
And in love be her conversion wrought.

CCXXIV



## Page 54

Night passed, and came the daylight hours,  
Karl garrisoned the city's towers;  
He left a thousand valiant knights,  
To sentinel their Emperor's rights.  
Then all his Franks ascend their steeds,  
While Bramimonde in bonds he leads,  
To work her good his sole intent.  
And so, in pride and strength, they went;  
They passed Narbonne in gallant show,  
And reached thy stately walls, Bordeaux.  
There, on Saint Severin's altar high,  
Karl placed Count Roland's horn to lie,  
With mangons filled, and coins of gold,  
As pilgrims to this hour behold.  
Across Garonne he bent his way,  
In ships within the stream that lay,  
And brought his nephew unto Blaye,  
With his noble comrade, Olivier,  
And Turpin sage, the gallant peer.  
Of the marble white their tombs were made;  
In Saint Roman's shrine are the baron's laid,  
Whom the Franks to God and his saints commend  
And Karl by hill and vale doth wend,  
Nor stays till Aix is reached, and there  
Alighteth on his marble stair.  
When sits he in his palace hall,  
He sends around to his judges all,  
From Frisia, Saxony, Lorraine,  
From Burgundy and Allemaine,  
From Normandy, Brittain, Poitou:  
The realm of France he searches through,  
And summons every sagest man.  
The plea of Ganelon then began.

CCXXV

From Spain the Emperor made retreat,  
To Aix in France, his kingly seat;  
And thither, to his halls, there came,  
Alda, the fair and gentle dame.  
"Where is my Roland, sire," she cried,  
"Who vowed to take me for his bride?"  
O'er Karl the flood of sorrow swept;  
He tore his beard and loud he wept.



“Dear sister, gentle friend,” he said,  
“Thou seekest one who lieth dead:  
I plight to thee my son instead,—  
Louis, who lord of my realm shall be.”  
“Strange,” she said, “seems this to me.  
God and his angels forbid that I  
Should live on earth if Roland die.”  
Pale grew her cheek—she sank amain,  
Down at the feet of Carlemaine.  
So died she. God receive her soul!  
The Franks bewail her in grief and dole.

CCXXVI

So to her death went Alda fair.  
The king but deemed she fainted there.  
While dropped his tears of pity warm,  
He took her hands and raised her form.  
Upon his shoulder drooped her head,  
And Karl was ware that she was dead.  
When thus he saw that life was o’er,  
He summoned noble ladies four.  
Within a cloister was she borne;  
They watched beside her until morn;  
Beneath a shrine her limbs were laid;—  
Such honor Karl to Alda paid.



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CCXXVII

The Emperor sitteth in Aix again,  
With Gan, the felon, in iron chain,  
The very palace walls beside,  
By serfs unto a stake was tied.  
They bound his hands with leathern thong,  
Beat him with staves and cordage strong;  
Nor hath he earned a better fee.  
And there in pain awaits his plea.

CCXXVIII

'Tis written in the ancient geste,  
How Karl hath summoned east and west.  
At La Chapelle assembled they;  
High was the feast and great the day—  
Saint Sylvester's, the legend ran.  
The plea and judgment then began  
Of Ganelon, who the treason wrought,  
Now face to face with his Emperor brought.

CCXXIX

"Lords, my barons," said Karl the king,  
"On Gan be righteous reckoning:  
He followed in my host to Spain;  
Through him ten thousand Franks lie slain  
And slain was he, my sister's son,  
Whom never more ye look upon,  
With Olivier the sage and bold,  
And all my peers, betrayed for gold."  
"Shame befall me," said Gan, "if I  
Now or ever the deed deny;  
Folly he wronged me in wealth and land,  
And I his death and ruin planned:  
Therein, I say, was treason none."  
They said, "We will advise thereon."

CCXXX

Count Gan to the Emperor's presence came,  
Fresh of hue and lithe of frame,  
With a baron's mien, were his heart but true.



On his judges round his glance he threw,  
And on thirty kinsmen by his side,  
And thus, with mighty voice, he cried:  
“Hear me, barons, for love of God.  
In the Emperor’s host was I abroad—  
Well I served him, and loyally,  
But his nephew, Roland, hated me:  
He doomed my doom of death and woe,  
That I to Marsil’s court should go.  
My craft, the danger put aside,  
But Roland loudly I defied,  
With Olivier, and all their crew,  
As Karl, and these his barons, knew.  
Vengeance, not treason, have I wrought.”  
“Thereon,” they answered, “take we thought.”

CCXXXI

When Ganelon saw the plea begin,  
He mustered thirty of his kin,  
With one revered by all the rest—  
Pinabel of Sorrence’s crest.  
Well can his tongue his cause unfold,  
And a vassal brave his arms to hold.  
“Thine aid,” said Ganelon, “I claim;  
To rescue me from death and shame.”  
Said Pinabel, “Rescued shalt thou be.  
Let any Frank thy death decree,  
And, wheresoe’er the king deems meet,  
I will him body to body greet,  
Give him the lie with my brand of steel.”  
Ganelon sank at his feet to kneel.

CCXXXII



## Page 56

Come Frank and Norman to council in,  
Bavarian, Saxon, and Poitevin,  
With all the barons of Teuton blood;  
But the men of Auvergne are mild of mood—  
Their hearts are swayed unto Pinabel.  
Saith each to other, "Pause we well.  
Let us leave this plea, and the king implore  
To set Count Ganelon free once more.  
Henceforth to serve him in love and faith:  
Count Roland lieth cold in death:  
Not all the gold beneath the sky  
Can give him back to mortal eye;  
Such battle would but madness be."  
They all applauded his decree,  
Save Thierry—Geoffrey's brother he.

CCXXXIII

The barons came the king before.  
"Fair Sire, we all thy grace implore,  
That Gan be suffered free to go,  
His faith and love henceforth to show.  
Oh, let him live—a noble he.  
Your Roland you shall never see:  
No wealth of gold may him recall."  
Karl answered, "Ye are felons all."

CCXXXIV

When Karl saw all forsake him now,  
Dark grew his face and drooped his brow.  
He said, "Of men most wretched I!"  
Stepped forth Thierry speedily,  
Duke Geoffrey's brother, a noble knight,  
Spare of body, and lithe and light,  
Dark his hair and his hue withal,  
Nor low of stature, nor over tall:  
To Karl, in courteous wise, he said,  
"Fair Sire, be not disheartened.  
I have served you truly, and, in the name  
Of my lineage, I this quarrel claim.  
If Roland wronged Sir Gan in aught,  
Your service had his safeguard wrought.  
Ganelon bore him like caitiff base,



A perjured traitor before your face.  
I adjudge him to die on the gallows tree;  
Flung to the hounds let his carcase be,  
The doom of treason and felony.  
Let kin of his but say I lie,  
And with this girded sword will I  
My plighted word in fight maintain.”  
“Well spoken,” cry the Franks amain.

CCXXXV

Sir Pinabel stood before Karl in place,  
Vast of body and swift of pace,—  
Small hope hath he whom his sword may smite.  
“Sire, it is yours to decide the right,  
Bid this clamor around to pause.  
Thierry hath dared to adjudge the cause;  
He lieth. Battle thereon I do.”  
And forth his right-hand glove he drew.  
But the Emperor said, “In bail to me  
Shall thirty of his kinsmen be;  
I yield him pledges on my side:  
Be they guarded well till the right be tried.”  
When Thierry saw the fight shall be,  
To Karl his right glove reacheth he;  
The Emperor gave his pledges o’er.  
And set in place were benches four—  
Thereon the champions take their seat,  
And all is ranged in order meet,—  
The preparations Ogier speeds,—  
And both demand their arms and steeds.



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CCXXXVI

But yet, ere lay they lance in rest,  
They make their shrift, are sained and blessed;  
They hear the Mass, the Host receive,  
Great gifts to church and cloister leave.  
They stand before the Emperor's face;  
The spurs upon their feet they lace;  
Gird on their corselets, strong and light;  
Close on their heads the helmets bright.  
The golden hilts at belt are hung;  
Their quartered shields from shoulder swung.  
In hand the mighty spears they lift,  
Then spring they on their chargers swift.  
A hundred thousand cavaliers  
The while for Thierry drop their tears;  
They pity him for Roland's sake.  
God knows what end the strife will take.

CCXXXVII

At Aix is a wide and grassy plain,  
Where met in battle the barons twain.  
Both of valorous knighthood are,  
Their chargers swift and apt for war.  
They prick them hard with slackened rein;  
Drive each at other with might and main.  
Their bucklers are in fragments flung,  
Their hauberks rent, their girths unstrung;  
With saddles turned, they earthward rolled.  
A hundred thousand in tears behold.

CCXXXVIII

Both cavaliers to earth are gone,  
Both rise and leap on foot anon.  
Strong is Pinabel, swift and light;  
Each striketh other, unhorsed they fight;  
With golden-hilted swords, they deal  
Fiery strokes on the helms of steel.  
Trenchant and fierce is their every blow.  
The Franks look on in wondrous woe.  
"O God," saith Karl, "Thy judgment show."



CCXXXIX

“Yield thee, Thierry,” said Pinabel.  
“In love and faith will I serve thee well,  
And all my wealth to thy feet will bring,  
Win Ganelon’s pardon from the king.”  
“Never,” Thierry in scorn replied,  
“Shall thought so base in my bosom bide!  
God betwixt us this day decide.”

CCXL

“Ah, Pinabel!” so Thierry spake,  
“Thou art a baron of stalwart make,  
Thy knighthood known to every peer,—  
Come, let us cease this battle here.  
With Karl thy concord shall be won,  
But on Ganelon be justice done;  
Of him henceforth let speech be none.”  
“No,” said Pinabel; “God forefend!  
My kinsman I to the last defend;  
Nor will I blench for mortal face,—  
Far better death than such disgrace.”  
Began they with their glaves anew  
The gold-encrusted helms to hew;  
Towards heaven the fiery sparkles flew.  
They shall not be disjoined again,  
Nor end the strife till one be slain.

CCXLI



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Pinabel, lord of Sorrence's keep,  
Smote Thierry's helm with stroke so deep  
The very fire that from it came  
Hath set the prairie round in flame;  
The edge of steel did his forehead trace  
Adown the middle of his face;  
His hauberk to the centre clave.  
God deigned Thierry from death to save.

### CCXLII

When Thierry felt him wounded so,  
For his bright blood flowed on the grass below,  
He smote on Pinabel's helmet brown,  
Cut and clave to the nasal down;  
Dashed his brains from forth his head,  
And, with stroke of prowess, cast him dead.  
Thus, at a blow, was the battle won:  
"God," say the Franks, "hath this marvel done."

### CCXLIII

When Thierry thus was conqueror,  
He came the Emperor Karl before.  
Full fifty barons were in his train,  
Duke Naimes, and Ogier the noble Dane,  
Geoffrey of Anjou and William of Blaye.  
Karl clasped him in his arms straightway  
With skin of sable he wiped his face;  
Then cast it from him, and, in its place,  
Bade him in fresh attire be drest.  
His armor gently the knights divest;  
On an Arab mule they make him ride:  
So returns he, in joy and pride.  
To the open plain of Aix they come,  
Where the kin of Ganelon wait their doom.

### CCXLIV

Karl his dukes and his counts addressed:  
"Say, what of those who in bondage rest—  
Who came Count Ganelon's plea to aid,  
And for Pinabel were bailsmen made?"  
"One and all let them die the death."



And the king to Basbrun, his provost, saith  
"Go, hang them all on the gallows tree.  
By my beard I swear, so white to see,  
If one escape, thou shalt surely die."  
"Mine be the task," he made reply.  
A hundred men-at-arms are there:  
The thirty to their doom they bear.  
The traitor shall his guilt atone,  
With blood of others and his own.

## CCXLV

The men of Bavaria and Allemaine,  
Norman and Breton return again,  
And with all the Franks aloud they cry,  
That Gan a traitor's death shall die.  
They bade be brought four stallions fleet;  
Bound to them Ganelon, hands and feet:  
Wild and swift was each savage steed,  
And a mare was standing within the mead;  
Four grooms impelled the coursers on,—  
A fearful ending for Ganelon.  
His every nerve was stretched and torn,  
And the limbs of his body apart were borne;  
The bright blood, springing from every vein,  
Left on the herbage green its stain.  
He died a felon and recreant:  
Never shall traitor his treason vaunt.

## CCXLVI



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Now was the Emperor's vengeance done,  
And he called to the bishops of France anon  
With those of Bavaria and Allemaine.  
"A noble captive is in my train.  
She hath hearkened to sermon and homily,  
And a true believer in Christ will be;  
Baptize her so that her soul have grace."  
They say, "Let ladies of noble race,  
At her christening, be her sponsors vowed."  
And so there gathered a mighty crowd.  
At the baths of Aix was the wondrous scene—  
There baptized they the Spanish queen;  
Julienne they have named her name.  
In faith and truth unto Christ she came.

CCXLVII

When the Emperor's justice was satisfied,  
His mighty wrath did awhile subside.  
Queen Bramimonde was a Christian made,  
The day passed on into night's dark shade;  
As the king in his vaulted chamber lay,  
Saint Gabriel came from God to say,  
"Karl, thou shalt summon thine empire's host,  
And march in haste to Bira's coast;  
Unto Impha city relief to bring,  
And succor Vivian, the Christian king.  
The heathens in siege have the town essayed  
And the shattered Christians invoke thine aid."  
Fain would Karl such task decline.  
"God! what a life of toil is mine!"  
He wept; his hoary beard he wrung.

\* \* \* \* \*

So ends the lay Tuoldus sung.

**THE DESTRUCTION OF DA DERGA'S HOSTEL**

**TRANSLATED BY**

WHITLEY STOKES, D.C.L.



## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

*The vast and interesting epic literature of Ireland remained practically inaccessible to English readers till within the last sixty years. In 1853, Nicholas O’Kearney published the Irish text and an English translation of “The Battle of Gabra,” and since that date the volume of printed texts and English versions has steadily increased, until now there lies open to the ordinary reader a very considerable mass of material illustrating the imaginative life of medieval Ireland.*

Of these Irish epic tales, “The Destruction of Da Derga’s Hostel” is a specimen of remarkable beauty and power. The primitive nature of the story is shown by the fact that the plot turns upon the disasters that follow on the violation of tabus or prohibitions often with a supernatural sanction, by the monstrous nature of many of the warriors, and by the utter absence of any attempt to rationalise or explain the beliefs implied or the marvels related in it. The powers and achievements of the heroes are fantastic and extraordinary beyond description, and the natural and extra-natural constantly mingle; yet nowhere, does the narrator express surprise. The technical method of the tale, too, is curiously and almost mechanically symmetrical, after the manner of savage art; and both description and narration are marked by a high degree of freshness and vividness.



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The following translation is, with slight modification, that of Dr. Whitley Stokes, from a text constructed by him on the basis of eight manuscripts, the oldest going back to about 1100 A.D. The story itself is, without doubt, several centuries earlier, and belongs to the oldest group of extant Irish sagas.\_

### THE DESTRUCTION OF DA DERGA'S HOSTEL

There was a famous and noble king over Erin, named Eochaid Feidlech. Once upon a time he came over the fairgreen of Bri Leith, and he saw at the edge of a well a woman with a bright comb of silver adorned with gold, washing in a silver basin wherein were four golden birds and little, bright gems of purple carbuncle in the rims of the basin. A mantle she had, curly and purple, a beautiful cloak, and in the mantle silvery fringes arranged, and a brooch of fairest gold. A kirtle she wore, long, hooded, hard-smooth, of green silk, with red embroidery of gold. Marvellous clasps of gold and silver in the kirtle on her breasts and her shoulders and spaulds on every side. The sun kept shining upon her, so that the glistening of the gold against the sun from the green silk was manifest to men. On her head were two golden-yellow tresses, in each of which was a plait of four locks, with a bead at the point of each lock. The hue of that hair seemed to them like the flower of the iris in summer, or like red gold after the burnishing thereof.

There she was, undoing her hair to wash it, with her arms out through the sleeve-holes of her smock. White as the snow of one night were the two hands, soft and even, and red as foxglove were the two clear-beautiful cheeks. Dark as the back of a stag-beetle the two eyebrows. Like a shower of pearls were the teeth in her head. Blue as a hyacinth were the eyes. Red as rowan-berries the lips. Very high, smooth and soft-white the shoulders. Clear-white and lengthy the fingers. Long were the hands. White as the foam of a wave was the flank, slender, long, tender, smooth, soft as wool. Polished and warm, sleek and white were the two thighs. Round and small, hard and white the two knees. Short and white and rulestraight the two shins. Justly straight and beautiful the two heels. If a measure were put on the feet it would hardly have found them unequal, unless the flesh of the coverings should grow upon them. The bright radiance of the moon was in her noble face: the loftiness of pride in her smooth eyebrows: the light of wooing in each of her regal eyes. A dimple of delight in each of her cheeks, with a dappling (?) in them at one time, of purple spots with redness of a calf's blood, and at another with the bright lustre of snow. Soft womanly dignity in her voice; a step steady and slow she had: a queenly gait was hers. Verily, of the world's women 'twas she was the dearest and loveliest and justest that the eyes of men had ever beheld. It seemed to King Eochaid and his followers that she was from the elfmounds. Of her was said: "Shapely are all till compared with Etain," "Dear are all till compared with Etain."



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A longing for her straightway seized the king; so he sent forward a man of his people to detain her. The king asked tidings of her and said, while announcing himself: "Shall I have an hour of dalliance with thee?"

"'Tis for that we have come hither under thy safeguard," quoth she.

"Query, whence art thou and whence hast thou come?" says Eochaid.

"Easy to say," quoth she. "Etain am I, daughter of Etar, king of the cavalcade from the elfmounds. I have been here for twenty years since I was born in an elfmound. The men of the elfmound, both kings and nobles, have been wooing me; but nought was gotten from me, because ever since I was able to speak, I have loved thee and given thee a child's love for the high tales about thee and thy splendour. And though I had never seen thee, I knew thee at once from thy description: it is thou, then, I have reached."

"No 'seeking of an ill friend afar' shall be thine," says Eochaid. "Thou shalt have welcome, and for thee every other woman shall be left by me, and with thee alone will I live so long as thou hast honour."

"My proper bride-price to me!" she says, "and afterwards my desire."

"Thou shalt have both," says Eochaid.

Seven *cumals*[3] are given to her.

[Footnote 3: *I.e.*, twenty-one cows.]

Then the king, even Eochaid Feidlech, dies, leaving one daughter named, like her mother, Etain, and wedded to Cormac, king of Ulaid.

After the end of a time Cormac, king of Ulaid, "the man of the three gifts," forsakes Eochaid's daughter, because she was barren save for one daughter that she had borne to Cormac after the making of the pottage which her mother—the woman from the elfmounds—gave her. Then she said to her mother: "Bad is what thou hast given me: it will be a daughter that I shall bear."

"That will not be good," says her mother; "a king's pursuit will be on her."

Then Cormac weds again his wife, even Etain, and this was his desire, that the daughter of the woman who had before been abandoned [*i.e.* his own daughter] should be killed. So Cormac would not leave the girl to her mother to be nursed. Then his two thralls take her to a pit, and she smiles a laughing smile at them as they were putting her into it. Then their kindly nature came to them. They carry her into the calfshead of the cowherds of Etirscel, great-grandson of Iar, king of Tara, and they fostered her till



she became a good embroideress; and there was not in Ireland a king's daughter dearer than she.

A fenced house of wickerwork was made by the thralls for her, without any door, but only a window and a skylight. King Eterscel's folk espy that house and suppose that it was food that the cowherds kept there. But one of them went and looked through the skylight, and he saw in the house the dearest, beautifullest maiden! This is told to the king, and straightway he sends his people to break the house and carry her off without asking the cowherds. For the king was childless, and it had been prophesied to him by his wizards that a woman of unknown race would bear him a son.



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Then said the king: "This is the woman that has been prophesied to me!"

Now while she was there next morning she saw a Bird on the skylight coming to her, and he leaves his birdskin on the floor of the house, and went to her and possessed her, and said: "They are coming to thee from the king to wreck thy house and to bring thee to him perforce. And thou wilt be pregnant by me, and bear a son, and that son must not kill birds<sup>[4]</sup>. And 'Conaire, son of Mess Buachalla' shall be his name," for hers was Mess Buachalla, "the Cowherds' fosterchild."

[Footnote 4: This passage indicates the existence in Ireland of totems, and of the rule that the person to whom a totem belongs must not kill the totem-animal.—W.S.]

And then she was brought to the king, and with her went her fosterers, and she was betrothed to the king, and he gave her seven *cumals* and to her fosterers seven other *cumals*. And afterwards they were made chieftains, so that they all became legitimate, whence are the two Fedlimthi Rechtaidi. And then she bore a son to the king, even Conaire son of Mess Buachalla, and these were her three urgent prayers to the king, to wit, the nursing of her son among three households, that is, the fosterers who had nurtured her, and the two Honeyworded Maines, and she herself is the third; and she said that such of the men of Erin as should wish to do aught for this boy should give to those three households for the boy's protection.

So in that wise he was reared, and the men of Erin straightway knew this boy on the day he was born. And other boys were fostered with him, to wit, Fer Le and Fer Gar and Fer Rogein, three great-grandsons of Donn Desa the champion, an army-man of the army from Muc-lesi.

Now Conaire possessed three gifts, to wit, the gift of hearing and the gift of eyesight and the gift of judgment; and of those three gifts he taught one to each of his three fosterbrothers. And whatever meal was prepared for him, the four of them would go to it. Even though three meals were prepared for him each of them would go to his meal. The same raiment and armour and colour of horses had the four.

Then the king, even Eterscele, died. A bull-feast is gathered by the men of Erin, in order to determine their future king; that is, a bull used to be killed by them and thereof one man would eat his fill and drink its broth, and a spell of truth was chanted over him in his bed. Whosoever he would see in his sleep would be king, and the sleeper would perish if he uttered a falsehood.

Four men in chariots were on the Plain of Liffey at their game, Conaire himself and his three fosterbrothers. Then his fosterers went to him that he might repair to the bull-feast. The bull-feaster, then in his sleep, at the end of the night beheld a man stark-naked, passing along the road of Tara, with a stone in his sling.

“I will go in the morning after you,” quoth he.



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He left his fosterbrothers at their game, and turned his chariot and his charioteer until he was in Dublin. There he saw great, white-speckled birds, of unusual size and colour and beauty. He pursues them until his horses were tired. The birds would go a spearcast before him, and would not go any further. He alighted, and takes his sling for them out of the chariot. He goes after them until he was at the sea. The birds betake themselves to the wave. He went to them and overcame them. The birds quit their birdskins, and turn upon him with spears and swords. One of them protects him, and addressed him, saying: "I am Nemglan, king of thy father's birds; and thou hast been forbidden to cast at birds, for here there is no one that should not be dear to thee because of his father or mother."

"Till to-day," says Conaire, "I knew not this."

"Go to Tara tonight," says Nemglan; "'tis fittest for thee. A bull-feast is there, and through it thou shalt be king. A man stark-naked, who shall go at the end of the night along one of the roads of Tara, having a stone and a sling—'tis he that shall be king."

So in this wise Conaire fared forth; and on each of the four roads whereby men go to Tara there were three kings awaiting him, and they had raiment for him, since it had been foretold that he would come stark-naked. Then he was seen from the road on which his fosterers were, and they put royal raiment about him, and placed him in a chariot, and he bound his pledges.

The folk of Tara said to him: "It seems to us that our bull-feast and our spell of truth are a failure, if it be only a young, beardless lad that we have visioned therein."

"That is of no moment," quoth he. "For a young, generous king like me to be in the kingship is no disgrace, since the binding of Tara's pledges is mine by right of father and grandsire."

"Excellent! excellent!" says the host. They set the kingship of Erin upon him. And he said: "I will enquire of wise men that I myself may be wise."

Then he uttered all this as he had been taught by the man at the wave, who said this to him: "Thy reign will be subject to a restriction, but the bird-reign will be noble, and this shall be thy restriction, *i.e.* thy tabu.

"Thou shalt not go righthandwise round Tara and lefthandwise round Bregia.

"The evil-beasts of Cerna must not be hunted by thee.

"And thou shalt not go out every ninth night beyond Tara.

"Thou shalt not sleep in a house from which firelight is manifest outside, after sunset, and in which light is manifest from without.



“And three Reds shall not go before thee to Red’s house.

“And no rapine shall be wrought in thy reign.

“And after sunset a company of one woman or one man shall not enter the house in which thou art.

“And thou shalt not settle the quarrel of thy two thralls.



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Now there were in his reign great bounties, to wit, seven ships in every June in every year arriving at Inver Colptha[5], and oakmast up to the knees in every autumn, and plenty of fish in the rivers Bush and Boyne in the June of each year, and such abundance of good will that no one slew another in Erin during his reign. And to every one in Erin his fellow's voice seemed as sweet as the strings of lutes. From mid-spring to mid-autumn no wind disturbed a cow's tail. His reign was neither thunderous nor stormy.

[Footnote 5: The mouth of the river Boyne.—W.S.]

Now his fosterbrothers murmured at the taking from them of their father's and their grandsire's gifts, namely Theft and Robbery and Slaughter of men and Rapine. They thieved the three thefts from the same man, to wit, a swine and an ox and a cow, every year, that they might see what punishment therefor the king would inflict upon them, and what damage the theft in his reign would cause to the king.

Now every year the farmer would come to the king to complain, and the king would say to him. "Go thou and address Donn Desa's three great-grandsons, for 'tis they that have taken the beasts." Whenever he went to speak to Donn Desa's descendants they would almost kill him, and he would not return to the king lest Conaire should attend his hurt.

Since, then, pride and wilfulness possessed them, they took to marauding, surrounded by the sons of the lords of the men of Erin. Thrice fifty men had they as pupils when they (the pupils) were were-wolfing in the province of Connaught, until Maine Milscothach's swineherd saw them, and he had never seen that before. He went in flight. When they heard him they pursued him. The swineherd shouted, and the people of the two Maines came to him, and the thrice fifty men were arrested, along with their auxiliaries, and taken to Tara. They consulted the king concerning the matter, and he said: "Let each (father) slay his son, but let my fosterlings be spared."

"Leave, leave!" says every one: "it shall be done for thee."

"Nay indeed," quoth he; "no 'cast of life' by me is the doom I have delivered. The men shall not be hung; but let veterans go with them that they may wreak their rapine on the men of Alba."

This they do. Thence they put to sea and met the son of the king of Britain, even Ingcel the One-eyed, grandson of Conmac: thrice fifty men and their veterans they met upon the sea.

They make an alliance, and go with Ingcel and wrought rapine with him.

This is the destruction which his own impulse gave him. That was the night that his mother and his father and his seven brothers had been bidden to the house of the king of his district. All of them were destroyed by Ingcel in a single night. Then the Irish pirates put out to sea to the land of Erin to seek a destruction as payment for that to which Ingcel had been entitled from them.



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In Conaire's reign there was perfect peace in Erin, save that in Thomond there was a joining of battle between the two Carbres. Two fosterbrothers of his were they. And until Conaire came it was impossible to make peace between them. 'Twas a tabu of his to go to separate them before they had repaired to him. He went, however, although to do so was one of his tabus, and he made peace between them. He remained five nights with each of the two. That also was a tabu of his.

After settling the two quarrels, he was travelling to Tara. This is the way they took to Tara, past Usnech of Meath; and they saw the raiding from east and west, and from south and north, and they saw the warbands and the hosts and the men stark-naked; and the land of the southern O'Neills was a cloud of fire around him.

"What is this?" asked Conaire. "Easy to say," his people answer. "Easy to know that the king's law has broken down therein, since the country has begun to burn."

"Whither shall we betake ourselves?" says Conaire.

"To the Northeast," says his people.

So then they went righthandwise round Tara, and lefthandwise round Bregia, and the evil beasts of Cerna were hunted by him. But he saw it not till the chase had ended.

They that made of the world that smoky mist of magic were elves, and they did so because Conaire's tabus had been violated.

Great fear then fell on Conaire because they had no way to wend save upon the Road of Midluachair and the Road of Cualu.

So they took their way by the coast of Ireland southward.

Then said Conaire on the Road of Cualu: "whither shall we go tonight?"

"May I succeed in telling thee! my fosterling Conaire," says Mac cecht, son of Snade Teighed, the champion of Conaire, son of Eterscel. "Oftener have the men of Erin been contending for thee every night than thou hast been wandering about for a guesthouse."

"Judgment goes with good times," says Conaire. "I had a friend in this country, if only we knew the way to his house!"

"What is his name?" asked Mac cecht.

"Da Derga of Leinster," answered Conaire. "He came unto me to seek a gift from me, and he did not come with a refusal. I gave him a hundred kine of the drove. I gave him a hundred fatted swine. I gave him a hundred mantles made of close cloth. I gave him a hundred blue-coloured weapons of battle. I gave him ten red, gilded brooches. I gave



him ten vats good and brown. I gave him ten thralls. I gave him ten querns. I gave him thrice nine hounds all-white in their silver chains. I gave him a hundred racehorses in the herds of deer. There would be no abatement in his case though he should come again. He would make return. It is strange if he is surly to me tonight when reaching his abode.”

“When I was acquainted with his house,” says Mac cecht, “the road whereon thou art going towards him was the boundary of his abode. It continues till it enters his house, for through the house passes the road. There are seven doorways into the house, and seven bedrooms between every two doorways; but there is only one door-valve on it, and that valve is turned to every doorway to which the wind blows.”



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“With all that thou hast here,” says Conaire, “thou shalt go in thy great multitude until thou alight in the midst of the house.”

“If so be,” answers Mac cecht, “that thou goest thither, I go on that I may strike fire there ahead of thee.”

When Conaire after this was journeying along the Road of Cualu, he marked before him three horsemen riding towards the house. Three red frocks had they, and three red mantles: three red bucklers they bore, and three red spears were in their hands: three red steeds they bestrode, and three red heads of hair were on them. Red were they all, both body and hair and raiment, both steeds and men.

“Who is it that fares before us?” asked Conaire. “It was a tabu of mine for those Three to go before me—the three Reds to the house of Red. Who will follow them and tell them to come towards me in my track?”

“I will follow them,” says Le fri flaith, Conaire’s son.

He goes after them, lashing his horse, and overtook them not. There was the length of a spearcast between them: but they did not gain upon him and he did not gain upon them.

He told them not to go before the king. He overtook them not; but one of the three men sang a lay to him over his shoulder:

“Lo, my son, great the news, news from a hostel.... Lo my son!”

They go away from him then: he could not detain them.

The boy waited for the host. He told his father what was said to him. Conaire liked it not. “After them, thou!” says Conaire, “and offer them three oxen and three bacon-pigs, and so long as they shall be in my household, no one shall be among them from fire to wall.”

So the lad goes after them, and offers them that, and overtook them not. But one of the three men sang a lay to him over his shoulder:

“Lo, my son, great the news! A generous king’s great ardour whets thee, burns thee. Through ancient men’s enchantments a company of nine yields. Lo, my son!”

The boy turns back and repeated the lay to Conaire.

“Go after them,” says Conaire, “and offer them six oxen and six bacon-pigs, and my leavings, and gifts tomorrow, and so long as they shall be in my household no one to be among them from fire to wall.”



The lad then went after them, and overtook them not; but one of the three men answered and said:

“Lo, my son, great the news. Weary are the steeds we ride. We ride the steeds of Donn Tetscorach from the elfmounds. Though we are alive we are dead. Great are the signs; destruction of life: sating of ravens: feeding of crows, strife of slaughter: wetting of sword-edge, shields with broken bosses in hours after sundown. Lo, my son!”

Then they go from him.

“I see that thou hast not detained the men,” says Conaire.

“Indeed it is not I that betrayed it,” says Le fri flaithe.

He recited the last answer that they gave him. Conaire and his retainers were not blithe thereat: and afterwards evil forebodings of terror were on them.



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“All my tabus have seized me tonight,” says Conaire, “since those Three Reds are the banished folks[6].”

[Footnote 6: They had been banished from the elfmounds, and for them to precede was to violate one of his tabus.—W.S.]

They went forward to the house and took their seats therein, and fastened their red steeds to the door of the house.

That is the Forefaring of the Three Reds in the *Bruden Da Derga*.

This is the way that Conaire took with his troops, to Dublin.

'Tis then the man of the black, cropt hair, with his one hand and one eye and one foot, overtook them. Rough cropt hair upon him. Though a sackful of wild apples were flung on his crown, not an apple would fall on the ground, but each of them would stick on his hair. Though his snout were flung on a branch they would remain together. Long and thick as an outer yoke was each of his two shins. Each of his buttocks was the size of a cheese on a withe. A forked pole of iron black-pointed was in his hand. A swine, black-bristled, singed, was on his back, squealing continually, and a woman big-mouthed, huge, dark, sorry, hideous, was behind him. Though her snout were flung on a branch, the branch would support it. Her lower lip would reach her knee.

He starts forward to meet Conaire, and made him welcome. “Welcome to thee, O master Conaire! Long hath thy coming hither been known.”

“Who gives the welcome?” asks Conaire.

“Fer Caille here, with his black swine for thee to consume that thou be not fasting tonight, for 'tis thou art the best king that has come into the world!”

“What is thy wife’s name?” says Conaire.

“Cichuil,” he answers.

“Any other night,” says Conaire, “that pleases you, I will come to you,—and leave us alone to night.”

“Nay,” say the churl, “for we will go to thee to the place wherein thou wilt be tonight, O fair little master Conaire!”

So he goes towards the house, with his great, big-mouthed wife behind him, and his swine short-bristled, black, singed, squealing continually, on his back. That was one of Conaire’s tabus, and that plunder should be taken in Ireland during his reign was another tabu of his.



Now plunder was taken by the sons of Donn Desa, and five hundred there were in the body of their marauders, besides what underlings were with them. This, too, was a tabu of Conaire's. There was a good warrior in the north country, "Wain over withered sticks," this was his name. Why he was so called was because he used to go over his opponent even as a wain would go over withered sticks. Now plunder was taken by him, and there were five hundred in the body of their marauders alone, besides underlings.



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There was after that a troop of still haughtier heroes, namely, the seven sons of Ailill and Medb, each of whom was called "Mane." And each Mane had a nickname, to wit, Mane Fatherlike and Mane Motherlike, and Mane otherlike, and Mane Gentle-pious, Mane Very-pious, Mane Unslow, and Mane Honeyworded, Mane Grasp-them-all, and Mane the Loquacious. Rapine was wrought by them. As to Mane Motherlike and Mane Unslow there were fourteen score in the body of their marauders. Mane Fatherlike had three hundred and fifty. Mane Honeyworded had five hundred. Mane Grasp-them-all had seven hundred. Mane the Loquacious had seven hundred. Each of the others had five hundred in the body of his marauders.

There was a valiant trio of the men of Cualu of Leinster, namely, the three Red Hounds of Cualu, called Cethach and Clothach and Conall. Now rapine was wrought by them, and twelve score were in the body of their marauders, and they had a troop of madmen. In Conaire's reign a third of the men of Ireland were reavers. He was of sufficient strength and power to drive them out of the land of Erin so as to transfer their marauding to the other side (Great Britain), but after this transfer they returned to their country.

When they had reached the shoulder of the sea, they meet Ingcel the One-eyed and Eiccel and Tulchinne, three great-grandsons of Conmac of Britain, on the raging of the sea. A man ungentle, huge, fearful, uncouth was Ingcel. A single eye in his head, as broad as an oxhide, as black as a chafer, with three pupils therein. Thirteen hundred were in the body of his marauders. The marauders of the men of Erin were more numerous than they.

They go for a sea-encounter on the main. "Ye should not do this," says Ingcel: "do not break the truth of men (fair play) upon us, for ye are more in number than I."

"Nought but a combat on equal terms shall befall thee," say the reavers of Erin.

"There is somewhat better for you," quoth Ingcel. "Let us make peace since ye have been cast out of the land of Erin, and we have been cast out of the land of Alba and Britain. Let us make an agreement between us. Come ye and wreak your rapine in my country, and I will go with you and wreak my rapine in your country."

They follow this counsel, and they gave pledges therefor from this side and from that. There are the sureties that were given to Ingcel by the men of Erin, namely, Fer gair and Gabur (or Fer lee) and Fer rogain, for the destruction that Ingcel should choose to cause in Ireland and for the destruction that the sons of Donn Desa should choose in Alba and Britain.

A lot was cast upon them to see with which of them they should go first. It fell that they should go with Ingcel to his country. So they made for Britain, and there his father and

mother and his seven brothers were slain, as we have said before. Thereafter they made for Alba, and there they wrought the destruction, and then they returned to Erin.



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'Tis then, now, that Conaire son of Eterscel went towards the Hostel along the Road of Cualu.

'Tis then that the reavers came till they were in the sea off the coast of Bregia overagainst Howth.

Then said the reavers: "Strike the sails, and make one band of you on the sea that ye may not be sighted from land; and let some lightfoot be found from among you to go on shore to see if we could save our honors with Ingcel. A destruction for the destruction he has given us."

"Who will go on shore to listen? Let some one go," says Ingcel, "who should have there the three gifts, namely gift of hearing, gift of far sight, and gift of judgment."

"I," says Mane Honeyworded, "have the gift of hearing."

"And I," says Mane Unslow, "have the gift of far sight and of judgment."

"'Tis well for you to go thus," say the reavers: "good is that wise."

Then nine men go on till they were on the Hill of Howth, to know what they might hear and see.

"Be still a while!" says Mane Honeyworded.

"What is that?" asks Mane Unslow.

"The sound of a good king's cavalcade I hear."

"By the gift of far sight, I see," quoth his comrade.

"What seest thou here?"

"I see there," quoth he, "cavalcades splendid, lofty, beautiful, warlike, foreign, somewhat slender, weary, active, keen, whetted, vehement, a good course that shakes a great covering of land. They fare to many heights, with wondrous waters and invers[7]."

[Footnote 7: Mouths of rivers.]

"What are the waters and heights and invers that they traverse?"

"Easy to say: Indeoin, Cult, Cuilten, Mafat, Ammat, Iarmafat, Finne, Goiste, Guistine. Gray spears over chariots: ivory-hilted swords on thighs: silvery shields above their elbows. Half red and half white. Garments of every color about them.



“Thereafter I see before them special cattle specially keen, to wit, thrice fifty dark-gray steeds. Small-headed are they, red-nosed, pointed, broad-hoofed, big-nosed, red-chested, fat, easily-stopt, easily-yoked, foray-nimble, keen, whetted, vehement, with their thrice fifty bridles of red enamel upon them.”

“I swear by what my tribe swears,” says the man of the long sight, “these are the cattle of some good lord. This is my judgment thereof: it is Conaire, son of Eterscel, with multitudes of the men of Erin around him, who has travelled the road.”

Back then they go that they may tell it to the reavers. “This,” they say, “is what we have heard and seen.”

Of this host, then, there was a multitude, both on this side and on that, namely, thrice fifty boats, with five thousand in them, and ten hundred in every thousand. Then they hoisted the sails on the boats, and steer them thence to shore, till they landed on the Strand of Fuirbthe.

When the boats reached land, then was Mac cecht a-striking fire in Da Derga’s Hostel. At the sound of the spark the thrice fifty boats were hurled out, so that they were on the shoulders of the sea.



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“Be silent a while!” said Ingcel. “Liken thou that, O Fer rogain.”

“I know not,” answers Fer rogain, “unless it is Luchdonn the satirist in Emain Macha, who makes this hand-smiting when his food is taken from him perforce: or the scream of Luchdonn in Temair Luachra: or Mac cecht’s striking a spark, when he kindles a fire before a king of Erin where he sleeps. Every spark and every shower which his fire would let fall on the floor would broil a hundred calves and two half-pigs.”

“May God not bring that man (even Conaire) there to-night!” say Donn Desa’s sons. “Sad that he is under the hurt of foes!”

“Meseems,” says Ingcel, “it should be no sadder for me than the destruction I gave you. This were my feast that Conaire should chance to come there.”

Their fleet is steered to land. The noise that the thrice fifty vessels made in running ashore shook Da Derga’s Hostel so that no spear nor shield remained on rack therein, but the weapons uttered a cry and fell all on the floor of the house.

“Liken thou that, O Conaire,” says every one: “what is this noise?”

“I know nothing like it unless it be the earth that has broken, or the Leviathan that surrounds the globe and strikes with its tail to overturn the world, or the barque of the sons of Donn Desa that has reached the shore. Alas that it should not be they who are there! Beloved foster-brothers of our own were they! Dear were the champions. We should not have feared them tonight.”

Then came Conaire, so that he was on the green of the Hostel.

When Mac cecht heard the tumultuous noise, it seemed to him that warriors had attacked his people. Thereat he leapt on to his armour to help them. Vast as the thunder-feat of three hundred did they deem his game in leaping to his weapons. Thereof there was no profit.

Now in the bow of the ship wherein were Donn Desa’s sons was the champion, greatly-accounted, wrathful, the lion hard and awful, Ingcel the One-eyed, great-grandson of Conmac. Wide as an oxhide was the single eye protruding from his forehead, with seven pupils therein, which were black as a chafer. Each of his knees as big as a stripper’s caldron; each of his two fists was the size of a reaping-basket: his buttocks as big as a cheese on a withe: each of his shins as long as an outer yoke.

So after that, the thrice fifty boats, and those five thousands—with ten hundred in every thousand,—landed on the Strand of Fuirbthe.



Then Conaire with his people entered the Hostel, and each took his seat within, both tabu and non-tabu. And the three Reds took their seats, and Fer caille with his swine took his seat.

Thereafter Da Derga came to them, with thrice fifty warriors, each of them having a long head of hair to the hollow of his polls, and a short cloak to their buttocks. Speckled-green drawers they wore, and in their hands were thrice fifty great clubs of thorn with bands of iron.



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"Welcome, O master Conaire!" quoth he. "Though the bulk of the men of Erin were to come with thee, they themselves would have a welcome."

When they were there they saw a lone woman coming to the door of the Hostel, after sunset, and seeking to be let in. As long as a weaver's beam was each of her two shins, and they were as dark as the back of a stag-beetle. A greyish, wooly mantle she wore. Her lower hair used to reach as far as her knee. Her lips were on one side of her head.

She came and put one of her shoulders against the doorpost of the house, casting the evil eye on the king and the youths who surrounded him in the Hostel. He himself addressed her from within.

"Well, O woman," says Conaire, "if thou art a wizard, what seest thou for us?"

"Truly I see for thee," she answers, "that neither fell nor flesh of thine shall escape from the place into which thou hast come, save what birds will bear away in their claws."

"It was not an evil omen we foreboded, O woman," saith he: "it is not thou that always augurs for us. What is thy name, O woman?"

"Cailb," she answers.

"That is not much of a name," says Conaire.

"Lo, many are my names besides."

"Which be they?" asks Conaire.

"Easy to say," quoth she. "Samon, Sinand, Seisclend, Sodb, Caill, Coll, Dichoem, Dichiuil, Dithim, Dichuimne, Dichruidne, Dairne, Darine, Deruaine, Egem, Agam, Ethamne, Gnim, Cluiche, Cethardam, Nith, Nemain, Noennen, Badb, Blosc, B[l]oar, Huae, oe Aife la Sruth, Mache, Mede, Mod."

On one foot, and holding up one hand, and breathing one breath she sang all that to them from the door of the house.

"I swear by the gods whom I adore," says Conaire, "that I will call thee by none of these names whether I shall be here a long or a short time."

"What dost thou desire?" says Conaire.

"That which thou, too, desirest," she answered.



“Tis a tabu of mine,” says Conaire, “to receive the company of one woman after sunset.”

“Though it be a tabu,” she replied, “I will not go until my guesting come at once this very night.”

“Tell her,” says Conaire, “that an ox and a bacon-pig shall be taken out to her, and my leavings: provided that she stays tonight in some other place.”

“If in sooth,” she says, “it has befallen the king not to have room in his house for the meal and bed of a solitary woman, they will be gotten apart from him from some one possessing generosity—if the hospitality of the Prince in the Hostel has departed.”

“Savage is the answer!” says Conaire. “Let her in, though it is a tabu of mine.”

Great loathing they felt after that from the woman’s converse, and ill-foreboding; but they knew not the cause thereof.

The reavers afterwards landed, and fared forth till they were at Lecca cinn slebe. Ever open was the Hostel. Why it was called a *Bruden* was because it resembles the lips of a man blowing a fire.



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Great was the fire which was kindled by Conaire every night, to wit, a "Boar of the Wood." Seven outlets it had. When a log was cut out of its side every flame that used to come forth at each outlet was as big as the blaze of a burning oratory. There were seventeen of Conaire's chariots at every door of the house, and by those that were looking from the vessels that great light was clearly seen through the wheels of the chariots.

"Canst thou say, O Fer rogain, what that great light yonder resembles?"

"I cannot liken it to aught," answers Fer rogain, "unless it be the fire of a king. May God not bring that man there tonight! 'Tis a pity to destroy him!"

"What then deemest thou," says Ingcel, "of that man's reign in the land of Erin?"

"Good is his reign," replied Fer rogain. "Since he assumed the kingship, no cloud has veiled the sun for the space of a day from the middle of spring to the middle of autumn. And not a dewdrop fell from grass till midday, and wind would not touch a beast's tail until nones. And in his reign, from year's end to year's end, no wolf has attacked aught save one bullcalf of each byre; and to maintain this rule there are seven wolves in hostageship at the sidewall in his house, and behind this a further security, even Maclocc, and 'tis he that pleads for them in Conaire's house. In Conaire's reign are the three crowns on Erin, namely, crown of corn-ears, and crown of flowers, and crown of oak mast. In his reign, too, each man deems the other's voice as melodious as the strings of lutes, because of the excellence of the law and the peace and the goodwill prevailing throughout Erin. May God not bring that man there tonight! 'Tis sad to destroy him. 'Tis *'a branch through its blossom,' 'Tis a swine that falls before mast. 'Tis an infant in age. Sad is the shortness of his life!*"

"This was my luck," says Ingcel, "that he should be there, and there should be one Destruction for another. It were not more grievous to me than my father and my mother and my seven brothers, and the king of my country, whom I gave up to you before coming on the transfer of the rapine."

"'Tis true, 'tis true!" say the evildoers who were along with the reavers.

The reavers make a start from the Strand of Fuirbthe, and bring a stone for each man to make a cairn; for this was the distinction which at first the Fians made between a "Destruction" and a "Rout." A pillar-stone they used to plant when there would be a Rout. A cairn, however, they used to make when there would be a Destruction. At this time, then, they made a cairn, for it was a Destruction. Far from the house was this, that they might not be heard or seen therefrom.

For two causes they built their cairn, namely, first, since this was a custom in marauding, and, secondly, that they might find out their losses at the Hostel. Every one



that would come safe from it would take his stone from the cairn: thus the stones of those that were slain would be left, and thence they would know their losses. And this is what men skilled in story recount, that for every stone in Carn leca there was one of the reavers killed at the Hostel. From that cairn Leca in Hui Cellaig is so called.



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A “boar of a fire” is kindled by the sons of Donn Desa to give warning to Conaire. So *that* is the first warning-beacon that has been made in Erin, and from it to this day every warning-beacon is kindled.

This is what others recount: that it was on the eve of *samain* (All-Saints-day) the destruction of the Hostel was wrought, and that from yonder beacon the beacon of *samain* is followed from that to this, and stones (are placed) in the *samain*-fire.

Then the reavers framed a counsel at the place where they had put the cairn.

“Well, then,” says Ingcel to the guides, “what is nearest to us here?”

“Easy to say: the Hostel of Hua Derga, chief-hospitaller of Erin.”

“Good men indeed,” says Ingcel, “were likely to seek their fellows at that Hostel to-night.”

This, then, was the counsel of the reavers, to send one of them to see how things were there.

“Who will go there to espy the house?” say everyone.

“Who should go,” says Ingcel, “but I, for ’tis I that am entitled to dues.”

Ingcel went to reconnoitre the Hostel with one of the seven pupils of the single eye which stood out of his forehead, to fit his eye into the house in order to destroy the king and the youths who were around him therein. And Ingcel saw them through the wheels of the chariots.

Then Ingcel was perceived from the house. He made a start from it after being perceived.

He went till he reached the reavers in the stead wherein they were. Each circle of them was set around another to hear the tidings—the chiefs of the reavers being in the very centre of the circles. There were Fer ger and Fer gel and Fer rogel and Fer rogain and Lomna the Buffoon, and Ingcel the One-eyed—six in the centre of the circles. And Fer rogain went to question Ingcel.

“How is that, O Ingcel?” asks Fer rogain.

“However it be,” answers Ingcel, “royal is the custom, hostful is the tumult: kingly is the noise thereof. Whether a king be there or not, I will take the house for what I have a right to. Thence my turn of rapine cometh.”



“We have left it in thy hand, O Ingcel!” say Conaire’s fosterbrothers. “But we should not wreak the Destruction till we know who may be therein.”

“Question, hast thou seen the house well, O Ingcel?” asks Fer rogain.

“Mine eye cast a rapid glance around it, and I will accept it for my dues as it stands.”

“Thou mayest well accept it, O Ingcel,” saith Fer rogain: “the foster father of us all is there, Erin’s overking, Conaire, son of Eterscel.”

“Question, what sawest thou in the champion’s high seat of the house, facing the King, on the opposite side?”

## **THE ROOM OF CORMAC CONDLONGAS**

“I saw there,” says Ingcel, “a man of noble countenance, large, with a clear and sparkling eye, an even set of teeth, a face narrow below, broad above. Fair, flaxen, golden hair upon him, and a proper fillet around it. A brooch of silver in his mantle, and in his hand a gold-hilted sword. A shield with five golden circles upon it: a five-barbed javelin in his hand. A visage just, fair, ruddy he hath: he is also beardless. Modest-minded is that man!”



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“And after that, whom sawest thou there?”

### THE ROOM OF CORMAC’S NINE COMRADES

“There I saw three men to the west of Cormac, and three to the east of him, and three in front of the same man. Thou wouldst deem that the nine of them had one mother and one father. They are of the same age, equally goodly, equally beautiful, all alike. Thin rods of gold in their mantles. Bent shields of bronze they bear. Ribbed javelins above them. An ivory-hilted sword in the hand of each. An unique feat they have, to wit, each of them takes his sword’s point between his two fingers, and they twirl the swords round their fingers, and the swords afterwards extend themselves by themselves. Liken thou *that*, O Fer rogain,” says Ingcel.

“Easy,” says Fer rogain, “for me to liken them. It is Conchobar’s son, Cormac Condlongas, the best hero behind a shield in the land of Erin. Of modest mind is that boy! Evil is what he dreads tonight. He is a champion of valour for feats of arms; he is an hospitaller for householding. These are yon nine who surround him, the three Dungusses, and the three Doelgusses, and the three Dangusses, the nine comrades of Cormac Condlongas, son of Conchobar. They have never slain men on account of their misery, and they never spared them on account of their prosperity. Good is the hero who is among them, even Cormac Condlongas. I swear what my tribe swears, nine times ten will fall by Cormac in his first onset, and nine times ten will fall by his people, besides a man for each of their weapons, and a man for each of themselves. And Cormac will share prowess with any man before the Hostel, and he will boast of victory over a king or crown-prince or noble of the reavers; and he himself will chance to escape, though all his people be wounded.”

“Woe to him who shall wreak this Destruction!” says Lomna Druth, “even because of that one man, Cormac Condlongas, son of Conchobar.” “I swear what my tribe swears,” says Lomna son of Donn Desa, “if I could fulfil my counsel, the Destruction would not be attempted were it only because of that one man, and because of the hero’s beauty and goodness!”

“It is not feasible to prevent it,” says Ingcel: “clouds of weakness come to you. A keen ordeal which will endanger two cheeks of a goat will be opposed by the oath of Fer rogain, who will run. Thy voice, O Lomna,” says Ingcel, “hath taken breaking upon thee: thou art a worthless warrior, and I know thee. Clouds of weakness come to you...”

Neither old men nor historians shall declare that I quitted the Destruction, until I shall wreak it.”



“Reproach not our honour, O Ingcel,” say Ger and Gabur and Fer rogain. “The Destruction shall be wrought unless the earth break under it, until all of us are slain thereby.”

“Truly, then, thou hast reason, O Ingcel,” says Lomna Druth son of Donn Desa. “Not to thee is the loss caused by the Destruction. Thou wilt carry off the head of the king of a foreign country, with thy slaughter of another; and thou and thy brothers will escape from the Destruction, even Ingcel and Ecell and the Yearling of the Rapine.”



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“Harder, however, it is for me,” says Lomna Druth: “woe is me before every one! woe is me after every one! ’Tis my head that will be first tossed about there to-night after an hour among the chariot-shafts, where devilish foes will meet. It will be flung into the Hostel thrice, and thrice will it be flung forth. Woe to him that comes! woe to him with whom one goes! woe to him to whom one goes! wretches are they that go! wretches are they to whom they go!”

“There is nothing that will come to me,” says Ingcel, “in place of my mother and my father and my seven brothers, and the king of my district, whom ye destroyed with me. There is nothing that I shall not endure henceforward.”

“Though a ... should go through them,” say Ger and Gabur and Fer rogain, “the Destruction will be wrought by thee to-night.”

“Woe to him who shall put them under the hands of foes!” says Lomna. “And whom sawest thou afterwards?”

### THE ROOM OF THE PICTS, THIS

“I saw another room there, with a huge trio in it: three brown, big men: three round heads of hair on them, even, equally long at nape and forehead. Three short black cowls about them reaching to their elbows: long hoods were on the cowls. Three black, huge swords they had, and three black shields they bore, with three dark broad-green javelins above them. Thick as the spit of a caldron was the shaft of each. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”

“Hard it is for me to find their like. I know not in Erin that trio, unless it be yon trio of Pictland, who went into exile from their country, and are now in Conaire’s household. These are their names: Dublonges son of Trebuat, and Trebuat son of Hua-Lonsce, and Curnach son of Hua Faich. The three who are best in Pictland at taking arms are that trio. Nine decads will fall at their hands in their first encounter, and a man will fall for each of their weapons, besides one for each of themselves. And they will share prowess with every trio in the Hostel. They will boast a victory over a king or a chief of the reavers; and they will afterwards escape though wounded. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction, though it be only on account of those three!”

Says Lomna Druth: “I swear to God what my tribe swears, if my counsel were taken, the Destruction would never be wrought.”

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel: “clouds of weakness are coming to you. A keen ordeal which will endanger, *etc.* And whom sawest thou there afterwards?”



## THE ROOM OF THE PIPERS

“There I beheld a room with nine men in it. Hair fair and yellow was on them: they all are equally beautiful. Mantles speckled with colour they wore, and above them were nine bagpipes, four-tuned, ornamented. Enough light in the palace were the ornament on these four-tuned pipes. Liken thou them, O Fer rogain.”



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“Easy for me to liken them,” says Fer rogain. “Those are the nine pipers that came to Conaire out of the Elfmound of Bregia, because of the noble tales about him. These are their names: Bind, Robind, Riabind, Sibe, Dibe, Deichrind, Umall, Cumal, Ciallglind. They are the best pipers in the world. Nine enneads will fall before them, and a man for each of their weapons, and a man for each of themselves. And each of them will boast a victory over a king or a chief of the reavers. And they will escape from the Destruction; for a conflict with them will be a conflict with a shadow. They will slay, but they will not be slain, for they are out of an elfmound. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction, though it be only because of those nine!”

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel. “Clouds of weakness come to you,” *etc.* “And after that, whom sawest thou there?”

### THE ROOM OF CONAIRE’S MAJORDOMO

“There I saw a room with one man in it. Rough cropt hair upon him. Though a sack of crab-apples should be flung on his head, not one of them would fall on the floor, but every apple would stick on his hair. His fleecy mantle was over him in the house. Every quarrel therein about seat or bed comes to his decision. Should a needle drop in the house, its fall would be heard when he speaks. Above him is a huge black tree, like a millshaft, with its paddles and its cap and its spike. Liken thou him, O Fer rogain!”

“Easy for me is this. Tuidle of Ulaid is he, the steward of Conaire’s household. ’Tis needful to hearken to the decision of that man, the man that rules seat and bed and food for each. ’Tis his household staff that is above him. That man will fight with you. I swear what my tribe swears, the dead at the Destruction slain by him will be more numerous than the living. Thrice his number will fall by him, and he himself will fall there. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction!” *etc.*

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel. “Clouds of weakness come upon you. What sawest thou there after that?”

### THE ROOM OF MAC CECHT, CONAIRE’S BATTLE-SOLDIER

There I beheld another room with a trio in it, three half-furious nobles: the biggest of them in the middle, very noisy ... rock-bodied, angry, smiting, dealing strong blows, who beats nine hundred in battle-conflict. A wooden shield, dark, covered with iron, he bears, with a hard ... rim, a shield whereon would fit the proper litter of four troops of ten weaklings on its ... of ... leather. A ... boss thereon, the depth of a caldron, fit to cook four oxen, a hollow maw, a great boiling, with four swine in its mid-maw great.... At his



two smooth sides are two five-thwarted boats fit for three parties of ten in each of his two strong fleets.

A spear he hath, blue-red, hand-fitting, on its puissant shaft. It stretches along the wall on the roof and rests on the ground. An iron point upon it, dark-red, dripping. Four amply-measured feet between the two points of its edge.



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Thirty amply-measured feet in his deadly-striking sword from dark point to iron hilt. It shews forth fiery sparks which illumine the Mid-court House from roof to ground.

'Tis a strong countenance that I see. A swoon from horror almost befell me while staring at those three. There is nothing stranger.

Two bare hills were there by the man with hair. Two loughs by a mountain of the ... of a blue-fronted wave: two hides by a tree. Two boats near them full of thorns of a white thorn tree on a circular board. And there seems to me somewhat like a slender stream of water on which the sun is shining, and its trickle down from it, and a hide arranged behind it, and a palace house-post shaped like a great lance above it. A good weight of a plough-yoke is the shaft that is therein. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!

“Easy, meseems, to liken him! That is Mac cecht son of Snaide Teichid; the battle-soldier of Conaire son of Eterscel. Good is the hero Mac cecht! Supine he was in his room, in his sleep, when thou beheldest him. The two bare hills which thou sawest by the man with hair, these are his two knees by his head. The two loughs by the mountain which thou sawest, these are his two eyes by his nose. The two hides by a tree which thou sawest, these are his two ears by his head. The two five-thwarted boats on a circular board, which thou sawest, these are his two sandals on his shield. The slender stream of water which thou sawest, whereon the sun shines, and its trickle down from it, this is the flickering of his sword. The hide which thou sawest arranged behind him, that is his sword’s scabbard. The palace-housepost which thou sawest, that is his lance; and he brandishes this spear till its two ends meet, and he hurls a wilful cast of it when he pleases. Good is the hero, Mac cecht!”

“Six hundred will fall by him in his first encounter, and a man for each of his weapons, besides a man for himself. And he will share prowess with every one in the Hostel, and he will boast of triumph over a king or chief of the reavers in front of the Hostel. He will chance to escape though wounded. And when he shall chance to come upon you out of the house, as numerous as hailstones, and grass on a green, and stars of heaven will be your cloven heads and skulls, and the clots of your brains, your bones and the heaps of your bowels, crushed by him and scattered throughout the ridges.”

Then with trembling and terror of Mac cecht they flee over three ridges.

They took the pledges among them again, even Ger and Gabur and Fer rogain.

“Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction!” says Lomna Druth; “your heads will depart from you.”

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel: “clouds of weakness are coming to you” *etc.*



“True indeed, O Ingcel,” says Lomna Druth son of Donn Desa. “Not unto thee is the loss caused by the Destruction. Woe is me for the Destruction, for the first head that will reach the Hostel will be mine!”



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“Tis harder for *me*,” says Ingcel: “’tis *my* destruction that has been ... there.”

“Truly then,” says Ingcel, “maybe I shall be the corpse that is frailest there,” *etc.*

“And afterwards whom sawest thou there?”

### THE ROOM OF CONAIRE’S THREE SONS, OBALL AND OBLIN AND CORPRE

“There I beheld a room with a trio in it, to wit, three tender striplings, wearing three silken mantles. In their mantles were three golden brooches. Three golden-yellow manes were on them. When they undergo head-cleansing their golden-yellow mane reaches the edge of their haunches. When they raise their eye it raises the hair so that it is not lower than the tips of their ears, and it is as curly as a ram’s head. A ... of gold and a palace-flambeau above each of them. Every one who is in the house spares them, voice and deed and word. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain,” says Ingcel.

Fer rogain wept, so that his mantle in front of him became moist. And no voice was gotten out of his head till a third of the night had passed.

“O little ones,” says Fer rogain, “I have good reason for what I do! Those are three sons of the king of Erin: Oball and Oblin and Corpre Findmor.”

“It grieves us if the tale be true,” say the sons of Donn Desa. “Good is the trio in that room. Manners of ripe maidens have they, and hearts of brothers, and valours of bears, and furies of lions. Whosoever is in their company and in their couch, and parts from them, he sleeps not and eats not at ease till the end of nine days, from lack of their companionship. Good are the youths for their age! Thrice ten will fall by each of them in their first encounter, and a man for each weapon, and three men for themselves. And one of the three will fall there. Because of that trio, woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction!”

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel: “clouds of weakness are coming to you, *etc.* And whom sawest thou afterwards?”

### THE ROOM OF THE FOMORIANS

I beheld there a room with a trio in it, to wit, a trio horrible, unheard-of, a triad of champions, *etc.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Liken thou that, O Fer rogain?



“Tis hard for me to liken that trio. Neither of the men of Erin nor of the men of the world do I know it, unless it be the trio that Mac cecht brought out of the land of the Fomorians by dint of duels. Not one of the Fomorians was found to fight him, so he brought away those three, and they are in Conaire’s house as sureties that, while Conaire is reigning, the Fomorians destroy neither corn nor milk in Erin beyond their fair tribute. Well may their aspect be loathy! Three rows of teeth in their heads from one ear to another. An ox with a bacon-pig, this is the ration of each of them, and that ration which they put into their

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mouths is visible till it comes down past their navels. Bodies of bone (i.e. without a joint in them) all those three have. I swear what my tribe swears, more will be killed by them at the Destruction than those they leave alive. Six hundred warriors will fall by them in their first conflict, and a man for each of their weapons, and one for each of the three themselves. And they will boast a triumph over a king or chief of the reavers. It will not be more than with a bite or a blow or a kick that each of those men will kill, for no arms are allowed them in the house, since they are in 'hostageship at the wall' lest they do a misdeed therein. I swear what my tribe swears, if they had armour on them, they would slay us all but a third. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction, because it is not a combat against sluggards."

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel, *etc.* "And whom sawest thou there after that?"

### THE ROOM OF MUNREMAR SON OF GERRCHENN AND BIRDERG SON OF RUAN AND MAL SON OF TELBAND

"I beheld a room there, with a trio in it. Three brown, big men, with three brown heads of short hair. Thick calf-bottoms (ankles?) they had. As thick as a man's waist was each of their limbs. Three brown and curled masses of hair upon them, with a thick head: three cloaks, red and speckled, they wore: three black shields with clasps of gold, and three five-barbed javelins; and each had in hand an ivory-hilted sword. This is the feat they perform with their swords: they throw them high up, and they throw the scabbards after them, and the swords, before reaching the ground, place themselves in the scabbards. Then they throw the scabbards first, and the swords after them, and the scabbards meet the swords and place themselves round them before they reach the ground. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easy for me to liken them! Mal son of Telband, and Munremar son of Gerrchenn, and Birderg son of Ruan. Three crown-princes, three champions of valour, three heroes the best behind weapons in Erin! A hundred heroes will fall by them in their first conflict, and they will share prowess with every man in the Hostel, and they will boast of the victory over a king or chief of the reavers, and afterwards they will chance to escape. The Destruction should not be wrought even because of those three."

"Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction!" says Lomna. "Better were the victory of saving them than the victory of slaying them! Happy he who should save them! Woe to him that shall slay them!"

"It is not feasible," says Ingcel, *etc.* "And afterwards whom sawest thou?"

### THE ROOM OF CONALL CERNACH



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“There I beheld in a decorated room the fairest man of Erin’s heroes. He wore a tufted purple cloak. White as snow was one of his cheeks, the other was red and speckled like foxglove. Blue as hyacinth was one of his eyes, dark as a stag-beetle’s back was the other. The bushy head of fair golden hair upon him was as large as a reaping-basket, and it touches the edge of his haunches. It is as curly as a ram’s head. If a sackful of red-shelled nuts were spilt on the crown of his head, not one of them would fall on the floor, but remain on the hooks and plaits and swordlets of their hair. A gold hilted sword in his hand; a blood-red shield which has been speckled with rivets of white bronze between plates of gold. A long, heavy, three-ridged spear: as thick as an outer yoke is the shaft that is in it. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”

“Easy for me to liken him, for the men of Erin know that scion. That is Conall Cernach, son of Amorgen. He has chanced to be along with Conaire at this time. ’Tis he whom Conaire loves beyond every one, because of his resemblance to him in goodness of form and shape. Goodly is the hero that is there, Conall Cernach! To that blood-red shield on his fist, which has been speckled with rivets of white bronze, the Ulaid have given a famous name, to wit, the *Bricriu* of Conall Cernach.

“I swear what my tribe swears, plenteous will be the rain of red blood over it to-night before the Hostel! That ridged spear above him, many will there be unto whom to-night, before the Hostel, it will deal drinks of death. Seven doorways there are out of the house, and Conall Cernach will contrive to be at each of them, and from no doorway will he be absent. Three hundred will fall by Conall in his first conflict, besides a man for each (of his) weapons and one for himself. He will share prowess with every one in the Hostel, and when he shall happen to sally upon you from the house, as numerous as hailstones and grass on green and stars of heaven will be your half-heads and cloven skulls, and your bones under the point of his sword. He will succeed in escaping though wounded. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction, were it but for this man only!”

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel. “Clouds,” *etc.*

“And after that whom sawest thou?”

## THE ROOM OF CONAIRE HIMSELF

“There I beheld a room, more beautifully decorated than the other rooms of the house. A silvery curtain around it, and there were ornaments in the room. I beheld a trio in it. The outer two of them were, both of them, fair, with their hair and eyelashes; and they are as bright as snow. A very lovely blush on the cheek of each of the twain. A tender lad in the midst between them. The ardour and energy of a king has he, and the counsel of a sage. The mantle I saw around him is even as the mist of Mayday. Diverse are the hue and semblance



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each moment shewn upon it. Lovelier is each hue than the other. In front of him in the mantle I beheld a wheel of gold which reached from his chin to his navel. The colour of his hair was like the sheen of smelted gold. Of all the world's forms that I beheld, this is the most beautiful. I saw his golden-hilted glaive down beside him. A forearm's length of the sword was outside the scabbard. That forearm, a man down in the front of the house could see a fleshworm by the shadow of the sword! Sweeter is the melodious sounding of the sword than the melodious sound of the golden pipes that accompany music in the palace."

"Then," quoth Ingcel, "I said, gazing at him:

I see a high, stately prince, *etc.*

I see a famous king, *etc.*

I see his white prince's diadem, *etc.*

I see his two blue-bright cheeks, *etc.*

I see his high wheel ... round his head ... which is over his yellow-curly hair.

I see his mantle red, many-coloured, *etc.*

I see therein a huge brooch of gold, *etc.*

I see his beautiful linen frock ... from ankle to kneecaps.

I see his sword golden-hilted, inlaid, its in scabbard of white silver, *etc.*

I see his shield bright, chalky, *etc.*

A tower of inlaid gold," *etc.*

Now the tender warrior was asleep, with his feet in the lap of one of the two men and his head in the lap of the other. Then he awoke out of his sleep, and arose, and chanted this lay:

"The howl of Ossar (Conaire's dog) ... cry of warriors on the summit of Tol Geisse; a cold wind over edges perilous: a night to destroy a king is this night."

He slept again, and awoke thereout, and sang this rhetoric:



“The howl of Ossar ... a battle he announced: enslavement of a people: sack of the Hostel: mournful are the champions: men wounded: wind of terror: hurling of javelins: trouble of unfair fight: wreck of houses: Tara waste: a foreign heritage: like is lamenting Conaire: destruction of corn: feast of arms: cry of screams: destruction of Erin’s king: chariots a-tottering: oppression of the king of Tara: lamentations will overcome laughter: Ossar’s howl.”

He said the third time:

“Trouble hath been shewn to me: a multitude of elves: a host supine; foes’ prostration: a conflict of men on the Dodder[8]: oppression of Tara’s king: in youth he was destroyed; lamentations will overcome laughter: Ossar’s howl.”

[Footnote 8: A small river near Dublin, which is said to have passed through the Bruden.—W.S.]

“Liken thou, O Fer rogain, him who has sung that lay.”



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“Easy for me to liken him,” says Ferrogain. No “conflict without a king” this. He is the most splendid and noble and beautiful and mighty king that has come into the whole world. He is the mildest and gentlest and most perfect king that has come to it, even Conaire son of Eterscel. ’Tis he that is overking of all Erin. There is no defect in that man, whether in form or shape or vesture: whether in size or fitness or proportion, whether in eye or hair or brightness, whether in wisdom or skill or eloquence, whether in weapon or dress or appearance, whether in splendour or abundance or dignity, whether in knowledge or valour or kindred.

“Great is the tenderness of the sleepy simple man till he has chanced on a deed of valour. But if his fury and his courage be awakened when the champions of Erin and Alba are at him in the house, the Destruction will not be wrought so long as he is therein. Six hundred will fall by Conaire before he shall attain his arms, and seven hundred will fall by him in his first conflict after attaining his arms. I swear to God what my tribe swears, unless drink be taken from him, though there be no one else in the house, but he alone, he would hold the Hostel until help would reach it which the man would prepare for him from the Wave of Clidna[9] and the Wave of Assaroe[10] while ye are at the Hostel.”

[Footnote 9: In the bay of Glandore, co. Cork.—W.S.]

[Footnote 10: At Ballyshannon, co. Donegal.—W.S.]

“Nine doors there are to the house, and at each door a hundred warriors will fall by his hand. And when every one in the house has ceased to ply his weapon, ’tis then he will resort to a deed of arms. And if he chance to come upon you out of the house, as numerous as hailstones and grass on a green will be your halves of heads and your cloven skulls and your bones under the edge of his sword.

“’Tis my opinion that he will not chance to get out of the house. Dear to him are the two that are with him in the room, his two fosterers, Dris and Snithe. Thrice fifty warriors will fall before each of them in front of the Hostel and not farther than a foot from him, on this side and that, will they too fall.”

“Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction, were it only because of that pair and the prince that is between them, the over-king-of Erin, Conaire son of Eterscel! Sad were the quenching of that reign!” says Lomna Druth, son of Donn Desa.

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel. “Clouds of weakness are coming to you,” *etc.*

“Good cause hast thou, O Ingcel,” says Lomna son of Donn Desa. “Not unto *thee* is the loss caused by the Destruction: for thou wilt carry off the head of the king of another country, and thyself will escape. Howbeit ’tis hard for me, for I shall be the first to be slain at the Hostel.”



“Alas for me!” says Ingcel, “peradventure I shall be the frailest corpse,” *etc.*

“And whom sawest thou afterwards?”



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### THE ROOM OF THE REARGUARDS

“There I saw twelve men on silvery hurdles all around that room of the king. Light yellow hair was on them. Blue kilts they wore. Equally beautiful were they, equally hardy, equally shapely. An ivory-hilted sword in each man’s hand, and they cast them not down; but it is the horse-rods in their hands that are all round the room. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain.”

“Easy for me to say. The king of Tara’s guardsmen are there. These are their names: three Londs of Liffey-plain: three Arts of Ath cliath (*Dublin*): three Buders of Buagnech: and three Trenfers of Cuilne. I swear what my tribe swears, that many will be the dead by them around the Hostel.

And they will escape from it although they are wounded. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction were it only because of that band! And afterwards whom sawest thou there?”

### LE FRI FLAITH SON OF CONAIRE, WHOSE LIKENESS THIS IS

“There I beheld a red-freckled boy in a purple cloak. He is always a-wailing in the house. A stead wherein is the king of a cantred, whom each man takes from bosom to bosom.

“So he is with a blue silvery chair under his seat in the midst of the house, and he always a-wailing. Truly then, sad are his household listening to him! Three heads of hair on that boy, and these are the three: green hair and purple hair and all-golden hair. I know not whether they are many appearances which the hair receives, or whether they are three kinds of hair which are naturally upon him. But I know that evil is the thing he dreads to-night. I beheld thrice fifty boys on silvern chairs around him, and there were fifteen bulrushes in the hand of that red-freckled boy, with a thorn at the end of each of the rushes. And we were fifteen men, and our fifteen right eyes were blinded by him, and he blinded one of the seven pupils which was in my head” saith Ingcel.

“Hast thou his like, O Fer rogain?”

“Easy for me to liken him!” Fer rogain wept till he shed his tears of blood over his cheeks. “Alas for him!” quoth he. This child is a ‘scion of contention’ for the men of Erin with the men of Alba for hospitality, and shape, and form and horsemanship. Sad is his slaughter! ‘Tis a ‘swine that goes before mast,’ ‘tis a babe in age! the best crown-prince that has ever come into Erin! The child of Conaire son of Eterscel, Le fri flaith is his name. Seven years there are in his age. It seems to me very likely that he is miserable because of the many appearances on his hair and the various hues that the hair



assumes upon him. This is his special household, the thrice fifty lads that are around him.”

“Woe,” says Lomna, “to him that shall wreak the Destruction, were it only because of that boy!”

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel. “Clouds of weakness are coming on you, *etc.*” “And after that whom sawest thou there?”



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### THE ROOM OF THE CUPBEARERS

“There I saw six men in front of the same room. Fair yellow manes upon them: green mantles about them: tin brooches at the opening of their mantles. Half-horses (centaurs) are they, like Conall Cernach. Each of them throws his mantle round another and is as swift as a millwheel. Thine eye can hardly follow them. Liken thou those, O Fer rogain!”

“This is easy for me. Those are the King of Tara’s six cupbearers, namely Uan and Broen and Banna, Delt and Drucht and Dathen. That feat does not hinder them from their skinking, and it blunts not their intelligence thereat. Good are the warriors that are there! Thrice their number will fall by them. They will share prowess with any six in the Hostel, and they will escape from their foes, for they are out of the elfmounds. They are the best cupbearers in Erin. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction were it only because of them!”

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel. “Clouds, *etc.*” “And after that, whom sawest thou there?”

### THE ROOM OF TULCHINNE THE JUGGLER

“There I beheld a great champion, in front of the same room, on the floor of the house. The shame of baldness is on him. White as mountain cotton-grass is each hair that grows through his head. Earrings of gold around his ears. A mantle speckled, coloured, he wore. Nine swords in his hand, and nine silvern shields, and nine apples of gold. He throws each of them upwards, and none of them falls on the ground, and there is only one of them on his palm; each of them rising and falling past another is just like the movement to and fro of bees on a day of beauty. When he was swiftest, I beheld him at the feat, and as I looked, they uttered a cry about him and they were all on the house-floor. Then the Prince who is in the house said to the juggler: ‘We have come together since thou wast a little boy, and till to-night thy juggling never failed thee.’

“‘Alas, alas, fair master Conaire, good cause have I. A keen, angry eye looked at me: a man with the third of a pupil which sees the going of the nine bands. Not much to him is that keen, wrathful sight! Battles are fought with it,’ saith he. ‘It should be known till doomsday that there is evil in front of the Hostel.’

“Then he took the swords in his hand, and the silvern shields and the apples of gold; and again they uttered a cry and were all on the floor of the house. That amazed him, and he gave over his play and said:

‘O Fer caille, arise! Do not ... its slaughter. Sacrifice thy pig! Find out who is in front of the house to injure the men of the Hostel.’



'There,' said he, 'are Fer Cualngi, Fer le, Fer gar, Fer rogel, Fer rogain. They have announced a deed which is not feeble, the annihilation of Conaire by Donn Desa's five sons, by Conaire's five loving fosterbrothers.'



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“Liken thou that, O Fer rogain! Who has chanted that lay?”

“Easy for me to liken him,” says Fer rogain. “Taulchinne the chief juggler of the King of Tara; he is Conaire’s conjurer. A man of great might is that man. Thrice nine will fall by him in his first encounter, and he will share prowess with every one in the Hostel, and he will chance to escape therefrom though wounded. What then? Even on account of this man only the Destruction should not be wrought.”

“Long live he who should spare him!” says Lomna Druth.

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel, *etc.*

### THE ROOM OF THE SWINEHERDS

“I beheld a trio in the front of the house: three dark crowtufts on them: three green frocks around them: three dark mantles over them: three forked ...(?) above them on the side of the wall. Six black greaves they had on the mast. Who are yon, O Fer rogain?”

“Easy to say,” answers Fer rogain: “the three swineherds of the king, Dub and Donn and Dorcha: three brothers are they, three sons of Mapher of Tara. Long live he who should protect them! woe to him who shall slay them! for greater would be the triumph of protecting them than the triumph of slaying them!”

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel, *etc.*

### THE ROOM OF THE PRINCIPAL CHARIOTEERS

“I beheld another trio in front of them: three plates of gold on their foreheads: three short aprons they wore, of grey linen embroidered with gold: three crimson capes about them: three goads of bronze in their hands. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”

“I know them,” he answered. “Cul and Frecul and Forcul, the three charioteers of the King: three of the same age: three sons of Pole and Yoke. A man will perish by each of their weapons, and they will share the triumph of slaughter.”

### THE ROOM OF CUSCRAD SON OF CONCHOBAR

“I beheld another room. Therein were eight swordsmen, and among them a stripling. Black hair is on him, and very stammering speech has he. All the folk of the Hostel listen to his counsel. Handsomest of men he is: he wears a shirt and a bright-red mantle, with a brooch of silver therein.”



“I know him,” says Fer rogain: “’tis Cuscraid Menn of Armagh, Conchobar’s son, who is in hostageship with the king. And his guards are those eight swordsmen around him, namely, two Flanns, two Cummins, two Aeds, two Crimthans. They will share prowess with every one in the Hostel, and they will chance to escape from it with their fosterling.”

## **THE ROOM OF THE UNDER-CHARIOTEERS**

“I beheld nine men: on the mast were they. Nine capes they wore, with a purple loop. A plate of gold on the head of each of them. Nine goads in their hands. Liken thou.”



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“I know those,” quoth Fer rogain: “Riado, Riamcobur, Riade, Buadon, Buadchar, Buadgnad, Eirr, Ineirr, Argatlam—nine charioteers in apprenticeship with the three chief charioteers of the king. A man will perish at the hands of each of them,” *etc.*

### THE ROOM OF THE ENGLISHMEN

“On the northern side of the house I beheld nine men. Nine very yellow manes were on them. Nine linen frocks somewhat short were round them: nine purple plaids over them without brooches therein. Nine broad spears, nine red curved shields above them.”

“We know them,” quoth he. “Oswald and his two fosterbrothers, Osbrit Longhand and his two fosterbrothers, Lindas and his two fosterbrothers. Three crown-princes of England who are with the king. That set will share victorious prowess,” *etc.*

### THE ROOM OF THE EQUERRIES

“I beheld another trio. Three cropt heads of hair on them, three frocks they wore, and three mantles wrapt around them. A whip in the hand of each.”

“I know those,” quoth Fer rogain. “Echdruim, Echriud, Echruathar, the three horsemen of the king, that is, his three equerries. Three brothers are they, three sons of Argatron. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction, were it only because of that trio.”

### THE ROOM OF THE JUDGES

“I beheld another trio in the room by them. A handsome man who had got his baldness newly. By him were two young men with manes upon them. Three mixed plaids they wore. A pin of silver in the mantle of each of them. Three suits of armour above them on the wall. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”

“I know those,” quoth he. “Fergus Ferde, Fergus Fordae and Domaine Mossud, those are the king’s three judges. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction were it only because of that trio! A man will perish by each of them.”

### THE ROOM OF THE HARPERS

“To the east of them I beheld another ennead. Nine branchy, curly manes upon them. Nine grey, floating mantles about them: nine pins of gold in their mantles. Nine rings of crystal round their arms. A thumb-ring of gold round each man’s thumb: an ear-tie of gold round each man’s ear: a torque of silver round each man’s throat. Nine bags with



golden faces above them on the wall. Nine rods of white silver in their hands. Liken thou them.”

“I know those,” quoth Fer rogain. “They are the king’s nine harpers, with their nine harps above them: Side and Dide, Dulothe and Deichrinne, Caumul and Cellgen, Ol and Olene and Olchoi. A man will perish by each of them.”

## **THE ROOM OF THE CONJURORS**

“I saw another trio on the dais. Three bedgowns girt about them. Four-cornered shields in their hands, with bosses of gold upon them. Apples of silver they had, and small inlaid spears.”



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"I know them," says Fer rogain. "Cless and Clissine and Clessamun, the king's three conjurers. Three of the same age are they: three brothers, three sons of Naffer Rochless. A man will perish by each of them."

### THE ROOM OF THE THREE LAMPOONEERS

"I beheld another trio hard by the room of the King himself. Three blue mantles around them, and three bedgowns with red insertion over them. Their arms had been hung above them on the wall."

"I know those," quoth he. "Dris and Draigen and Aittit ('Thorn and Bramble and Furze'), the king's three lampooners, three sons of Sciath foilt. A man will perish by each of their weapons."

### THE ROOM OF THE BADBS

"I beheld a trio, naked, on the roof-tree of the house: their jets of blood coming through them, and the ropes of their slaughter on their necks."

"Those I know," saith he, "three ... of awful boding. Those are the three that are slaughtered at every time."

### THE ROOM OF THE KITCHENERS

"I beheld a trio cooking, in short inlaid aprons: a fair grey man, and two youths in his company."

"I know those," quoth Fer rogain: "they are the King's three chief kitcheners, namely, the Dagdae and his two fosterlings, Seig and Segdae, the two sons of Rofer Singlespit. A man will perish by each of them," *etc.*

"I beheld another trio there. Three plates of gold over their heads. Three speckled mantles about them: three linen shirts with red insertion: three golden brooches in their mantles: three wooden darts above them on the wall."

"Those I know," says Fer rogain: "the three poets of that king: Sui and Rodui and Fordui: three of the same age, three brothers: three sons of Maphar of the Mighty Song. A man will perish for each of them, and every pair will keep between them one man's victory. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction!" *etc.*



## THE ROOM OF THE SERVANT-GUARDS

“There I beheld two warriors standing over the king. Two curved shields they had, and two great pointed swords. Red kilts they wore, and in the mantles pins of white silver.”

“Bole and Root are those,” quoth he, “the king’s two guards, two sons of Maffer Toll.”

## THE ROOM OF THE KING’S GUARDSMEN

“I beheld nine men in a room there in front of the same room. Fair yellow manes upon them: short aprons they wore and spotted capes: they carried smiting shields. An ivory-hilted sword in the hand of each of them, and whoever enters the house they essay to smite him with the swords. No one dares to go to the room of the King without their consent. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”

“Easy for me is that. Three Mochmatnechs of Meath, three Buageltachs of Bregia, three Sostachs of Sliab Fuait, the nine guardsmen of that King. Nine decads will fall by them in their first conflict, *etc.* Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction because of them only!”



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“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel. “Clouds of weakness,” *etc.* “And whom sawest thou then?”

### THE ROOM OF NIA AND BRUTHNE, CONAIRE’S TWO WAITERS

“There I beheld another room, and a pair was in it, and they are ‘oxtubs,’ stout and thick. Aprons they wore, and the men were dark and brown. They had short back-hair on them, but high upon their foreheads. They are as swift as a waterwheel, each of them past another, one of them to the King’s room, the other to the fire. Liken thou those, O Fer rogain!”

“Easy to me. They are Nia and Bruthne, Conaire’s two table-servants. They are the pair that is best in Erin for their lord’s advantage. What causes brownness to them and height to their hair is their frequent haunting of the fire. In the world is no pair better in their art than they. Thrice nine men will fall by them in their first encounter, and they will share prowess with every one, and they will chance to escape. And after that whom sawest thou?”

### THE ROOM OF SENCHA AND DUBTHACH AND GOBNIU SON OF LURGNECH

“I beheld the room that is next to Conaire. Three chief champions, in their first greyness, are therein. As thick as a man’s waist is each of their limbs. They have three black swords, each as long as a weaver’s beam. These swords would split a hair on water. A great lance in the hand of the midmost man, with fifty rivets through it. The shaft therein is a good load for the yoke of a plough-team. The midmost man brandishes that lance so that its edge-studs hardly stay therein, and he strikes the haft thrice against his palm. There is a great boiler in front of them, as big as a calf’s caldron, wherein is a black and horrible liquid. Moreover he plunges the lance into that black fluid. If its quenching be delayed it flames on its shaft and then thou wouldst suppose that there is a fiery dragon in the top of the house. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”

“Easy to say. Three heroes who are best at grasping weapons in Erin, namely, Sencha the beautiful son of Ailill, and Dubthach Chafer of Ulaid, and Goibnenn son of Lurgnech. And the *Luin* of Celtchar son of Uthider which was found in the battle of Mag Tured, this is in the hand of Dubthach Chafer of Ulaid. That feat is usual for it when it is ripe to pour forth a foeman’s blood. A caldron full of poison is needed to quench it when a deed of man-slaying is expected. Unless this come to the lance, it flames on its haft and will go through its bearer or the master of the palace wherein it is. If it be a blow that is to be given thereby it will kill a man at every blow, when it is at that feat, from one



hour to another, though it may not reach him. And if it be a cast, it will kill nine men at every cast, and one of the nine will be a king or crown-prince or chieftain of the reavers.

“I swear what my tribe swears, there will be a multitude unto whom tonight the *Luin* of Celtchar will deal drinks of death in front of the Hostel. I swear to God what my tribe swears that, in their first encounter, three hundred will fall by that trio, and they will share prowess with every three in the Hostel tonight. And they will boast of victory over a king or chief of the reavers, and the three will chance to escape.”



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“Woe,” says Lomna Druth, “to him who shall wreak the Destruction, were it only because of that trio!”

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel, *etc.* “And after that, whom sawest thou there?”

### THE ROOM OF THE THREE MANX GIANTS

“There I beheld a room with a trio in it. Three men mighty, manly, overbearing, which see no one abiding at their three hideous crooked aspects. A fearful view because of the terror of them. A ... dress of rough hair covers them ... of cow's hair, without garments enwrapping down to the right heels. With three manes, equine, awful, majestic, down to their sides. Fierce heroes who wield against foeman hard-smiting swords. A blow, they give with three iron flails having seven chains triple-twisted, three-edged, with seven iron knobs at the end of every chain: each of them as heavy as an ingot of ten smeltings. Three big brown men. Dark equine back-manes on them, which reach their two heels. Two good thirds of an oxhide in the girdle round each one's waist, and each quadrangular clasp that closes it as thick as a man's thigh. The raiment that is round them is the dress that grows through them. Tresses of their back-manes were spread, and a long staff of iron, as long and thick as an outer yoke was in each man's hand, and an iron chain out of the end of every club, and at the end of every chain an iron pestle as long and thick as a middle yoke. They stand in their sadness in the house, and enough is the horror of their aspect. There is no one in the house that would not be avoiding them. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”

Fer rogain was silent. “Hard for me to liken them. I know none such of the world's men unless they be yon trio of giants to whom Cuchulainn gave quarter at the beleaguerment of the Men of Falga, and when they were getting quarter they killed fifty warriors. But Cuchulainn would not let them be slain, because of their wondrousness. These are the names of the three: Srubdaire son of Dordbruige, and Conchenn of Cenn maige, and Fiad sceme son of Scipe. Conaire bought them from Cuchulainn for ... so they are along with him. Three hundred will fall by them in their first encounter, and they will surpass in prowess every three in the Hostel; and if they come forth upon you, the fragments of you will be fit to go through the sieve of a corn-kiln, from the way in which they will destroy you with the flails of iron. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction, though it were only on account of those three! For to combat against them is not a 'paeon round a sluggard.’” “Ye cannot,” says Ingcel. “Clouds of weakness are coming to you,” *etc.* “And after that, whom sawest thou there?”

### THE ROOM OF DA DERGA

“There I beheld another room, with one man therein and in front of him two servants with two manes upon them, one of the two dark, the other fair. Red hair on the warrior,



and red eyebrows. Two ruddy cheeks he had, and an eye very blue and beautiful. He wore a green cloak and a shirt with a white hood and a red insertion. In his hand was a sword with a hilt of ivory, and he supplies attendance of every room in the house with ale and food, and he is quick-footed in serving the whole host. Liken thou that, O Ferrogain!"



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“I know those men. That one is Da Derga. 'Tis by him that the Hostel was built, and since it was built its doors have never been shut save on the side to which the wind comes—the valve is closed against it—and since he began housekeeping his caldron was never taken from the fire, but it has been boiling food for the men of Erin. The pair before him, those two youths, are his fosterlings, two sons of the king of Leinster, namely Muredach and Corpre. Three decads will fall by that trio in front of their house and they will boast of victory over a king or a chief of the reavers. After this they will chance to escape from it.”

“Long live he who should protect them!” says Lomna.

“Better were triumph of saving them than triumph of slaying them! They should be spared were it only on account of that man. 'Twere meet to give that man quarter,” says Lomna Druth.

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel. “Clouds,” *etc.* “And after that whom sawest thou there?”

### THE ROOM OF THE THREE CHAMPIONS FROM THE ELFMOUNDS

“There I beheld a room with a trio in it. Three red mantles they wore, and three red shirts, and three red heads of hair were on them. Red were they all together with their teeth. Three red shields above them. Three red spears in their hands. Three red horses in their bridles in front of the Hostel. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”

“Easily done. Three champions who wrought falsehood in the elfmounds. This is the punishment inflicted upon them by the king of the elfmounds, to be destroyed thrice by the King of Tara. Conaire son of Eterscel is the last king by whom they are destroyed. Those men will escape from you. To fulfil their own destruction, they have come. But they will not be slain, nor will they slay anyone. And after that whom sawest thou?”

### THE ROOM OF THE DOORWARDS

“There I beheld a trio in the midst of the house at the door. Three holed maces in their hands. Swift as a hare was each of them round the other towards the door. Aprons were on them, and they had gray and speckled mantles. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”

“Easily done: Three doorwardens of Tara’s King are those, namely Echur (‘Key’) and Tochur and Tecmang, three sons of Ersa (‘Doorpost’) and Comla (‘Valve’). Thrice their number will fall by them, and they will share a man’s triumph among them. They will chance to escape though wounded.”



“Woe to him that shall wreak!” *etc.*, says Lomna Druth.

“Ye cannot,” says Ingcel, *etc.* “And after that whom sawest thou?”

## THE ROOM OF FER CAILLE

“There I beheld at the fire in front a man with black cropt hair, having only one eye and one foot and one hand, having on the fire a pig bald, black, singed, squealing continually, and in his company a great big-mouthed woman. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”



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“Easily done: Fer caille with his pig and his wife Cichuil. They (the wife and the pig) are his proper instruments on the night that ye destroy Conaire King of Erin. Alas for the guest who will run between them! Fer caille with his pig is one of Conaire’s tabus.”

“Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction!” says Lomna.

“Ye cannot,” quoth Ingcel. “And after that, whom sawest thou there?”

### THE ROOM OF THE THREE SONS OF BAITHIS OF BRITAIN

“There I beheld a room with three enneads in it. Fair yellow manes upon them, and they are equally beautiful. Each of them wore a black cape, and there was a white hood on each mantle, a red tuft on each hood, and an iron brooch at the opening of every mantle, and under each man’s cloak a huge black sword, and the swords would split a hair on water. They bore shields with scalloped edges. Liken thou them, O Fer rogain!”

“Easily done. That is the robber-band of the three sons of Baithis of Britain. Three enneads will fall by them in their first conflict, and among them they will share a man’s triumph. And after that whom sawest thou?”

### THE ROOM OF THE MIMES

“There I beheld a trio of jesters hard by the fire. Three dun mantles they wore. If the men of Erin were in one place, even though the corpse of his mother or his father were in front of each, not one could refrain from laughing at them. Wheresoever the king of a cantred is in the house, not one of them attains his seat on his bed because of that trio of jesters. Whenever the king’s eye visits them it smiles at every glance. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”

“Easily done. Mael and Mlithe and Admlithe—those are the king of Erin’s three jesters. By each of them a man will perish, and among them they will share a man’s triumph.”

“Woe to him that will wreak the Destruction!” says Lomna, *etc.* “And after that whom sawest thou there?”

### THE ROOM OF THE CUPBEARERS

“There I beheld a room with a trio in it. Three grey-floating mantles they wore. There was a cup of water in front of each man, and on each cup a bunch of watercress. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”



“Easily done. Black and Dun and Dark: they are the King of Tara’s three cupbearers, to wit, the sons of Day and Night. And after that, whom sawest thou there?”

## **THE ROOM OF NAR THE SQUINTER-WITH-THE-LEFT-EYE**

“There I beheld a one-eyed man asquint with a ruinous eye. A swine’s head he had on the fire, continually squealing. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!”

“Easy for me to name the like. He is Nar the Squinter with the left eye, the swineherd of Bodb of the Elfmound on Femen, ’tis he that is over the cooking. Blood hath been spilt at every feast at which he has ever been present.”



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“Rise up, then, ye champions!” says Ingcel, “and get you on to the house!”

With that the reavers march to the Hostel, and made a murmur about it.

“Silence a while!” says Conaire, “what is this?”

“Champions at the house,” says Conall Cernach.

“There are warriors for them here,” answers Conaire.

“They will be needed tonight,” Conall Cernach rejoins.

Then went Lomna Druth before the host of reavers into the Hostel. The doorkeepers struck off his head. Then the head was thrice flung into the Hostel, and thrice cast out of it, as he himself had foretold.

Then Conaire himself sallies out of the Hostel together with some of his people, and they fight a combat with the host of reavers, and six hundred fell by Conaire before he could get to his arms. Then the Hostel is thrice set on fire, and thrice put out from thence: and it was granted that the Destruction would never have been wrought had not work of weapons been taken from Conaire.

Thereafter Conaire went to seek his arms, and he dons his battle-dress, and falls to plying his weapons on the reavers, together with the band that he had. Then, after getting his arms, six hundred fell by him in his first encounter.

After this the reavers were routed. “I have told you,” says Fer rogain son of Donn Desa, “that if the champions of the men of Erin and Alba attack Conaire at the house, the Destruction will not be wrought unless Conaire’s fury and valour be quelled.”

“Short will his time be,” say the wizards along with the reavers. This was the quelling they brought, a scantness of drink that seized him.

Thereafter Conaire entered the house, and asked for a drink.

“A drink to me, O master Mac cecht!” says Conaire.

Says Mac cecht: “This is not the order that I have hitherto had from thee, to give thee a drink. There are spencers and cupbearers who bring drink to thee. The order I have hitherto had from thee is to protect thee when the champions of the men of Erin and Alba may be attacking thee around the Hostel. Thou wilt go safe from them, and no spear shall enter thy body. Ask a drink of thy spencers and thy cupbearers.”



Then Conaire asked a drink of his spencers and his cupbearers who were in the house.

“In the first place there is none,” they say; “all the liquids that had been in the house have been spilt on the fires.”

The cupbears found no drink for him in the Dodder (a river), and the Dodder had flowed through the house.

Then Conaire again asked for a drink. “A drink to me, O fosterer, O Mac cecht! ’Tis equal to me what death I shall go to, for anyhow I shall perish.”

Then Mac cecht gave a choice to the champions of valour of the men of Erin who were in the house, whether they cared to protect the King or to seek a drink for him.



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Conall Cernach answered this in the house—and cruel he deemed the contention, and afterwards he had always a feud with Mac cecht.—“Leave the defence of the King to us,” says Conall, “and go thou to seek the drink, for of thee it is demanded.”

So then Mac cecht fared forth to seek the drink, and he took Conaire’s son, Le fri flaith, under his armpit, and Conaire’s golden cup, in which an ox with a bacon-pig would be boiled; and he bore his shield and his two spears and his sword, and he carried the caldron-spit, a spit of iron.

He burst forth upon them, and in front of the Hostel he dealt nine blows of the iron spit, and at every blow nine reavers fell. Then he makes a sloping feat of the shield and an edge-feat of the sword about his head, and he delivered a hostile attack upon them. Six hundred fell in his first encounter, and after cutting down hundreds he goes through the band outside.

The doings of the folk of the Hostel, this is what is here examined, presently.

Conall Cernach arises, and takes his weapons, and wends over the door of the Hostel, and goes round the house. Three hundred fell by him, and he hurls back the reavers over three ridges out from the Hostel, and boasts of triumph over a king, and returns, wounded, into the Hostel.

Cormac Condlongas sallies out, and his nine comrades with him, and they deliver their onsets on the reavers. Nine enneads fall by Cormac and nine enneads by his people, and a man for each weapon and a man for each man. And Cormac boasts of the death of a chief of the reavers. They succeed in escaping though they be wounded.

The trio of Picts sally forth from the Hostel, and take to plying their weapons on the reavers. And nine enneads fall by them, and they chance to escape though they be wounded.

The nine pipers sally forth and dash their warlike work on the reavers; and then they succeed in escaping.

Howbeit then, but it is long to relate, ’tis weariness of mind, ’tis confusion of the senses, ’tis tediousness to hearers, ’tis superfluity of narration to go over the same things twice. But the folk of the Hostel came forth in order, and fought their combats with the reavers, and fell by them, as Fer rogain and Lomna Druth had said to Ingcel, to wit, that the folk of every room would sally forth still and deliver their combat, and after that escape. So that none were left in the Hostel in Conaire’s company save Conall and Sencha and Dubthach.

Now from the vehement ardour and the greatness of the contest which Conaire had fought, his great drouth of thirst attacked him, and he perished of a consuming fever, for



he got not his drink. So when the king died those three sally out of the Hostel, and deliver a wily stroke of reaving on the reavers, and fare forth from the Hostel, wounded, to-broken and maimed.

Touching Mac cecht, however, he went his way till he reached the Well of Casair, which was near him in Crich Cualann; but of water he found not therein the full of his cup, that is, Conaire's golden cup which he had brought in his hand. Before morning he had gone round the chief rivers of Erin, to wit, Bush, Boyne, Bann, Barrow, Neim, Luae, Laigdae, Shannon, Suir, Sligo, Samair, Find, Ruirthech, Slaney, and in them he found not the full of his cup of water.



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Then before morning he had travelled to the chief lakes of Erin, to wit, Lough Derg, Loch Luimnig, Lough Foyle, Lough Mask, Long Corrib, Loch Laig, Loch Cuan, Lough Neagh, Morloch, and of water he found not therein the full of his cup.

He went his way till he reached Uaran Garad on Magh Ai. It could not hide itself from him: so he brought thereout the full of his cup, and the boy fell under his covering.

After this he went on and reached Da Derga's Hostel before morning.

When Mac cecht went across the third ridge towards the house, 'tis there were twain striking off Conaire's head. Then Mac cecht strikes off the head of one of the two men who were beheading Conaire. The other man then was fleeing forth with the king's head. A pillar-stone chanced to be under Mac cecht's feet on the floor of the Hostel. He hurls it at the man who had Conaire's head and drove it through his spine, so that his back broke. After this Mac cecht beheads him. Mac cecht then spilt the cup of water into Conaire's gullet and neck. Then said Conaire's head, after the water had been put into its neck and gullet:

"A good man Mac cecht! an excellent man Mac cecht!  
A good warrior without, good within,  
He gives a drink, he saves a king, he doth a deed.  
Well he ended the champions I found.  
He sent a flagstone on the warriors.  
Well he hewed by the door of the Hostel ... Fer le,  
So that a spear is against one hip.  
Good should I be to far-renowned Mac cecht  
If I were alive. A good man!"

After this Mac cecht followed the routed foe.

'Tis this that some books relate, that but a very few fell around Conaire, namely, nine only. And hardly a fugitive escaped to tell the tidings to the champions who had been at the house.

Where there had been five thousand—and in every thousand ten hundred—only one set of five escaped, namely Ingcel, and his two brothers Echell and Tulchinne, the "Yearling of the Reavers"—three great-grandsons of Conmac, and the two Reds of Roiriu who had been the first to wound Conaire.

Thereafter Ingcel went into Alba, and received the kingship after his father, since he had taken home triumph over a king of another country.



This, however, is the recension in other books, and it is more probably truer. Of the folk of the Hostel forty or fifty fell, and of the reavers three fourths and one fourth of them only escaped from the Destruction.

Now when Mac cecht was lying wounded on the battle-field, at the end of the third day, he saw a woman passing by.

“Come hither, O woman!” says Mac cecht.

“I dare not go thus,” says the woman, “for horror and fear of thee.”

“There was a time when I had this, O woman, even horror and fear of me on some one. But now thou shouldst fear nothing. I accept thee on the truth of my honour and my safeguard.”



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Then the woman goes to him.

"I know not," says he, "whether it is a fly or a gnat, or an ant that nips me in the wound."

It happened that it was a hairy wolf that was there, as far as its two shoulders in the wound!

The woman seized it by the tail, and dragged it out of the wound, and it takes the full of its jaws out of him.

"Truly," says the woman, "this is 'an ant of ancient land.'"

Says Mac cecht "I swear to God what my people swears, I deemed it no bigger than a fly, or a gnat, or an ant."

And Mac cecht took the wolf by the throat, and struck it a blow on the forehead, and killed it with a single blow.

Then Le fri flaith, son of Conaire, died under Mac cecht's armpit, for the warrior's heat and sweat had dissolved him.

Thereafter Mac cecht, having cleansed the slaughter, at the end of the third day, set forth, and he dragged Conaire with him on his back, and buried him at Tara, as some say. Then Mac cecht departed into Connaught, to his own country, that he might work his cure in Mag Brengair. Wherefore the name clave to the plain from Mac cecht's misery, that is, Mag Bren-guir.

Now Conall Cernach escaped from the Hostel, and thrice fifty spears had gone through the arm which upheld his shield. He fared forth till he reached his father's house, with half his shield in his hand, and his sword, and the fragments of his two spears. Then he found his father before his garth in Taltiu.

"Swift are the wolves that have hunted thee, my son," saith his father.

"'Tis this that has wounded us, thou old hero, an evil conflict with warriors," Conall Cernach replied.

"Hast thou then news of Da Derga's Hostel?" asked Amorgin. "Is thy lord alive?"

"He is *not* alive," says Conall.

"I swear to God what the great tribes of Ulaid swear, it is cowardly for the man who went thereout alive, having left his lord with his foes in death."

"My wounds are not white, thou old hero," says Conall.



He shews him his shield-arm, whereon were thrice fifty wounds: this is what was inflicted upon it. The shield that guarded it is what saved it. But the right arm had been played upon, as far as two thirds thereof, since the shield had not been guarding it. That arm was mangled and maimed and wounded and pierced, save that the sinews kept it to the body without separation.

“That arm fought tonight, my son,” says Amorgein.

“True is that, thou old hero,” says Conall Cernach. “Many there are unto whom it gave drinks of death tonight in front of the Hostel.”

Now as to the reavers, every one of them that escaped from the Hostel went to the cairn which they had built on the night before last, and they brought thereout a stone for each man not mortally wounded. So this is what they lost by death at the Hostel, a man for every stone that is (now) in Carn Lecca.

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It endeth: Amen: it endeth.