

Stories of Roland

CLASSIC LIT FOR YOUNG READERS

TOLD BY H.E. MARSHALL

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Roland

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Libraries of Hope

Stories of Roland
Classic Literature for Young Readers

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Stories of Roland

Told to the Children by
HENRIETTA E. MARSHALL

With Pictures by
L.D. LUARD

About This Book

The book from which these stories are taken is called the Song of Roland, for when the tales were first written down they were written as poetry. That was many hundreds of years ago. They were then set to music and sung to the sound of the harp by the minstrels, who strolled from place to place, singing of love and death, of battle and reward. For in those days, long, long ago, when there were not many books and few could read, it was from the songs of the minstrels that the people learned the history of their country and the stories of their brave men.

The stories were told from minstrel to minstrel, from father to son, and were often changed in the telling. Sometimes

a singer would forget a part, or another who was good at telling stories would add a little. Even when the stories were written down they were changed too, for there was no printing in those days, and the people who copied the poems would sometimes add or leave out parts, and sometimes a great poet would come, who, instead of copying merely, would tell the story in quite a new way. And so in time it happened that true history and fairy tale were interwoven, until at last it was hard to tell which was which.

And this is what happened with the stories that I have tried to tell again here. Charlemagne, the great king of whom they speak, belongs to history. He was very wise and powerful, although he lived more than a thousand years ago. He ruled over a vast empire, which stretched from the borders of Spain over half of Germany, at a time when our island was

divided into several kingdoms, ruled by several kings.

We know from history that Charlemagne went to Spain to fight the Saracens and that as he returned home he was defeated. For the rest, the Song of Roland is a fairy tale. But through the ages it has come down to us, a song of soldiers and of chivalry. To the sound of it many a time the Frankish warrior must have marched to battle. To the sound of it the Normans marched upon the dreadful day of Hastings, when our Harold met his death, and for this reason, if for no other, to us it should be interesting.

H.E. MARSHALL
Oxford, 1907

King Marsil's Council

For seven long years the great King Charlemagne had been fighting in Spain against the Saracens. From shore to shore he had conquered the land. Everywhere the heathen people had bowed before him, owning him as their master and Christ as their God. Only the fair city of Saragossa, sitting safe among its hills, was yet unconquered. But Charlemagne had taken the not far distant Cordres, and he now was making ready to march against Saragossa.

King Marsil knew not how to save his city from the conqueror. So one day he seated himself upon his marble throne, and called his wise men together. The throne was set under the shade of his great orchard trees, for there, when the

summer sun was hot, he held his court.

'My lords,' he said, 'great Karl of France besets our town. No host have I strong enough to meet him in the field, none that may guard our walls against him. I pray you, my lords, give me counsel. How shall we guard us, that shame and death come not upon us?'

Then all the wise men were silent, for well they knew the power and might of Charlemagne, and they wist not what to counsel.

At last Blancandrin spoke. A knight of great valour was he, and of all the heathen lords he was the wisest and most prudent. And when he spoke, all men listened.

'Send a message to this proud and haughty Karl,' he said. 'Promise him great friendship, give him rich presents of lions, bears and dogs; seven hundred camels ye shall send unto him, a thou-

sand falcons. Give him four hundred mules laden with gold and silver; give him as much as fifty wagons may hold, so that he may have gold and to spare with which to pay his soldiers. But say to him, "Too long hast thou been far from France. Return, return to thy fair city of Aix, and there at the feast of Holy Michael will I come to thee and be thy man, and be baptized, and learn of thy gentle Christ." Charlemagne will ask hostages of thee. Well, give them—ten—twenty—whatever he may ask of thee. We will give our sons. See! I will be the first, I will give my son. And if he perish it is better so than that we should all be driven from our land to die in beggary and shame.'

Then Blancandrin was silent, and all the heathen lords cried aloud, 'It is well spoken.'

'Yea,' Blancandrin went on, 'by my

long beard I swear, then shalt thou see the Franks quickly return to their own land, each man to his home. St. Michael's Day will dawn. Charlemagne will hold a great feast awaiting thee. But the days will pass and thou wilt not come. Then, for the Emperor is terrible and his wrath fierce, he will slay our sons whom he holds as hostages for thee. Better so, I say, than that we should lose fair Spain and live in slavery and woe.'

'Yea, so say we all!' cried the heathen lords.

'So be it,' said King Marsil; 'let it be done as Blancandrin hath said.'

Then one by one the King called ten of his greatest lords about him. 'Go ye with Blancandrin,' he said. 'Take olive branches in your hands in token of peace and lowliness. Say to the great Karl that for the sake of his gentle Christ he shall show pity upon me, and give me peace.

Say that ere a month has gone I will follow after you. Then will I kneel to him, and put my hands in his, and swear to be his true and faithful vassal. Then shall he sprinkle me with the water of Holy Christ, and I shall be his for evermore.'

All this King Marsil said with treachery in his heart, for well he knew that he would do none of these things.

'It is well,' said Blancandrin, 'the peace is sure.'

Then mounted upon white mules, with saddles of silver and harness of gold, with olive branches in their hands and followed by a great train of slaves carrying rich presents, Blancandrin and the ten messengers set out to seek the court of the great Christian King, Charlemagne.

The Emperor Charlemagne's Council

The Emperor Charlemagne was well pleased, for at last, after much fighting, he had taken the city of Cordres. The walls lay in ruins, and with his great war engines he had shattered the towers and turrets. Within the town his knights had found rich plunder of gold and silver and precious stones, of wrought armour and princely weapons. So they were well rewarded for days of fighting and of toil.

But most of all Charlemagne was glad that not a heathen man remained within the walls. For those who would not be baptized, and become good Christian men, had been slain. Such was the great Emperor's way. To every prisoner was given the choice to live as Christian or to

die as heathen.

And now, resting after his labours and his battles, great Karl sat in a sunny orchard. Around him were gathered his mighty men. Wise and old, bearded and grave, they sat upon gay carpets spread upon the ground, talking together or playing chess. Of the younger knights, some wrestled or ran or tried their strength in friendly wise in the cool shadow of the trees. Among them was the Emperor's nephew Roland, the bravest knight of France, and his fast friend Oliver.

And into the cool shade of the orchard, where these knights rested and played, rode Blancandrin and his train, on their white mules. Bending low before Charlemagne, 'In the name of God we greet thee,' said the messengers.

Then kneeling humbly, Blancandrin spoke. 'The valiant King Marsil sends me

to thee,' he said, 'with presents rich and rare. He promises to become thy vassal; he will place his hands within thy hands, and swear to serve thee. But already thou hast been too long time distant from thy fair realm of France. Go back, and there will King Marsil come to do thee homage.'

When Blancandrin had finished speaking, the Emperor bowed his head in thought. He was never quick to speak, and now he pondered long before he answered the kneeling stranger. In silence around him, his own knights and the messengers of Spain awaited his reply.

At last Charlemagne raised his head. 'Thou hast spoken well,' he said to Blancandrin, 'but King Marsil is my great enemy. Thy words are fair, but how may I know if there be any truth in them?'

This was even as Blancandrin had foreseen. 'We will give thee hostages,' he

said, 'ten—twenty—whatever number thou wilt ask. I will send mine own son to thee. And if we keep not faith with thee, if King Marsil come not, as he swears he will, to bow the knee to thee and receive the baptism of Holy Christ, then mayest thou slay them all.'

'So be it'; said Charlemagne, 'it seemeth me King Marsil may yet find grace.'

Then as the day was far gone, and the evening sun sent long shadows through the trees, the Emperor gave orders that the Saracens should be lodged with honour, that every respect should be paid to them and that they should be waited upon as noble guests.

So the night passed and very early in the morning, Charlemagne rose. And after hearing morning prayer, he called his wise men round him that they might give him counsel.

'My lords and barons,' he said, 'King

Marsil hath sent messengers to me with fair words and rich presents. He promises to be my vassal and to be baptized in the name of Holy Christ. And to this end he will follow me to France, if I now return thither. But how may I know whether he lie to me, or whether he speak truth?'

'Beware of him, beware!' cried the Franks.

Then, as silence once more fell upon them, Roland rose. His cheek was flushed, his eye flashed in anger. 'Believe not thou this Marsil!' he cried. 'He was ever a traitor. Once before, dost thou not remember it, there came from him false messengers, with olive branches in their hands and lies upon their lips. And when thou sentest two of thy knights to him, he smote off their heads. Listen not unto him, but end as thou hast begun. Carry the war to Saragossa, and if the siege should last all thy life long, it were still

worth it, to avenge the death of our noble knights upon this felon Marsil. War! I say war!'

The Emperor bent his head. With his fingers he twisted his long white beard as he sat in thought, and to his nephew he answered no word good or bad. Around him stood his knights and nobles, silent too.

Then in the stillness, a knight whose name was Ganelon sprang up. His face was dark and haughty, and with proud gestures he strode to the foot of the throne. 'Listen not to the counsel of fools!' he cried. 'Think rather of thine own best good. King Marsil's gifts and promises, I say, thou oughtest to accept. He who counselleth thee to refuse is a fool, and thinketh not of the death we all may die. Listen not to the counsel of pride. Let fools be, and hearken to the wise.' And casting a look of dark hatred

at Roland, Ganelon was silent.

Then from his seat an old man rose. He was the Duke Naimes. His face was brown and wrinkled, his beard was white and long, and in all the Emperor's court there was none more wise than he.

Turning to the Emperor, 'Thou hast heard,' he said, 'the words of Count Ganelon. It is wise counsel that he giveth. Let it be followed. King Marsil is vanquished in war. Thou hast taken all his castles, the walls of his towns are laid low by thy war engines, his villages are burned, his men are beaten. To-day he prays thee to have mercy upon him, and thou wrongest thyself if thou refuse. Send, I counsel thee, one of thy knights to Saragossa to speak with King Marsil, for it is time that this great war should end, and that we return to our own land.'

Then all the Franks cried out, 'The Duke hath spoken well.'

'My lords and barons,' said the Emperor, 'since ye think it well, whom shall we send to do our bidding at Saragossa?'

'I will go right gladly,' said Duke Naimes. 'Give me here and now thy glove and mace as tokens that I am thy messenger, and let me go.'

'Nay,' replied the Emperor, 'wisest art thou in counsel. By my beard, thou shalt not go so far from me! Sit thee down, I command thee!'

Duke Naimes was silent, and again the Emperor spoke. 'My lords and barons, whom will ye that we send?'

'Send me!' cried Roland, 'right joyfully will I go.'

'Nay,' said Oliver, springing forward, 'nay, not so. Too fiery of temper art thou. Thou wouldst bring but evil out of this. Let me go rather, if the Emperor will.'

'Be silent, both!' thundered Charlemagne. 'Not a step shall ye go, either one

or other of you. Nay, by my white beard, I swear none of my twelve chosen peers shall go.' For Roland and Oliver were two of the twelve noblest and best of Charlemagne's knights, known as the Peers of France.

Before the anger of the Emperor the Franks stood silent and abashed. Then from the ranks of knights, Turpin, the old Archbishop of Rheims, stepped out. Raising his clear, strong voice, he spoke. 'Sire,' he cried, 'thy knights and barons have suffered much in war these seven long years. Let them now rest. But give to me thy glove and mace. I will find this Saracen lord, and will speak unto him my mind.'

'Nay,' said the Emperor, and his brow grew yet more dark, 'nay, by my troth thou shalt not go. Sit thee down, and speak not again until I command thee.' Then, as Turpin was silent and went

back to his place, once again the Emperor turned to his knights. 'My lords of France,' he cried, 'now choose ye, choose ye whom we shall send to do our bidding at Saragossa!'

'Ah!' said Roland, 'if I may not go, then send Ganelon my step-father. Nowhere canst thou find a better knight or wiser man.'

'Well said! well said!' shouted the Franks. 'If so the Emperor will, there were no man better.'

'Good,' replied Charlemagne, 'Ganelon it shall be. Approach, Count, and receive the mace and glove. The Franks have chosen thee. Thou hast heard.'

But Ganelon stood in his place white and trembling with passion. 'This is Roland's work,' he said in a voice low, yet sharp with anger. 'For this, I vow, I will love him no more. No more will I love Oliver, for he is Roland's friend. No more

will I love the Peers, for they are his companions. There, Sire, before thy face I fling defiance at them.'

'Ganelon,' replied the Emperor sternly, 'there is too much anger here. Since I order it, thou shalt go.'

'Oh, I will go,' cried Ganelon mad with anger, 'I will go, and I will die as the two knights before me died. For if I go to Saragossa, I know well that I shall never return.' Then seeing that his anger moved not the Emperor one whit, he began to speak in a pleading, gentle voice. 'Forget not thou thy sister who is my wife,' he said. 'Forget not my son, too. Oh, my pretty boy! If he lives he will be a noble knight, and to him I leave all my lands and riches. Be thou good to him and love him, for I shall never see him more.'

'Ganelon,' said Charlemagne scornfully, 'thy heart is too tender methinks. If

I command thee to go, go thou must.'

And now Count Ganelon's anger knew no bounds. Shaking with wrath, he flung his cloak backward from his shoulders, showing the silken vest which he wore beneath. He was very tall and splendid, and his dark proud face glowed with passion, and his grey eyes glittered as he turned to Roland. 'Fool,' he cried, 'dastard, why this hatred against me? Ah! every one knows. I am thy step-father, and therefore hast thou condemned me to go to Marsil and to death. But wait,' he went on, his voice trembling and choking with passion, 'wait, and if it please Heaven that I return, I will bring upon thee such sorrow and mourning as shall last all thy life long.'

'Pride and folly,' laughed Roland scornfully, 'thou knowest that I care not for thy threats. But such a message as that upon which the Emperor now sends

thee requires a man of wisdom, and if so the Emperor will, I will take thy place.'

But neither did this please Ganelon. 'Thou art not my vassal,' he cried, 'nor am I thy lord. The Emperor hath commanded me to go to Saragossa, and go I shall. But I shall do thee and thy companions an evil to avenge me of this day.'

At that Count Roland laughed aloud in scorn.

When Ganelon heard Roland laugh he became as one beside himself. His face grew purple with anger, he gasped and choked. 'I hate thee,' he hissed at last, 'I hate thee!' Then struggling to be calm he turned once more to the Emperor. 'Great Karl,' he said, 'I am ready to do thy will.'

'Fair Sir Ganelon,' said the Emperor, 'this is my message to the heathen King Marsil. Say to him that he shall bend the knee to gentle Christ and be baptized in His name. Then will I give him full half



"I hate thee," hissed Ganelon.

of Spain to hold in fief. Over the other half Count Roland, my nephew well-beloved, shall reign. If Marsil doth not choose to accept these terms then will I march to Saragossa. I will besiege and take his city. I will bind him hand and foot, and will lead him prisoner to Aix, my royal seat. There he shall be tried, and judged and slain, dying a death of torture and disgrace. Here is the letter which I have sealed with my seal. Give thou it into the hands of the heathen lord.'

Thus speaking, the Emperor held out the letter and his right hand glove to Ganelon. But he, in his anger scarce knowing what he did, as he knelt to take them, let the glove slip from his fingers, and it fell to the ground between them.

'Alas!' cried the Franks, 'that is an evil omen. Ill-luck will come to us of this quest.'

'Ye shall have news of it anon,' said Ganelon darkly, turning from them. Then to the Emperor he said, 'Sire, let me go. Since go I must, why delay?'

The Emperor raised his hand, and signed him with the sign of the cross. 'Go,' he said, 'in Christ's name and mine.' And giving his mace into Ganelon's hand, he bade him God-speed.

Without a look at the gathered peers, without a word of farewell, Ganelon turned on his heel, and went to his own house. There he clad himself in his finest armour. Golden spurs were bound upon his feet, a cloak of rich fur and silk was flung about his shoulders. Murglies, his famous sword, he girt to his side, and as he sprang upon his horse Taschebrun, many a knight pressed round him to say farewell, many begged to be allowed to go with him. For they were gallant knights and bold, and to go upon a quest of dan-

ger was their greatest joy. But Ganelon would have none of them. 'God forbid!' he cried; 'I had rather go upon my death alone. But, gentle sirs, ye return to fair France, whither I too would fain go. Greet there for me my dear lady and my boy. Defend him and guard his rights as ye would your own.' Then with bent head Ganelon turned slowly from their sight, and rode to join the heathen Blancandrin.

As he journeyed, his heart was heavy. Sadly he thought of that fair France which he might never see again, more sadly still of his wife and child whom never again perhaps would he hold in his arms. Then his heart grew hot with jealous anger at the thought that these knights and nobles whom he hated would now soon return to France, and that he alone of all that gallant host would be left to die in heathen Spain.

Ganelon's Treason

As Ganelon and Blancandrin rode along together beneath the olive-trees and through the fruitful vineyards of sunny Spain, the heathen began to talk cunningly. 'What a wonderful knight is thy Emperor,' he said. 'He hath conquered the world from sea to sea. But why cometh he within our borders? Why left he us not in peace?'

'It was his will,' replied Ganelon. 'There is no man in all the world so great as he. None may stand against him.'

'You Franks are gallant men indeed,' said Blancandrin, 'but your dukes and counts deserve blame when they counsel the Emperor to fight with us now.'

'There is none deserveth that blame save Roland,' said Ganelon. 'Such pride

as his ought to be punished. Oh, that some one would slay him!' he cried fiercely. 'Then should we have peace.'

'This Roland is very cruel,' said Blancandrin, 'to wish to conquer all the world as he does. But in whom does he trust for help?'

'In the Franks,' said Ganelon. 'They love him with such a great love that they think he can do no wrong. He giveth them gold and silver, jewels and armour, so they serve him. Even to the Emperor himself he maketh rich presents. He will not rest until he hath conquered all the world, from east to west.'

The Saracen looked at Ganelon out of the corner of his eye. He was a right noble knight, but now that his face was dark with wrath and jealousy, he looked like a felon.

'Listen thou to me,' said Blancandrin softly. 'Dost wish to be avenged upon

Roland? Then by Mahomet deliver him into our hands. King Marsil is very generous; for such a kindness he will willingly give unto thee of his countless treasure.'

Ganelon heard the tempter's voice, but he rode onward as if unheeding, his chin sunken upon his breast, his eyes dark with hatred.

But long ere the ride was ended and Saragossa reached, the heathen lord and Christian knight had plotted together for the ruin of Roland.

At length the journey was over, and Ganelon lighted down before King Marsil, who awaited him beneath the shadow of his orchard trees, seated upon a marble throne covered with rich silken rugs. Around him crowded his nobles, silent and eager to learn how Blancandrin had fared upon his errand.

Bowing low, Blancandrin approached

the throne, leading Ganelon by the hand. 'Greeting,' he said, 'in the name of Mahomet. Well, O Marsil, have I done thy behest to the mighty Christian King. But save that he raised his hands to heaven and gave thanks to his God, no answer did he render to me. But unto thee he sendeth one of his nobles, a very powerful man in France. From him shalt thou learn if thou shalt have peace or war.'

'Let him speak,' said King Marsil. 'We will listen.'

'Greeting,' said Ganelon, 'in the name of God—the God of glory whom we ought all to adore. Listen ye to the command of Charlemagne:—Thou, O king, shalt receive the Christian faith, then half of Spain will he leave to thee to hold in fief. The other half shall be given to Count Roland—a haughty companion thou wilt have there. If thou wilt not

agree to this, Charlemagne will besiege Saragossa, and thou shalt be led captive to Aix, there to die a vile and shameful death.'

King Marsil shook with anger and turned pale. In his hand he held an arrow fledged with gold. Now, springing from his throne, he raised his arm as if he would strike Ganelon. But the knight laid his hand upon his sword and drew it half out of the scabbard. 'Sword,' he cried, 'thou art bright and beautiful; oft have I carried thee at the court of my king. It shall never be said of me that I died alone in a foreign land, among fierce foes, ere thou wert dipped in the blood of their bravest and best.'

For a few moments the heathen king and the Christian knight eyed each other in deep silence. Then the air was filled with shouts. 'Part them, part them,' cried the Saracens.

The noblest of the Saracens rushed between their king and Ganelon. 'It was a foolish trick to raise thy hand against the Christian knight,' said Marsil's Calif, seating him once more upon his throne. ''Twere well to listen to what he hath to say.'

'Sir,' said Ganelon proudly, 'thinkest thou for all the threats in the wide world I will be silent and not speak the message which the mighty Charlemagne sendeth to his mortal enemy? Nay, I would speak, if ye were all against me.' And keeping his right hand still upon the golden pommel of his sword, with his left he unclasped his cloak of fur and silk and cast it upon the steps of the throne. There, in his strength and splendour, he stood defying them all.

''Tis a noble knight!' cried the heathen in admiration.

Then once more turning to King

Marsil, Ganelon gave him the Emperor's letter. As he broke the seal and read, Marsil's brow grew black with anger. 'Listen, my lords,' he cried; 'because I slew yonder insolent Christian knights, the Emperor Charlemagne bids me beware his wrath. He commands that I shall send unto him as hostage mine uncle the Calif.'

'This is some madness of Ganelon!' cried a heathen knight. 'He is only worthy of death. Give him unto me, and I will see that justice is done upon him.' So saying, he laid his hand upon his sword.

Like a flash of lightning Ganelon's good blade Murglies sprang from its sheath, and with his back against a tree, the Christian knight prepared to defend himself to the last. But once again the fight was stopped, and this time Blancandrin led Ganelon away.

Then, walking alone with the king, Blancandrin told of all that he had done, and of how even upon the way hither, Ganelon had promised to betray Roland, who was Charlemagne's greatest warrior. 'And if he die,' said Blancandrin, 'then is our peace sure.'

'Bring hither the Christian knight to me,' cried King Marsil.

So Blancandrin went, and once more leading Ganelon by the hand, brought him before the king.

'Fair Sir Ganelon,' said the wily heathen, 'I did a rash and foolish thing when in anger I raised my hand to strike at thee. As a token that thou wilt forget it, accept this cloak of sable. It is worth five hundred pounds in gold.' And lifting a rich cloak, he clasped it about the neck of Ganelon.

'I may not refuse it,' said the knight, looking down. 'May Heaven reward

thee!'

'Trust me, Sir Ganelon,' said King Marsil, 'I love thee well. But keep thou our counsels secret. I would hear thee talk of Charlemagne. He is very old, is he not?—more than two hundred years old. He must be worn out and weary, for he hath fought so many battles and humbled so many kings in the dust. He ought to rest now from his labours in his city of Aix.'

Ganelon shook his head. 'Nay,' he said, 'such is not Charlemagne. All those who have seen him know that our Emperor is a true warrior. I know not how to praise him enough before you, for there is nowhere a man so full of valour and of goodness. I would rather die than leave his service.'

'In truth,' said Marsil, 'I marvel greatly. I had thought that Charlemagne had been old and worn. Then if it is not

so, when will he cease his wars?'

'Ah,' said Ganelon, 'that he will never do so long as his nephew Roland lives. Under the arch of heaven there bides no baron so splendid or so proud. Oliver, his friend, also is full of prowess and of valour. With them and his peers beside him, Charlemagne feareth no man.'

'Fair Sir Ganelon,' said King Marsil boldly, knowing his hatred, 'tell me, how shall I slay Roland?'

'That I can tell thee,' said Ganelon. 'Promise thou the Emperor all that he asketh of thee. Send hostages and presents to him. He will then return to France. His army will pass through the valley of Roncesvalles. I will see to it that Roland and his friend Oliver lead the rear-guard. They will lag behind the rest of the army, then there shalt thou fall upon them with all thy mighty men. I say

not but that thou shalt lose many a knight, for Roland and his Peers will fight right manfully. But in the end, being so many more than they, thou shalt conquer. Roland shall lie dead, and slaying him thou wilt cut off the right arm of Charlemagne. Then farewell to the wondrous army of France. Never again shall Charlemagne gather such a company, and within the borders of Spain there shall be peace for evermore.'

When Ganelon had finished speaking, the king threw his arms about his neck and kissed him. Then turning to his slaves, he commanded them to bring great treasure of gold, and silver and precious stones, and lay it at the feet of the knight.

'But swear to me,' said Marsil, 'that Roland shall be in the rear-guard, and swear to me his death.'

And Ganelon, laying his hand upon

his sword Murglies, swore by the holy relics therein, that he would bring Roland to death.

Then came a heathen knight who gave to Ganelon a sword, the hilt of which glittered with gems so that the eyes were dazzled in looking upon it. 'Let but Roland be in the rear-guard,' he said, 'and it is thine.' Then he kissed Ganelon on both cheeks.

Soon another heathen knight followed him, laughing joyfully. 'Here is my helmet,' he cried. 'It is the richest and best ever beaten out of steel. It is thine so that thou truly bring Roland to death and shame.' And he, too, kissed Ganelon.

Next came Bramimonde, Marsil's queen. She was very beautiful. Her dark hair was strung with pearls, and her robes of silk and gold swept the ground. Her hands were full of glittering gems. Bracelets and necklaces of gold, rubies

and sapphires fell from her white fingers. 'Take these,' she said, 'to thy fair lady. Tell her that Queen Bramimonde sends them to her because of the great service thou hast done.' And bowing low, she poured the sparkling jewels into Ganelon's hands. Thus did the heathen reward Ganelon for his treachery.

'Ho there!' called King Marsil to his treasurer, 'are my gifts for the Emperor ready?'

'Yea, Sire,' answered the treasurer, 'seven hundred camels' load of silver and gold and twenty hostages, the noblest of the land; all are ready.'

Then King Marsil leant his hand on Ganelon's shoulder. 'Wise art thou and brave,' he said, 'but in the name of all thou holdest sacred, forget not thy promise unto me. See, I give thee ten mules laden with richest treasure, and every year I will send to thee as much again.

Now take the keys of my city gates, take the treasure and the hostages made ready for thine Emperor. Give them all to him, tell him that I yield to him all that he asks, but forget not thy promise that Roland shall ride in the rear-guard.'

Impatient to be gone, Ganelon shook the King's hand from his shoulder. 'Let me tarry no longer,' he cried. Then springing to horse he rode swiftly away.

Meanwhile Charlemagne lay encamped, awaiting Marsil's answer. And as one morning he sat beside his tent, with his lords and mighty men around him, a great cavalcade appeared in the distance. And presently Ganelon, the traitor, drew rein before him. Softly and smoothly he began his treacherous tale. 'God keep you,' he cried; 'here I bring the keys of Saragossa, with treasure rich and rare, seven hundred camels' load of silver and gold and twenty hostages of the

noblest of the heathen host. And King Marsil bids me say, thou shalt not blame him that his uncle the Calif comes not too, for he is dead. I myself saw him as he set forth with three hundred thousand armed men upon the sea. Their vessels sank ere they had gone far from the land, and he and they were swallowed in the waves.' Thus Ganelon told his lying tale.

'Now praised be Heaven!' cried Charlemagne. 'And thanks, my trusty Ganelon, for well hast thou sped. At length my wars are done, and home to gentle France we ride.'

So the trumpets were sounded, and soon the great army, with pennons waving and armour glittering in the sunshine, was rolling onward through the land, like a gleaming mighty river.

But following the Christian army, through valleys deep and dark, by pathways secret and unknown, crept the

heathen host. They were clad in shining steel from head to foot, swords were by their sides, lances were in their hands, and bitter hatred in their hearts. Four hundred thousand strong they marched in stealthy silence. And, alas! the Franks knew it not.

When night came the Franks encamped upon the plain. And high upon the mountain sides, in a dark forest the heathen kept watch upon them.

In the midst of his army King Charlemagne lay, and as he slept he dreamed he stood alone in the valley of Roncesvalles, spear in hand. There to him came Ganelon who seized his spear and broke it in pieces before his eyes, and the noise of the breaking was as the noise of thunder. In his sleep Charlemagne stirred uneasily, but he did not wake. The vision passed, and again he dreamed. It seemed to him that he was now in his

own city of Aix. Suddenly from out a forest a leopard sprang upon him. But even as its fangs closed upon his arm, a faithful hound came bounding from his hall and fell upon the savage beast with fury. Fiercely the hound grappled with the leopard. Snarling and growling they rolled over and over. Now the hound was uppermost, now the leopard. "Tis a splendid fight,' cried the Franks who watched. But who should win the Emperor knew not, for the vision faded, and still he slept.

The night passed and dawn came. A thousand trumpets sounded, the camp was all astir, and the Franks made ready once more to march.

But Charlemagne was grave and thoughtful, musing on the dream that he had dreamed. 'My knights and barons,' he said, 'mark well the country through which we pass. These valleys are steep



Fiercely the hound grappled
with the leopard.

and straight. It would go ill with us did the false Saracen forget his oath, and fall upon us as we pass. To whom therefore shall I trust the rear-guard that we may march in surety?'

'Give the command to my step-son, Roland, there is none so brave as he,' said Ganelon.

As Charlemagne listened he looked at Ganelon darkly. 'Thou art a very demon,' he said. 'What rage possesseth thee? And if I give command of the rear to Roland, who, then, shall lead the van?'

'There is Ogier the Dane,' said Ganelon quickly, 'who better?'

Still Charlemagne looked darkly at him. He would not that Roland should hear, for well he knew his adventurous spirit.

But already Roland had heard. 'I ought to love thee well, Sir Step-sire,' he cried, 'for this day hast thou named me

for honour. I will take good heed that our Emperor lose not the least of his men, nor charger, palfrey, nor mule that is not paid for by stroke of sword.'

'That know I right well,' replied Ganelon, 'therefore have I named thee.'

Then to Charlemagne Roland turned, 'Give me the bow of office, Sire, and let me take command,' he said.

But the Emperor sat with bowed head. In and out of his long white beard he twisted his fingers. Tears stood in his eyes, and he kept silence. Such was his love for Roland and fear lest evil should befall him.

Then spoke Duke Naimes, 'Give the command unto Roland, Sire; there is none better.'

So, silently, Charlemagne held out the bow of office, and kneeling, Roland took it.

Then was Ganelon's wicked heart

glad.

'Nephew,' said Charlemagne, 'half my host I leave with thee.'

'Nay, Sire,' answered Roland proudly, 'twenty thousand only shall remain with me. The rest of ye may pass onward in all surety, for while I live ye have naught to fear.'

Then in his heart Ganelon laughed.

So the mighty army passed onward through the vale of Roncesvalles without doubt or dread, for did not Roland the brave guard the rear? With him remained Oliver his friend, Turpin the bold Archbishop of Rheims, all the peers, and twenty thousand more of the bravest knights of France.

As the great army wound along, the hearts of the men were glad. For seven long years they had been far from home, and now soon they would see their dear ones again. But the Emperor rode among

them sadly with bowed head. His fingers again twined themselves in his long white beard, tears once more stood in his eyes. Beside him rode Duke Naimes. 'Tell me, Sire,' he said, 'what grief oppresseth thee?'

'Alas,' said Charlemagne, 'by Ganelon France is betrayed. This night I dreamed I saw him break my lance in twain. And this same Ganelon it is that puts my nephew in the rear-guard. And I, I have left him in a strange land. If he die, where shall I find such another?'

It was in vain that Duke Naimes tried to comfort the Emperor. He would not be comforted, and all the hearts of that great company were filled with fearful, boding dread for Roland.

Roland's Pride

Meanwhile King Marsil was gathering all his host. From far and near came the heathen knights, all impatient to fight, each one eager to have the honour of slaying Roland with his own hand, each swearing that none of the twelve Peers should ever again see France.

Among them was a great champion called Chernuble. He was huge and ugly, and his strength was such that he could lift with ease a burden which four mules could scarcely carry. His face was inky black, his lips thick and hideous, and his coarse long hair reached the ground. It was said that in the land from whence he came, the sun never shone, the rain never fell, and the very stones were black as coal. He too, swearing that the Franks

should die and that France should perish, joined the heathen host.

Very splendid were the Saracens as they moved along in the gleaming sunshine. Gold and silver shone upon their armour, pennons of white and purple floated over them, and from a thousand trumpets sounded their battle song.

To the ears of the Frankish knights the sound was borne as they rode through the valley of Roncesvalles.

'Sir Comrade,' said Oliver, 'it seemeth me there is battle at hand with the Saracen foe.'

'Please Heaven it may be so,' said Roland. 'Our duty is to hold this post for our Emperor. Let us strike mighty blows that nothing be said or sung of us in scorn. Let us fight these heathen for our country and our faith.'

As Oliver heard the sounds of battle come nearer, he climbed to the top of a

hill, so that he could see far over the country. There before him he saw the Saracens marching in pride. Their helmets, inlaid with gold, gleamed in the sun. Gaily painted shields, hauberks of shining steel, spears and pennons waved and shone, rank upon rank in countless numbers.

Quickly Oliver came down from the hill, and went back to the Frankish army. 'I have seen the heathen,' he said to Roland. 'Never on earth hath such a host been gathered. They march upon us many hundred thousand strong, with shield and spear and sword. Such battle as awaiteth us have we never fought before.'

'Let him be accursed who fleeth!' cried the Franks. 'There be few among us who fear death.'

'It is Ganelon the felon, who hath betrayed us,' said Oliver, 'let him be

accursed.'

'Hush thee, Oliver,' said Roland; 'he is my step-sire. Let us hear no evil of him.'

'The heathen are in fearful force,' said Oliver, 'and our Franks are but few. Friend Roland, sound upon thy horn. Then will Charlemagne hear and return with all his host to help us.'

For round Roland's neck there hung a magic horn of carved ivory. If he blew upon this in case of need, the sound of it would be carried over hill and dale far, far onward. If he sounded it now, Charlemagne would very surely hear, and return from his homeward march.

But Roland would not listen to Oliver. 'Nay,' he said, 'I should indeed be mad to sound upon my horn. If I call for help, I, Roland, I should lose my fame in all fair France. Nay, I will not sound, but I shall strike such blows with my good

sword Durindal that the blade shall be red to the gold of the hilt. Our Franks, too, shall strike such blows that the heathen shall rue the day. I tell thee, they be all dead men.'

'Oh Roland, friend, wind thy horn,' pleaded Oliver. 'To the ear of Charlemagne shall the sound be borne, and he and all his knights will return to help us.'

'Now Heaven forbid that my kin should ever be pointed at in scorn because of me,' said Roland, 'or that fair France should fall to such dishonour. No! I will not sound upon my horn, but I shall strike such blows with my sword Durindal that the blade shall be dyed red in the blood of the heathen.'

In vain Oliver implored. 'I see no dishonour shouldst thou wind thy horn,' he said, 'for I have beheld the Saracen host. The valleys and the hills and all the plains are covered with them. They are

many and great, and we are but a little company.'

'So much the better,' cried Roland, 'my desire to fight them grows the greater. All the angels of Heaven forbid that France, through me, should lose one jot of fame. Death is better than dishonour. Let us strike such blows as our Emperor loveth to see.'

Roland was rash as Oliver was wise, but both were knights of wondrous courage, and now Oliver pleaded no more. 'Look,' he cried, 'look where the heathen come! Thou hast scorned, Roland, to sound thy horn, and our noble men will this day do their last deeds of bravery.'

'Hush!' cried Roland, 'shame to him who weareth a coward's heart.'

And now Archbishop Turpin spurred his horse to a little hill in front of the army. 'My lords and barons,' he cried,

turning to them, 'Charlemagne hath left us here to guard the homeward march of his army. He is our King, and we are bound to die for him, if so need be. But now, before ye fight, confess your sins, and pray God to forgive them. If ye die, ye die as martyrs. In God's great paradise your places await you.'

Then the Franks leapt from their horses and kneeled upon the ground while the Archbishop blessed them, and absolved them from all their sins. 'For penance I command that ye strike the heathen full sore,' he said.

Then springing from their knees the Franks leapt again into their saddles, ready now to fight and die.

'Friend,' said Roland, turning to Oliver, 'thou wert right. It is Ganelon who is the traitor. But the Emperor will avenge us upon him. As for Marsil, he deemeth that he hath bought us, and

that Ganelon hath sold us unto him. But he will find that it is with our swords that we will pay him.'

And now the battle began. 'Montjoie!' shouted the Franks. It was the Emperor's own battle cry. It means 'My joy,' and came from the name of his famous sword Joyeuse or joyous. This sword was the most wonderful ever seen. Thirty times a day the shimmering light with which it glowed changed. In the gold of the hilt was encased the head of the spear with which the side of Christ had been pierced. And because of this great honour the Emperor called his sword Joyeuse, and from that the Franks took their battle cry 'Montjoie.' Now shouting it, and plunging spurs into their horses' sides, they dashed upon the foe. Never before had been seen such pride of chivalry, such splendour of knightly grace.

With boasting words, King Marsil's nephew came riding in front of the battle. 'Ho, felon Franks!' he cried, 'ye are met at last. Betrayed and sold are ye by your king. This day hath France lost her fair fame, and from Charlemagne is his right hand torn.'

Roland heard him. With spur in side and slackened rein, he dashed upon the heathen, mad with rage. Through shield and hauberk pierced his spear, and the Saracen fell dead ere his scoffing words were done. 'Thou dastard!' cried Roland, 'no traitor is Charlemagne, but a right noble king and cavalier.'

King Marsil's brother, sick at heart to see his nephew fall, rode out with mocking words upon his lips. 'This day is the honour of France lost,' he sneered.

But Oliver struck his golden spurs into his steed's side! 'Caitiff, thy taunts are little worth,' he cried, and, pierced

through shield and buckler, the heathen fell.

Bishop Turpin, too, wielded well both sword and lance. 'Thou lying coward, be silent evermore!' he cried, as a scoffing heathen king fell beneath his blows. 'Charlemagne our lord is true and good, and no Frank shall flee this day.'

'Montjoie! Montjoie!' sounded high above the clang of battle, as heathen after heathen was laid low. Limbs were lopped, armour flew in splinters. Many a heathen knight was cloven through from brow to saddle bow. The plain was strewn with the dying and the dead.

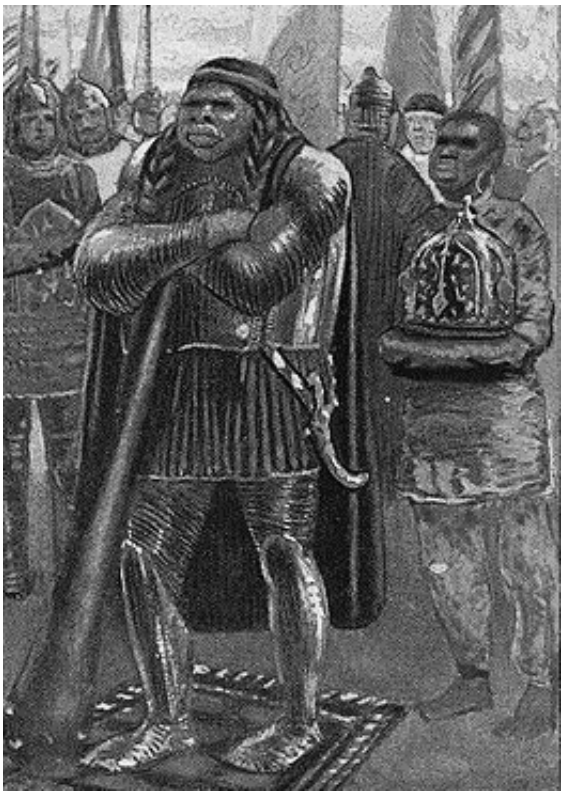
In Roland's hand his lance was shivered to the haft. Throwing the splintered wood away, he drew his famous Durindal. The naked blade shone in the sun and fell upon the helmet of Chernuble, Marsil's mighty champion. The sparkling gems with which it shone were

scattered on the grass. Through cheek and chine, through flesh and bone, drove the shining steel, and Chernuble fell upon the ground, a black and hideous heap. 'Lie there, caitiff!' cried Roland, 'thy Mahomet cannot save thee. Not unto such as thou is the victory.'

On through the press rode Roland. Durindal flashed and fell and flashed again, and many a heathen bit the dust. Oliver, too, did marvellous deeds. His spear, as Roland's, was shivered into atoms. But scarcely knowing what he did, he fought still with the broken shaft, and with it brought many a heathen to his death.

'Comrade, what dost thou?' said Roland. 'Is it now the time to fight with staves? Where is thy sword called Hauteclere with its crystal pommel and golden guard?'

'I lacked time in which to draw it,'



Chernuble, Marsil's mighty champion.

replied Oliver, 'there was such need to strike blows fast and hard.'

But now he drew his shining Hauteclere from its scabbard, and with it he dealt such blows that Roland cried, 'My brother art thou, Oliver, from henceforth. Ah! such blows our Emperor would dearly love to see.'

Furious and more furious waxed the fight. On all sides might be heard the cry of 'Montjoie! Montjoie!' and many a blow did Frank and heathen give and take. But although thousands of Saracens lay dead, the Franks too had lost many of their bravest knights. Shield and spear, banner and pennon, broken, bloodstained and trampled, strewed the field.

Fiercer, wilder still, the battle grew. Roland, Oliver, Archbishop Turpin and all the twelve Peers of France fought in the thickest of the press. Many of the

heathen fled, but even in flight they were cut down.

Meanwhile over France burst a fearful storm. Thunder rolled, lightning flashed, the very earth shook and trembled. There was not a town in all the land but the walls of it were cracked and riven. The sky grew black at mid-day, rain and hail in torrents swept the land. 'It is the end of the world,' the people whispered in trembling fear.

Alas, they knew not! It was the earth's great mourning for the death of Roland, which was nigh.

The battle waxed horrible. The Saracens fled, and the Franks pursued till of that great heathen host but one was left. Of the Saracen army which had set out in such splendour, four hundred thousand strong, one heathen king alone remained. And he, King Margaris, sorely wounded, his spear broken, his shield

pierced and battered, fled with the direful news to King Marsil.

The Franks had won the day, and now mournfully over the plain they moved, seeking their dead and dying comrades. Weary men and worn were they, sad at the death of many brother knights, yet glad at the might and victory of France.

Roland Sounds His Horn

Alone, King Margaris fled, weary and wounded, until he reached King Marsil, and fell panting at his feet.

'Ride! ride! Sire,' he cried, 'thy army is shattered, thy knights to the last man lie dead upon the field; but thou wilt find the Franks in evil plight. Full half of them also lie dead. The rest are sore wounded and weary. Their armour is broken, their swords and spears are shattered. They have naught wherewith to defend themselves. To avenge the death of thy knights were now easy. Ride! oh, ride!'

In terrible wrath and sorrow King Marsil gathered a new army. In twenty columns through the valleys they came marching. The sun shone upon the gems

and goldwork of their helmets, upon lances and pennons, upon buckler and embroidered surcoat. Seven thousand trumpets sounded to the charge, and the wind carried the clamour afar.

'Oliver, my comrade,' said Roland, when he heard it, 'Oliver, my brother, the traitor Ganelon hath sworn our death. Here his treachery is plainly to be seen. But the Emperor will bring upon him a terrible vengeance. As for us, we must fight again a battle fierce and keen. I will strike with my trusty Durindal and thou with thy Hauteclere bright. We have already carried them with honour in many battles. With them we have won many a victory. No man may say scorn of us.'

And so once again the Franks made ready for battle.

But King Marsil was a wily foe. 'Hearken, my barons all,' he cried,

'Roland is a prince of wondrous strength. Two battles are not enough to vanquish him. He shall have three. Half of ye shall go forward now, and half remain with me until the Franks are utterly exhausted. Then shall ye attack them. Then shall we see the day when the might of Charlemagne shall fall and France shall perish in shame.'

So King Marsil stayed upon the hillside while half of his knights marched upon the Franks with battle-cry and trumpet-call.

'Oh Heaven, what cometh now!' cried the Franks as they heard the sound. 'Woe, woe, that ever we saw Ganelon the felon.'

Then spoke the brave Archbishop to them. 'Now it is certain that we shall die. But it is better to die sword in hand than in slothful ease. Now is the day when ye shall receive great honour. Now is the

day that ye shall win your crown of flowers. The gates of paradise are glorious, but therein no coward shall enter.'

'We will not fail to enter,' cried the Franks. 'It is true that we are but few, but we are bold and staunch,' and striking their golden spurs into their chargers' flanks, they rode to meet the foe.

Once more the noise and dust of battle rose. Once more the plain was strewn with dead, and the green grass was crimson-dyed, and scattered wide were jewels and gold, splintered weapons, and shattered armour.

Fearful was the slaughter, mighty the deeds of valour done, until at last the heathen broke and fled again. After them in hot pursuit rode the Franks. Their bright swords flashed and fell again and again, and all the way was marked with dead.

At length the heathen cries of

despair reached even to where King Marsil stayed upon the hillside. 'Marsil, oh our King! ride, ride, we have need of thee!' they cried.

Even to the King's feet the Franks pursued the fleeing foe, slaying them before his face.

Then Marsil, mounting upon his horse, led his last knights against the fearful foe.

The Franks were nigh exhausted, but still three hundred swords flashed in the sunlight, three hundred hearts still beat with hope and courage.

As Roland watched Oliver ever in the thickest of the fight, dealing blow upon blow unceasingly, his heart swelled anew with love for him. 'Oh, my comrade real and true,' he cried, 'alas! this day shall end our love. Alas! this day we shall part on earth for ever.'

Oliver heard him and through the

press of fighting he urged his horse to Roland's side. 'Friend,' he said, 'keep near to me. So it please God we shall at least die together.'

On went the fight, fiercer and fiercer yet, till but sixty weary Franks were left. Then, sadly gazing upon the stricken field, Roland turned to Oliver. 'Behold! our bravest lie dead,' he cried. 'Well may France weep, for she is shorn of all her most valiant knights. Oh my Emperor, my friend, alas, why wert thou not here? Oliver, my brother, how shall we speed him now our mournful news?'

'I know not,' said Oliver sadly, 'rather come death now than any craven deed.'

'I will sound upon my horn,' said Roland, all his pride broken and gone. 'I will sound upon my horn. Charlemagne will hear it and the Franks will return to our aid.'

'Shame would that be,' cried Oliver.

'Our kin would blush for us and be dishonoured all their days. When I prayed of thee thou wouldst not sound thy horn, and now it is not I who will consent to it. Sound upon thy horn! No! there is no courage, no wisdom in that now. Had the Emperor been here we had been saved. But now it is too late, for all is lost. Nay,' he cried in rising wrath, 'if ever I see again my fair sister Aude, I swear to thee thou shalt never hold her in thine arms. Never shall she be bride of thine.' For Roland loved Oliver's beautiful sister Aude and was loved by her, and when Roland would return to France she had promised to be his bride.

'Ah, Oliver, why dost thou speak to me with so much anger and hate,' cried Roland sadly.

'Because it is thy fault that so many Franks lie dead this day,' answered Oliver. 'It is thy folly that hath slain

them. Hadst thou done as I prayed thee our master Charlemagne had been here. This battle had been fought and won. Marsil had been taken and slain. Thy madness it is, Roland, that hath wrought our fate. Henceforward we can serve Charlemagne never more. And now here endeth our loyal friendship. Oh, bitter the parting this night shall see.'

With terrible grief in his heart, stricken dumb with misery and pain, Roland gazed upon his friend. But Archbishop Turpin had heard the strife between the two, and setting spurs to his horse he rode swiftly towards them. 'Sir Roland, and you, Sir Oliver,' he cried, 'I pray you strive not thus. See! we all must die, and thy horn, Roland, can avail nothing now. Great Karl is too far and would return too late. Yet it were well to sound it. For the Emperor when he hears it will come to avenge our fall, and the

heathen will not return joyously to their homes. When the Franks come, they will alight from their horses, they will find our bodies, and will bury them with mourning and with tears, so we shall rest in hallowed graves, and the beasts of the field shall not tear our bones asunder.'

'It is well said,' cried Roland.

Then to his lips he laid his horn, and taking a deep breath he blew mightily upon it. With all the strength left in his weary body he blew.

Full, and clear and high the horn sounded. From mountain peak to mountain peak the note was echoed, till to the camp of Charlemagne, full thirty leagues away, it came.

Then as he heard it, sweet and faint, borne upon the summer wind, the Emperor drew rein, and bent his ear to listen, 'Our men give battle; it is the horn of Roland,' he cried.



With all the strength left in his
weary body he blew.

'Nay,' laughed Ganelon scornfully, 'nay, Sire, had any man but thou said it I had deemed he lied.'

So slowly and sad at heart, with many a backward glance, the Emperor rode on.

Again Roland put his horn to his mouth. He was weary now and faint. Blood was upon his pale lips, the blue veins in his temples stood out like cords. Very mournfully he blew upon his horn, but the sound of it was carried far, very far, although it was so feeble and so low.

Again to the soft, sweet note Charlemagne bent his ear. Duke Naimes, too, and all the Frankish knights, paused at the sound. 'It is the horn of Roland,' cried the Emperor, 'and very surely had there been no battle, he had not sounded it.'

'There is no battle,' said Ganelon in fretful tones. 'Thou art grown old and fearful. Thou talkest as a frightened child.

Well thou knowest the pride of Roland, this strong, bold, great and boastful Roland, that God hath suffered so long upon His earth. For one hare Roland would sound his horn all day long. Doubtless now he laughs among his Peers. And beside, who would dare to attack Roland? Who so bold? Of a truth there is none. Ride on, Sire, ride on. Why halt? Our fair land is still very far in front.'

So again, yet more unwillingly, the Emperor rode on.

Crimson stained were the lips of Roland. His cheeks were sunken and white, yet once again he raised his horn. Faintly now, in sadness and in anguish, once again he blew. The soft, sweet notes took on a tone so pitiful, they wrung the very heart of Charlemagne, where, full thirty leagues afar, he onward rode.

'That horn is very long of breath,' he

sighed, looking backward anxiously.

'It is Roland,' cried Duke Naimes. 'It is Roland who suffers yonder. On my soul, I swear, there is battle. Some one hath betrayed him. If I mistake not, it is he who now deceives thee. Arm, Sire, arm! Sound the trumpets of war. Long enough hast thou hearkened to the plaint of Roland.'

Quickly the Emperor gave command. Quickly the army turned about, and came marching backward. The evening sunshine fell upon their pennons of crimson, gold and blue, it gleamed upon helmet and corslet, upon lance and shield. Fiercely rode the knights. 'Oh, if we but reach Roland before he die,' they cried, 'oh, what blows we will strike for him.'

Alas! alas! they are late, too late!

The evening darkened, night came, yet on they rode. Through all the night

they rode, and when at length the rising sun gleamed like flame upon helmet, and hauberk and flowing pennon, they still pressed onward.

Foremost the Emperor rode, sunk in sad thought, his fingers twisted in his long white beard which flowed over his cuirass, his eyes filled with tears. Behind him galloped his knights, strong men though they were, every one of them with a sob in his throat, a prayer in his heart, for Roland, Roland the brave and fearless.

One knight only had anger in his heart. That knight was Ganelon. And he by order of the Emperor had been given over to the keeping of the kitchen knaves. Calling the chief among them, 'Guard me well this felon,' said Charlemagne, 'guard him as a traitor, who hath sold all mine house to death.'

Then the chief scullion and a hun-

dred of his fellows surrounded Ganelon. They plucked him by the hair and buffeted him, each man giving him four sounding blows. Around his neck they then fastened a heavy chain, and leading him as one might lead a dancing bear, they set him upon a common baggage-horse. Thus they kept him until the time should come that Charlemagne would ask again for the felon knight.

The Death of Oliver

In the dawning of the day Roland looked to the mountain and looked to the plain. Everywhere the Franks lay dead around him. Then, like a noble cavalier, he wept for them. 'My lords and barons,' he sighed, 'may God have mercy on you. May your souls reach paradise and rest among the holy flowers for ever. Better vassals than ye were never seen. Well have ye served me these many years. Oh land of France! oh my loved country! to-day thou mournest thy best barons. And it is for me they die. Oliver, my brother Oliver, let us on again and strike the heathen. If they slay me not, I die of grief and shame.'

So once again Roland the Terrible

arose and swung his sword Durindal, until, as deer before the hounds, the heathen fled before him.

'Good,' cried Archbishop Turpin, ''tis ever thus a knight should fight, else he had better be a monk, praying in some lonely cell, that our sins may be forgiven us.'

'Strike, strike!' cried Roland, 'strike and do not spare.'

So once again the clash and clang of battle rang out upon the still morning air. But now the Christian knights were wondrous few, the heathen many. Through the thickest of the fight rode King Marsil, slaying many a knight. 'Cursed be thou,' cried Roland, 'full many a comrade hast thou slain before my face. Yet ere we part thou shalt know the name of my good sword.' Then with one stroke he cut off the King's right hand, and with another laid his son dead

at his feet.

Then in terror Marsil fled. 'Mahomet avenge us,' he cried, 'upon these felon Franks whom Charlemagne hath left in our fair Spain.'

But although Marsil fled, the Calif, his uncle, still remained. It was that same Calif of whom Ganelon had lied, saying he had seen him drown before his eyes. Now with savage war-cry he threw himself upon the dwindling Christian company.

'Now,' cried Roland, 'the end hath come. Now, no longer have we to live. But strike, my lords, strike. Sell your lives as dearly as may be. Strike, so that France be not dishonoured, and when Charlemagne shall come and shall find fifteen heathen dead for one of us, he will bless us even while he mourns.'

'Shame, shame to the laggard!' cried Oliver, dashing into the fray. But the

traitor Calif struck him from behind, full in the middle of his back. Through silken cloak and coat of steel drove the lance until it pierced the breast of the gallant knight.

'Aha!' cried the Calif, 'now hast thou thy death-blow. In thee alone have I avenged all our host.'

Oliver was indeed sorely wounded, but, wheeling quickly, he lifted his good sword high in the air, and brought it crashing down upon the Calif's golden helmet. The sparkling gems with which it was set were scattered upon the grass. From crown to chin his head was cloven, and without a groan the heathen sank upon the earth.

Still wielding his sword right manfully, Oliver called to Roland. 'Roland, Roland, come to me. Be thou near me at the end, for to-day is the day of our last farewell.'

Through the battle Roland spurred his horse to Oliver's side. With mournful eyes he looked upon his ashen face, and upon the red stream which trickled from his wound. 'Alas, my gentle friend,' he cried, 'alas, is this the end of all thy prowess, all thy fame? Now is the Emperor's loss complete indeed.' And saying these words, from grief and pain he fainted, sitting upon his horse.

As Roland fainted he reeled against Oliver, and he, his eyes already dark in death, knew not his friend. Only feeling that he was struck, he returned the blow. Striking heavily upon Roland's helmet, he clove it in two. But his sword went no further, and Roland was unwounded.

The blow brought Roland to his senses once again, and he, marvelling at it, turned to look upon his friend. 'Was it thou, comrade, who struck me?' he whispered softly and tenderly. 'Thou hast

not done it knowingly? I am thy friend Roland, who loveth thee. Thou hast no anger against me in thine heart?'

'I hear thee,' replied Oliver, 'but I cannot see thee, friend. God seeth thee. Have I struck thee, brother? I did it not knowingly. Forgive it me.'

'I am not hurt,' said Roland, 'and before God I forgive it thee.' Then these two in perfect love and trust leaned each on the other to say a last farewell.

Now Oliver's eyes were dark, his ears were stopped in death. Dismounting from his horse he knelt upon the ground. Joining his hands he confessed his sins and prayed God to bless fair France and Charlemagne his king, and above all men his comrade Roland. Then he bowed his head, and stretching himself upon the battle-field, he died.

When Roland saw Oliver lie still, very softly he mourned. 'Dear my friend,'

he sighed, 'to what sorrow hath thy valour brought thee! Many the day, many the year we two have been together, thou and I. Never hast thou done me wrong, nor I thee. Now that thou art gone it is but pain to live.' And for very grief Roland swooned again as he sat upon his horse.

Once again Roland opened his eyes and looked around upon the utter ruin of all his knights. Of all the Christian host but two remained with him alive. These were Turpin, the brave Archbishop, and Gautier of Hum, a right noble count.

With lances broken, shields pierced and armour shattered, the valiant three still fought the heathen throng. Saracen after Saracen fell beneath their blows. 'What fearsome men!' cried they, 'but they shall not escape alive. Craven is he who attacketh them not. More craven he who letteth them escape.'

But soon, such was the might of the dauntless three that the heathen dared no more attack them. A thousand foot and forty thousand horse there still remained of the Saracen host. Yet afar they stood, hurling lance and spear and javelin at the three who faced them side by side.

Soon Gautier fell dead, pierced by a flying dart. Next the Archbishop's horse was killed beneath him, and Turpin was carried to the ground. But in a moment he sprang up again. 'I am not vanquished yet!' he cried to Roland. 'As long as a good warrior hath breath, he fights.' And dashing upon the heathen, sorely wounded though he was, he laid about him with such good will that, as it was told in after days, they found four hundred dead about him.

Roland too fought in deadly pain, and sorely he longed to know if

Charlemagne were near. So now again he took his horn, and blew upon it a faint and feeble blast.

The pitiful soft notes floated through the air, and faint and feeble though they were, they reached the ear of Charlemagne. The Emperor drew rein and bent his ear to listen. 'My lords,' he said, 'it goeth ill with us. This day I ween my nephew is lost to me. So wearily he winds his horn, 'tis like a dying man. If ye would reach him ere it is too late, set spur to horse and let every trumpet in the army sound, that he may know we come.'

Then at the command of the Emperor, sixty thousand trumpets sounded. Loudly the brazen clamour rose. The mountains echoed and the hills answered, until the heathen heard it where they fought, and they stood aghast. 'It is Charlemagne who comes,' they cried; 'it is Charlemagne. The

Emperor! the Emperor returns! These are French trumpets that we hear. If Charlemagne come, what disaster for us will betide. If Roland live, the battle is to fight again, and Spain, our fair broad Spain, is lost.'

Then four hundred of the boldest of the heathen drew together, and marching in close rank, shoulder to shoulder they charged down upon Roland.

As Roland saw them come he felt his strength return to him. While he had life he would never yield, and rather death than flight. So, striking spurs, he urged his wearied horse forward, and dashed alone against four hundred heathen. At his stirrup ran the Archbishop, and as the Saracens saw the dauntless heroes come, they were seized with terror and fled before them.

'Flee, flee!' they cried, 'it is the trumpets of France we hear. Charlemagne the

Mighty is upon us.'

Roland was ever the bravest and most courteous of knights. Now he drew rein and turning to the Archbishop said, 'I am on horseback, thou on foot; that should not be. For love of thee I will halt here. Good or ill we will share together, and for no man in the world will I forsake thee. Together we will await the heathen.'

'Shame be to him who first stints his blows!' cried Turpin. 'After this battle we will fight no more, truly. But Charlemagne is nigh, and he will avenge us.'

And now the heathen, gathered at a distance, talked among themselves. 'We are born to misfortune,' said they. 'And this day is the blackest that ever we have seen. We have lost all our lords and leaders, and now dread Charlemagne returns with his great army. Already we can hear the trumpets call, already we

can hear the cry, "Montjoie, Montjoie." And nothing equals the pride of this Count Roland. There is no man that can vanquish him. Let us flee, but ere we go let each man hurl at him lance and spear, so that he die.'

So ere they fled, the heathen hurled their spears and lances at Roland. His shield was broken, his hauberk riven asunder, and beneath him sank his good horse pierced with thirty wounds. The Archbishop too lay silent on the ground. But the last heathen had fled, and on that ghastly field Roland stood alone.

The Death of Roland

Over the plain fled the heathen, and Roland could no more pursue them. His good horse lay dead beside him, and he, all weary and worn, bent to aid his dear friend Turpin. Quickly he unlaced his helmet, drew off his shirt of mail, now all stained and rent with many a sword-cut, and tearing his silken vest in stripes, he gently bound his wounds. Then tenderly lifting him in his arms he laid him on a grassy bank.

Kneeling beside the dying Archbishop, Roland whispered softly, 'Father, our comrades, whom we loved, are all slain, but we should not leave them thus. Give me leave to go, and I will seek them and bring them here, that thou mayest

bless them once more.'

'Go, friend,' said Turpin, 'but return right soon. Thanks be to God, the field is ours. We have won it, thou and I alone.'

So all alone Roland went across the dreadful field. One by one he found the Peers of France. One by one he tenderly raised them in his arms, and brought them to the Archbishop, laying them at his feet.

As Turpin gazed upon them lying there so still and quiet, tears started to his eyes and trickled down his pale worn cheeks. 'My lords,' he cried, raising his hand in blessing, 'may the Lord of all glory receive your souls! In the flower-starred meadows of Paradise may ye live for ever!' And there on the battle-field he absolved them from all their sins, and signed them with the sign of the Cross.

Once again Roland returned to search the plain for his friend Oliver. At

last, under a pine tree, by a wild-rose bush, he found his body. Very tenderly he lifted him, and faint and spent, staggering now beneath his burden, he carried him, and laid him with the other Peers, beside the Archbishop, so that he too might receive a last blessing.

'Fair Oliver, my comrade,' said Roland, kneeling beside him, 'to break a lance and shatter in pieces a shield, to counsel loyally and well, to punish traitors and cowards, never was there better knight on earth.' Then, fainting, Roland fell forward on the ground.

When Turpin saw Roland swoon, he stretched out his hand and took his ivory horn from his neck. Through Roncesvalles there flowed a stream, and the Archbishop thought that if he could but reach it, he would bring from it some water to revive Roland.

With great difficulty he rose, and



"May the Lord of all glory
receive your souls."

with trembling footsteps, staggering as he went, he dragged himself a little way. But his strength was gone. Soon he stumbled and fell upon his knees, unable to rise again. Turning his eyes to heaven he clasped his hands together, 'May God take me to His paradise,' he cried, and so fell forward dead. Thus died the Archbishop in the service of his Emperor. He who both by word and weapon had never ceased to war against the heathen was now silent and still for ever.

When Roland came to himself he saw Turpin kneel upon the ground a little way off and then fall forward dead. Again Roland rose, and going to the Archbishop crossed his beautiful white hands upon his breast. 'Ah! Father,' he said, 'knight of noble lineage, I leave thee in the hands of the Most Glorious. Never man served Him more willingly. Nay, never since the Holy Apostles hath such

a prophet been. To win man and to guard our faith thou wert ever ready. May the gates of Paradise be wide for thee.'

Then lifting his hands to heaven, Roland called aloud, 'Ride! oh Karl of France, ride quickly as thou mayest. In Roncesvalles there is great sorrow for thee. But the King Marsil too hath sorrow and loss, and for one of us there lie here forty of the heathen.'

Then faint and weary Roland sank upon the grass. In one hand he clasped his ivory horn which he had taken again from the fingers of the dead Archbishop, in the other he held his sword Durindal. As he sat there still and quiet, a Saracen who had lain among the dead, pretending to be dead also, suddenly rose. Stealthily he crept towards Roland. Nearer and nearer he came, until when he was quite close, he stretched out his hand and seized Durindal. 'Vanquished,

he is vanquished, the nephew of Charlemagne is vanquished!' he shouted. 'Behold his sword, which I will carry with me into Arabia!'

But even as the Saracen seized Durindal, Roland opened his eyes. 'Thou art none of our company, I ween,' he cried, and raising his ivory horn he brought it crashing down upon the head of the Saracen. Helmet and skull-bone cracked beneath the blow, and the heathen fell dead at Roland's feet.

'Coward,' he cried, 'who made thee so bold that thou didst dare to lay hand upon Roland? Whoever hears of it will deem thee a madman.' Then looking sadly at his horn, he said, 'For thee have I broken the mouthpiece of my horn, and the gold and gems about the rim are scattered on the ground.'

And now, fearing that some one might again steal his sword when he was



Stealthily he crept toward Roland.

no longer able to resist, Roland gathered all his strength together. Taking Durindal in his hand he went to where a bare brown rock rose out of the plain. With mighty blows he dashed the blade against the rock again and again. But it would not break. The steel grated and screeched upon the stone, but no scratch or dint was seen upon the blade, no notch upon the edge. 'Oh, Holy Mary, Mother of Heaven, come to my aid!' cried Roland. 'Oh my good Durindal, what misfortune! When I am parted from thee I shall no longer be able to take care of thee. We together have gained many battles; we together have conquered many realms, which now own Charlemagne as King. As long as I live, thou shalt never be taken from me, and when I am dead thou shalt never belong to one who shall flee before the foe, thou, who hast so long been borne by a valiant warrior.'

Again Roland struck upon the rock. Again the steel grated and screeched, but the sword would not break. When the knight saw that he could not break the blade he became very sad. 'Oh my good Durindal,' he cried, 'thou who hast shone and flamed in the sunshine many a time and oft to my joy, now givest thou me pain and sorrow lest I leave thee in the hands of the heathen?'

A third time Roland struck upon the rock and beat the blade with all his might. But still it would not break. Neither notch nor scratch was to be seen upon the shining steel. Then softly and tenderly he made moan, 'Oh, fair and holy, my Durindal, it is not meet that the heathen should possess thee. Thou shouldst ever be served by Christian hand, for within thy hilt is many a holy relic. Please Heaven thou shalt never fall into the hands of a coward.' Thus spoke

he to his sword, caressing it as some loved child.

Then, seeing that by no means could he break his sword, Roland threw himself upon the grass with his face to the foe, so that when Charlemagne and all his host arrived they might know that he had died a conqueror. Beneath him, so that he guarded them with his body, he laid his sword and horn.

Clasping his hands, he raised them to heaven. 'Oh God,' he cried, 'I have sinned. Pardon me for all the wrong that I have done both in great things and in small. Pardon me for all that I have done from the hour of my birth until now when I am laid low.'

So with hands clasped in prayer, the great warrior met his end. Through the quiet evening air was heard the rustle of angels' wings. And St. Raphael, St. Michael of Peril, and the angel Gabriel

swept down upon the dreadful battle-field, and taking the soul of Roland, bore it to Paradise.

The Return of Charlemagne

Roland was dead and bright angels had already carried his soul to heaven, when Charlemagne and all his host at last rode into the valley of Roncesvalles. What a dreadful sight was there! Not a path nor track, not a yard nor foot of ground but was covered with slain Franks and heathen lying side by side in death.

Charlemagne gazed upon the scene with grief and horror. 'Where art thou, Roland?' he called. 'The archbishop, where is he? Oliver, where art thou?' All the twelve peers he called by name. But none answered. The wind moaned over the field, fluttering here and there a fallen banner, but voice to answer there

was none.

'Alas,' sighed Charlemagne, 'what sorrow is mine that I was not here ere this battle was fought!'

In and out of his long white beard his fingers twisted, and tears of grief and anger stood in his eyes. Behind him, rank upon rank, crowded his knights and barons full of wrath and sorrow. Not one among them but had lost a son or brother, a friend or comrade. For a time they stood dumb with grief and horror.

Then spoke Duke Naimes. Wise in counsel, brave in battle was he. 'Look, Sire,' he cried, 'look where two leagues from us the dust arises upon the great highway. There is gathered the army of the heathen. Ride, Sire, ride and avenge our wrongs.'

And so it was, for those who had fled from the battle-field were gathered together and were now crowding onward

to Saragossa.

'Alas!' said Charlemagne, 'they are already far away. Yet they have taken from me the very flower of France, so for the sake of right and honour I will do as thou desirest.'

Then the Emperor called to him four of his chief barons. 'Rest here,' he said, 'guard the field, the valleys and the hills. Leave the dead lying as they are, but watch well that neither lion nor any other savage beast come nigh to them. Neither shall any servant or squire touch them. I forbid ye to let man lay hand upon them till we return.'

'Sire, we will do thy will,' answered the four.

Then, leaving a thousand knights to be with them, Charlemagne sounded his war-trumpets, and the army set forth upon the pursuit of the heathen. Furiously they rode and fast, but already the

foe was far. Anxiously the Emperor looked to the sun as it slowly went down toward the west. Night was at hand and the enemy still afar.

Then, alighting from his horse, Charlemagne kneeled upon the green grass. 'Oh Lord, I pray Thee,' he cried, 'make the sun to stop. Say Thou to the night, "wait." Say Thou to the day, "remain."' And as the Emperor prayed, his guardian angel stooped down and whispered to him, 'Ride onward, Charlemagne! Light shall not fail thee. Thou hast lost the flower of France. The Lord knoweth it right well. But thou canst now avenge thee upon the wicked. Ride!'

Hearing these words, Charlemagne sprang once more to horse and rode onward.

And truly a miracle was done for him. The sun stood motionless in the sky, the heathen fled, the Franks pursued,

until in the Valley of Darkness they fell upon them and beat them with great slaughter. The heathen still fled, but the Franks surrounded them, closing every path, and in front flowed the river Ebro wide and deep. Across it there was no bridge, upon it no boat, no barge. Calling upon their gods Tervagan and Apollin and upon Mahomet to save them, the heathen threw themselves into the water. But there no safety they found. Many, weighted with their heavy armour, sank beneath the waves. Others, carried by the tide, were swept away, and all were drowned, King Marsil alone fleeing towards Saragossa.

When Charlemagne saw that all his enemies were slain, he leapt from his horse, and, kneeling upon the ground, gave thanks to Heaven. And even as he rose from his knees the sun went down and all the land was dim in twilight.

'Now is the hour of rest,' said the Emperor. 'It is too late to return to Roncesvalles, for our steeds are weary and exhausted. Take off their saddles and their bridles, and let them refresh themselves upon the field.'

'Sire, it is well said,' replied the Franks.

So the knights, leaping from their horses, took saddle and bridle from them, and let them wander free upon the green meadows by the river side. Then, being very weary, the Franks lay down upon the grass, all dressed as they were in their armour, and with their swords girded to their sides, and slept. So worn were they with battle and with grief, that none that night kept watch, but all alike slept.

The Emperor too slept upon the ground among his knights and barons. Like them he lay in his armour. And his good sword Joyeuse was girt about him.

The night was clear and the moon shone brightly. And Charlemagne, lying on the grass, thought bitterly of Roland and of Oliver, and of all the twelve Peers of France who lay dead upon the field of Roncesvalles. But at last, overcome with grief and weariness, he fell asleep.

As the Emperor slept, he dreamed. He thought he saw the sky grow black with thunder-clouds, then jagged lightning flashed and flamed, hail fell and wild winds howled. Such a storm the earth had never seen, and suddenly in all its fury it burst upon his army. Their lances were wrapped in flame, their shields of gold were melted, hauberks and helmets were crushed to pieces. Then bears and wolves from out the forests sprang upon the dismayed knights, devouring them. Monsters untold, serpents, fiery fiends, and more than thirty thousand griffins, all rushed upon

the Franks with greedy, gaping jaws.

'Arm! Arm! Sire,' they cried to him. And Charlemagne, in his dream, struggled to reach his knights. But something, he knew not what, held him bound and helpless. Then from out the depths of the forest a lion rushed upon him. It was a fierce, terrible, and proud beast. It seized upon the Emperor, and together they struggled, he fighting with his naked hands. Who would win, who would be beaten, none knew, for the dream passed and the Emperor still slept.

Again Charlemagne dreamed. He stood, he thought, upon the marble steps of his great palace of Aix holding a bear by a double chain. Suddenly out of the forest there came thirty other bears to the foot of the steps where Charlemagne stood. They all had tongues and spoke like men. 'Give him back to us, Sire,' they said, 'he is our kinsman, and we must

help him. It is not right that thou shouldest keep him so long from us.'

Then from out the palace there came a hound. Bounding among the savage beasts he threw himself upon the largest of them. Over and over upon the grass they rolled, fighting terribly. Who would be the victor, who the vanquished? Charlemagne could not tell. The vision passed, and he slept till daybreak.

As the first dim light of dawn crept across the sky, Charlemagne awoke. Soon all the camp was astir, and before the sun rose high the knights were riding back over the wide roads to Roncesvalles.

When once again they reached the dreadful field, Charlemagne wandered over all the plain until he came where Roland lay. Then taking him in his arms he made great moan. 'My friend, my Roland, who shall now lead my army? My

nephew, beautiful and brave, my pride, my glory, all are gone. Alas the day! alas!' Thus with tears and cries he mourned his loss.

Then said one, 'Sire, grieve not overmuch. Command rather that we search the plain and gather together all our men who have been slain by the heathen. Then let us bury them with chant, and song and solemn ceremony, as befits such heroes.'

'Yea,' said Charlemagne, 'it is well said. Sound your trumpets!'

So the trumpets were sounded, and over all the field the Franks searched, gathering their slain brothers and comrades.

With the army there were many bishops, abbots and monks, and so with chant and hymn, with prayer and incense, the Franks were laid to rest. With great honour they were buried.

Then, for they could do no more, their comrades left them.

Only the bodies of Roland, Oliver and Archbishop Turpin, they did not lay in Spanish ground. In three white marble coffins covered with silken cloths they were placed on chariots, ready to be carried back to the fair land of France.

The Coming of the Emir of Babylon

King Marsil fled from the battlefield, and thus fleeing, at last he reached Saragossa. There in the shadow of an olive tree by his palace gateway, he lighted down. His servants crowded round him in sad astonishment to see their master return in such sorry plight. His broken sword, his shattered helmet and hauberk he gave to them. Then he flung himself down upon the grass, hiding his face.

When the Queen Bramimonde heard that her lord had returned, she hurried to him. Then as she listened to his woeful tale, and saw his shattered wrist, from which the right hand was

gone, she wept aloud and made great moan. With terrible curses she cursed Charlemagne and France, she cursed her own heathen gods and idols. Then she threw the image of Apollin down, taking from him his crown and sceptre and trampling him under foot. 'Oh, wicked god,' she cried, 'why hast thou brought such shame upon us? Why hast thou allowed our king to be defeated? Thou rewardest but ill those who serve thee.'

The images of Tervagan and Mahomet too she caused to be beaten and broken in pieces, and flung to the pigs and dogs. Never were idols treated with such scorn.

Then Queen Bramimonde beat upon her breast; she tore her hair and cried aloud to all the four corners of the earth. As for King Marsil, he went into his great vaulted room and lay upon his couch and would utter no word to any man, such

was his grief.

But even as Queen Bramimonde cried aloud and King Marsil lay silent upon his couch, a mighty fleet came sailing up the Ebro.

Seven years before, when Charlemagne had first come to Spain, King Marsil had sent a message to the old Emir of Babylon, begging him for aid. But Babylon is far, and the Emir Baligant had to gather his knights and barons from forty kingdoms, so the years passed and no help came. But now at last, after long delay, he had reached the land of Spain, and was even now sailing up the Ebro with all his mighty men of war. By day the river for miles was gay with gilded prows and many-coloured pennons. By night thousands of lanterns glittered from the masts, and swung and flickered in the summer breeze, so that the country all around was lighted up with

starry flame.

At length the Emir landed. A white silk carpet was thrown upon the ground, in the shade of a laurel tree an ivory chair was set and there the Emir took his seat. Around him stood seventeen kings together with knights and barons in such numbers that no man might count them.

'Listen, valiant warriors,' cried Baligant. 'I mean to bring this Charlemagne, of whom we hear such wondrous tales, so low that he shall not even dare to eat unless I give him leave. Too long hath he been making war in Spain, and I will carry battle and the sword into his fair France. I shall never cease from warring until I see him at my feet, or dead.' And thus insolently boasting, Baligant struck his knee with his glove.

Then the Emir called two of his knights. 'Go to Saragossa,' he said, 'and tell King Marsil that I have come to help

him. And what battle there will be when I meet Charlemagne! Give Marsil this glove embroidered with gold; put it on his right hand. Give him, too, this golden mace, and say to him that so soon as he hath come to do me homage I will march against Charlemagne. And if the Emperor will not kneel at my feet asking mercy, if he will not deny the Christian faith, I will tear his crown from his head!'

''Tis well said!' cried the heathen.

'And now to horse, barons! to horse,' cried Baligant. 'One of ye shall carry the glove, the other the mace. Haste ye!'

'Thy will shall be done,' answered the barons and, leaping upon their horses, they sped towards Saragossa.

But as they came near to the city they heard a great noise. It was the heathen folk who wept, and cried and made great moan, cursing their gods Tervagan and Apollin and Mahomet, who had done

nought for them. 'Miserable beings that we are,' they cried, 'what will become of us? Shame and misfortune have fallen upon us. We have lost our king, for Roland hath cut off his right hand. His fair son too is dead. All Spain is in the hands of the Franks.'

In great astonishment the messengers of Baligant drew rein and lighted down at the steps of the palace. Then mounting the stairs, they entered the great vaulted room where the King lay silent and the Queen wept and mourned.

'May Apollin, and Tervagan and Mahomet our master save the King and guard the Queen,' they said in greeting, bowing low.

'What folly do ye speak!' cried Bramimonde, 'our gods are only cowards. At Roncesvalles they have done vile deeds. They have left all our warriors to die. They have forsaken mine own lord,

the King Marsil, his right hand hath been cut from his arm, and soon all Spain will be in the power of Charlemagne. Oh, misery! Oh, sorrow! What will become of me. Oh, woe! woe! is there none to slay me?'

'Hush, lady, cease thy weeping and thy moan,' said one of the messengers. 'We have come from the Emir Baligant, and he will be the deliverer of Marsil. Here is the glove and mace which he hath sent. There on the Ebro we have four thousand vessels, barques and rapid galleys, and who shall count our ships of war? The Emir is rich, he is powerful. He will follow and attack Charlemagne even to the borders of France. He will do battle until the proud Emperor kneels at his feet craving mercy, or until he die.'

But the Queen shook her head. 'The task is not thus light as ye deem it,' she said. 'Charlemagne will die rather than

flee or beg for mercy. All the kings of the earth are as children to him. He fears no living man.'

'Cease thy wailing,' said King Marsil to the Queen. Then turning to the messengers, 'It is I who shall speak,' he said. 'You see me now in deepest grief. I have neither son nor daughter to inherit the kingdom. Yesterday I had an only son, but Roland hath slain him. Say to your lord that he shall come to me, and that I will yield to him the whole of Spain, and lay my hand in his, and be his vassal, so that he fight Charlemagne and conquer him.'

'It is well,' said the messengers.

Then King Marsil told them all that had befallen, from the time in which Blancandrin had set forth until the moment in which he spoke to them. 'Now,' he ended, 'the Emperor is not seven leagues from here. Say to the Emir

that he would do well to prepare at once for battle. The Franks are even now upon their homeward way, but they will not refuse to fight.'

Then taking their farewell and bowing low, the messengers departed. Quickly they mounted upon their horses, and full of wonder at all that they had heard, they sped back to the Emir.

'Ah, well,' said he, when he saw them return alone, 'where is Marsil, whom I bade ye bring unto me?'

'He is wounded unto death,' they replied. Then they told Baligant all the tale that they had heard. 'And if thou help the King now,' they ended, 'he swears to give thee the whole of Spain, and he will put his hand within thy hands and be thy man.'

The Emir bent his head in thought. Then rising from his ivory chair he looked proudly round upon his barons.

Joy was in his heart and a smile of insolent pride upon his lips. 'Make no tarrying, my lords,' he cried. 'Leave your ships, mount your horses and ride forward. This old Charlemagne shall not escape us. From to-day is Marsil avenged. For that he hath lost, I will give unto him the Emperor's good right arm.'

Then Baligant called one of his greatest barons. 'I give thee command of all the army,' he said, 'until I return.' And mounting upon his horse, with but four dukes beside him, he set out for Saragossa. There he lighted down at the marble steps of the palace and climbed to the chamber where Marsil lay.

When Bramimonde saw the Emir come she ran to meet him. 'Oh, miserable, miserable one that I am!' she cried, and fell weeping at his feet.

The Emir raised her, and together they went to Marsil.

'Raise me up,' said the King to two slaves, when he saw the Emir come. Then taking his glove in his left hand he gave it to the Emir. 'My lord Baligant,' he said, 'with this I give you all my lands. I am henceforth thy vassal. I am lost! All my people are lost!'

'Thy grief is great,' said Baligant, 'and I cannot speak long with thee, for Charlemagne expects me not, and I must hasten to take him unawares. But I accept thy glove since thou givest it to me.'

Then, glad at the thought of possessing all Spain, Baligant seized the glove. Quickly he ran down the steps, sprang upon his horse, and was soon spurring back to his army. 'Forward, forward,' he cried, 'the Franks cannot now escape us.'

And thus it was that as Charlemagne had made an end of burying the dead heroes, and was ready to depart

homeward, a great noise of trumpets and of shouting, of clang and clatter of armour and neighing of horses came to his ear. Soon over the hills appeared the glitter of helmets, and two messengers from the heathen army came spurring towards the Emperor. 'Proud King, thou canst no longer escape,' they cried. 'Baligant the Emir is here, and with him is a mighty army. To-day we will see if thou art truly valorous.'

Charlemagne tore his beard, looking darkly at the messengers. Then drawing himself up, he threw a proud look over his army. In a loud and strong voice he cried, 'To horse, my barons, to horse and to arms.'

Such was Charlemagne's answer to the prideful message of the Emir. The Emperor himself was the first to arm, and when the Franks saw him ride before them with his glittering helmet and

shield, and his sword Joyeuse girt about him, they cried aloud, 'Such a man was made indeed to wear a crown.'

Then calling to him two of his best knights, Charlemagne gave to them, one the sword of Roland, the other his ivory horn. 'Ye shall carry them,' he said, 'at the head of all the army.' And when the trumpets sounded to battle, louder and sweeter than them all sounded the horn of Roland.

The day was bright, the sun shone dazzlingly upon both armies, glittering with gold, and gems and many colours. In the ranks of the heathen were many men fierce and terrible to look upon, Moors and Turks, Negroes black as ink, giants and monsters were there. But the hearts of the Franks were stout and strong, and they feared none of them.

Soon the battle waxed fierce and terrible. 'Montjoie, Montjoie,' the

Emperor's war-cry, sounded once again to all the winds of Spain. 'Precieuse, Precieuse,' the cry of the Emir, answered it. The heathen, like the Christian cry, was taken from the name of their leader's sword. The Emir had heard of the fame of Charlemagne's sword, and he called his Precieuse, or precious, in imitation. And in imitation too of the Christian knights the heathen used this name as a battle-cry.

The fight was fierce and long, and marvellous deeds of skill and valour were done, until at length the field was once more strewn with dead and dying, with dinted shields and splintered spears, helmets and swords, and trodden, blood-stained banners and pennons.

In the thickest of the fight the Emperor and the Emir met. 'Precieuse,' cried the Emir. 'Montjoie,' replied the Emperor. Then a fearful fight took place.

Blow upon blow fell, sparks flew. Again and again the two knights charged, and wheeled and charged anew. Such were the shocks, that at last their saddle-girths broke and both were thrown to the ground.

Quickly the Emperor and the Emir sprang up again, and renewed the fight on foot. 'Think, Charlemagne,' cried the Emir, as they fought, 'ask pardon of me and promise to be my vassal, and I will give thee all Spain and the East.'

'I owe neither peace nor love to a heathen,' replied Charlemagne. 'Become a Christian, and I will love thee henceforth.'

'I will rather die,' answered the Emir.

So they fought on. With a mighty blow the Emir broke Charlemagne's helmet and wounded him sorely on the head. The Emperor staggered and almost fell, and it seemed as if his strength went

from him. But his guardian angel whispered to him, 'Great King, what doest thou?'

And when Charlemagne heard the angel whisper, his strength came to him anew, and with one great blow he laid the Emir dead at his feet. Then the Emperor remembered his dream, and knew that the victory was to him, and that the Emir was the lion who attacked him in his dream. 'Montjoie,' he cried, and leapt upon his horse.

As to the heathen, when they saw their leader fall, they fled.

Terrible was the slaughter and the chase. Through the heat and dust of the day, the Franks pursued the fleeing heathen, even to the walls of Saragossa.

There in a high tower sat Queen Bramimonde, praying with her heathen priests for the victory of the Emir. But when she looked forth from her tower

and saw the heathen ride in dire confusion, chased by the victorious Franks, she broke out again into loud wailing. Running to King Marsil she cried, 'Oh, noble King, our men are beaten. We are undone.'

Then Marsil, in utter grief, turned his face to the wall and died.

Now to the very gates of the palace the noise of battle came. The streets of the town were full of armed men, pursuing and pursued. And before night fell all the city was in the hands of Charlemagne.

The Franks entered every heathen temple and broke the images in pieces.

Then all the heathen were baptized, and those who would not become Christian were put to death. Such was the way in those fierce old times.

Leaving a garrison to guard the town, Charlemagne set forth for France once

more, leading with him captive Queen Bramimonde.

At Blaye, upon the shores of the Gironde, the three heroes, Roland, Oliver, and Archbishop Turpin were buried with great pomp and ceremony, and after long journeying the Emperor arrived at last at his great city of Aix. Then from all the corners of his kingdom he gathered his wise men to judge the traitor Ganelon.

The Punishment of Ganelon

The Emperor sat upon his throne with all his wise men around him, and into the hall came Aude, the fair sister of Oliver. At the foot of the throne she knelt. 'Sire,' she said, 'where is Roland, whose bride I am?'

Full of grief the Emperor bent his head. Tears stood in his eyes, and at first he could not speak. Then gently taking Aude by the hand, 'Dear sister,' he said, 'dear friend, thou askest news of a dead man. But grieve not. Thou art not left without a lover. Thou shalt be the bride of Louis, my son.'

Then Aude stood up. Her face was very pale. With both hands she pushed back her golden hair from her face.

'What strange words are these?' she said. 'If Roland be dead, what is any man to me? Please God and His saints and angels, I too may die.' And so speaking she fell at the Emperor's feet.

Charlemagne thought that she had but fainted, and springing up, he lifted her in his arms. But her head fell back upon her shoulder, and he saw that she was dead. Then calling four countesses he bade them carry her to a convent near. And so tended by the greatest ladies in the land, fair Aude was laid to rest with chant, and hymn, and great state and pomp as befits a hero's bride.

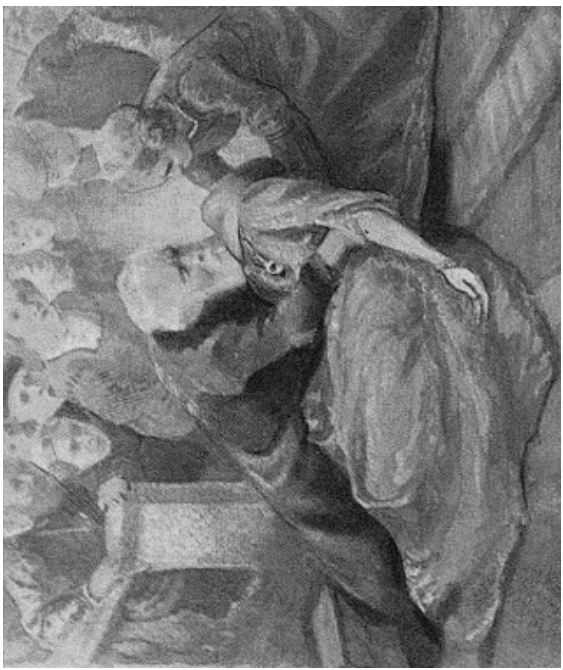
Then, with chains upon his hands and feet, Ganelon was brought into the hall of judgment. Sitting upon his throne, the Emperor spoke to his wise men who were gathered around him, and told them all the tale of Ganelon's treachery, and of how for gold he had

betrayed his comrades.

Proud and haughty as ever, Ganelon stood before his judges. 'It is true,' he said; 'I will never deny it. I hated Roland, for his riches made me wrathful against him. I sought to bring him to shame and death. But I do not admit that it was treason.'

'Of that we shall be the judges,' said the Franks.

Tall and straight and proud, Ganelon stood before the Emperor. With haughty looks he eyed his judges, and then his thirty kinsmen who stood near him. 'Hear me, barons,' he cried, in a bold, loud voice. 'When I was with the army of the Emperor, I served him in faith and love. But Roland his nephew hated me. He condemned me to death, yea, to a very miserable death, in sending me to the court of Marsil. That I escaped that death I owe to mine own skill. And I



He saw that she was dead.

defied Roland, I defied Oliver and all his companions, before the face of Charlemagne and his barons. Well knew the Emperor of that defiance. It was just vengeance, then, that I took. Of no treason am I guilty.'

'We shall judge of that,' said the Franks. And so they passed into the council chamber.

Then when Ganelon saw that it was like to go ill with him, he gathered his thirty kinsmen about him, and begged them to plead for him. But it was chiefly in Pinabel, his nephew, that he trusted, for he was wise and could plead well, and as a good soldier there was none like him. 'In thee do I trust,' said Ganelon, 'thou art he who must save me from death and shame.'

'I will be thy champion,' replied Pinabel. 'If any Frank say that thou art a traitor, I will give him the lie with the

steel of my sword.'

Then Ganelon fell upon his knees and kissed Pinabel's hand.

And when all the wise men and barons were gathered together, Pinabel pleaded so well for Ganelon that at last they said, 'Let us pray the Emperor to pardon Ganelon this once. Henceforward he will serve him in love and faith. Roland is dead. Not all the gold or all the silver in the world can bring him to life again. To fight about it, that were folly.'

Only one knight, called Thierry, would not agree. 'Ganelon is a traitor worthy of death,' he said. But the others would not listen to him, and they all returned to Charlemagne, to tell him what they had decided. 'Sire,' they said, 'we come to beg thee to set Ganelon free. He is a true knight, though this once he hath done ill. He repents him, and will

henceforth serve thee in love and faith. Roland is dead, and not all the gold or silver in the world can bring him back again.'

When the Emperor heard these words, his face grew dark with anger. 'Ye are all felons,' he cried. Then dropping his head upon his breast, 'Unhappy man that I am,' he moaned, 'to be thus forsaken of all.'

Out of the crowd stepped Thierry. He was slim and slight, but very knightly to look upon. 'Sire,' he cried, 'thou art not forsaken of all. By my forefathers I have a right to be among the judges in this cause. What quarrel lay between Roland and Ganelon hath nought to do with this. Ganelon, I say, is a felon. Ganelon is a traitor. Ganelon is a liar. Let him be hanged and his body thrown to the dogs. Such is the punishment of traitors. And if any of his kin say I lie, I

am ready to prove the truth of my words with my good sword which hangeth by my side.'

'Well spoken! well spoken!' cried the Franks.

Then before the Emperor, Pinabel advanced. He was tall and strong, and with his sword most skilful. 'Sire,' he cried, 'thine is the right to decide this cause. Thierry hath dared to judge in it. I say he lieth. Battle thereon will I do,' and so speaking he flung his glove on the ground.

'Good,' said Charlemagne, well pleased. 'But I must have hostages. Thirty of Ganelon's kinsmen shall be held in ward until this jousting be done.'

Then Thierry too drew off his glove and gave it to the Emperor. For him also thirty hostages were held in ward until it should be seen who should have right in this quarrel.

Beyond the walls of Aix there was a fair meadow, and there the champions met. All around there were seats set so that the knights and barons might look on, and in the middle of them was Charlemagne's throne.

The champions were both clad in new and splendid armour, the trumpets sounded, and springing to horse they dashed upon each other. Fiercely they fought. Their shields were dinted by many a blow, their armour battered and broken, and at last they met with such a shock that both were unhorsed and fell to the ground.

'Oh, Heaven!' cried Charlemagne, 'show me which hath right.' Then he remembered his dream of the bear and his thirty brethren, and of how the hound from out his palace hall had grappled with the greatest of them.

Both knights sprang lightly from their

fall and began to fight on foot. 'Yield thee, Thierry,' cried Pinabel, 'and I will henceforth be thy man and serve thee in faith and love. All my treasure will I give to thee, if thou but pray the Emperor to forgive Ganelon.'

'Never,' cried Thierry, 'shame be to me should I think thereon. Let God decide between me and thee this day.'

So they fought on.

'Pinabel,' said Thierry presently, 'thou art a true knight. Thou art tall and strong, and all men know of thy courage, so yield thee, and make thy peace with Charlemagne. As to Ganelon, let justice be done on him, and let us never more speak his name.'

'Nay,' replied Pinabel, 'God forbid that I should so forsake my kinsman, and to mortal man I will never yield. Rather let me die than earn such disgrace.'

So once again they closed in fight.

Thicker and faster fell the blows. Their chain-mail was hacked to pieces. The jewels of their helmets sparkled on the grass. Thierry was wounded in the face. Blood blinded him, but raising his sword with all his remaining strength, he brought it crashing down on Pinabel's helmet.

For a moment the knight waved his sword wildly in the air. Then he fell to the ground dead. The fight was over.

'Now by the judgment of God, is it proved that Ganelon is a traitor,' cried the Franks. 'He deserves to be hanged, both he and all his kindred who have answered for him.'

And as all the people cheered the champion of Roland's cause, Charlemagne rose from his throne, and going to him took him in his arms and kissed him, and threw his royal mantle around his shoulders. Then very tenderly his squires

disarmed the wounded knight, set him upon a gently pacing mule, and led him back in triumph to Aix.

Once again Charlemagne called all his wise men and barons together. 'What shall be done with the hostages who pled for Ganelon?' he asked.

'Let them all die the death,' replied the Franks.

Then the Emperor called an old provost to him. 'Go,' he said, 'hang them all on the gallows there. And if one escape, by my long white beard, thou shalt die the death.'

'None shall escape,' replied the provost, 'trust me.' Then taking with him a hundred sergeants he hanged the thirty high upon the gallows tree.

But a still more fearful death was to be the fate of the traitor Ganelon himself. Bound hand and foot, he was led through the town riding upon a common

cart-horse, while the people cursed him as he passed. And beyond the walls, where his champion had fought and died for him, he was torn to pieces by wild horses.

And thus in fearful wise was Ganelon repaid for his treachery, and thus was Roland avenged.

Now when the Emperor's anger was satisfied, he called all his bishops together. 'In my house,' he said, 'there is a prisoner of noble race. 'Tis Bramimonde the Saracen Queen. She hath been taught in grace, and hath opened her heart to the true light. Let her now be baptized, so that her soul may be saved.'

Then many noble ladies were gathered together to be sponsors for the Queen, and a great crowd of knights and nobles came too, and Bramimonde was baptized and became Christian, and was no longer called Bramimonde, but

The people cursed him as he passed.

Julienne.

Then at last had the Emperor rest. The long day was over, quiet night came, and Charlemagne lay down to sleep. But as he lay in his vaulted chamber the angel Gabriel stood beside him. 'Charlemagne, Charlemagne,' he called, 'gather all the armies of thy kingdom. March quickly to the land of Bire to help the Christian King Vivien, for there the heathen besiege him in his city and the Christians cry aloud for help.'

Then the Emperor turned upon his couch and wept. He longed for rest from his great labours, and yet he could not disobey the command.

'Alas,' he cried, 'what a life of toil is mine!'