

STORIES OF ROLAND



“May the Lord of all glory receive your souls.”

STORIES OF
ROLAND

TOLD TO THE CHILDREN BY
H. E. MARSHALL



YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS
CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

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TO
GRAHAM AND ROBIN

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 stores 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

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CHAPTER I

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?”

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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 thousand falcons. Give him four hundred mules laden with gold and silver; give him as much as fifty waggons 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

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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

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ten messengers set out to seek the court of the great Christian King, Charlemagne.

CHAPTER II

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

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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

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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 Marsill!" 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

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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 Naimés. 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

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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

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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

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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

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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 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

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“I hate thee,” hissed Ganelon.

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.”

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“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 danger 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

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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.

CHAPTER III

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?"

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“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

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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.

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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

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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

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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

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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.

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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 rearguard."

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.

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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

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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 and

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Fiercely the hound grappled with the leopard.

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?"

GANELON'S TREASON

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

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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 Naimés. “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 Naimés 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.