



# The Ballad of Blonay

by

LEONARD BACON



— 1906 —

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A

CHANSON DE YOLANDE

by

LEONARD BACON



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DEDICATED  
TO  
MY FATHER AND MOTHER



The events, on which this ballad is founded, took place in Turin and the Pays de Vaud during the year 1506. They are related by Guichenon an historian of the House of Savoy, and his account of the „Combat des Mariés et Non-Mariés“ is printed, in the original old French, in a recent history of Montreux, compiled by M. M. Rambert, Sebert and others.

The Doyen Bridel has told the tale in the „Conservateur Suisse“, and it is fairly well known in Switzerland, but I imagine it is unfamiliar elsewhere.

I have altered a few minor details in my version, but have not changed the story in the main, and I think, though I have no sure knowledge, that it is the only account in English.

LEONARD BACON,

Les Avants sur Montreux,

December 1906.







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## The Ballad of Blonay

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You must know that I was a demoiseau  
Hereabouts in the Pays de Vaud,  
But that was ages and ages ago,

Or ever I won la belle Yolande,  
The lovely lady of little land,  
And naught for dower but heart and hand.

Autumn is merry in fair Savoy,  
And I rode to Turin full of joy,  
Dreaming dreams that befit a boy.

Little I dreamed my first tourney  
Should see me vanquished utterly,  
Yet at last win the victory.

I came to the Duke in Turin Town,  
That ancient city of great renown,  
Amid the vineyards fruitful and brown.

I had not been a week in court,  
When they had a bickering of this sort,  
To make the ladies merry sport;

That unwed maidens were lovelier  
Than ever married ladies were,  
And the groom was less than the bachelor.

But the Sire de Blonay liked it not,  
Being lately wedded, and waxed full hot  
And took the jest up on the spot.

Saying : "I will wager by Trial of War  
That wedded ladies fairer are,  
And mine the fairest of all by far".

Merry then were the unwed maids,  
And cried aloud to the younger blades :  
"Will ye have us shamed for knightless jades?"

"Who stands forth for the unwed maidens?"  
Their voices lilted in merry cadence,  
And I stood forth for the unwed maidens.

For the morrow morning we set the tilting,  
And wiled the evening with laughter and liling,  
Wagering lily or rose were wilting.

And morning came, and the blazoned list,  
And lovely maidens and dames, I wist,  
And I was gallant to keep the trist,

High on the back of a piebald mare,  
Girded and armed for the fight with care,  
And Messire de Blonay was waiting there

On a great black charger, that had seen  
Many a tourney in gay Turin,  
And ne'er 'neath a conquered knight had been.

Three times did the lances spring and splinter  
As icicles do that have hung all winter,  
When Lent is drawing to Septuaginta.

Three times did the running steeds reel over,  
And halt and stagger and yet recover,  
And thrice did the dust arise and hover.

But the fourth shock came, and I felt the girth  
Rend like a ribbon nothing worth,  
And my crested helm plowed up the earth.

Cried Blonay : " Ho Corsant de Bresse!  
Go pay homage to my Contesse,  
That is the Queen of Loveliness ".

So I took horse in Turin Town,  
And rode away up hill and down,  
Amid the vineyards russet and brown.

A day, a day, and a half a day,  
I rode along on the winding way,  
Till I came where the good knight's castle lay

Amid the fields on a little hill,  
Whence one could gaze, nor have his fill,  
On lake and vineyard and mountain, till

The soul within him grew clamorous  
To worship all things beauteous,  
That are so fair and glorious.

But heavy-hearted thither I came,  
And in the castle I found the dame,  
A lovely lady of ancient name;

And told her I was a vanquished knight,  
Her love had beaten in listed fight,  
And I told her all the tale aright.

Then spake she : „As thou hast courteously  
Done what my lord commanded thee,  
Thou art right welcome unto me.

”And from thy vow thou art here released,  
And bidden to our castle feast;  
Nor shalt thou be among the least,

”Though Chastelard and Chillon ride,  
With Gruyère’s Count of birth and pride,  
Unto our feasting side by side“.

And merrily sooth to Blonay’s hall  
Came knights, and ladies sweet and tall,  
But there was the fairest of them all.

Never I trow shall I forget  
How I first saw Yolande de Villette.  
As a pearl in a golden coronet.

She sat by the Lady of Blonay's side :  
Oh, lovely maiden of splendor and pride!  
So lovely the spirit trembled and cried

For very joy at the sight of her.  
No flowering lily was lovelier,  
Nor slight blue hare-bell, nor lithe larkspur.

She seemed as a swaying hyacinth,  
In a darkling grove of Terebinth,  
Or a pillar white on a sombre plinth.

And my heart awoke and life was a song,  
And she was as music sweet and strong.  
That lifted and lilted and bore along

Burden of life and burden of love,  
Burden of beauty, that wound and wove  
My heart in the warp of heaven above.

And I turned and spoke to la belle Blonay,  
As she laughed with her guests so fair and gay,  
And said unto her what I would say ;

"Lady, your niece is fair to see,  
Fairest of all this company,  
And of all this world I will make free".

She laughed : " Good sooth, for a chevalier,  
That hath fallen under my husband's spear,  
Ye waste small homage and little fear.

" Another course with him will ye ride? "  
" Nay, my sweet lady ", I replied,  
" For I fain would be on the winning side "

And I turned away to the lovely maid,  
That looked aside and drooped her head,  
Yet I know that she was comforted.

And thus I won her, the fairest love,  
That ever came from heaven above,  
Which same with the lance I will hold and prove.

Oh, but Our Lady was good to me,  
When she gave De Blonay the victory,  
For I have conquered utterly.

Ho, knights of Turin City so gay !  
I have changed since the tourney-day,  
Chevalier preux des Mariées.











