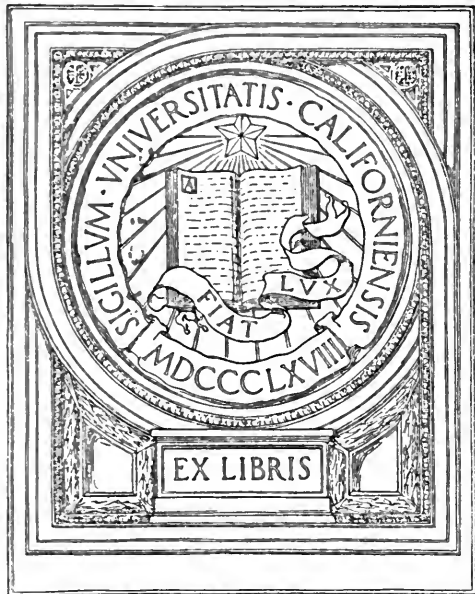


Renaud
of
Montauban.



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



THE GIFT OF
MAY TREAT MORRISON
IN MEMORY OF
ALEXANDER F MORRISON

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(Quatre fils Aimon)

RENAUD OF MONTAUBAN: FIRST
DONE INTO ENGLISH BY WILLIAM
CAXTON AND NOW ABRIDGED
AND RETRANSLATED BY ROBERT
STEELE

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TO
WALTER CRANE
PAINTER AND WRITER
THIS BOOK IS
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

MAR 27 '43

GIFT OF MRS. A. F. MORRISON

433016

DEAR MR. CRANE,

If I put your name at the head of this little book it is not with the thought that it is a worthy homage to the work you have done in the world for so many, young and old: it is rather to express our thanks—Mr. Mason's and mine—since even the smallest offering may be judged by the will of the givers rather than its intrinsic value.

Yet I should not have ventured to connect our work with your name if I had not felt that the subject-matter of our story at least was worthy of the highest. One astounding age and race of men gave to Western Europe the noblest architecture the world has seen, to learning the Universities, and to literature the Matter of France, of
ix

Britain, and of Rome—the root-stock and the fair blossoming of romance. The Matter of Britain, made familiar to us by Malory, has furnished the masters of our days with the subject of some of their finest work—Tennyson, Swinburne, and Morris have but retold in divers manners the stories of that age. But the Matter of France—the story of Charlemagne and his Peers, the story of Troy, of Alexander, and the like—have not been so fortunate. From the days of their first translation into our tongue they have ceased less and less to interest the readers of this country, till at last even the buyers of chap-books have refused them their support. We have tried to bring them again to the public of to-day in the “Story of Alexander” and in “Huon of Bordeaux,” with only the success that my poor skill warranted the hopes of, far below the merits of the stories themselves.

Once more, it may be for the last time, we come before the public with one of these

tales of the birth of Western feudalism. As I see it, though perhaps not as I have written it down, it is worthy of their hearing. If it has not the long ages behind it that make the "Story of Alexander" one of the most interesting, as it is one of the oldest of romances: if we do not hear in it the distant horn of Oberon sounding now and again through the woods of Outremêr, and catch a glimpse of the King of Faery, lover of truth and true men: yet the tale of the Four Sons of Aymon has for us the attraction of being of the very life of the people amongst whom it grew, the most dearly loved and best remembered of these half-forgotten tales. As I have wandered through that fair land of the north of France, dear to us as the nursing-home of civic liberties, and as the cradle of the greatest architecture of the world, the land between the Seine and the Rhine, one sees, as one rides through the little villages, the four brothers pictured on the sign of the little estaminet: in the town the oldest street

will bear their name, and in the winter night amidst the howling of the wind one still may chance to hear the neighing of Bayard and the clatter of his hoofs as he hurries past the dwellings of ungrateful man. Other stories of success and glory have died out and been forgotten centuries ago—this of unmerited wrong, of brave resistance, of final triumph, of humility and patience, has lived in the hearts of the people who have found their strength and their success in the same resistance of patience and endurance.

A few words as to the form in which I have presented the story to modern readers it would be easy to discover the original form of the tale and to present it thus to the public of to-day, but certain considerations led me to prefer the later form. The story of Renaud grew originally in the north of France, but its immense popularity imposed upon the tellers of the time the necessity of connecting him with other parts of France. Thus nearly every episode in

xii

the story is doubled: over and over again the situation recurs localised in the south of France. It would be easy to make guesses at the position of the map of these various resting-places of Renaud; I could take you to the little bridge from which Bayard was thrown into the Meuse, or show you the castle where Maugis wrought his spells, or dreamed of vengeance against the murderer of his father; but these things are not the function of the story-teller, nor do they even add value to his work. When all the different forms were drawn together into one epic it was equally impossible to omit one or the other locality, and I have thought it better to retain some of these duplications of incident for the sake of the beauty of their treatment in the old romance. Really and truly, to my mind the hero of the tale is neither Renaud nor Roland, but Bayard, the good horse.

One word more and I have done. This long struggle of patience against power, the

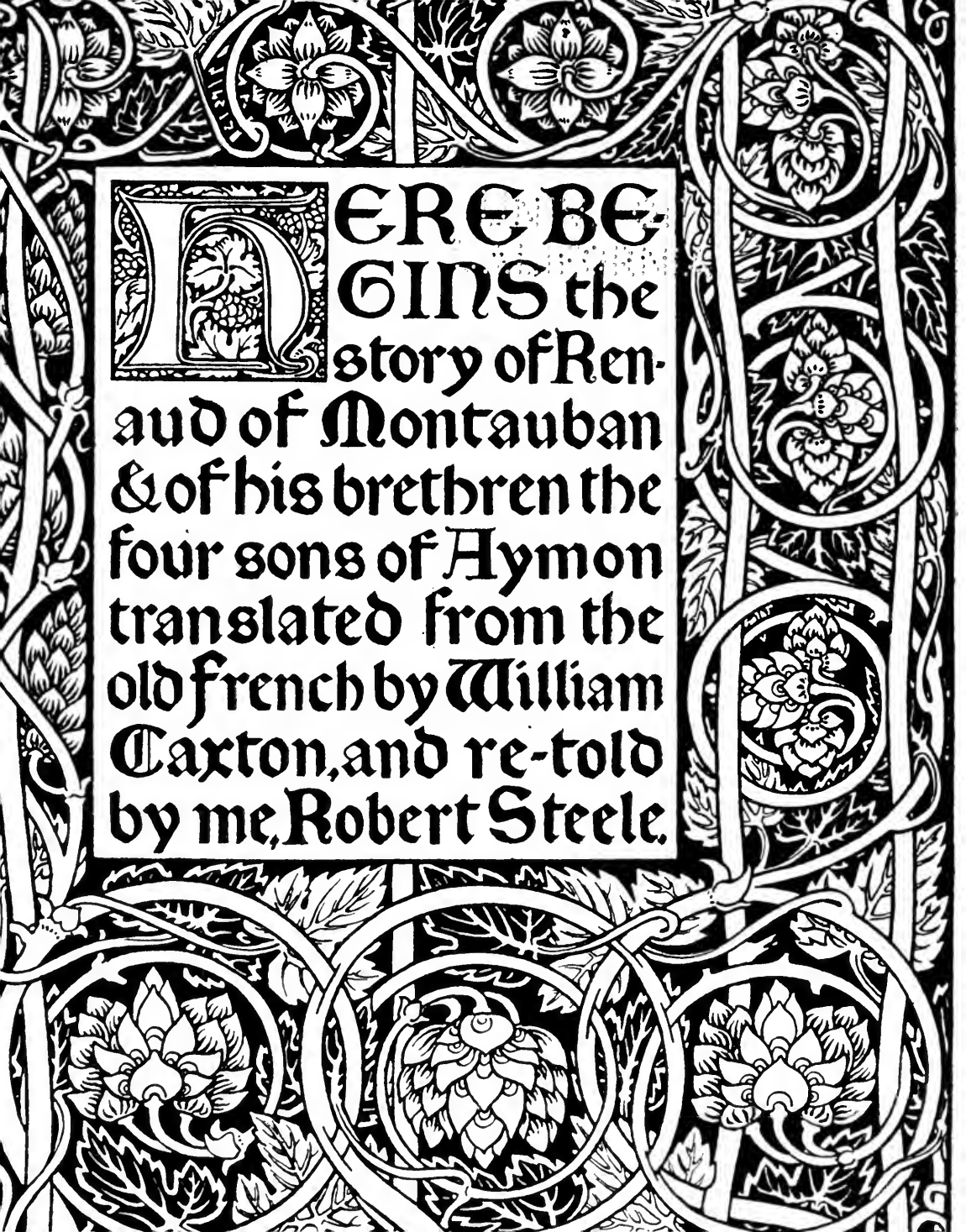
attitude of Renaud towards his lord, give us better than any other romance I know, the ideal view of the relations of a knight to his overlord, and this picture itself would I think justify me, if justification were needed, for intruding on the public again with tales of old days.

ROBERT STEELE.

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Renaud
of
Montau-
ban

The page is framed by an intricate, black and white decorative border. It features a complex pattern of interlocking vines, leaves, and circular medallions. Each medallion contains a stylized floral or foliate design, possibly representing a specific flower or a heraldic symbol. The overall style is reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts movement or early 20th-century decorative arts.

THERE BE
GINS the
story of Ren-
aud of Montauban
& of his brethren the
four sons of Hymon
translated from the
old french by William
Caxton, and re-told
by me, Robert Steele.

IT is told in the deeds of Charlemagne that upon a time he held high feast in Paris at the time of Pentecost, after that he was come again from the plains of Lombardy, where he had overthrown the Saracens and slain their king. Round him were many worthy knights; the twelve peers of France were there, Germans, Englishmen, Normans, Poitevins, Lombards and more. Amongst the other dukes and princes, came the good and worthy Duke Aymon of Dordonne, and with him his four sons, Renaud, Alard, Guichard, and Richard. Fair and mighty, witty and valiant, were the four, and of them Renaud was the tallest man that could anywhere be found.

At this feast the King rose and said to his barons :

“ My vassals and friends, ye all know how I have conquered and gotten so many great lands by your help and succour, and how I have slain the infidels or made them accept the Christian faith. Yet have we lost right many of our chivalry through the fault of those of our vassals who would not come to our banner after we had sent for them, like Gerard of Rousillon, the Duke of Nanteuil, and Duke Beuves of Aigremont, of whom I now complain to you. Had it not been for Sir Salomon, who came to our aid with thirty thousand men, and Lambert of Berri, and Geoffrey of Bourdelle, and Galeran of Bouillon who bore our banner, we should have been beaten,

2 and

and that by the fault of these three brethren, and above all, of Duke Beuves of Aigremont, since they never deigned to obey our orders, though they took oath of service. Now shall I send him word to come and serve me with all his power, and in case he refuse I shall send for all my friends and my subjects and besiege him at Aigremont. If I take it, I will hang him, and slay his son Maugis ; I will burn his wife alive, and put his lands to fire and sword."

Then the good Duke Naymes of Bavaria rose forthwith and spoke in this wise :

"Sire, meseemeth you should not anger yourself so sore : if you will believe me, you will send to the Duke of Aigremont a messenger well and honourably accompanied. He should be wise and prudent, such an one as will shew forth all that you charge him with ; and when you know the duke's answer, then can you advise you what you have to do."

"In good faith," said the King, "you counsel me wisely and right well."

Then he thought within himself whom he might send bold enough to deliver his message without fear of death, and asked his barons, but there was none of them that answered, for many of them were of kin to the duke, as Duke Aymon of Dordonne, who was his brother. Then was King Charlemagne right wroth and angry ; and then swore by Saint Denis that he would destroy the duke. He called for his eldest son Lohier, and said :

“ My son, needs must you do this message. Take with you an hundred knights armed and honourably arrayed : and when you come to Duke Beuves, say to him that if he come not to serve me on Saint John’s Day next, I will besiege Aigremont, and destroy his lands ; I will hang him and his son, and burn his wife alive.”

“ Sire,” said Lohier, “ I will do your errand without fear, and tell him all your message.”

Then Charlemagne repented sore that he had charged him with this message, but seeing it had been said it must be carried out. On the morrow Lohier and his company made them ready and came mounted before the King. Then Lohier said to the King, his father :

“ Sire, we are here ready to fulfil your will.”

“ Dear son,” said Charlemagne, “ I recommend you to God, and I beseech Him to keep and guard you and your fellowship from evil or any harm.”

Then departed Lohier and his company, whereof the King made great lamentation and not without cause.

Now go the messengers towards Aigremont, sore threatening Duke Beuves. Full hardly shall it hap with them, and afterwards many ladies shall abide widows without husbands, and many gentlewomen unwedded ; many churches shall be destroyed, and many lands burned and wasted—pity shall it be to see them. For, as they were riding and threatening

the duke, a spy hears all that they say, and coming hastily to Aigremont to Duke Beuves in his palace, tells him how the messengers of Charlemagne are coming with threats, the King's son at their head.

Now there were with the Duke great foison of his folk, by reason of the feast. Then said he :

“Barons, the King sets little by me since he bids me go to serve him with all my power, and sends his eldest son to threaten me ; what counsel ye me thereto, my friends ?”

Then rose a wise and prudent knight, Simon by name, and said :

“My lord, if you will hear me, I bid you receive honourably the messengers of Charlemagne, for well you know that he is your liege lord, and wit that he who warreth against his lord striveth against God and right. Have no regard to your kin, nor to your brothers who would not obey him. Know that the King is mighty and will destroy you, body and goods, but that if you obey him.”

Then answered the Duke that thus he would not do, and that Messire Simon gave him evil counsel : “for,” said he, “I have three brothers who will bear out my war against him, and also my four nephews, worthy and well taught in feats of war.”

“Alas,” said the Duchess, “believe your council ; no man shall praise you for making war against your rightful lord ; wite well it is against the law of God.”

Then he looked on her in great wrath and bade her hold her peace. Great was the noise thereon in the palace of Aigremont, for some counselled the Duke that he should do as the Duchess had advised, and others said nay: and at the last the Duke said to those that bade him not make peace with the King that he thanked them heartily.

Much long they spake of this matter, till at last the messengers of the King came to Aigremont. The castle was set right high upon a rock, well environed with strong walls, and garnished with fair towers, so that for its situation and strength it was impregnable, save only for famine. And Lohier cried to the lords that were with him:

“See now what a fortress is there! what walls! and the river runs at its foot. There is not, I do believe, its like in all Christendom.”

Then spake a knight called Savary to Lohier, his lord:

“Sir, it seems to me that the King, your father, hath done a great folly to attempt to destroy the Duke of Aigremont, for in good sooth he is right mighty; methinks he could raise as many men to make war as my lord your father, if he came to be attacked. It were a fair thing if they might be agreed, but well I wot, if the King had him, all the gold in Paris would not hinder him from hanging or slaying. So I beseech you speak mildly to Duke Beuves, for he is right fierce, and if there
6 were

were a medley between you and him the loss should turn upon us, for we are right few.”

THEY COME
INTO THE
CASTLE

Lohier answered that he spoke prudently; “but we fear him not,” said he, “if he say any thing to our displeasure he shall be the first to repent it.”

Then said Messire Savary to himself softly that this was not wisely said, “for if it hap you to say any thing that shall displease him, he will wreak it on your body, and we shall all be in a way to die.”

Thus speaking of one thing and another they came to the gate of the castle, which was straightway shut by the porter. The knights knocked and the porter answered to them :

“Lords, what be you?”

“Friend,” answered Lohier, “open to us this gate at once, for we would speak with Duke Beuves from the King.”

“Now abide you a little, and haste you not,” said the porter, “I will go speak to my lord the Duke.”

So he went into the hall, knelt down before the Duke, and told him how down at the gate was a right great company of men at arms, an hundred men or more well armed and horsed, and with them the eldest son of King Charlemagne. “My lord,” said he, “shall I open the gates to them?”

“Yea,” said the duke, “for I fear them not, were Charlemagne himself with them.”

So the porter ran straightway down again to open them the gates, and Lohier with his company entered

entered and mounted up to the donjon of the castle where sat Beuves. Then said the duke :

“ Lords, here comes the eldest son of the King ; if he speak courteously to me he will do well, for say he any thing to displeas me, I shall without delay take vengeance thereof.”

Now there were round him two hundred knights or more, and it was the month of May when all creatures human ought well to rejoice them, and men-folk worthy of heart defend them well and war against their enemies. So Lohier, right nobly armed, entered into the hall of the palace of Aigremont, and saw it well garnished of fair folk, the duke sitting full proudly among his barons, and the duchess his wife next by him, and before him his son Maugis, who had not his like in the art of necromancy or of arms.

Lohier marched at the head of his folk and saluted the duke in this wise, whereby great evil fell to him at last :

“ The God that created the firmament and made all things of naught to sustain the people, keep and save King Charlemagne, Emperor of Almayne and King of France, and all his noble lineage, and confound the Duke of Aigremont ! The King, my father, sends thee word to come forthwith to Paris with five hundred knights to serve him where he will please to employ thee. Also shalt thou do him right and reason of this that thou were not with him in
8 arms

arms in Lombardy to fight against the enemies of the Christian faith : by this your fault, Baldwin lord of Melun, Geoffrey of Bourdelle, and many other great lords there lost their life. If thou come not, the King shall come on thee with his power, and take thee and bring thee into France. There shalt thou be judged as a thief and false traitor to thy lord to be slain and hanged alive, thy wife burnt, thy children destroyed or banished. Do this therefore that I command thee in the King's name, for thou art his subject."

BEUVES
WILL NOT
DO HIS
WILL

When Duke Beuves had heard Lohier thus speak, he changed colour and said to him :

"I shall not go to Charlemagne, or fulfil aught of his will ; I hold neither castle nor fortress from him : but I shall come on him with all my power and destroy the land of France to Paris."

Then said Lohier :

"Vassal, how darest thou answer thus? If the King knew your threats he would come straightway on thee and utterly destroy thee. Remember thou art his liege man. Thou canst not gainsay it : come then freely and serve thy lord, believe me. If you do not he will hang you where the winds of the air with their great blasts shall dry up thy bones."

When the duke heard him speak thus, he said that he came to an ill end who bore such a message from Charlemagne, for never should he return.

Then a certain knight, Walter by name, came forth

forth and said : " My lord, keep you from this folly ; let Lohier say all his will, for you are never the worse for all his saying. You know how mighty the King is, for you are his subject, and from him you hold your castle of Aigremont and all your lands. If you do him service you shall do wisely, and if you war against your rightful lord nothing but evil can come to you therefrom."

When the duke heard him, he gave him thank, but still angry he said to him :

" Hold your peace, for I shall hold nothing from him while I can bear arms and mount my horse. I will send for my brothers Gerard of Roussillon, and the Duke of Nanteuil, and Garnier his son, and we will march on Charlemagne, and if I can meet him in any place I will do to him what he thought to do to me. By my faith, all the gold in Paris should not hinder me from slaying this messenger, were I cut in pieces for it."

Lohier said to him : " I neither esteem you nor fear you." Then Duke Beuves waxed red and cried : " Now, barons, upon him, bring him to me, for he shall die shamefully."

The barons durst not gainsay their lord, but drew their swords and ran straightway on Charlemagne's folk, and Lohier called his banner and began to defend himself and his folk right sharply. God knows how many heads and arms were there cut off that day, for at that hour began a
10 strife

strife by which many ladies and damsels were without husbands and lovers, many children fatherless, and many churches wasted and destroyed that never since have been repaired. What shall I say more? Wit you well that they fought within the walls of the palace, and the noise of it spread throughout the town. Then the burgesses and the craftsmen came with their axes and swords, about seven thousand men, but the door of the palace of Aigremont was narrow and the Frenchmen within kept them well. Alas, what a terrible and unhappy slaughter was there that day—those that had least of might were forced to do manfully.

When Lohier saw that he and his folk had the worse, he struck a knight in such a wise that he laid him dead at the feet of Duke Beuves. Then he said, bewailing himself:

“Lord God, That suffered death and passion to redeem mankind, guard me this day from shameful death and from torment, for well I know that I shall not see my father, King Charlemagne, any more.”

The duke called out: “Lohier, this day shall be your last.”

“It shall not be,” said Lohier, and with that he struck the Duke upon the head, but his helm saved him and the blow glanced to his heel, so that the blood ran out. Thereon said Lohier: “I knew that you would not escape.”

Then came Duke Beuves, in a wood rage, and heaving

LOHIER
AND HIS
FOLK ARE
SLAIN

heaving up his brank of steel, he smote so hard upon his bright helm that he cloved him to the teeth, and Lohier fell dead before him on the pavement of the hall. So outrageously died Lohier, son of King Charlemagne, and Duke Beuves struck the head from his body.

After that the folk of Lohier saw their lord dead, they made no great defence, for of an hundred that entered the palace with him, there were but twenty left. Of these the duke slew forthwith ten, and to the other ten he said :

“ Promise and swear to me on your faith as knights that ye will bear your lord Lohier to his father Charlemagne, and say that in an evil hour did he send him with such a message to me. On this account I will let you go, and you shall say to him that I will not pay him a denier, but that in the summer I will come with thirty thousand men and destroy him and all his land.”

“ Sir,” answered they, “ we shall do what it pleases you to command us.”

Then a bier was made ready, and men put the body of Lohier within it, and horses drew it from the castle.

When they were in the fields, the knights began to weep and said :

“ Alas, what shall we now say to the King, when he shall know your cruel death, Lohier? We may well be certain he will make us die.”

Thus making their moan for the love of their lord Lohier, they rode on their way to Paris. Now leave we to speak of them, and tell of King Charlemagne.

AYMON
BRINGS HIS
FOUR SONS
TO THE
KING

Upon a day the King said unto his lords and barons :

“Lords, I am sorry for my son Lohier, whom I have sent to Aigremont. I fear me sore there has been strife with the proud Duke Beuves, and I doubt me he has slain my son Lohier. By my crown, if he hath so done I shall go upon him with an hundred thousand men, and hang him on a gibbet.”

“Sire,” quoth Duke Aymon, “if he hath offended, you will do well to wreak on him great vengeance. He is your liege man ; he holds his lands of you, and ought to serve and honour you ; I am right sorry if he hath done you wrong in any manner. I have here my four sons, Renaud, Alard, Guichard, and Richard who are right valiant, and shall be trusty and true to you.”

“Aymon,” said the King, “I owe you great thanks for the offer that you have made me. It is my will that you bring them hither at once that I may make them knights : I will give them castles and lands enough.”

Straightway Duke Aymon sent for his sons, and brought them before the King, and when he saw them, they pleased him greatly. Renaud was the first that spake, and he said :

“Sire,

“Sire, if it please you to make us knights, we shall be ever ready to serve you.”

Then King Charlemagne called for his seneschal and said: “Bring me the arms of the King of Cyprus whom I slew with my own hands before Pampeluna, I will give them to Renaud, the most valiant of all; and other goodly arms will I give to his three brethren.”

So the seneschal brought the arms and the four sons of Aymon of Dordonne were armed, and Ogier the Dane, who was of their kin, did on the spurs of the new knight Renaud. King Charlemagne girt on his sword, and dubbed him knight, saying:

“God increase in thee goodness, honour and worth.”

Then Renaud mounted on Bayard, a horse that had no like in the world but Bucephalus the horse of the great King Alexander, for he could run ten leagues without being weary: this horse was brought up in the Isle of Brescau, and Maugis had given him to his cousin. His shield emblazoned hung at his neck, and he flourished his sword, by seeming a most valiant knight in the sight of all men. So they rode out to St. Victor nigh Paris, where the King had raised a quantain at which the new made knights should joust, and all did well, but Renaud took the prize. Then said Charlemagne to him:

“From henceforth, Renaud, you shall come with me in battle.”

“Sire,” said Renaud, “God yield it you a thousand times. I promise you to serve you truly, and never shall you find me wanting, save from your default.”

The jousting done, the Emperor returned to his palace in Paris, and reasoned there with his barons :

“I marvel much of Lohier, my eldest son, why he tarries so long on his message. I fear greatly some evil hath come to him, for I dreamed this night in my sleep that the thunder fell on him, and then that Duke Beuves came and cut off his head. By my beard, if this be so, he shall never have peace with me while he lives.”

“Sire,” said Duke Naymes, “I believe not such things, nor should you give credence to them.”

The King said :

“Yet if it be so, I shall send for Normans, Flemings, Germans, Bavarians, English, and Lombards, and with them I will destroy him utterly.”

As they spoke thus, there came riding a messenger on a dun horse, sore, sick, and weary, wounded to the death, who came in before the palace where the King was at the windows. When the King saw the messenger, he went quickly down from the palace hall to the gate, and with him Naymes of Bavaria, and Ogier the Dane. Then the messenger he bowed full low, though he was sore wounded, and might with pain speak, and said to him :

“Sire, great folly you did when you sent my lord your son to ask tribute and obedience of Duke

Beuves,

Beuves, the which your son asked shamefully. But the duke, who is fell and cruel, when he heard my said lord, commanded his meinie of knights to take him, for that he should never return to recount his message, nor what answer he had found. Then there was a great and cruel medley so that your dear son Lohier was slain there, and Duke Beuves slew him and all your folk save me and nine others, who are bringing your son in a bier, and I myself am sore hurt, as you may see.”

Then the messenger could speak no more because of the great grief and pain of his wounds, and fell down in a swoon. When the King heard this he fell down on the ground and tore his hair, saying :

“ Ha, God that made heaven and earth, Thou hast brought me into sore trouble ; let me die, for I desire no more to live.”

Then Duke Naymes began to comfort him and said : “ For God’s love, Sire, torment not yourself ; have good heart and comfort your folk : ” and this he said for them that he saw weeping for their kinsmen and friends slain with Lohier. “ Bury your son in honour at St. Germain of the Meadows, and then march on Duke Beuves with all your power, and destroy him and his lands at your pleasure.”

Then King Charlemagne appeased himself, for he knew that Duke Naymes’ counsel was good, and bade his barons make them ready to meet the body of Lohier his son. Straightway they made them-

selves ready to do the King's commandment, and went out. When they were two leagues from Paris they met the corpse, and when King Charlemagne saw it he alighted from his horse, and took up the cloth that was on the bier, and looked on his son Lohier. Then saw he the head that was smitten off from the body, and the face that was all hewen, and cried: "How well may I hate that Duke Beuves who hath thus murdered my son!"

LOHIER IS
BURIED AT
PARIS

Then he kissed his child full often, and said:

"Ha, fair son, you were a tall man and a gentle knight; I pray God that He take your soul into His realm of Paradise."

Great sorrow made the King, but Duke Naymes comforted him, and Ogier the Dane and Sampson of Burgundy took him by the arms and led him to St. Germain of the Meadows. There the body of Lohier was buried as the sons of kings are wont to be, and he was put in his grave. Now leave we to speak of King Charlemagne, and of his grief, and tell we of Duke Aymon, and of his four sons that were at Paris.

"My sons," said Aymon, "you know how King Charlemagne is much wroth, and not without cause, at my brother your uncle, since he hath slain Lohier his son. I wot well that the King will fall upon him with all his power, but we will not go with him. Let us go to Dordonne, and then if the King makes war upon my brother, we can help him."

So they mounted their horses and stayed not till they came to Laon, and from thence they rode so long that they came to Dordonne. When the lady saw her lord and her four sons she was right glad and came out to welcome them, asking if Renaud and his brothers were made knights. The duke answered "Yea," and after she asked why they had left the King's court. Then he rehearsed unto her word by word how his brother Duke Beuves had slain Lohier, whereof the good lady Margery was greatly sorry, for she knew that this should mean the destruction of Duke Aymon her husband, of herself, of her sons, and of their land. Moreover, she heard Renaud, her eldest son, threatening Charlemagne and she said to him :

"My son Renaud, I pray thee understand me a little ; love thy sovereign and natural lord and dread him above all things, and God shall reward thee for it. My lord Aymon, I marvel much that you departed from Charlemagne without leave of him that hath done you so much good and so great worship, and hath given your sons such noble arms and made them knights with his own hands—more honour he might not do you or your children."

"Lady," said the duke, "we be thus departed from Charlemagne because my brother hath slain his son, as I have before told you."

"Ha," quoth the lady, "for God's love, my lord, do not meddle with that, for you shall see that this

summer the King will go upon your brother. By my counsel serve the King, your rightful lord, and fail him in no wise, for if you do other you will be false to your natural lord."

THE KING
IS MUCH
WROTH

"Lady," quoth the duke, "before God I would rather have lost my castle and half of my lands than that my brother should have slain Lohier. Now the will of God be done therein and none otherwise." Here we leave speaking of Duke Aymon and of the duchess, and return to speak of King Charlemagne that was come again to Paris making great sorrow for the death of his son.

While Duke Naymes was comforting him in his sorrow there came a messenger before the King who shewed how Duke Aymon of Dordonne and his four sons were gone into their own country. Wherefore the King was sore angered, and swore by God and St. Denis that before he died Duke Aymon and his sons should suffer full sore for it, and that Duke Beuves nor his family should not keep them therefrom. Then dinner was set and Salomon served him the cup that day, but the King did eat but little for his great melancholy. And after meat the King said to his barons :

"Lords, Duke Beuves hath done me great outrage in that he hath slain my son, but if it please God I shall go to see him this summer and destroy all his lands, and this will I do the more because Duke Aymon hath gone from me with his

BEUVES
MAKES HIM
READY FOR
WAR

four sons whom I have made knights, which I now repent."

"Sire," said Duke Naymes, "your son is dead through great unhap, and in an evil hour was he put to death: now summon all your folk and take your way towards Aigremont, and if you may take Duke Beuves let him pay full dearly for the death of your son."

"Naymes," said the King, "you are prudent and wise, surely I will follow your advice."

Then he gave leave to many of his barons, bidding them each to go into his own country to make ready, and to come again to him the first day of summer. So it was done as the King commanded, and tidings were carried into all lands that Charlemagne was making a great assembly of men at arms. When the news of it reached Duke Beuves' court, he straightway sent for his kinsmen and friends, and in special for Gerard of Roussillon and the Duke of Nanteuil. When they came together they were well-nigh fourscore thousand fighting men, as fair folk as ever were seen, ready to defend the castle. Then said Duke Beuves to his brother Gerard:

"Be not dismayed, for I hope to hurt the King sore if he come against us: let us go forth against Troyes. There we shall fight with him vigorously by the aid of God."

This was at the beginning of May, and Charlemagne was at Paris abiding till his men should
20 come

come to go forth against the Duke. He abode not long till Richard of Normandy came with thirty thousand men, and Earl Guy with a right noble company. After him came Salomon of Brittany and a host of Poitevins, Gascons, Normans, Flemings, and Burgundians, who all lodged in the meadows of St. Germain. When the King knew that his folk were all arrived he had thereof great joy, and straightway set out for Aigremont, putting his foreguard in the hands of Ogier the Dane and Richard of Normandy. After they had ridden several days there came straight to Ogier the Dane, who was in the foreguard, a messenger riding in haste, and asked whose was this goodly host. He answered they were King Charlemagne's folk. So the messenger said he would speak to him, and Ogier brought him before the King. As soon as the messenger saw him he fell at his feet and told him he was of Troyes, and sent by Aubrey, lord of Troyes, to beseech succour from him, for that Duke Beuves of Aigremont and his two brothers were besieging him, and that if his liege lord came not to his help he must yield up the town and the fair castle that Julius Cæsar built there.

BEUVES
LAYS SIEGE
TO TROYES

When Charlemagne understood that Troyes was besieged by Duke Beuves and his brothers he was full sorry and swore by St. Denis of France that he would go there with his army, and if he could take the Duke of Aigremont, he would make him die a

THE KING
DRAWS
NIGH TO
TROYES

shameful death. So he called Duke Naymes of Bavaria, Godefroy of Frisia, and Duke Galeran, and said to them :

“ Barons, let us ride hastily to Troyes ere it be taken.”

They answered him right gladly that they would so do, and rode forth a good pace till they came nigh Troyes. The foreguard had the oriflamme with thirty thousand men and with them was the messenger as guide. When they were near the town a messenger came to Gerard of Roussillon saying that King Charlemagne was at hand to succour Aubrey with a right great company. Then said Gerard to his brothers that it were good that they should go against the King with all their power, and that each should prove himself a good man. So they did as they devised and Gerard was the first in the foreguard, and they rode till each party could see the other's faces. Then said Ogier the Dane to Richard of Normandy :

“ See how Gerard of Roussillon weeneth to deal with us ; let us think to defend us well, so that the worship abide with King Charlemagne and with us.”

Then they let their horses run on one side and the other, and Gerard smote a German with his spear so that he fell dead on the ground ; then he took his banner, and cried aloud :

“ Roussillon, Roussillon ! ”

Straightway began a battle, strong, fell, and cruel. And when Ogier the Dane saw his folk slain, he grew mad with rage and smote a knight so that his spear ran through him and he fell dead: Gerard seeing that, smote one of Ogier's knights down before him. Great was the battle and fierce; you should have seen there shields pierced and broken, habergeons cloven, salades and helms unbuckled and sore beaten and dented, men lying on the ground wounded or dead—a great pity to see. Then came Duke Beuves spurring his horse, and crying out “Aigremont,” struck down Enguerrande of St. Quentin, and there came to him his brother with his folk, and all together they rode on the army of Charlemagne. Now came up the Germans and Lombards of the King's army. Many worthy knights of both sides were slain in the fight, and now shewed Richard of Normandy his great prowess, overthrowing from his horse a certain knight at the side of Gerard. Then swore Gerard to avenge his death, and cried out his war-cry “Roussillon,” but his brother of Nanteuil came to him and said: “Brother, turn again, for Charlemagne cometh with his host, and if we abide the loss shall turn to us.”

While they were thus speaking Galeran of Boulogne struck his sword through the body of Gerard's nephew so that he fell down dead. Then had Gerard like to have lost his wits, and sent for Duke Beuves

BEUVES IS
STRUCK
DOWN

his brother to come and aid him. On the other side the King assembled his folk, and that same day there fell forty thousand men of one side or the other. Duke Beuves smote Walter of Pierrette on his shield and the spear went through him and the Duke cried out: "Aigremont."

Then jousted Richard of Normandy against him hurting him sore, crying:

"It was an evil day for you when you slew Lohier! You cannot escape."

With that he drew out his sword, and smote the Duke upon the helm in such wise that if it had not been for his coif of steel, Beuves would have been slain that hour, for the stroke fell on the horse and cut it in two as if it had been nothing. But up stood Duke Beuves on his feet at once, for he was very valiant, and holding his sword in his hand, he smote a knight named Simon, killing him in the place, the while he called out his cry: "Aigremont."

So there came to him his two brethren and their folk on one side, and Ogier and Naymes, and Archbishop Turpin and many others of King Charlemagne's men on the other, for in this battle were many nobles.

Up rode King Charlemagne crying: "Barons, if they escape us, we shall never have honour."

Then he bore up his spear to the rest, and smiting Gerard of Roussillon on the shield, he bore man and

horse to the ground ; if his brothers had not helped him that day had been his last. Then came Ogier the Dane and smote one of Gerard's knights so that he clove him to the teeth, and when Gerard saw his knight thus slain, he called on God and our Lady, saying :

“ I have this day lost a fair and good knight.”

The Duke Beuves, for his part, prayed God to keep him from death, and from falling into the hands of Charlemagne.

Nigh was the sun under, and it was about compline time : the fighters on one side and the other were weary and sore fatigued. The three brethren withdrew to their tents in great wrath, and specially Gerard of Roussillon who had that day lost his cousin and a hundred other of his best knights. “ An evil hour it was,” cried he, “ when the son of Charlemagne was slain.”

Then came to him Duke Beuves bleeding and horribly wounded, and when Gerard saw him he said : “ Fair brother, are you wounded to death ? ”

“ Nay,” said he, “ I shall soon be whole.”

Then Gerard swore that at sunrise he would begin again the battle even if thirty thousand men should die.

“ Alas, nay,” said his brother the Duke of Nanteuil, “ if you will do my counsel, we shall send thirty of the wisest knights we have unto King Charlemagne and shew humbly that he have pity on

us, and that the Duke Beuves shall pay him for the death of his son Lohier, as it shall be determined by his barons and ours. You know well we are his liegemen, and when we war against him, we do cruel falsehood. Moreover, if he lost all the folk that he hath here with him, before a month passed he would have twice as many again, so that we can do nothing against him."

His two brethren answered him that they would do so, seeing he counselled them thereto, and concluded to send as soon as it should be day. That night they kept good watch till the morning, and made ready their messengers, and when they were ready, Gerard of Roussillon said :

" Lords, say well to King Charlemagne that we be sore displeased at the death of Lohier, and that our brother Duke Beuves repenteth of it full sore. If it please him to have mercy on us we shall go and serve him where it shall please him to send us with ten thousand men. Moreover, speak to Naymes of Bavaria, and pray him to employ himself towards the King that this accord may be made."

When the messengers had understood what they should say to King Charlemagne they mounted their horses, each of them bearing branches of olive in their hands in token of peace, and ceased not to ride till they came before the King's tent. Then they saluted him humbly, and one of them, named Stephen, spoke in this manner :

THE MES-
SENGERS
SPEAK
WISELY

“ That God Who formed our first father and mother and created all things, bless our lord Charlemagne, and give him good life and long. Wite, Sire, that Duke Gerard of Roussillon, Duke Beuves of Aigremont, and the Duke of Nanteuil are come hither to cry you mercy, and beseech you right humbly that it may please you to pardon them the death of your son. And the Duke of Aigremont doth you to wit that if it be your pleasure to do so, that he and his brothers will come to serve you with ten thousand fighting men in all that shall be your pleasure to employ them. Sire, for God’s sake have remembrance that God forgave His death to Longinus who cruelly pierced him to the heart, wherefore may it please you to pardon them and take them into your grace.”

When King Charlemagne heard the messengers thus speak he wrinkled his forehead and knitted his brows and looked full angrily, and for some time answered them nothing. Soon after he began to speak in this manner :

“ By my faith, the Duke Beuves had well lost his wits when he so shamefully slew my dear son Lohier whom I loved so tenderly. Now, is he my vassal or not?”

“ Sire,” answered Stephen, “ I am certain that he will do you right at the direction of your council.”

Then said the King :

“ Of this we will take counsel;” and withdrew him

him a little aside and calling to him his lords he said to them :

“ Here be the messengers of Duke Beuves and of his brethren, who send me word that they will come and serve me where I will with ten thousand fighting men, if we will pardon them the death of our son Lohier ; they will be our vassals and hold their lands and lordships of us.”

“ Sire,” answered Duke Naymes, “ in this is nothing but well. I counsel you that you pardon them, for the three dukes be valiant and of great renown.”

Then by the counsel of Duke Naymes the King pardoned the three brethren, and called to him the knights and said to them that he pardoned their lords on the condition that Duke Beuves of Aigremont should come to serve him at the Feast of St. John with ten thousand men well arrayed.

“ And bid them come now to me to take of them their oath and faith that they shall henceforth obey and serve me truly, and hold of me all their lands.”

So the messengers departed and came again to the dukes, and shewed them how they had sped. Then said Duke Gerard of Roussillon :

“ It is reason that we take off our good gowns, and go to the King naked, and cry him mercy for our offences against his high puissance and lordship.”

His brethren agreed thereto, and so these noble

knights took off their clothes, and all naked, bare-foot, and in poor estate departed from their lodgings and with them four thousand knights. In this wise they came before the King, in right great humility.

When King Charlemagne saw the brethren thus coming with their barons, he called to him Duke Naymes and said to him :

“Can ye not tell me what folk you see coming yonder?”

“Sire,” said Duke Naymes, “it is Duke Beuves of Aigremont, coming with his folk to require your mercy.”

Then Duke Beuves came before the King, and cast himself upon his knee, and said in this wise :

“Sire, I cry you mercy, for we be come here by your commandment. If I have slain your dear son by my folly, I now yield me and my brethren also as your men, to serve you with all our power where you shall set us, and never shall we fail you, but if it come from you.”

When the King saw them come so humbly in their shirts and barefoot he had great pity of them, and pardoned them the death of his son Lohier, and all his ill will, and from one side and the other men embraced their kinsmen. The three brethren swore fidelity to Charlemagne, and took leave of him, after he had charged Duke Beuves to serve him at the Feast of St. John. Then the King returned to Paris

GANELON
PREPARES
TREASON

and the brethren returned each to his place, right glad to have accorded Duke Beuves with the King.

A little before the Feast of St. John Charlemagne held a great court at Paris, and Duke Beuves forgetting not to go thither as he had promised, departed from Aigremont with two hundred knights, and took his way to serve the King. Now as the King was in his court, there came to him Earl Ganelon, Fulkes of Morillon, Harare, and Beranger, who told him how Duke Beuves was coming with two hundred knights, saying :

“Sire, how may you love or be well served by him who hath so cruelly slain your son? If your pleasure were, we should well avenge you of him, for in good sooth we should slay him.”

“It would be treason,” said the King, “for we have given him peace. Do it at your own will, so that I have no part in it; but beware, for the Duke of Aigremont is right mighty and of great kindred.”

“Sire,” answered Ganelon, “take no thought of that, for there is no man in the world great enough to undertake aught against me and my lineage. I will set out to-morrow with two thousand fighting men, and deliver the world of him.”

“Truly,” said the King, “it were treason.”

“Care not for that,” said Ganelon, “he slew my kinsman Lohier by treason, and therefore will I be avenged if I can.”

“Do then as you wish, protesting always that I am not consenting,” said the King.

BEUVES
HAS AN ILL
DREAM

When the morning came Ganelon and his fellows departed from Paris, and tarried not till they came into the valley of Soissons, and there they met with Duke Beuves and his power. When he saw them he said :

“Here are some of the King’s men returning from the court.”

“It is no matter,” said one of his knights.

“I wot not what it may be,” said Duke Beuves, “Charlemagne is fond of vengeance, and hath with him folk which be fell and cruel like Fulke of Morillon. I dreamed last night in my sleep that a griffin came out of the heavens and pierced my shield and my arms, so that his claws struck into my liver, and none of my men escaped from him, and there came out of my mouth a white dove.”

Then one of his knights said that he should not dismay himself for a dream, and the duke answered :

“I know not what God shall send me, but my heart dreadeth.”

So he commanded that every man should arm himself, and this they did right gladly.

Earl Ganelon and Fulke rode quickly forward to meet Duke Beuves and said to him that he had done ill to slay Lohier, but that before the even he should be rewarded for it. When the duke heard him, he marvelled and said :

“ Ha, how can one guard himself from traitors? I held King Charlemagne for a true prince and now I see the contrary; but before I die, I shall sell my life full dear.”

Then they joined fight and Ganelon smote Regnier, the duke's cousin, before his eyes and cried with a loud voice :

“ Smite on, knights, for he slew my cousin Lohier. He did not deign to make peace with me, but now I shall sell it him full dear.”

Then Ganelon and his folk ran on Duke Beuves who defended himself worthily, and smote down many a knight. After this he began to lament and wish for his two brethren and his nephews.

“ Alas,” said he, “ dear son Maugis, where are you now that you are not here to succour me? Ha, Duke of Nanteuil and Gerard of Roussillon, you will never see me more ! Why do ye not know the false enterprise of Charlemagne and of Earl Ganelon, that shall this day make me to die? Ha, my dear nephews, I have this day much need of you. My dear nephew Renaud, if it pleased God that you might know the grievous pass to which I am this day brought by treason, well I wot that I should have succour by thee, for in all the world is not thy peer.”

Fierce was the battle and right hard to endure, but well may ye wite that the Duke of Aigremont might not endure against so many, for he had with him only two hundred knights and the others were

more than two thousand. It was a piteous sight to behold the heads and feet smitten off the field. Then came Ganelon and struck down Thessaume of Blois, and slew him, and drove back the knights of the Duke. So he, knowing that without death he could not escape, went and smote one of Ganelon's knights and overthrew him, for he could do no other but defend himself as long as he could. Ha, God, what a great pity it was to betray him, for many churches, towns, and castles were set on fire, and many great nobles brought to their death!

Great was the destruction that Ganelon made among the folk, for of the two hundred barons only fifty were left. Duke Beuves said to them :

“ You see that we be almost all dead, if we defend ourselves not. For God's love let each of us be worth three as long as we are alive.”

Then he rushed forward, and smote a knight named Helias, crying out : “ Smite well, barons.”

Fair was the medley, and the noise of the blows on the helms sounded out. At the last a certain Griffon of Hauteville, struck the Duke's horse on the breast, and overthrew him. When the Duke arose and thought to slay him the stroke fell on his horse ; and the Duke knew that all was over. And Ganelon came on him and struck him such a stroke with his spear that he run him through the body and so he fell dead, and Griffon who was kin to Ganelon, came to him and passed his sword through his body.

BEUVES
IS BURIED
HONOUR-
ABLY

Then cried Griffon: "Now hast thou thy reward for the death of Lohier."

Then Ganelon the traitor and the lord of Hauteville remounted and went after the Duke's folk that fled, for there were but ten left of two hundred, and overtook them. These traitors made them swear that they should bear their master's body to Aigremont as he had caused Lohier to be brought into Paris, and this they promised to do. They put the body on a bier and went on their way with it, making sorrow and lamentation for the death of their master, and cursing the treason of King Charlemagne.

So went these sorrowful knights, bearing the body of Duke Beuves on a bier, and it ceased not to bleed for four leagues. At the last they came near Aigremont, and tidings of them came to the town and to the duchess that her lord had been thus traitorously slain. Ask not of the sorrow that the duchess and Maugis her son made; for when she saw her lord and the wounds that he had in his body she fell down in a swoon upon him more than three times. In this wise they bore the body to the chief church, where the bishop of the town did the service, and he was laid in his grave. Then said Maugis: "Pity it is that such a worthy lord should be slain by treason. Do I but live long enough Charlemagne and the traitors who have done this shall abide it full dearly."

Thus comforted he his lady mother, saying to her :

“ Dear mother, have patience ; my uncles and my cousins will help me well to avenge my father’s death.”

GREAT
WARS
CAME
THEREOF
BUT AT
LAST PEACE
IS MADE

Now leave we to speak of Aigremont, and return to tell of the traitors Griffon and Ganelon that go again to Paris, and there recount to Charlemagne the mortal treason which they had committed and done, whereof the King was glad, but afterward he was full wroth and sorry for it. For after the Duke of Aigremont’s death his two brethren, Gerard of Roussillon and Dron of Nanteuil, warred sore against him with their nephew Maugis, till at the last they made peace and accorded together. At the Feast of Pentecost the Emperor held his Court in Paris after he had accorded with the brethren of Duke Beuves, and to this feast came William of England, Galeran of Boulogne, fifteen kings, thirty dukes, and forty earls. Also there came Duke Aymon of Dordonne, with his four sons, to whom the King said :

“ Aymon, I love you and your children well ; wite ye that I will make Renaud my seneschal, and the others shall go with me and bear my falcons.”

“ Sire,” said Duke Aymon, “ I thank you much for the great worship you do me and my sons, and we shall serve you truly. But you erred sore when

PEACE WAS
NOT MADE
WITH THE
FOUR SONS

you made my brother Duke Beuves to die by treason. Believe that it grieved me full sore at heart, and if we had not feared you we would have taken vengeance, but since my brother Gerard forgives you, I forgive it you also."

"Aymon," said the King, "you know better than what you say, for you know well the offence that he had done me in slaying my son Lohier. Now set one against the other and let no more be spoken thereof."

"No more we shall," said Aymon; "but God have mercy on his soul, for he was a worthy knight."

Then came forth Renaud, Alard, Guichard, and Richard, and said to the King:

"Sire, you have made us knights, but know for truth we love you not for the death of our uncle the Duke of Aigremont, which you have not accorded with us."

When the King heard them he looked grim in the visage for great wrath, and smote his forehead for anger; then he said:

"Boy, begone; for I swear by St. Simon that if it were not for the company here I would put thee in such a prison that thou couldst not see hand or foot that thou hast."

"Sire," said Renaud, "that were not reason; but since you will not hear us we will hold our peace."

They went to the church to hear the fair mass

that was sung, and rich was the offering : they came again to the palace, and asked for water to wash their hands and set them down to dinner, except King Salomon, who served that day with Duke Godfrey. But Renaud might not eat because the King had rebuked him so shamefully.

“ How shall I revenge myself on Charlemagne,” said he, “ for the death of my uncle so traitorously slain ? ”

His brethren comforted him as they could, and after dinner, when the barons came out to sport themselves, Berthelot, nephew of Charlemagne, called him to play at chess. So long they played on a golden board with ivory chessmen that at the last debate arose between them, and Berthelot called Renaud a foul name, and smote him on the visage so that his blood fell to the ground.

When Renaud saw himself thus outraged he was right wroth and took the chessboard and smote Berthelot on his head so hard that he fell down dead to the ground before him. Then went a cry through the hall of the palace that Renaud had slain Berthelot, and when the King heard it he cried :

“ Barons, keep guard that Renaud does not escape, for if I can catch him he shall surely die, since he has slain my nephew.”

So the knights ran on him, but his kinsmen defended him nobly, and there was a great fray that

that day in the palace of Paris, and Maugis made there much slaughter.

While the fray lasted Renaud and his brothers and Maugis escaped and came to their horses, and soon rode out of Paris, fleeing straight to Dordonne, towards their mother. When Charlemagne knew that they were gone out of Paris he armed two thousand knights to pursue them, but the four brothers and their cousin tarried not till they came to Samur, and there they baited their horses. Then Renaud began to say :

“ Fair God, That suffered death and passion, keep this day my brothers and my cousin from death and falling into the hands of Charlemagne the cruel.”

One knight of the French who were pursuing them better horsed than his fellows, overtook Renaud at last, and said :

“ Abide, thou untrue knight, and I shall bring you to the King.”

When Renaud heard him he turned and smote him with his spear, so that he fell dead ; then he took his horse and gave it to his brother Alard. After he turned on another knight and killed him with a blow of his sword, and gave his horse to his brother Guichard. Then came another knight and said :

“ Wretches, ye shall come to the King, who will hang you all.”

“We fear him not,” said Renaud ; and with this he gave him such a stroke that he fell to the ground, and Renaud took his horse by the rein and gave it to his brother Richard, who had full great need of it. Now were they new horsed, with Renaud on Bayard, and Maugis behind him, and when the sun was gone under and the night began they were come into the town of Soissons.

At the last they came to Dordonne, and met with the duchess their mother, who ran to kiss them, and asked what they had done with their father, and if they had left the Court in wrath.

“Lady,” quoth Renaud, “yea ; for I have slain Berthelot the nephew of Charlemagne, who called me foul names and struck my face so that the blood ran.”

When the lady heard him she fell down in a swoon. Renaud lifted her up, and when she was come to herself she said :

“Fair son, how durst you do this thing? I promise you you shall repent of it always. Your father shall be destroyed for it, and cast out of his lands, and if ye escape alive it shall be great marvel. I pray you, my children, flee away, and take all my treasure with you, for if your father come from the Court, he will yield you to King Charlemagne.”

“Lady,” quoth Renaud, “ween you that our father is so cruel as to deliver us into the hands of our mortal enemy?”

Renaud and his brethren and cousin would make no long tarrying, but took of the treasure as much as served their turn, and took their leave of their lady mother, who embraced them, sore weeping, for she knew not if she should ever see them again. So departed the new knights with their cousin Maugis, and entered into the great forest of Ardennes, in the valley of Faery, and rode till they came to the river Meuse. There they chose a place where they made to be built a fair castle on a very strong rock, and at the foot of it passed the river. When the castle was built they called it Montfort: it was the strongest from thence to Montpellier, for it was closed with great walls, and environed with ditches sore deep, and well garnished with all manner of victuals and things needful in a fortress, so that they feared Charlemagne in no wise except by treason.

Now was King Charlemagne in Paris exceeding angry at the four knights, so he made the Duke Aymon of Dordonne come before him, and swear that he would never help his sons in any way, and wherever he should find them he should take them and bring them to the King; the which Aymon durst not refuse, but swore that he would do so, for which he was after sore blamed. After he had thus sworn he departed from Paris all wroth and came to Dordonne; and when the duchess saw him she began to weep full sore.

“Lady,” said the duke, “where be my sons gone?”

“Sir,” said she, “I cannot tell; but why suffered you Renaud to slay Berthelot?”

“Renaud is the strongest knight that lives, and not all the assembly could stop him,” said the duke. “You must know that he had asked right of the King concerning the death of his uncle, and the King answered him outrageously, wherefore he slew Berthelot to avenge himself on Charlemagne, as well as for the blow he had in his visage. Therefore the King hath made me swear that if I can take my sons I shall bring them to Paris, and that they shall never have succour of me, whereof I am full sorry.”

Now leave we to speak of the Duchess and Duke Aymon, and tell of Renaud and his brethen; since the story of Alexander has none been which tells of such great deeds as did the four sons of Aymon, for, when King Charlemagne banished them from France, and made his barons and their father swear to give them no aid, they defended themselves in good wise. It fell on a day that the King held court in Paris, and a messenger came and kneeled before him, saying:

“Sire, I bring you tidings. Wite ye that I have come from the forest of Ardennes, where I have found the four sons of Aymon in a strong castle which they have built there?”

When Charlemagne heard this he called his barons round him and said :

“ Lords, it needs not to send for you ; I pray and require you, as my liegemen, help me to be avenged of the four sons of Aymon.”

The barons answered with one voice :

“ Sire, we shall do your commandment : give us leave to go into our own lands and make ready harness and horses.”

So the barons departed and abode not long, but came back to Paris all arrayed and ready for war ; and when Charlemagne saw them he received them gladly. Straightway he departed from Paris, and went that day to Montlion, where they lay that night ; and on the morrow he set out again and gave the foreguard to Regnier of Montpellier, who hated Renaud greatly.

When they were on the road the King called his vassals, Regnier, Guyon of Aufort, the Earl Garnier, Geoffrey, Longon, Ogier the Dane, Richard of Normandy, and the Duke Naymes, and said unto them :

“ Lords, I pray you use all diligence and watch well every night, that we may lose no time.”

Then said Duke Naymes :

“ Sire, we shall do so.”

So the trumpets were blown and the host brought together, and they rode till they came to Molins, otherwise called Aspes, and when they were come

here they saw the castle of Montfort. At that same hour the three brethren of Renaud were coming from the chase out of the wood of Ardennes, and Richard the youngest bare a right fair horn, which Renaud much loved, and with the brethren were but twenty knights. As they were returning to Montfort, Richard looked over the river Meuse and saw the host of King Charlemagne. On this he was sore troubled, and said to his brother Guichard :

“ Fair brother, what folk may they be that I see yonder? I heard say from a messenger that the King was coming to besiege us.”

Then Guichard looked and saw the foreguard with Regnier, and Richard struck his horse with his spurs, and came up to Regnier, and said :

“ Fair Sir, whose are these folk? ”

“ Sir,” said Richard, “ these are the folk of the Emperor Charlemagne, who go to besiege a castle that the four sons of Aymon have built in Ardennes : God give them evil rest.”

“ Certes,” quoth Richard, “ I am a friend of Renaud’s, and I owe you no grace for what you say, since I am bound to defend them with all my power.”

With this he spurred on him and smote Regnier through the shield and slew him, and gave his horse to one of his esquires. Then the French commenced to cry, “ Mountjoy St. Denis ! ” and the brethren of Renaud, “ Montfort ! ” Then was a fell battle and

cruel: shields rent and helms broken, till all the folk of Regnier were slain or fled. Then came an esquire to the King to tell him how Richard had slain Regnier, and how his foreguard was broken up.

The Emperor grieved sore for the death of Regnier, and called Ogier the Dane and said to him:

“Ogier, go to the succour, you and Naymes, for Richard hath slain my folk, and beareth off the spoil.”

Then Ogier the Dane abode not, but rode out with Duke Naymes and three hundred knights. Yet their labour was for nought, for Richard and his men were already in the castle of Montfort with all that they had won. When Renaud saw his brothers return with so much booty he came and kissed them, and said to Richard:

“Fair brother, where have ye taken so great spoil?”

“Brother,” said Richard, “I shall tell you. Wite that Charlemagne is come with all his host, so many that it is a wonder to see. We were coming out of the wood when we met the foreguard of the army that Regnier was leading. We fought them, but God be thanked and our men, we overthrew them utterly. One part is dead, the other fled, and we have carried off the spoil.”

Then said Renaud:

“ I praise you well that you have overthrown our enemies in the first onset. Fair lords, now is the time come that every one of us must prove him a good man, and do worthily his duty: let King Charlemagne know our prowess, so that he hold us not feeble and weak.”

When Renaud had thus spoken to his folk, they answered him :

“ My lord, have no doubt of us ; we shall never fail you as long as we shall live.”

When Renaud knew the good will of his folk he said :

“ Let the gate be shut and the bridge drawn up, and go we to the windows to see this folk that come against us.”

And when they looked out they saw Ogier the Dane turn back with his men. So Ogier came to the King and said :

“ Sire, the castle is very strong ; we shall not take it easily from such folk as keep it.”

When Charlemagne heard him, he was very wroth, and swore that he would never return into France until Renaud was taken and hanged with his brother Richard, and Ogier answered that he would do well, for they had caused great trouble.

“ Sire,” said Fulkes de Morillon, “ we shall avenge you. Bid your folk invest Montfort.”

“ Certes,” said the King, “ you say well ;” and he made the trumpets to blow and commanded his

army to besiege Montfort on every side. Now this castle was built on a rock at the foot of which ran the Meuse, on one side it had a great wood full pleasant, on another a fair plain and great meadows. When the King's folk were all lodged, he mounted his horse with a few of his lords to see the strength of the castle, and when he had well beheld it, he began to say: "How is this castle closed and set in a strong place? Fair lords, think to war well, for we have somewhat more to do than I weened."

So the King's tent was set up, and in it was a rich carbuncle which shone like a burning torch, and a golden apple, and the Emperor went therein and ordered that no man should mount horse for eight days, save only for sport, till he sent through all the kingdom for men to fetch victuals in great abundance. Then said Duke Naymes:

"Sire, you may do better. Send a messenger to Renaud to bid him deliver up his brother Richard and you will leave him his land; if he yield him, behead him at once; if Renaud refuse, the war must be carried on."

Then said the King:

"Where can I find a faithful messenger?"

"Sire," said Duke Naymes, "if it please you, Ogier and I will do this message."

"It pleases me well," said Charlemagne, "and right great thanks do I owe you: you never failed me at a need."

So Naymes and Ogier made them ready, and took branches of olive in their hands, and went together without any other company. When Alard saw the two knights come, he went and asked them who they were.

NAYMES
AND OGIER
BEAR A
MESSAGE

“Sir,” said Duke Naymes, “we be messengers of King Charlemagne, sent hither to speak to Renaud, son of Aymon.”

Straightway Alard went to his lord, and Renaud commanded forthwith that the gate should be opened to them and the drawbridge let down, for he would see and speak with them. When Renaud saw them he saluted them courteously, and after that, he set them on a bench. Then Duke Naymes said to him :

“Renaud, the Emperor Charlemagne bids you by us, send to him your brother Richard to be dealt with at his pleasure and will, and if you will not do so, Charlemagne defieth you, and will never leave you till he hath made you to die an evil death with great shame.”

When Renaud heard these words he waxed all red with anger and said :

“Naymes, by the faith I owe to God, if it were not that I love you I would hew you both to pieces. Well have you deserved it, for you, Naymes, are my near kinsman, and ought to help me against all men. Tell Charlemagne that he shall not have Richard my brother ; let him leave his threatening, and do his

worst. Now void from our sight, for to see you thus here grieveth me too sore."

When Naymes and Ogier heard Renaud thus, they made no longer dwelling, but departed straightway and coming to Charlemagne, recounted all that Renaud had said.

When Charlemagne heard this answer he was so sore an angered that he commanded that the castle should be assailed at each of the three gates they knew of: at the first Guy and Fulkes of Morillon, the Earl of Nevers and Ogier the Dane were set; before the second the Duke of Burgundy and the Earl Albundes were set; and at the third was Aymon, father of Renaud, who had come to fight against his sons. The castle was besieged by much folk, but Renaud did one thing that turned to his great honour, for he said:

"Fair lords, I pray you mount not on your horses till ye hear the trumpet blow, for I see that Charlemagne's folk be right weary, it were no worship for us to run on them so. When they are a little eased of their weariness we shall make our first issue on them worthily."

Wite ye that in the castle of Montfort was a false door on the rock by which Renaud and his brethren went out at all times without danger. So when he saw that it was time to go upon their enemies he called to him Samson of Bordeaux, who had come to his aid with a hundred knights and said:

“Sir, it is time that our enemies know what we are; if we tarry longer Charlemagne may think us cowards.”

When he had said this he came to his brother Richard and said: “I will never leave you while I am alive, for I love you as myself, and it is reason that I do, you are the best knight of our lineage.”

Then he embraced him and said to his brothers:

“Make the trumpets blow out to show King Charlemagne what folk we be; if God willed that we could take the Earl of Estampes I should be right glad, for he is the man that hateth us most. He will haply not escape us for he is in the fore-guard.”

Then the four brothers and their company armed themselves and issued out of the false door without noise or cry, and so fell on the host of Charlemagne with great wrath and overthrew soldiers, tents, and pavilions. Who had then seen Renaud mounted on Bayard and his deeds of arms would have had great marvel; and that man he met was born in an evil hour, for he smote no man that he did not cleave him down.

When the folk of Charlemagne saw their enemies they ran to arms and came against Renaud and his men. The old Aymon heard the cry and mounted his horse to side against his sons. But Renaud seeing him, was right sorry for it and said to his brethren:

“ Here is our father ; let us make him room, for I would not that one of us should set on him.”

Then they turned to another side of the battle, but their father followed them, and began to set sore hands on them and their folk. When Renaud saw that their father laid sore on them, he said all angered :

“ Father, what do you ? you should help and defend us, and you do worse to us than others do. It well seems that you love us but little, since you are displeased that we be such good men at arms against Charlemagne, and have disinherited us. We have made this little castle to keep ourselves in, and you come here to destroy it. This is no father’s work. If you will do us no good, at least do us no harm. I swear if you come any further against us I will give you such a stroke with my sword, that you will have no leisure to repent your folly.”

Aymon was in great anger at his heart when he heard the words of Renaud, but, for fear of Charlemagne, he could do no otherwise, so he drew back and suffered his sons to pass harmless.

While Renaud was thus speaking to his father, came Charlemagne, Aubry, Ogier, Earl Henry, and Fulkes de Morillon. When Renaud saw them come, he blew his trumpets to assemble his folk, and when they were assembled one of Charlemagne’s knights named Thierry rode out against Renaud’s folk. Then Alard, as he neared them, spurred his

horse and came against him and thrust a hauberk that he bare clean through his shield and body, so that he fell down dead. King Charlemagne seeing this, cried out :

“ Lords, take vengeance on these wretches who so illtreat us.”

When Aymon heard Charlemagne speak thus, he went and smote one of his son’s knights so cruelly with his brank of steel that he smote his head from off his shoulders.

“ Father,” cried Renaud, “ you do ill when you slay my men. If I trowed not to hurt my honour, I would take cruel vengeance on you. Ah, lady mother, what will be your sorrow when you know the harm our father doeth this day? ”

When Fulkes of Morillon saw how steadily the men of Renaud maintained themselves against him, he cried :

“ Sir Emperor, what meaneth this? I believe you are forgotten ; let these traitors be taken and hanged forthwith.”

When the French heard this they spurred their horses, and smote on Renaud’s men so hard that they made them retreat. But when Alard saw his men retire, he was enraged and drew his sword and drove back the enemy with such force of arms that the French were all abashed. In that battle many were the knights slain, and none might stand before Renaud, for he overthrew all before him ;

VON OF ST.
OMER IS
SLAIN

kinsmen and parents spared not each other, but slew one another like beasts. Then Yon of St. Omer rode through the battle with a good horse, and slew a knight named Guyon, and when Renaud saw it, he was very wrath. He took his banner and said to his men: "Do so much that I may have that good horse, for if he go away I shall have no joy till he stands beside Bayard."

When Guichard heard this he spurred his horse, and smote Yon so hard that he drove his glaive through his breast, and took his horse by the bridle and led him to Renaud, saying:

"Sir, we have the horse you desired so sore."

"Grammercy, brother," said Renaud, "now have we two horses which we can trust. Mount on him at once."

When Guichard heard his brother, he leaped on the horse, and gave his own to guard to a knight.

So Renaud came again to the battle, and when he saw his father therein, he had great wrath and said:

"My father, you are greatly to blame for acting so against us. At Christmas or Easter men ought to visit their friends, and eat with them when dinner is ready; but you come to see us in a hot war, and cheer us with the point of the sword. It is no father's love you give us, but a stepfather's rigour."

Then answered Duke Aymon, "Keep yourselves well, for if Charlemagne takes you, all the world could not save you from being hanged."

“Father,” said Renaud, “leave that and come and help us, we will soon destroy the King.”

GOOD
STROKES
ARE GIVEN

“Go, wretch,” cried Aymon, “I am too old to do treason.”

“Father,” said Renaud, “I see you love us little, guard yourself well ;” and when he had said that he struck one named Guymar and killed him.

When Charlemagne saw his squire dead, he spurred his horse, and had in his hand a rod of iron to part the battle in sunder, for he saw that his own folk had the worst. Then he commanded the French to withdraw, and as they would have gone away, there came through the battle Bernard of Burgundy and smote Simon of Berne dead at the feet of Renaud.

When the four sons of Aymon saw Simon dead, they were right sorry and spurred their horses against the press to avenge his death, and wite it well that Renaud with his sword that day brought to death full three hundred knights of the best of Charlemagne’s host. At that time Alard came through the press against the Earl of Estampes and drove his lance through his body. When Renaud saw that stroke, he came to Alard and kissed him and said : “Fair brother, blessed be the hour when you were born, for you have avenged us of the greatest foe we had.”

Then the trumpets were blown to call his men together.

When the King saw the great harm that the four sons of Aymon had done him, he cried with a loud voice :

“ Lords, draw back, for our enemies be too good knights for us ; let us return to our tents, for we can only take this castle by famine, since they are so courageous.”

When the barons heard him, they said :

“ Sire, we shall do your will,” and as they departed, Renaud and his brethren came on them, and took of them prisoners Antoine, Guereaur the Earl of Nevers, and Thierry of Ardennes, for no man might withstand them. So they returned gladly to their castle, and Renaud was always the hindmost man. Then came Aymon, their father, once more on them, and when Renaud saw his father he turned Bayard and smote his father’s horse so hard that he fell down to the earth. When Aymon saw himself on the ground, he rose up quickly and took his sword in his hand to defend himself, but his sons would have taken him prisoner if Ogier the Dane had not rescued him. Then said Ogier :

“ What think you of your sons ? They are right brave.”

When Aymon was horsed again, he pursued his sons once more, saying to his folk :

“ Let us pursue these wretches, for if they live they will do us harm.”

When Renaud saw his father again, he turned
54 and

and smote amongst the thickest of his father's folk, and put them to flight, for they might not endure his great blows. Then the King saw this and made the sign of the cross, and spurred his horse towards Renaud, and cried :

“ Renaud, I forbid you to go further.”

When Renaud saw him, he did him reverence, and said to his men :

“ Let us go forth, for here comes the King. I would not that any man of us should lay hands on him.”

Then his folk returned into the castle, right glad of the fair adventure that had happened to them that day; and when they were all entered they drew up the bridge and disarmed them, and set themselves at table and their prisoners with them, and after meat Renaud thanked his brother for slaying the Earl of Estampes.

When Charlemagne saw that Renaud was safe in the castle, he lighted from his horse, and swore that he would never depart till he had taken the castle of the four sons of Aymon, and for thirteen months his army lay before it. No week passed without a battle or a skirmish, and when they were not fighting they went hunting. Ofttimes Renaud spoke to the French to have peace, and said :

“ Fair lords, I pray you tell Charlemagne that he shall never take us by force, for our castle is well garnished. That which he may have by goodness,

RENAUD
WOULD
HAVE
PEACE

he need not take by force. He may have the castle and us also. I will put in his hands the castle of Montfort, so that my brethren and myself, our goods and baggage be safe, and this war that hath lasted so long take an end."

"Renaud," said Ogier the Dane, "you say well. I promise you I shall show the same to the King, and if he will believe my counsel, he will do as you ask."

As Renaud and Ogier thus spoke together, Fulkes of Morillon came up and cried to Renaud :

"Vassal, you are mad. I have heard your words well, and truly you shall yield Montfort, and your heads also."

"Fulkes," said Renaud, "you have full oft reproved me. I know full well that the death of Berthelot is the fault that King Charlemagne hath against me, but, certes, I could do no other but defend myself to my power. If it please you, tell King Charlemagne to take us to mercy, that we may be friends, and it shall be to your honour."

Then said Fulkes :

"All you say is worth naught to you ; you shall die and your brothers."

"Fulkes," said Renaud, "you threaten too much knights that be better than you. I tell you you will purchase your death."

Then Charlemagne sent for men through all his land, and when they were come, he said :

“Sirs, I complain to you of the four sons of Aymon, who destroy and waste my land, and their castle is too strong to be taken except by famine. Now tell me what I ought to do, for I shall do your counsel.”

HERNIER
WILL TAKE
THE
CASTLE

The barons answered not to this complaint of the King, till Duke Naymes said :

“Sire, return into France till the winter is over and come again next spring. Renaud is not so sore besieged but that he goeth into the woods at his will, and he and his brethren are knights not lightly overcome. This is my counsel, Sire.”

Then spake Hernier of the Seine :

“Sire, give me the castle and all that is therein, and the lordship for five miles about it, and I shall yield to you Renaud and his brethren prisoners before a month be past.”

“Hernier,” said the King, “if you do this that you say, I grant you the castle, and all that you have asked with it.”

“Sire,” said Hernier, “I promise you I shall succeed.”

Hereon he made no more tarrying, but said :

“Sire, command Guyon of Brittany to take with him a thousand knights, well armed, and go upon the mountain without noise, and I will put him in the castle.”

When he had said this, he went and armed himself, mounted his horse, and rode to the gate of

the castle, where he spoke to them that kept ward, saying :

“ Alas, have mercy on me or else I am but dead, for Charlemagne pursues me to hang me because I have said much good of Renaud to him. Also I have tidings to show to Renaud.”

When they that were on the gate heard him thus speak they let down the bridge, and made him come in, and did him great honour : the false traitor rewarded them for it full ill. And while this was done, Charlemagne sent Guyon and his knights on the hill till the day were come.

Now is Hernier the traitor in the hall of Montfort, where men make good cheer. When Renaud heard of him, he said to him :

“ Who art thou, fair knight, that art come hither ? ”

He said, “ Sir, my name is Hernier of the Seine, and I have angered King Charlemagne for love of you, and I am come hither because I know not whither to go.”

“ Good friend,” answered Renaud, “ since you call yourself my friend, you are right welcome. Tell me, I pray thee, how doth the host of the Emperor ? ”

“ Sir,” said Hernier, “ they suffer much, and in very certain they must go their way in forty days, for none of the barons will abide here longer. I promise you if the army went away, you might get much goods.”

“ Friend,” said Renaud, “ if it be as you say, you have comforted me well.”

When supper was ready, Renaud and his brethren sat down and with them the traitor Hernier, and supped gladly, for they were weary of bearing their harness, and they had not ceased to fight that day. After supper Hernier was well and honestly brought to bed, for Renaud had so commanded ; but when all the knights were fast asleep, Hernier, as false Judas, slept not, but rose and took his harness and armed himself. When he was well armed at his ease, he came to the drawbridge and cut the ropes that kept it up, and let it down ; then he went on the walls, and found the watchman and slew him, and took the keys and opened the gate of the castle. Then Guyon of Brittany seeing the gate open, made no tarrying, but entered into the castle, and all his folk with him, and began to kill and slay all that they found.

After that the yeomen of the stable had supped, they went to their sleep. Suddenly the horse of Alard began to make a noise against the others. When Alard and Richard heard the noise, they rose up and saw the hall door open, and perceived through it the armour glittering in the bright moonlight. They went next to the bed where they had brought the false Hernier, and finding him not; they waked Renaud and said :

“ Fair brother, we are betrayed, for Hernier hath

put the folk of Charlemagne in the castle, and they are slaying your men."

Then Renaud rose and armed himself quickly, and said: "Now, my friends, let us bear ourselves worthily; we had never so great need."

Now there were with him but thirty knights in the donjon, for all the rest were in the base court, which was like a little town well peopled, and there was Guyon of Brittany and his men.

Renaud, seeing Hernier the traitor with a hundred knights, cried out:

"Come forth, my brothers; if God help us not we are all lost."

Then they came to the gate and fought so that no man could stand before them, and the base court began to be sore moved. Then the folk of Charlemagne, when they saw how those of the donjon defended themselves, set the base court on fire, and began to pull down the houses; soon was the fire so great that it reached the donjon. Renaud said:

"What shall we do? If we tarry here we shall be burnt."

Then he said to his brethren, "Come all after me," and he went to the false door and issued out of the castle and his folk with him. But when they were out they were more abashed than before, for they knew not whither to go. Hernier the traitor was aware of them and came out to assail them; then said Renaud:

“Lords, let us succour our folk, for if they die
unhelped it were a great shame to us.”

HERNIER IS
DRAWN TO
DEATH

His brethren agreed gladly, and they issued out and gave great strokes and many, and Renaud smote such marvellous strokes with his sword Flamberge, that he cut all he touched. When Renaud saw how their enemies fled and durst not abide him, he said to Alard: “It was great cowardice to hide us so.”

“Sir,” said he, “you say truth.”

Then Renaud came to the gate of the castle and entered therein, and in spite of all his enemies he shut the gate and drew up the bridge, and when he had done this he came again to the battle.

Now Hernier the traitor was in the fight at the donjon of which Renaud had shut the gate, so that he no longer feared the army of the King. Then he thrust himself so fiercely into the fight and his brethren with him, that there remained alive but Hernier the traitor and twelve others. Soon were these taken, and Renaud bade them make a gibbet on his highest tower, and there he made the twelve men to be hanged, and he made Hernier to be tied by his hands and feet to four horses, and he was drawn and quartered as a traitor should be. Then Renaud made a great fire, and made him to be cast therein, and when he was burnt he cast his ashes to the wind.

When King Charlemagne wist that his folk were thus dead, he was sore angry, and said:

“How am I evil dealt with by these four brethren? I did myself great harm when I made them knights; as it is said, men often make a rod for their own backs. Their uncle slew Lohier my son, and Renaud, Berthelot my nephew. Well may I call myself unhappy when I cannot avenge myself on four simple knights! But I shall never depart from hence till I be avenged, or till they overcome me.”

“Sire,” said Fulkes of Morillon, “you are right. Yet Renaud fears you not, for he hath hung your men in your despite.”

Then said Duke Naymes, “Sire, had you believed me, you would not have lost your men, but you would believe Hernier, and it has happed as you see.”

The Emperor knew that he had spoken truth, and wist not what to say for shame.

During this time Renaud and his brethren went up on the walls to look around them, and saw that the base court, where all their provisions were, was burning. Then Renaud said to his brothers: “We have lost our store of victuals, and meseemeth if we dwell any longer here we do not wisely.”

“Brother,” said Alard, “you speak well, we will do as you have said. As long as the life is in our body we will not leave you.”

So when they were agreed, they tarried till it was night, and then they armed themselves, and Renaud said: “Lords, how many are we?”

“We are near five hundred,” said Alard.

“It is enough,” said Renaud, “but wot ye what we shall do? Let us keep always together without fear, and go through to the land of Almayne, and if Charlemagne’s folk attack us, we must defend ourselves well, and smite hard upon them.”

When it was time to set out, Renaud mounted on Bayard, and the others on their horses; they opened the gate and rode out without noise, and when they were out, Renaud looked sadly on his castle, and said:

“Adieu, good castle! Pity it is to see you so destroyed! God’s curse have he that betrayed you. It is but seven years since you were built.”

And when Alard saw Renaud so full of sorrow he came to him and said:

“Brother, you be to blame to speak so, for no knight alive can equal you. Comfort yourself, for I swear that before two years are past you will have a castle worth four such as this is. Now let us go, for we have no need to tarry.”

“Brother,” said Renaud, “I have always found good counsel in you; take you and Guichard the foreguard, and Richard and I will come behind.”

“Sir,” said Alard, “all shall be done as you say.”

Then they rode at the head with one hundred knights and they put their waggons in the middle, and Richard and Renaud rode last with their men.

But Charlemagne's watchmen perceived them, and when the King knew that Renaud was escaping, he was much wroth, and called to arms. Then the host began to move, and Alard and Guichard spurred their horses on them, since they saw they could not pass, and Renaud sent twenty knights on with the baggage while he and the rest went to help his brothers.

What shall I tell you? Because it was night, and Charlemagne's folk might not well see how few they were, Renaud and his men passed in spite of them. When Charlemagne knew that Renaud had departed, he rejoiced because of the fair castle of Montfort, but he followed him with his army, and with him were Ogier the Dane, Duke Naymes, Fulkes of Morillon, and many others. When Charlemagne, who was well-horsed, saw Renaud and his folk, he cried:

"By the aid of God, you shall all die, wretches. To-day I will hang you all."

"Sire," said Renaud, "if God will, it shall not be so, for we shall defend ourselves dearly."

Then he rode furiously against King Charlemagne, but he missed his blow, for Dan Hugh came between them, and Renaud smote him through the shield so hard that he pierced his heart. Then Charlemagne cried:

"Lords, seize them! If the wretches escape I shall never be happy."

Renaud returned back to his men and said, "Fear
64 nothing

nothing while I am alive, ride on boldly and in good array.”

THE CHASE
IS LEFT

For thirteen leagues they were pursued by Charlemagne, but they lost none of their fellowship at that time, and at last they came to the river. The King called his barons and said, “Lords, let the chase go; it were folly from henceforth to follow them, for our horses can go no further. If Renaud wrought witchcraft he could no more. Let us lodge nigh this river.”

“Sire,” said the barons, “we will obey your commands.”

Then they unladed their sumpners, and pitched their tents, and prepared dinner, for all that day they had eaten nothing.

When Renaud saw that the chase was finished and that they had gone far from Charlemagne, he found a fair and clear fountain, and round it much grass. Thereon he said: “Here is a fair ground for us to lodge in and for our horses.” Then they unloaded their sumpners and let them feed at ease; but the knights were in evil case, for they had neither meat nor drink save clear water alone.

Now Charlemagne might well say that he could never hurt the four sons of Aymon. The next morning after he camped at the river, he said to Duke Naymes: “What think you we ought to do?” “Sire,” said Duke Naymes, “if you will

believe me, we shall return to France ; this wood is too thick and the river too perilous."

As the King and duke were speaking together, there came many knights before him, and he called Bridelon, Regnier, and Ogier the Dane, and said :

" Lords, I will that ye return to Paris with me."

They were all glad, and said :

" Sire, it is the best counsel you can do."

Then Charlemagne made to be cried in the camp that every man should return to his own lands, and he returned to Paris, and the barons to their countries.

As Duke Aymon was returning it happed to him that he came by the spot where his sons were dwelling, and when he saw them he said to his knights : " Counsel me, I pray you, what I ought to do against my children. If I assail them and they be slain or taken I shall never have joy, and if I let them go I shall be forsworn."

But none of the knights answered him one word. Then he said : " Since it is so that ye will give me no counsel, I will fight with them here ; God's will be done."

" Sir," said Emofroy, " you do not amiss in assailing your children, for you swore to Charlemagne to do so. Take care not to be forsworn."

" Good friend, you say well," said Aymon, " I shall so do that I shall not be blamed." Then he called two of his knights and said to them, " Go to

Renaud and his brethren and defy them on my behalf."

AYMON
WILL
FIGHT
THEM

"Sir," said they, "you command a hard thing of us to do; but since it pleases you, we will go." Straightway they went to Renaud, who was abashed to see the messengers of his father coming, and said to his brethren: "Lords, arm yourselves, or we shall be overthrown, for I know the rage of my father against us."

Then came the two knights before him, and when Renaud saw them he said:

"Lords, who be ye, and what wind driveth you hither?"

Then spake one of the knights, and said: "Sir, we be knights of my lord, your father, that sendeth to you by us a defiance."

"Lords," said Renaud, "I wot it well, but go again and tell him he shall not do well to fight his children."

"Sir," said they, "think to defend yourself well, for he will assail you without doubt."

When Aymon had heard their answer he made none other tarrying, but spurred his horse on his sons, and when Renaud saw him coming he met him and said:

"Ha, father, what do you? We have none so great a foe to us as you! At the least, if you will not help us, be not our enemy."

"Wretch!" cried Aymon, "you shall never do
good

good since you have begun to preach! Go to the woods, for you are not worth a straw. Defend yourself, for if you are taken you will suffer great torments."

"Sir," said Renaud, "you are wrong. I will defend myself since I must, for if I let myself be killed I should do great sin."

When Aymon heard that he put lance in rest and ran on his children as if they had been strangers, and Renaud cried to his men:

"Lords, smite well, for necessity compels us thereto."

Then, he put himself in the thickest of the fight, and struck so boldly that all his father's folk marvelled greatly. But Renaud must lose at this time, for his father had many more folk than he, and of five hundred men that abode with Renaud after his castle was taken, there were but fifty persons left alive after this battle, though Duke Aymon had lost well half his men. So he turned towards the mountain, and Aymon chased him as well as he could, and weened to have taken them. When Renaud saw they were on the top he said: "Let us stay here, this is a good place to defend."

Then was great skirmishing, and many a knight sore wounded and slain, and Alard's horse was killed under him. Straightway he jumped on his feet and began to defend himself with his sword, and Richard his brother came to his succour, for

Aymon thought to have taken him. The battle grew more terrible than before, and Alard was near taken when Renaud spurred into the greatest press and overthrew his father Aymon to the earth, calling out: "Father, now have you fared as well as brother Alard."

So saying he drew his sword Flamberge, and began to part the press in such wise that soon was a clear space around him.

"Fair brother," said he, "leap up behind me."

When Bayard felt himself laden with two knights he went so strongly that it seemed to Renaud he was more spirited than he had been all the day. Four times he rode through the press with his brother Alard behind him, and four of Charlemagne's chiefest knights did he slay, and thus did he take Alard out of the hands of his enemies in spite of them.

Now were his brothers weary, though Renaud was never the weaker for anything he did in arms, so they drew away, and as he went he turned at every step he made, and kept his enemies back with the hard strokes he gave, so that his folk went before him all at their ease. But when he saw that his folk were far from their enemies, he spurred Bayard, and came to them with his brother Alard with great swiftness. And as he went Emofroy, who was one of the bravest knights of Charlemagne, followed after him, riding on a black horse which

FEW FOLK
ARE LEFT
ALIVE

the King had given him. When he was near Renaud he said: "Traitor, I shall slay you if you yield not, that I may bring you to Charlemagne."

Thereon he smote him on his shield, and Renaud in his wrath smote him dead to the ground, and took his horse by the bridle, saying to Alard: "Hold, fair brother, mount this good black horse, for I give him to you." Much Alard thanked him for the fair present he made him, and lighted down from Bayard, and mounted the horse and spurred against a knight of his father's folk named Arfroy so hard that he overthrew and killed him. Shortly to speak the battle began again afresh, sore hard and fell, so that twenty of the best knights that Aymon had with him were slain, whereat the duke was sore angered and cried: "Ha, Lords, avenge the death of Emofroy, the good knight that the King had given me."

When Aymon's folk heard this, they ran on Alard so much that they made him leave the place by force, and if there had not been there a little river, Renaud and his brothers would have had much to do. Yet if he had had only fifty more knights with him at the passage he would have discomfited his father and all his folk, but as he had them not he must forsake the place, and might not save with him but fourteen knights, out of the five hundred who came out with him from Montfort. Now hath Renaud so few folk that he knew not what to do,
70 wherefore

wherefore the tears fell down from his eyes, and in likewise the story tells that his father wept also, and said: "Alas! my sons, sorry am I, for I am occasion of your loss. Now shall ye go forth exiled, and ye have naught to live on and I cannot help you!"

When he had made his moan long enough, he made all the dead bodies to be buried, and the body of Emofroy to be borne on a litter to Dordonne, where he abode but a night. In the morning he made the litter to be borne on the mules, and went again to Paris, and came to Charlemagne, and said:

"Sire, as I went now lately to my own country I found my sons with five hundred knights in the forest of Ardennes: I would have taken them prisoners, but I might not, for they have done me much harm. I slew all their folk save fourteen persons that escaped with them, but before they fled they slew your knight Emofroy. They should have been taken but for a river."

When Charlemagne heard this, he was right sore an-angered and said to Aymon:

"You excuse yourself falsely, for never raven ate his young birds. Another may believe this, but not I."

When Aymon heard the King speak thus he said: "Sir Emperor, know that what I tell you is truth, and I shew it that the truth may be known and for no other cause."

"Aymon," said Charlemagne, "I know well your
heart;

heart ; if it went at your will, your sons should be lords of France."

"Sire," said Aymon, "ye be wroth of some other thing whereof I am not cause ; moreover, if you have any knight who will make good what it pleases you to say, I shall prove it on him that he lieth falsely. But evermore it has been so that you never loved a true knight but flatterers and liars only, whereof many evils have come and will come still."

Then Aymon mounted his horse and returned to his land without taking any leave of the King, and came to Dordonne, where he found the Duchess, who came to meet him and ask him what he had done.

Then said Duke Aymon, "Full evil have I done, for I found my four sons in the forest of Ardennes, and assailed them cruelly, weening to have taken them, which I could not do. Certainly if it had not been for the prowess of Renaud I had taken Alard, but he brought him out of the press and made him sit behind him on Bayard, nor might we abide his great strokes. He slew Emofroy, and took his horse whether we would or no. Then went I to Paris and shewed Charlemagne all that had passed."

Then the Duchess cried out :

"You have done evil to so sore damage our children ! You should defend them against all men,

and you do the worst you can to them. Are they not your sons? Should you not be a father to them? Blessed be the hour when they were born. I would that your children and mine had taken you prisoner, and made you give back to them all that they had lost by you. I rejoice that Charlemagne is wroth with you, for no good may come of evil-doing."

Then said Aymon :

"Lady, you say truth. I promise you that from henceforth I shall do them no harm."

So it was that time drew on and that after Renaud and his brothers had been long in the forest of Ardennes, they began to keep the ways and distressed all that carried food, for the sons dared not go into the towns to buy victuals. For cause of the great sufferance they had through hunger and cold of the snow their folk began to die, and at the last no more abode alive but Renaud and his brethren, and they had but four horses, Bayard and three others. They had neither oats nor corn to give them, but roots only, and for this their horses were so lean that they could hardly stand, save Bayard alone who was in good plight. Long did the four sons of Aymon lead this life, till their harness was rusty, their saddles and bridles all rotten, so that they made them reins of cord, and they themselves were become all black, and Renaud was feared so greatly that no man dared approach.

When he saw himself so poorly arrayed, he said to his brethren :

“ Lords, I marvel much that we take not some good counsel what we have to do ; meseemeth we lack courage, or we should not suffer what we now endure so long. Our armour and our horses are of little worth, and we have no money at all ; I pray you tell me what we ought to do for the best, for I had rather die as a knight than as a wild beast for hunger.”

When Alard heard Renaud thus speak, he said :

“ Brother, I have long since desired to tell you what you have just said, but I feared ; now will I give you good counsel. We have suffered here great poverty, and we may not go into any country, for you know that all the barons of France, and our father, and all our kinsmen hate us mortally. We shall go straight to Dordonne to our mother, for she shall not fail us, and there shall we sojourn a little. Then shall we take with us some company and go serve a great lord, where we shall get some good.”

“ Brother,” said Renaud, “ you are right ; I promise you I shall do so.”

When the other brothers heard the counsel that Alard had given, they began to say :

“ Brother, we know that you give good counsel to Renaud, and we are ready to follow it.”

So abode the four sons of Aymon till that the night was come ; then they mounted their horses and

put themselves to the way to Dordonne. When they were nigh the city, they looked on it and remembered the great poverty they had suffered so long. Then Renaud said to his brethren :

THEY COME
TO
DORDONNE

“We have done evil that we have not taken surety of our father, for you know he is so cruel that if he can take us he will make us prisoners.”

“Brother,” said Richard, “you say well, but I do not think that our father will do as you say. And if he so did, I had rather die in Dordonne than for hunger in the forest. Let us ride, for nobody shall know us, and if we can set our feet in Dordonne we shall be safe enough, for we be well beloved, and our mother would never suffer men to do us harm.”

“Certes, fair brother,” said Renaud, “you have spoken well and wisely ; let us ride on.”

The folk that beheld them as they passed through the streets marvelled much at them, and said :

“See, what folk be these? I trow they be not of our law or belief.”

When they were come to the palace, they lighted down and gave their horses to three varlets whom they found there, and went up to the hall and found no man, for Aymon their father was hawking on the river. The Duchess, their mother, was in her room, where she was continually in grief because she could hear no news of her children. They sat themselves down here and there, and abode a long while, till at the last the Duchess came out and

looked into the hall ; but she did not know her sons, and marvelled greatly what folks they were. Alard, when he saw his mother come, said to Renaud and his brothers :

“Yonder is our mother. Let us go and tell her our great penury and our need.”

“Brother,” said Renaud, “we shall tarry till she speak to us or not.”

When she was come to them and saw them so black and hideous, she said :

“God save you, lords! What be you? Are you Christian or Pagans, or folk that do penance? Will you have alms or clothing? I will give it you gladly for God’s sake and for my children’s, who are in great peril. Alas! I have not seen them for seven years.”

And when the Duchess had said this, she took so much pity for her sons that she began to weep sore.

When Renaud saw his mother so sorrowful he had great pity of her, and would discover himself; but the Duchess looked on him, and her blood ran up to her face and hovered within her body, and she began to shake and to fall in a swoon, so that for a great while she might not speak. And when she was come to herself again she knew him right well by a scar that he had in his face, and said to him :

“Renaud, my son, whose peer is not among all the knights of the world, where is gone your great
76 beauty?”

beauty? Why do you hide from me, who love you more than myself?"

And while she said these words she looked round her and knew her children, and went towards them with her arms spread abroad, sore weeping. Then she made them sit down by her, and said :

"How is it that I see you thus poor and disfigured? Why is it that you have with you no knights?"

"Lady," said Renaud, "we have no knights with us because our father has killed them, and wished to kill us also."

She called an esquire and bade him "Go take my sons' horses into a good stable; see that they be well tended."

Then came a yeoman, and said :

"Madame, if it please you to sit at the table, the meat is ready."

She took her sons with her and led them to dinner, and as they were eating their father, Aymon, returned from the chase, where he had slain four harts and two wild boars, besides divers partridges. When Aymon saw them he knew them not, and he said to his Duchess :

"Who are these folk so evil arrayed?"

The Duchess was sore aghast, and said :

"Sir, these are your children and mine, whom you have pursued like wild beasts. Long time have they dwelt in the forest of Ardennes, till they have

come to this evil state. Now are they come to me ; I pray you, for the love of God, lodge them this night."

Aymon shook for anger and turned himself towards his sons, and said :

"Wretches, you are not worth a straw, for you have neither folk nor money."

"Father," said Renaud, "if your land is in peace, others are not. You may go eighty leagues, and find neither rich man nor poor out of their castles. You have taken from us our good castle of Montfort, and assailed us in the forest of Ardennes ; so that of five hundred knights you left alive but fourteen. Since you owe us no good will, make our heads to be smitten off ; so shall you be beloved of Charlemagne and hated of God and of all men."

Duke Aymon knew the truth of these words, and said : "Go forth from my palace and beg your bread where you will."

Renaud said : "You speak evilly ; we have slain so many that we cannot go into another land. Give to us of your goods, and we will go far away."

"I will not," said Aymon.

"Father," said Renaud, "here I see your evil will. I swear to you that if I must needs depart, you shall dearly abide it. I had rather die here by the sword than die for hunger, since it may be none otherwise."

Then he turned red with anger, and drew his sword half out of his sheath. Alard, seeing his brother thus angry, ran and embraced him quickly, and said :

“ Fair brother, anger not yourself so sore with our father, for he is our lord, and therefore whether he is right or wrong he may say to us as it pleaseth him, and we must do his bidding ; and if he is cruel, we should be humble and pleasant to him. Keep yourself from setting hand on him, for that would be against the law of God.”

“ Brother,” said Renaud, “ when I see him that should help us, defend and love us, do all contrary to the same, I am like to wax mad. He hath made peace with Charlemagne to destroy us. I saw never so cruel a man against his sons ; I cannot tell the harm he hath done us, nor the poverty we have suffered through him.

When Aymon heard Renaud thus speak he said :

“ Great God, how sorry I am that I may not enjoy the good that God has given me ! No man in the world should be so happy as I if my sons had their peace with King Charlemagne. King Priam of Troy had never better men to his children than I. Should I then take heed to others against my sons, or help them and keep them against all men ! ”

When he had thus spoken to himself, he said to Renaud : “ Fair son, you are worthy and sage as

THE DUKE
WOULD
HELP THEM

Hector of Troy, therefore I ought well to do your will." Then he said to the Duchess:

"Lady, I go without, for I will not be forsworn to Charlemagne. You have within gold and silver enough, give to my children all that they ask."

"Father," said Renaud, "we ought to thank you much for what you have now said, and we shall go hence early to-morrow with God's grace. I promise you, we should never have come but to comfort our mother, that hath been so ill at ease for the love of us."

"Renaud," said the Duke, "you are full of great wit, consider the oaths that Charlemagne made me take against you. I am sore displeased that I found you in the woods of Ardennes, but I was forced of mine honour to do as I did, to be in peace with Charlemagne. Your mother hath not forsworn you, and therefore she may give you of our goods at her will." And when he had said thus, he took his men with him and went his way.

The Duchess was well pleased that Aymon had given her leave to do with his goods at her will, and said to her sons:

"Since your father is not within, you shall be well treated." Then she had the baths made ready and in them many a sweet herb, and brought them linen and other clothes for changes, and to each of them a mantle of fine scarlet furred with ermine. When they were well apparelled, she led them into

the room where their father's treasure was, and shewed it them, and Renaud laughed when he saw how rich it was, and said :

“Lady mother, gramercy of so fair a gift, for we had much need of it.” Then he took of this treasure, and paid therewith messengers and men-at-arms, to each a year's pay. That night they lay in their father's castle, and the next morning they departed before day, and with them were near five hundred men well armed. When they took leave of their fair mother, the Duchess, she said :

“Fair sons, draw towards Spain, for it is a plenteous country.”

As they were setting out their cousin Maugis came from France, and when he saw the company he ran to Renaud with his arms spread and kissed him, and his other three brethren, and said :

“God be thanked that I have come hither in time to see you.”

“Cousin,” said Renaud, “where have you been that we have not seen you this long time?”

“Cousin,” said Maugis, “I come from Paris, and I have brought with me three horses laden with Charlemagne's gold, half of which I will bestow on you.” As they went they met their father, and when Renaud saw him, he did him reverence ; and Aymon said :

“Fair sons, ye be well garnished. Do so that in France men may speak of your prowess.” So

THEY
COME INTO
GASCONY

he took leave of them, and returned to the Duchess, and took her in his arms, saying :

“Lady, grieve not so much, for my heart telleth me that we shall yet see them in great prosperity and honour, and you shall have joy and gladness of them in short time.”

Now telleth the tale, that after that the four sons of Aymon and Maugis their cousin had gone out of Dordonne to the number of seven hundred, all armed and in order, they passed through Brie, and Gastyne, and Orleans, and over the river Loire, and laid waste the country through which they passed till they came to Poitiers, where they heard that King Yon of Gascony was attacked by the Saracens. Maugis thereon said to Renaud :

“Cousin, let us go and fight for this King, and Charlemagne shall never take us there.”

“With a good will,” said Renaud.

They took their way to Gascony, and rode so long that they came to Bordeaux, where they found King Yon with a great company of knights. When they were down from their horses Renaud said :

“Go we and lodge us.”

“Cousin,” said Maugis, “we shall not do so, but let us speak at once to the King. If he retains us, in a good hour be it ; and if he do not, we will go and serve Bourgons the Saracen, who has already taken Montpellier, Toulouse, Tarascon, and Arles.”

“Cousin,” said Renaud, “you speak well and
82 wisely,

wisely, we shall do as you have said." Then Renaud took with him fifty knights, and clothed himself richly, and went with his brethren and Maugis to King Yon. As he rode through Bordeaux, all the people ran together to see him, because he was so great and so well made, and when they came to the gate, Renaud lighted down, and went up to the palace where the King was at council.

THEY HEAR
OF THE
SARACENS

When the seneschal saw Renaud how fair a man he was, and how many folk with him, he came towards him and said: "My lord, you are right welcome." Renaud answered: "God give you good adventure! Tell me if it please you, where is the King."

"My lord, he holdeth now his council, for Bourgons the Saracen has entered his land, and burnt towns and castles, abbeys, hospitals, and churches, and now he is in Toulouse with a great power."

"Certes," said Renaud, "this Bourgons is of great power, as men say."

While they were speaking together, King Yon came out of the council chamber, and when Renaud saw him, he called his brothers and saluted him humbly, and said to him:

"Sire, my brothers and I are knights from a far land, we come with our folk to do you service. But if our service be agreeable to you, you shall promise on your faith as a King, that you shall be my warrant and help against all other."

“Friend,” said King Yon, “ye be right welcome. And as you say you be come to serve me, I thank you for it with all my heart, but I would first know what folk ye be, for you might be such that I would defend you, or again that I shall be your enemy.”

“Sire,” said Renaud, “since it is your pleasure to know who we are, I shall tell it you. Know that I am Renaud, son of Duke Aymon of Dordonne, and these three knights are my brothers, and this is my cousin Maugis, one of the best knights in the world. Charlemagne hath cast us out of France, and hath disinherited us, and our father hath disavowed us for the love of him, so we go about for a lord that is good and true. He shall help us to defend against Charlemagne, and we shall serve him truly.”

When King Yon heard this that Renaud had said, he was right glad of it, for he knew they were the best knights in the world, and that if ever he should finish his wars it should be by their means. Then he looked up to heaven and thanked our Lord for their coming, and after said to them :

“Lords, ye are retained, ye are not men who ought to be refused. I promise you on the faith of a King that I shall defend you with all my power against all men. You are disinherited, and I also, therefore it is good reason that we help each other to the utmost of our power.”

“Sire,” said Renaud, “I promise you we shall die
84 in

in your service, or else your land shall be recovered again."

The King called his seneschal, and commanded that Renaud and his company should be well lodged, and forthwith it was done.

After Bourgons had taken Toulouse, he said to his people :

"Lords, you know well that when the iron is well hot, it worketh the better. Let us ride now to Bordeaux while the corn is in the ear, that our horses may have to eat."

Next day Bourgons departed from Toulouse with twenty thousand armed men, and ceased not to ride till in nine days he came to Bordeaux, and sent four hundred Saracens to waste and burn all the country unto the city of Bordeaux. When the watch upon the city gate saw them, he cried with a loud voice :

"Arm you, knights, here be the Paynims!" and the city was sore moved.

Renaud saw that it was time to arm. He said to his brothers : "Blow the trumpets for our folk to put them in arms," and when they were ready he mounted on Bayard, and went to King Yon, to whom he said :

"Sire, be not abashed, but be sure that God will help us this day. My heart telleth that this Saracen shall be discomfited and overcome by His help."

"Friend," said the King, "God be with you, I shall do as you advise."

Renaud rode out of Bordeaux foremost of all his folk against the Saracens, and ran fiercely on the enemy. He smote a Paynim through his shield, and drew his sword striking through them as if they had been disarmed.

Shortly to tell, when Renaud's folk came up, the Paynims might not endure, and must needs flee towards their camp. Bourgons, seeing his men in flight, sounded his trumpet and came up with his army. Renaud, when he saw so great a host coming out of the wood, marvelled sore, and turned himself to his brethren, saying :

“ Be not dismayed, we shall get great worship this day.”

As Renaud was thus speaking, Bourgons came up and smote one of Renaud's men so that the spear went through his body, and Alard spurred his horse on a Saracen, and felled him stark dead before him, and shortly to speak, never was there a greater stress of war. When King Yon saw the great deeds of the brethren, he blessed himself and said to his folk :

“ Go we and succour these true knights, for it is time long ago.” Then he spurred his horse and put himself amongst the thickest and began to do well. He did so much that he came beside Renaud, who said to him : “ Be sure and certain that the Saracens are discomfited.”

When Bourgons saw the great harm that Renaud bare to his folk he said :

“We be overcome by the powers of these five knights. Let us go back, for it is time;” and when he had said this, he and his men began to flee.

When Renaud saw that Bourgons was fleeing he smote Bayard with his spurs, and ran after him to kill him. Within a short while he was far from his brothers and his men, so that they wist not where he was. Then Alard said: “Alas! where is my brother?” King Yon came up, saying: “It is not wisdom to chase overmuch our enemies, let us withdraw, I pray you.”

“Sire,” said Alard, “we have lost Renaud our brother, and wot not if he is dead or taken.”

When King Yon heard this, he was full sorry, and they sought among the dead that lay on the field; and when they saw that they could not find him, they began to make great sorrow.

“Alas!” said Alard, “what shall we do? We departed from our land poor and exiled, but we cared not, for we were with the best knight of the world, and we trowed to have recovered honour and wealth by his prowess.”

When King Yon saw their grief he said:

“Lords, what is this that ye do? Since he is not dead that should be enough. If he be taken you shall have him again, if it cost me all I have in the world. We have so many of them prisoners, that Bourgons shall not do him any harm.”

“Sire,” said Alard, “let us go after him, and wit
87 what

what is become of him." "Friend," said the King, "I will do so gladly." Then they spurred their horses.

When Renaud had overtaken Bourgons, he cried upon him: "Flee no further, but turn towards me, for if you die fleeing you will be shamed."

When Bourgons heard him thus speaking, he turned at once, and knew well it was the good knight that had discomfited his folk. He said to him:

"Good knight, mar not your horse for nought, for if you lose him, you shall never recover such another;" and this he said to abash him, for he dared not joust with him.

But Renaud was not the man to be made afraid with words, and said:

"Bourgons, you must needs defend yourself."

Then Bourgons spurred his horse and smote Renaud so sharply that the spear went in pieces, and Renaud fell not, but wounded him in the breast full sore and struck him down to the ground. Bourgons rose up lightly, and took his sword in his hand, and held his shield over his head. When Renaud saw the wound he cried:

"Certes, it shall not be reproached to me that you fought on foot and I on horseback;" and with this he lighted down from Bayard, and drew his sword against Bourgons, and there began a sharp battle. When the Paynim's horse felt himself free from his

master, he began to run away, but Bayard went after him and took him by the mane with his teeth and brought him again to his master on the spot where the two knights were fighting. Renaud gave Bourgons a stroke on his shield with Flambard his sword, and all that the sword reached it cut through, the mails of his flancards, and his flesh, and Bourgons was sore afraid and said :

“ Ha, gentle knight, I pray thee for the love of God, give me truce, and I shall make thee lord of all I possess.”

“ Certes, no,” said Renaud, “ for I have promised King Yon to help him against all men, and he hath promised me; but if you will make yourself Christian, I shall do it gladly.”

“ Sir,” said Bourgons, “ I will yield me to you, if you will save my life and members.”

“ Bourgons,” said Renaud, “ if you yield you to me, you shall have no more harm than I.”

“ I put myself altogether in your hands,” said Bourgons.

Then Renaud took his sword, and they mounted on their horses, and took their way to Bordeaux.

As they were returning they met with King Yon, coming in haste with all his men. When Renaud saw him he thanked him much, and presented to him King Bourgons, and said :

“ Noble King of Gascony, I beseech you that Bourgons have no harm, for I have assured him.”

“Good friend,” said King Yon, “he shall have all honour for love of you, and I pray to God that I may do nothing against your will.”

When the three brothers and Maugis saw Renaud, they were glad, for they weened they had lost him; so ran they and kissed him full sweetly, and made him great feast and honour, for they had been in great sorrow for love of him.

“Brother,” said Alard, “you have brought us into great sorrow this day, for we thought that you had been taken, but now the war is done.”

Then they returned to Bordeaux, and King Yon took with him Renaud and his brethren and Maugis into the palace and found his folk making great feast. He said to them:

“Lords, do honour to this knight more than to me, for they have quieted my land and set my kingdom at peace.”

He dealt out the spoil, and gave the most part to Renaud and his brethren, but Renaud gave all his to his folk. When the King saw the goodness of Renaud, he loved him more than before, and said he would make Renaud lord over all his land.

King Yon had a sister who was a right fair damsel, and when she heard so much good of Renaud, she called to her a knight named Walter and said to him: “Tell me, I pray you, who had the prize of the battle.”

“Madame,” said Walter, “know that Renaud is
90 the

the best knight in the world, for he took Bourgons the Saracen by force, and by him the war is brought to an end."

Then was the maiden right glad in her heart. When Bourgons saw himself a prisoner he sent word to King Yon to come and speak with him, and said to him: "Sire, I am your prisoner with the most part of my folk. I will give you for our ransom ten horses laden with gold." The King answered that if Renaud was willing he would consent, and thereon he took counsel of Renaud and his brethren, and his barons. They counselled him to ransom Bourgons on condition that he should yield Toulouse again, and so it was done. But Renaud would have none of the ransom.

It happed upon a day that Renaud and his brethren took four wild beasts in a forest, and as they came home they found themselves near the Gironde. As they went Alard looked over the river and saw a high mountain, and said to Renaud:

"Brother, yonder upon that mountain is a fair ground and a strong; I believe there has once been a castle there. If we might build again there, Charlemagne should never take us. Ask it of King Yon, and we will make a strong fortress."

"Cousin," said Maugis, "Alard gives you good counsel." "I shall follow it," quoth Renaud.

They crossed the Gironde and came again to the King and presented him with the beasts they had
 91 taken

taken, and he received them honourably. Next day after they had heard Mass Renaud drew the King a little on one side and said to him : “ Sire, we have served you well and truly.”

“ Certes,” said the King, “ and I am holden to reward you for it. If I have in my land cities, towns, or other thing that you will have, I grant it you.”

“ Sire,” said Renaud, “ I thank you much for your good will. I and my brethren were coming from the chase, and as we came along by the Gironde we saw a mountain, and if it please you we would build thereon a castle.”

“ I right gladly grant it to you,” said the King to Renaud, who thanked him greatly. The King took him up and kissed him, and said : “ Noble knight, I promise you I shall make you a rich man if God spare me life.” “ Sire,” said Renaud, “ God yield it you.”

Next day the King made Renaud to come and took with him twenty knights and passed over the river till they came to the rock and saw the place that it was fair and pleasant. Renaud was right glad, for he said in himself that if he could build there a castle he would not fear Charlemagne when it was victualled, for there was a right fair spring of water at the highest of the mountain. When the knights that were with the King saw the place so fair and pleasant, and withal so strong, they took him a little aside and said :

“Sire what is this you will do? Do you wish to have another lord in your land? If Renaud build here a castle he shall fear you little, or all the barons of Gascony together. Consider that these knights are strangers, and may bear you great harm if they will. Give him some other reward, if you will believe me, and let this alone, for over great harm may come of it.”

HE WOULD
BUILD A
CASTLE

When King Yon heard these words he was abashed, for he wist well that they were truth, and little it lacked that the castle was not built. He began to think a little, and after he told himself that he had promised it to Renaud; so called he him and said: “My good friend, where will you that the castle be made?” “Sire, let it be here on this rock.”

“Certes,” said the King, “I give it to you; then shall you fear neither me nor my folk.”

“Sire,” said Renaud, “I certify you as a true knight, that I had rather die an evil death than think such treason upon you or any other! Think you because I am enemy to Charlemagne, my sovereign lord, that I have done against him some treason? Know that when I slew Berthelot his nephew, I did it in my own defence, for he drew first blood from me without reason. I swear to you on my faith that if any man do wrong unto you I will avenge it after my power; if you have any suspicion of me, give it me not.”

“ Good friend,” said the King, “ I know well your truth, and therefore have I granted it you.”

When Renaud heard the courtesy and goodness of the King he thanked him right much, and sent through the land for all the master masons and carpenters and crafty men in such work, so that there were well two hundred and fifty, besides the labourers. When all his stuff was ready he made them build there a strong castle, whereof the great hall was first made, and after, many chambers, and then the great tower. When the donjon was well closed, they enclosed the castle round about with double walls, high and thick, of hard stone, and many towers on it, and to this castle were four gates and no more. Then they made the portcullis, and secret passages and barbicans, and so the castle was finished. When King Yon knew this he came to see it and Renaud came out to meet him, and made him go up to the great tower of the fortress, so that he should see the castle at his ease. When the King beheld the fair work he called to him Renaud and said :

“ Good friend, how shall this castle be named? Meseemeth it ought to have a noble name for its great beauty.”

“ Sire, it hath no name yet, if it please you, you shall give it one.”

“ Certes, the place is fair, I will that it be called Montauban.”

Then he granted that those who should dwell in Montauban should be free of all manner of duties for the space of ten years; and when the people of the land heard this, the knights, gentlemen, burgesses, and merchants, and folk of all crafts came there, so that in all the country was no town so well peopled, for there dwelt five hundred burgesses, all rich men, and fifty taverners, and fifteen hundred craftsmen, besides other folk. When the barons saw that the King loved Renaud so well, they were wroth, and said to him :

“Sire, take good heed what you do, Montauban is right strong; if it hap by any wise that Renaud be an-angered upon you, he may lightly bring you great damage.”

“You say truth,” said the King, “but Renaud has so noble a heart that he shall never think upon treason in no wise.”

“Sire,” said an old knight, “if you will believe me I shall tell you how you shall always be lord and master of Renaud.”

“Friend,” said the King, “tell me this I pray you.”

“Sire, give him your sister to wife, so shall she be well married, for Renaud is noble of four descents.”

“Friend,” said King Yon, “you give me good counsel, so shall it be.”

The first day of the month of May, Renaud went from

from his castle of Montauban to Bordeaux to see King Yon, and Alard his brother who was there with him. Then the King came to meet him and took him by the hand, and went up to the hall of the palace, and there he called for chess to play at it with Renaud. As they were playing Godfrey of Moulins, the old knight who had spoken of the marriage, came into the hall and said :

“Hear me, lords; last night I dreamed that Renaud, son of Duke Aymon, was standing on a well, and all the people of this land bowed before him, and the King gave him a sparrowhawk; meseemed then that a great boar came out of the woods, and no man dared face him, but Renaud fought him and wounded him sore, and so I awoke.”

Straightway a great clerk named Bernard arose and said :

“Fair lords, if ye list to hearken, I shall declare unto you the signification of this dream. The well on which Renaud was standing is his castle of Montauban, the people that bowed them down are they who have come to dwell there, and the gift that the King gave him is his sister to wife. The boar is some great Prince, Christian or Paynim, that shall come to assail King Yon. This is his dream, and I, unworthy for to speak, would counsel that the marriage should be made of Renaud, and the sister of the King.” Then the King said : “Thou hast spoken well and wisely.” When

Renaud heard this he said: "Sire, gramercy of your fair gift that you give me: if it please you, may I take counsel with my brethren and Maugis."

"Brother," said Alard, "you have spoken ill; if you will believe me you shall fulfil his will straight-way, for to me and my brethren it shall be right pleasing."

"Brother," said Renaud, "I shall so do as you counsel me": then he turned him to the King, and said: "Sire, I am ready to do all that you will." So the King took him by the hand and affianced his sister to him.

When the marriage was accorded and made sure King Yon came to his sister's room and found her busy on the pennon of a spear that she was making for Renaud, though she durst not own it. The King saluted her, and the noble maid rose up and made him due reverence right mannerly.

"Fair sister," said the King, "I have married you well and highly." When she heard him she changed colour and could speak no word for a long time, but at last she said: "Sire, to whom have you given me?"

"Unto the best knight of the world, Renaud, son of Aymon." When she heard this she was right glad, for she loved Renaud with a great love, and she said: "Sire, I will do your will;" so he took her by the hand, and brought her to the palace, and said to Renaud before his barons: "Here I give you my sister to your wife and spouse."

HE IS
MARRIED

“Sire,” said Renaud, “I thank you for so fair a gift, it appertains not to so poor a knight as I am.” Then the King would make no tarrying, so he took her by the hand, and brought her right honourably to the Church, where the Bishop of Bordeaux wedded them. When they were married Maugis and his brethren made great joy, and hung Montauban with rich tapestry. Then they mounted their horses all covered with sendall, and went towards Bordeaux to meet with Renaud and his wife on the way. Eight days lasted the feasts and many great gifts were given, and at the last King Yon returned to Bordeaux right glad of the marriage, for he thought well that Renaud should keep him against all men.

NOW LEAVETH THE STORY TO TELL OF
RENAVD AND HIS BRETHREN AND RE-
TURNETH TO SPEAK OF CHARLEMAGNE,
WHO WENT TO ST. JAMES IN GALICIA
TO DO PENANCE FOR HIS SINS.

Now sheweth the history that Charlemagne was at Paris, and there came to him a devotion to go in pilgrimage to Saint James. He set out from Paris, and took in his company Ogier the Dane, and Duke Naymes of Bavaria, and many other lords. At the last they came to Saint James and when they were arrived there the King went straight to the church, and offered ten marks of fine gold before the altar. When he had done his devotions, he set out on the way through Bordeaux, and as he was going, he

98 saw

saw the castle of Montauban beyond the Gironde. Then he said :

CHARLE-
MAGNE
SEES MON-
TAUBAN

“ Lords, yonder is a fair castle, strong and well set. I see well that King Yon hath made it of late for it is new ; surely he thinketh to make war upon us.” Then he asked a man of the land what was that castle ; and he said :

“ Sire, the name of it is Montauban, and Renaud the son of Aymon hath built it.”

When Charlemagne heard this he was wroth, and for a while he could not speak, but at the last he said :

“ Lords, I shall tell you a wonder, I have found my enemies, the four sons of Aymon, in this land. Now up, Ogier, and you, Duke Naymes ; ride forthwith to King Yon and bid him yield me up my enemies, the four sons of Aymon, and find me knights to bring them into my land that I may hang them. If he will not do it, defy you him on my behalf, and tell him that within these three months I shall be in his land of Gascony with all my host, and I will destroy his land and his castles, and punish him without mercy.”

Straightway they went on their way to King Yon and found him at the last at Montauban, and when Ogier saw him he knew him well and saluted him, and told him all the message that they brought.

“ Ogier,” said the King, “ certes, I have here the four sons of Aymon, who are worthy knights. They

have helpen me in my need, and without them I should have been disinherited. For the good they have done me I have given my sister to wife to Renaud, and therefore I should be cruel and traitor if I should now deliver them into the hands of their mortal enemy. I had liefer be disinherited and die an ill death than suffer that they have any harm. King Charlemagne would then hold me for a fool. Therefore, Ogier, tell the Emperor on my behalf, that I shall forsake all my land before I will deliver them, and this is my answer."

When the King had thus said, Renaud spake after:

"Ogier, I marvel greatly why King Charlemagne will not leave us in peace: he cast us out of France poor and disinherited; he took our castle of Montfort, so that we wist not where we should go, and now he will cast us out of Gascony. Yet am I ready to do his will in reason and right, and I tell you well, if he refuse this in his pride, we are not such as be taken so lightly. We have a castle named Montauban, strong and impregnable."

"Renaud," said Ogier, "you speak unwisely; ween you to abash us by words? You know well that Charlemagne made you a knight, and you slew his nephew Berthelot. Think not ever to have peace with him. You ween you are in safety because King Yon hath built you a castle; full sore shall he repent it, for in two months we shall be in the midst of his land to destroy it."

“Ogier,” said Renaud, “I swear to you on my faith that when King Charlemagne shall be in Gascony he shall wish himself back again in France. Sore abashed shall ye be when you see the sharp war that we shall make against him; he who speaks now high shall then be full low.”

“Do as you will,” said Ogier; “I have told you all my message, and I go again to King Charlemagne.”

When the King heard the message, he shook all for rage, and said: “It shall be seen how King Yon and Renaud shall defend Gascony against me.”

Then he went forth and rode so long that he came to Paris. The day after he called all his barons to him, and when they were come the King held his council and said to them:

“Lords, I have sent for you to tell you the great shame that King Yon of Gascony doth to me, for he protects the four sons of Aymon in my despite. You know what wrong they have done me in slaying my nephew Berthelot. I did banish them out of France, and they made them the castle of Montfort in my lands, and I chased them out of it. Now are they with King Yon, and he has given his sister to Renaud, and will defend them against me.”

None of the barons answered him a word, for they were weary of the war they had made so long against Renaud; and when Charlemagne saw that nobody answered him, he called to him Duke

Naymes, Ogier the Dane, and Guidelon the Earl, and said to them: "Lords, what counsel do you give me in this matter?"

"Sire," said Duke Naymes, "if you will believe me, suffer your host to rest for five years, because the folk are weary of the war. When they shall be fresh, you make war at your will, and every man shall march with a good heart."

When the Emperor heard this he was sore angry, and as he was about to speak against Duke Naymes there came a youth of great beauty, and with him thirty squires well armed. This youngling came into the palace, and when he came before the Emperor he made his obeisance to him full courteously.

"Friend," said the King, "you are welcome. What wind brought you hither, and who are you?"

"Sire, I am called Roland of Brittany, and I am the son of your sister and Duke Milon."

When Charlemagne heard him, he was right glad and took him by the hand and embraced him many times and said: "Welcome are you indeed. Tomorrow in the morning shall you be made a knight, and you shall assay yourself on Renaud the son of Aymon."

"Sire," said Roland, "I shall do your commandment. I promise you Renaud shall not be spared of me, for he slew my cousin Berthelot, and I shall avenge his death."

In the morning the King dubbed him a knight
102 with

with much joy and honour; and as they were at the feast there came a messenger that said to the Emperor: "Sire, your men of Cologne recommend them humbly to your grace, and do you to wit that the Paynims have burnt and destroyed all the country. Wherefore they beseech you right humbly to come and succour them."

When the Emperor heard this he bowed his head for a little, and Roland, seeing him muse, said: "Sire, wherefore be you so dismayed? Give me some of your men, and I will raise the siege of Cologne."

Then said the King: "Fair nephew, blessed be the hour that you were born; you shall be my rest and my comfort: I will that you go there." So he gave him fifteen thousand men at arms, well arrayed, and said to him: "I have given you my men; keep them well, and get for them worship." "Sire," said Roland, "fear nothing, for at my return you shall know what we have done." And he went on his way with the folk.

So long they rode that they came to Cologne by night, and laid an ambush against their enemies. Then they came on a host of them carrying away Christian men and women and their goods; and when the Frenchmen saw them they said: "Our Lord hath sent us hither, let us ride on them, for they shall be utterly overthrown."

They spurred their horses and rode on the Pay-

THE PAY-
NIMS ARE
DEFEATED

nims with great strength, so that in a little while they discomfited them and recovered all the prisoners and beasts. Then the host of the Paynims came out on them, and the Frenchmen went again to their ambush.

When Roland saw that it was time to set upon the Paynims he issued out of his ambush with his folk, and smote them so that he cast good part of them to earth. With pain might a man pass for the dead that lay so thick there. Roland spurred his horse and smote a Paynim that was King of the the host with so great might that he overthrew him to earth, and slew him not, but bowed himself and took him for his prisoner, and set him again on his horse and brought him with him. But his folk, when they saw him taken, put themselves to flight full shamefully. Then Roland cried out :

“ Lords, go after them ; let not one escape, for ye shall have them, seeing I hold in my hand their King.”

“ They shall be taken or slain,” said they.

Then said the Paynim King that Roland had taken : “ I pray you kill them not ; they be all enough discomfited since you have taken me. Give them truce and take me to King Charlemagne, and if he pardon me I shall hold from henceforth all my land of him.”

“ By my head,” said Roland, “ you speak courteously.” And Duke Naymes approved ; so they

made a truce with the Paynims, and led Escorfant, their King, to Charlemagne.

King Charlemagne was right glad when he knew that his nephew had returned to Paris after discomfiting the Paynims and taking prisoner their King. Straightway he mounted his horse and went out to meet him. When Roland saw him, he lighted down and saluted the King right courteously, and said :

“Sire, here I deliver you King Escorfant that we have taken. He has told us that he will make himself a Christian man, and that he and his lineage will hold their lands of you if you will pardon him.”

“Nephew,” said Charlemagne, “there is no trust in him, and therefore I will keep me from him.”

He commanded that Escorfant should be brought to prison and have his will of meat and drink. After this Charlemagne called to him Duke Naymes, and said: “What think you of my nephew Roland—what did he when the battle was assembled?”

“Sire,” said Duke Naymes, “of Roland needeth not to speak. Such a knight has not been seen, for he alone hath overcome the Paynims; and if he had a horse that might bear him when he is armed, he should never have enemy but he should subdue him.” Then Charlemagne was right glad thereof. “But tell me,” said he, “where might men find such a good horse as you speak of?”

“Sire,” said the Duke, “make it to be cried on Montmartre with a trumpet that you will see all the
 105 horses

horses of your host run, and he that shall run best shall have a crown of gold and five hundred marks of fine silver and a hundred rolls of silk. Thus you may know the best horse in your kingdom ; and when you have seen him, buy him and give him to Roland. After that, give leave to your barons to St. John the Baptist's day next."

"Duke Naymes," said Charlemagne, "you give me good counsel, and I shall do as you have said."

Then he made the lists for the horses to run in, and set the crown, the silver and the silk at the end of it.

A yeoman who was going to Gascony passed by Montauban and told Renaud all the things that men would do at Paris, how Roland was come to court, and how he had discomfited Escorfant, and how the King would have the best horse to give him to Roland, and how the race was set for St. John's day next. Then Renaud began to laugh and said to his cousin Maugis: "Charlemagne shall see the best turn in the world, and I shall have the crown, for I will go there on Bayard to see how he shall prove himself."

"Sir," said Maugis, "do not go there ; but if you will go suffer that I bear you company, so shall you be more sure." "Gladly," said Renaud, "since you will have it so."

When it was time to set out Renaud said to his brothers: "Let us choose our horses and go on our way." And when they were all apparelled, he came

to his wife and said to her: "Lady, I pray you keep well my castle, and I shall soon come again."

"Sir," said she, "command your knights to go not out, and I promise you if King Yon my brother came himself, he should not come in. Now go, God be with you."

So Renaud took leave of her and set out. When they were come to Orleans and had passed the Loire men asked them whence they were, and Maugis, who spoke for them all, answered: "Lords, we are of Berne, and we go to Paris for the prize that the King hath set."

Thus by fair words they came to Melun, and there they lodged outside the town. When St. John's eve was come Renaud called Maugis and said: "What shall we do? To-morrow is the course of the horses, so it is convenable that we go lie to-night at Paris." "Cousin," said Maugis, "you say well; now let me do a little an it please you."

Then took Maugis a certain herb and stamped it upon a stone with the pommel of his sword, and tempered it with water and rubbed Bayard therewith, so that he became all white in such wise that they that had seen him before knew him not. After he anointed Renaud with an ointment that he bare with him, so that straightway he became of the age of twenty years.

When Maugis had thus dealt with Renaud and his horse he said to his cousins: "Lords, tell me
107 how

how think you, have I not well transfigured him? May they not go and come without being known? Bayard shall lose the prize for age, he is waxen so white."

The brothers began to laugh, and greatly did they wonder how Maugis had disfigured them. Then Renaud mounted on Bayard and Maugis on Morell and took leave of their folk, and Alard said to Maugis at their parting: "Take good heed of my brother Renaud, for if it were not for the trust I have in thee, I should not suffer him to go to Paris for all the gold of Spain."

NOW LEAVE WE A LITTLE TO SPEAK OF THEM AND RETURN TO KING CHARLEMAGNE, WHO WAS IN PARIS.

Charlemagne, seeing that his barons were all come, called Duke Naymes, Ogier the Dane, and Fulkes de Morillon, and said to them:

"Lords, take with you a hundred knights well armed, and go out on the Orleans road, that no man may pass you but you know who it is. I doubt me sore that Renaud will come, for you know how presumptuous he is, and if it came in his head, he would straightway do it."

"Sire," said the barons, "we shall do your commandment, and if Renaud be so foolish, he shall not escape us."

They rode out on the way to Orleans, and stopped in the midst of the road, four miles out of Paris; and
108 there

there they were for a long while and nobody passed by. When Duke Naymes saw this, he said to Ogier:

THEY PASS
THE GUARD

“By my faith, Charlemagne maketh us look like fools to tarry here for nought.” “Sir,” said Ogier, “you say truth; for me, I will tarry no longer.”

When they would have come back, Duke Naymes saw in the distance Renaud and Maugis coming. Then Fulkes cried out: “By my faith, here comes Renaud; now he cannot escape.” “You say truth,” said Duke Naymes, “the horse is much like Bayard, if he were of another colour.”

Then Fulkes set hand to sword, and came right near to Renaud and beheld him; then was he all abashed when he saw that it was not Renaud, and drew back while the two passed on their way. When Duke Naymes saw them coming, he called Maugis and said: “What are ye, and whither do ye go?”

“Sire,” said he, “I come from Peronne, and my name is Josuate.”

“Friend,” said Duke Naymes, “can you tell me anything of Renaud, the son of Duke Aymon?”

“Yes,” said Maugis, “he has ridden two days with us and is not two miles behind us.”

Then said Naymes: “Who is he that is with you? He holdeth him so still, I believe he hath some evil thoughts.”

“Sir,” said Maugis, “he is my son, and can speak no French.”

Then Duke Naymes said to Renaud: “Tell me, vassal, can you give me news of Renaud?”

And he answered him: “Imi scay point Franches, en prenant par cheval à Paris couronne Ri, non draps horniz gagner mi.”

Then Duke Naymes began to laugh and said:

“Who taught thee to speak? Thou art more of a fool than a bishop;” and let him go in peace.

At last Renaud and Maugis came to Paris, and as they entered the gate they met a man who recognised Renaud and cried out till a crowd came. Then he was yet more bold than before, and took Bayard by the bridle, but the good horse lifted his foot and kicked him in the breast and his heart burst. Then all the folk drew away and let them pass on to the old market. Now all the inns were full, so they went to a cordwainer to lodge, an ill man was he, for by him were the cousins near taken. When they had lighted down, and their horses were cared for, Maugis took a thread of silk, and waxed it well, and bound it round Bayard’s pastern. The cordwainer beheld this and said:

“Why have you bound the horse so? He will not be able to run. What knight is he that owneth him?”

“Sir,” said Maugis, “I have bound up his foot because he is lame, and it is my son who rides him.”

As Maugis was thus speaking with his host, he named Renaud unawares. THEY ARE
FOUND
OUT

“Ah,” said the host, “you have said enough ; surely he is the Renaud who slew Berthelot, the King’s nephew : I shall tell it to the King before I sleep.”

Then Renaud rose up with his hand on his sword, and said : “ Host, you mistake, I never saw Renaud, I know not who he is.”

“ Hold your peace,” said the host, “ I know you well ;” and so saying he turned to go out of his house, but Renaud smote him a great stroke of his sword and slew him.

When Maugis saw this he was right sorry for it and said : “ What have you done, have you lost your wit ? We are lost if God does not help us.”

Saying this he ran to the stable and saddled Bayard, and made Renaud mount him and ride away. All this while the wife and children of the cordwainer were crying out, but none could tell what had become of Renaud and Maugis, for they were in the press ; so Bayard went halting till they came to the gate of St. Martin, and there they abode all the night.

When it was day they went with the barons to church, and after Mass they followed the King into the meadows of the line, Bayard still halting along. When the King was come into the place he bade men set the crown at the end of the lists, and with

THE RACE
BEGINS

it the five hundred marks of silver and the rolls of silk, and it was done. When all was ready the knights mounted their horses, each hoping to gain the prize, and the King commanded Naymes and Ogier, Guidelon of Burgundy and Richard of Normandy to take a hundred knights well armed, and keep the course so that there should be no strife or noise. Then the knights at the starting-post began to jape at Renaud mounted on halting Bayard, and said to each other : " This fellow shall win the prize and the crown of gold for certain ; " and one of them said to Renaud : " You have done well, sweet knight, to bring your horse here, you will surely win the prize on him. "

Renaud heard full well their great words and his heart swelled in him, but he feared to lose the prize if he began the strife, so he held his peace. When the King heard what the knights were saying to Renaud, he was wroth for it, and said : " I command you, under pain of disgrace, that ye say no ill word to any knight. "

When Naymes and Ogier saw that it was time to run they sounded the trumpet and the race started. Forthwith Maugis ran up and unbound Bayard's foot, but before he was free, the others were far ahead. Then Renaud said to Bayard : " Bayard, we are far behind ; if you do not come in front we shall be blamed. "

When Bayard heard him he opened his nostrils,
112 stretched

stretched out his neck, and ran so quickly that the earth seemed to melt under him, and in a little while he had passed all the other horses. And when they that guarded the course saw it, they said to one another in surprise: "See how quickly that white horse runs; but late he halted sore, and now he is the best of all here." The Emperor called to him Richard of Normandy, and said: "Saw you ever so many good horses together as there are now?" Richard answered him: "No, sire, but the white passeth them all. How like he is to Bayard, if he had but his colour, and he who rides him is light and active."

Thus wite it, that Bayard over-ran all the other horses, and when Renaud was at the end of the course he took the crown and put it on his arm; as to the silver and the silk, he left them there. And when he had taken the crown he returned again to Charlemagne fair and softly, and when the King saw him, he laughed and said: "Friend, abide a little, I pray you; if you want my crown, you shall have it, and as much gold as you wish for your horse, so that never in your life shall you be poor."

"By my faith," said Renaud, "your words shall not avail you. My name is Renaud, and I bear away your crown: seek another horse for Roland, for you shall not have Bayard or your crown either."

Then he set spurs to Bayard, and rode off like a tempest. When Charlemagne heard these words he

was so angry that he could not for a great while speak a word, but at last he cried out :

“ Now after him, lords, after him ! It is my enemy, Renaud the son of Aymon ! ”

When the knights heard this, they spurred their horses after Renaud, but their going availed them naught. Thus Renaud came to the Seine, and crossed it swimming, and when he came to the other side, he lighted down on foot. Then Charlemagne, who was amongst his pursuers, called Renaud and said to him : “ Ha, true man’s son, give me back my crown ! I will give you its value and a truce for two years, so that you and your brethren may go to Arden, and see your mother who sore desires to see you.”

“ You shall never have your crown again,” said Renaud, “ I shall sell it and pay my knights therewith, and the carbuncle shall be set high on my castle, that all who pass by to St. James in pilgrimage may see it.”

When he had said this he rode away, leaving the high road for a little path that he knew of aforetime.

Meanwhile, Maugis mounted on his horse Morell, issued out of Paris as soon as he might, and put himself to look for Renaud, and when he had found him he cried out : “ Cousin, ride fast, for it is not good for us to tarry here.”

Then they took their way towards Melun, and

when they drew near it Alard, seeing them come in great haste, said : " Lords, we may get ready to set out ; light we all on horseback, and if they have need of help we will succour them."

As they came out of their ambush Renaud and Maugis arrived and said : " Lords, haste you all, for long tarrying might do us harm. I bring with me the King's crown, which Bayard has helped me to win."

Incontinent they put themselves in the way to Montauban, where they were well received by all the folk in the castle, and Renaud told them how he had gained the crown, and when they of Montauban heard his words they were right glad.

Now sheweth the story that when Renaud had won the crown of Charlemagne, the King abode all wroth in Paris, and called his barons and said to them : " Lords, I pray you, counsel me how I may avenge me of Renaud, for you know how he has angered me. I must have my crown again, before he breaks it and puts the carbuncle on his castle."

" Sire," said Roland, " if you will avenge you of Renaud, let us go upon him and destroy his land, and if we may take King Yon of Gascony, let us do such justice on him as you please."

" Nephew," said the King, " you are right ; I shall never have joy till I am avenged."

" Sire," said Duke Naymes, " calm yourself ; if you will, I will give you such counsel that Renaud

and his brothers shall be brought to destruction : assemble all your barons at the coming Candlemas, and let every one of them bring with him provisions for seven years. We will abide before Montauban till we have taken it, and after you shall do as you will."

Then the King made his letters as Duke Naymes had said, and sent them through all his empire, ordering every man accustomed to bear arms to come to him at the feast of Candlemas next following, well garnished with victuals for the space of seven years, to lay siege to Montauban. When the barons knew the King's will, every man made him ready as well as he could, and came to Paris to King Charlemagne and Roland his nephew ; and so many came that they could not all find lodging in Paris.

When the King saw that his barons were come he said : " Lords, ye all know right well how I have overcome and subdued four Kings, the which are obedient unto me save the King of Gascony : he hath saved in his land my enemies the four sons of Aymon. Wherefore I pray and command you that ye come with me into Gascony to help me that I may be avenged of the great harm they have done me."

Then said the Earl of Nanteuil for all the other lords :

" Sire, we may not go there at this time. You know well that we be but late come from Almayn, whereof

whereof we be yet all weary. There are in this fellowship many barons that have not been in their lands, nor seen their wives nor children. Moreover the wounds that I received in Almayn are not yet whole. You shall do as a good King and a wise one, who loves his folk, if you wait until Whitsuntide next coming, and give leave to all your barons to go to their lands and rest them for a while. When the time shall be come, they will be fresh and ready to do your will with all diligence."

HIS LORDS
DESIRE
PEACE

The King was very wroth at this answer and said: "If I should be disinherited, I will go into Gascony, and I shall take with me all the young men of my host, if ye are too weak and faint."

"Sire," said Duke Naymes, "you say well; the young men will be right glad to assay themselves."

"They shall destroy King Yon," said Charlemagne; "and when I have taken Renaud and his kin, I shall give all the land to the young knights for their heritage."

There was in the company a spy that belonged to Renaud, and when he had heard all that was to be said, he put himself in the way and came to Montauban, where he found Renaud and Maugis and the brothers. When Renaud saw him he asked:

"What news from the court of King Charlemagne?"

"My lord," said the spy, "wite it well that King Charlemagne is greatly wroth against King Yon, and

against you, your brothers, and Maugis. He hath sent for all his subjects, but none would come with him into Gascony. Then he swore that he would bring with him all the young knights, to whom he would give the land, and cast down the great tower of Montauban."

"Ha," said Renaud to his folk, "be not discouraged. I shall see how Roland and Oliver bear themselves against us." Then he went into the great hall and found Maugis.

"Lords," quoth he, "I bring you tidings. Charlemagne cometh to besiege us, and brings with him all the power of France. Let us think to receive him well."

"Brother," said Alard, "have no doubt of it, they shall be well received. As long as we live and see you riding on Bayard, we shall not fail you nor fear Charlemagne and his power."

It so fell that Charlemagne was advised, and thought on the counsel that the Earl of Nanteuil had given him, and he said to his folk that they should come to him at Easter when he held his Council General. When it was time to come again, every man made himself ready as well as he could; Richard of Normandy led with him many noble knights, then came Salomon of Brittany and with him a great company, Diziers of Spain was at the head of ten thousand men, Godfrey of Avignon brought with him all his power and great foison of victuals,

victuals, Bertrand of Almayn brought with him knights from Ireland and from Africa, and three thousand archers which would for no fear of death flee from battle, and Archbishop Turpin came with his company, and the King was right glad of his coming, for he trusted much to his fidelity and prowess.

When the host was assembled at Paris, there was so sore a dearth there that it was great pity, for the bushel of wheat was sold for ten shillings and five pence, and if the army had tarried there longer all the small people should have been dead of hunger. Seeing this, Charlemagne began to make his musters and found that he had with him thirty thousand young knights, without counting the older ones. He called to him Roland, and said :

“Fair nephew, I recommend to you my army, and pray you conduct it in good order.”

“Sire,” said Roland, “I shall do my duty after my power.”

Then they raised the Oriflamme, and departed out of Paris and came to Blois, and Charlemagne caused it to be cried that all the victuallers of the town should bring food to the army, and if what they brought was worth one penny, they should have two for it. Then they passed the Gironde, and came to Montauban and lodged them there before the place.

When the battle was ordained around the castle,

Roland said to King Charlemagne, "Meseemeth we should give assault to Montauban." The King answered :

"I do not wish my folk to take any hurt : first will I know whether the castle will be yielded up or no." Straightway he sent a knight, unarmed, and riding on a mule, to the castle, and when they at the gate saw that it was a messenger they opened to him and he entered. As he was come in he met the seneschal going his rounds with one hundred men, and he saluted him and asked who he was, and what was the host without.

"Sir," said the knight, "it is the host of Charlemagne, and I am one of his knights, come to speak with Renaud on behalf of King Charlemagne." Then the seneschal took him by the hand and led him to Renaud, and when the knight saw him, he saluted him humbly and said :

"The Emperor Charlemagne sendeth to you word by me, that if you will yield you to his mercy, and give to him your brother Richard to do his will of him, he shall have mercy on you : and if you will not do so, he shall assault your castle, and if he may take you, you shall die a cruel death."

Then Renaud began to laugh at his words, and said : "Friend, go tell the King that I am not the man to do any treason ; if I should do it, he would be the first to blame me. But if it please him, my brethren, Maugis, and I are at his commandment,

and we shall yield up to him the castle at his will if he will save our lives. And if Charlemagne refuse this, we shall not set much by him, but shall defend ourselves."

The messenger returned to Charlemagne, and shewed unto him all that Renaud had said, word by word, and the King thought a good while, for he knew that Renaud spoke well. Then he sent for Duke Naymes and Ogier the Dane, and said to them: "Lords, Renaud sendeth me word that he will do nothing after my will, and for this cause let the castle be forthwith assailed."

"Sire," said Duke Naymes, "meseemeth Renaud offereth you fair, and if you will believe me, you shall take him to mercy. You know well he and his brethren are men that can do you good service, and if Renaud were in peace with you, you should be better beloved and more dreaded therefore. But since your will cannot accord with this, I counsel you not to assail the castle, for Renaud hath with him a great company, and if ye assault the castle they shall issue out at the secret posterns and do your men great harm; therefore you should besiege them so closely that no man may come out or enter in."

Charlemagne knew well that Duke Naymes spoke wisely, and said to him:

"I will that it be done as you have advised." Then he made a cry through all the host that every man should lodge himself close to the castle, and

ROLAND
AND
OLIVER
SPEAK
TOGETHER

commanded that his tent should be pitched as near the gate as could be done, and so within a little while there were more than ten thousand tents round the castle of Montauban.

When the host was all lodged, Roland departed from the camp with two thousand young knights, and went to the other side of Montauban to a place called Balançon, and there he pitched his tent on the banks of a broad and deep river, and over it he set the dragon. They were in such ground that they could see from thence the woods and rivers and all the country round. Roland, seeing the place so strong, said to his folk :

“ Lords, I marvel not that the four sons of Aymon make war against my Uncle Charlemagne, since they have so strong a dwelling-place. I promise you Montauban shall never be taken of us.”

“ You are wrong,” said Oliver, “ we took Losanes, and threw down the great tower and donjon of Constantinople, so we may well have Montauban ; if Renaud and his brothers do not yield, they shall be in danger of death.”

“ I promise you,” said Roland, “ that they shall do nothing of what you say, but Renaud shall make us so to fear that the boldest will wish himself in Paris. He is courageous, and his brethren likewise ; they have in the castle many valiant knights, so I am of opinion that as long as they have victuals, they shall never be taken.”

When Roland's tent was set up he beheld a great number of birds between the two rivers; so he said to Archbishop Turpin and the other barons: "See how well we are lodged; let us go and fly our falcons."

THE LORDS
GO
SPORTING

"Sir," said Turpin, "most willingly." Then Roland mounted his horse, and took with him about thirty of his barons who carried their falcons and rode for the most part on mules. They were all unarmed save for their swords, and they took so many birds that they laded a horse therewith. Turpin and Ogier the Dane went not with them, but abode behind to keep the army, where they made two ancient knights recount and tell how great Troy was taken and destroyed. Meanwhile, there was a spy in the host who had been sent there to know what they wrought, and how they did, and this spy departed straightway and shewed to Renaud how Oliver and Roland were gone sporting and with them thirty lords of the best of the host.

When the spy had accounted these tidings to Renaud he was right glad of it, and called his brethren and Maugis to tell them the news. "What ought we to do?" said Renaud.

"Cousin," said Maugis, "we must kill them if we may. Remember you not how a messenger told you a month ago that Charlemagne said that he would leave all the old knights in his kingdom and would bring with him the young knights only, and

that he would give all Gascony to them? By this bobounce Roland and Oliver are so proud that they trow no man dare look upon them in anger. If you will believe me, I will tell you how to make them wroth and sorry."

Then Renaud sounded his horn, which was never blown but in case of need, and all men ran to arms, and Renaud mounted on Bayard. When he saw that his folk were well armed, he went out with them by a privy postern, where they of the host could not see them, and there were in his company about four thousand men. A forester led them through the thick of the wood, and Renaud bade him lead them straight to Balançon. When Renaud saw the tents he shewed them to his folk and said :

" Lords, behold what fair gain we have here if we will take it."

" Sir," said his men, " let us go to it boldly, we durst well assail hell itself when you are with us."

It fell that Archbishop Turpin, who abode with the host, heaved up his head and saw the crows flying about the fortress and making a great noise. Then he beheld the wood and there he saw his enemies, wherof he was sore afraid and called Ogier the Dane, and said :

" Go arm yourself, for here come our enemies! Roland and Oliver are gone to the chase and have left their men in this great danger." Then Ogier went to his tent and armed him, and when the

Frenchmen heard the trumpets blow they put themselves in order full nobly ; Ogier mounted his horse Broisart, and finding them armed said to them : “ Lords, think to defend you well, for we are assailed.”

OGIER AND
TURPIN

Renaud was taken aback when he saw the enemy moving and said to his folk : “ Lords, we are discovered, nevertheless let us go forward and attack them.” Then he said to Maugis : “ Cousin, abide here within this wood with a thousand knights, and if you see that we have need of help, come then and succour us.”

So saying, he put spurs to Bayard, and passed into Balançon, and the first he met was Aymer the Earl of Nicol, whom he struck dead. Then he set his hand to his sword and began so great a slaughter that no man could tell it, and cried out : “ Where are Roland and Oliver that say my folk and I are traitors, I would shew them the truth of the matter.”

Hearing this, Archbishop Turpin rode against him, and they gave each other so great strokes through their shields that they broke both their spears in pieces, but neither of them fell. Then Renaud gave a great stroke with his sword on the bishop’s helm, and said : “ By my faith, father, it were better for you to be in some church singing mass than to be here.”

And when the bishop heard this he was well near out of his mind, and went upon Renaud, and the

army was moved on one side and the other, and so many knights were overthrown that it was great pity to see.

Ogier the Dane on his horse Broisart smote Richard the brother of Renaud so great a stroke that his horse fell down to the earth, and when Richard saw himself aground he rose up again like a valiant knight, with his sword in his hand to defend himself, but Ogier passed on crying out : "To the banner of St. Denis."

Renaud seeing his brother cast to the ground was wroth, and spurred Bayard against Ogier the Dane, and they gave each other great strokes on their shields, but at last Renaud gave him such a stroke that neither girth nor armour might help, and Ogier fell, saddle and all, to the earth. Then Renaud took Broisart by the mane, and said to Ogier :

"You have done evil to overthrow my brother ; you know that you are of my lineage, and my near cousin, yet you do worse to us than others. Nevertheless, take your horse again, and do me a pleasure another time, if I have need of it."

"Cousin," said Ogier, "you speak as a good knight should." Then Renaud yielded him again Broisart, and held his stirrups for him to mount. When he was remounted he set hand to his sword and rode into the thickest of the Gascons and made them to flee before him.

Maugis, seeing that all the host was thus in confusion,

fusion, came out of the wood to Balançon, and put himself and his folk among the press so that none durst abide long before him. Then the French were so sore and weary that they might fight no more, and the Gascons chased them a long mile and after returned to their camp, and took all that they found there, and Maugis went to the tent of Roland and carried off the dragon that was on it, and so they returned to Montauban in great joy. After, when they had eaten at their ease, Renaud made bring the booty before him, and shared it among the folk, and Maugis went up on the great tower of Montauban, and set the dragon of Roland on it so that the enemy on both sides of the castle might see it. Then Charlemagne weened that Roland his nephew had taken Montauban by force, and was right glad, but the thing fell otherwise.

Now must we tell of Roland and of Oliver, who came again from hawking on the river with their fellows, right glad by seeming that they had taken so many birds. As they were coming Dom Rambault met them and said: "You have taken many birds, see that you sell them at a good price, for you will never get for them what they have cost you. If you have taken birds, Renaud and his brothers have taken knights and horses. You owe them thanks, for there is your dragon on the tower of Montauban, and all that see it ween that you have taken the castle."

When Roland heard this he lighted down and sat on a stone, and began to muse sore, for it lacked little that he went out of his mind. After, he called to him Turpin the Archbishop and Ogier the Dane, and said to them: "Fair lords, what counsel give you me upon this deed? I dare never more come before my uncle; I fear me too sore of evil reports. Give me leave to depart to the Holy Land to see the sepulchre of our Lord, and war against the Saracens, for since this mishap is come to me, I will no more bear arms against Christian men."

"Be not dismayed," said the Bishop, "this is but the use of war, such a thing befalleth many a one. I promise you you shall have before three days as many of Renaud's folk as he hath of yours."

"Sir," said Roland, "I promise you to rest on your prudence."

Forthwith they went together towards Charlemagne, and after them more than two hundred young knights on foot, because they had lost their horses. When they were come into the host they went straight to the tent of Duke Naymes, and there Roland abode for two days, and durst look no man in the face for the great sorrow that he had at his heart. Turpin came to King Charlemagne and entered into his tent and saluted him, and the Emperor returned to him his salute and said: "Dom Bishop, you be welcome."

"Sire," quoth he, "I beseech you pardon me if I
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tell you anything that displeases you. Wite that the four sons of Aymon have discomfited us, and taken with them all that we had in our tents, both horses and harness and the dragon of Roland and many prisoners, and they have slain the most part of our folk.”

When Charlemagne heard this, he was for a while like a madman, and swore by Saint Denis that he would be avenged. Then he sent through his host to every lord and baron bidding them come to his tent to keep parliament with him.

When they were come, he stood upon his feet and spoke to them in this manner :

“Lords, I have sent for you to shew you what has happed to us of new. Now wite that the four sons of Aymon have discomfited all the knights my nephew Roland had with him at Balançon, whereof I am right wrath and sorry, for I would I had lost a greater thing and this had not happed, but a thing that cannot be amended must be suffered and borne as men may. I require you, my lords and friends, counsel me how I may have this castle of Montauban.”

When the King had thus spoken there was none so hardy that they durst say a word save Duke Naymes.

“Sire,” quoth he, “you ask counsel to besiege Montauban. But no man that hath reason in his head will give you this counsel because of the great lords

lords which be of the alliance of Renaud. If you will have good counsel and believe me, Sire, send word to King Yon that he keep not your enemies within his land, but that he yield them into your hand to do with them at your pleasure. If he will not do so, you shall destroy his land, and no mercy shall you have upon him."

"Now give you me good counsel," said the King; "what you have spoken shall be done forthwith."

Charlemagne made come before him a herald of his, and said to him:

"Now go to Toulouse and tell King Yon on my behalf that I have come into Gascony with the twelve Peers of France and a hundred thousand fighting men. If he yields me not up my enemies the four sons of Aymon, I shall waste all his land, and take from him his crown and he shall be called the King Overthrown."

"Sire," quoth the herald, "your commandment shall be done without varying one word."

And thus he departed and took his way to Toulouse, where he found King Yon of Gascony in his palace with a right fair company. Thereon he saluted him on the Emperor's behalf, and said the thing wherefor he was sent. When King Yon heard his words, he bowed his head to the earth, and said not a word for a long while; then he said to the herald: "Good friend, you must tarry here

a seven-night, and then I shall tell you my will, and what I purpose to do."

KING YON
TAKES
COUNSEL

Then went King Yon into his chamber and his eight earls with him, and he commanded that the doors should be well shut. When they were all set down, King Yon took the word and said :

"Lords, I require you, on the faith you owe me, give me good counsel to my honour by reason : Charlemagne has entered into my lands with a hundred thousand men and sendeth word to me to yield him up the four sons of Aymon, and if not he will not leave one city nor town, but he shall cast all to the earth and take the crown from my head. My father held nothing from him, and no more shall I. It is better to die in great worship than to live in great shame."

When King Yon had thus spoken, there rose up a knight named Godfrey, his nephew, and said to him : "Sire, I marvel that you ask counsel to betray such knights as the four sons of Aymon. Renaud is your man, and you have given him your sister in marriage, and you know what good he hath done your land and you. You have promised and sworn to keep and defend him against all men. If you think to fail him, you must let him and his brethren go into some other land to seek their adventure, and haply they shall serve some lord who will do them more good than you do. Also I pray you, my dear lord

lord and uncle, that you will do nothing that turneth to blame or reproach to your friends."

Then spake the old Earl of Anjou, and said:

"Sire, you bid us give you counsel, if you will follow it we will give it you." "Say on boldly," said the King, "I will do as you counsel me."

"Sire," said the Earl, "I have heard say that Renaud and his brethren were very young when Duke Beuves of Aigremont was slain at Paris with the will of Charlemagne: and when they were grown the King would have amended it with them but they would take no amends, and bore their hate long time. Then Renaud slew Berthelot, the nephew of the King, with a chessboard. Sire, I will not hide anything from your knowledge: you know well that Charlemagne is so mighty a king that he never undertook war but he overcame in it: Wherefore I counsel you to yield Renaud and his brethren and Maugis, whereby you shall be delivered from great danger."

Then said Earl Mobandes: "Sire, if you will do this, you and we shall be traitors! You have given him your sister to wife, and when he came into this land he brought in his fellowship four thousand men at arms, and said to you before he took off his spurs that he was at war with Charlemagne. Natheless, you received him with good heart, and he has conquered for you many battles and delivered you from your enemies. I tell you,

Sire, you will not be worthy to call yourself King if you give up such knights as the four sons of Aymon for fear of death. You have lost neither castle nor town for them, and if ye do so you shall be taken for a traitor and put in the number of Judas.”

OTHERS
OPPOSE IT

After spoke Antony the Old and said: “Sire, believe not this counsel; I know better the intent of Renaud than any man that is here. You must understand, Sire, that Renaud was son to a man that had but one town, and was so proud that he deigned not to serve or obey his lord the King of France, but slew Berthelot with great outrage, wherefor Charlemagne chased him out of the realm of France. He has come into Gascony, and because he hath your sister to wife he is so proud that none may dure before him; if he may in any wise, he will take your life and have the realm for his own. Wherefor I counsel you to yield him and his brothers to King Charlemagne and appease his wrath.”

Then spoke Duke Guymart of Bayonne, and said: “Sire, Antony lieth falsely, and giveth you evil counsel, for Renaud is son to Duke Aymon of Dordonne, and Charlemagne made their uncle, Duke Beuves of Aigremont, to be slain by great wrong: moreover Renaud slew Berthelot, it is true, but it was his body defending. I say that a King is not worthy to bear a crown who will do treason for the threats of another.”

STILL
OTHERS
SPEAK

Then spake Humart, an old knight, and said :
“ Dom Guymart, I believe you have lost your wit to counsel King Yon to bear out Renaud against Charlemagne and to make all the land of Gascony to be destroyed.” And Guymart said : “ Thou liest falsely, and if we were in another place than here I should shew you that you were an old dotard and a fool.”

Then said Earl Hector : “ Sire, you asked counsel of such as cannot counsel themselves. We know that Renaud is a knight good enough. But by his great pride he has made war with Charlemagne and come into Gascony, and you have given him your sister in marriage. Therein you did great folly, and more when you made him the castle of Montauban upon the strongest ground that is in your realm. Now has come King Charlemagne and has besieged him, and I counsel you to deliver yourself of Renaud as soon as you may, for it is better to lose four knights than your kingdom. Take from him your sister and give her to another who has no such enemy as Charlemagne. And this you may well do without blame if you follow my counsel.”

When King Yon saw that the most part of his council agreed that he should yield Renaud to King Charlemagne, he began to weep and say in himself : “ Ha, Renaud ! I am sore charged for you, now shall my love depart from you ! You shall but lose your body, and I shall lose the love of God and of His
134 saints.

saints. I shall never find mercy in him to betray such a knight as you be." Then aloud, "Lords, I see well that I must yield up the four sons of Aymon, since the most part of you accordeth thereto, but I wote well that I shall be therefore taken all my life as a Judas:" and then they left the chamber and he sat down. And a wonder happened, for the chamber that was all white became black as any coal. When the King came out of the chamber he sat him down on a bench and began to weep sore for the pity he had on these valiant knights. Then he called to him his clerk and said :

"Come forth, Sir Peter, and write a letter from me to King Charlemagne, as I shall tell you. It is that I send him salutation with good love, and if he will leave my land in peace, I promise him that before ten days be past I shall deliver unto him the four sons of Aymon, and he shall find them in the plain of Vaucouleurs, clothed with scarlet furred with ermine, riding upon mules and bearing in their hands flowers and roses; and eight earls of my realm shall ride with them, and if they escape it shall be that they blame me not for it."

Then Sir Peter the clerk entered into his room and took pen and ink and wrote the letter word for word as the King had devised it. When it was written and sealed, Yon called his seneschal and said : "Now make you ready on horseback and go to the siege of Montauban, and there recommend me

to

to King Charlemagne and give him this letter. Tell him if he will quit my land I will do this and not otherwise."

"Sire," said the seneschal, "I shall gladly do your commandment." Then he rode out of Toulouse and took the herald of Charlemagne with him, and came to Montauban, where he found the Emperor in his pavilion. The seneschal lighted down, and saluted King Charlemagne from King Yon of Gascony, and presented him the letter on his behalf.

"Right mighty Emperor," said he, "King Yon sendeth you word by me, that if you will quit his land he will fulfil the tenour of this letter, and otherwise he will not."

When Charlemagne heard this, he took the letter from him, and said to the great lords there :

"Fair lords, be not displeas'd ; go out of this pavilion, for I would talk with this messenger privily."

And they all went out with a good will.

Then Charlemagne opened the letter and read it all along, and when he found therein what he most desired in the world, that the treason was ordained, he might be no gladder than he was, and he said :

"Your lord, King Yon, speaketh full courteously, and if he doth what he saith, he shall be my good friend, and I shall do to him great worship and defend him against all men."

“Sire,” said the seneschal, “of this that you say you shall give me surety, if it please you.”

THE KING
WRITES TO
HIM

“I swear it you,” said the King, “in the name of St. Mary and St. Denis of France.”

“Sire, you have said enough. I ask for no other surety,” said the seneschal.

After this Charlemagne called his chamberlain, and said :

“Make a letter to King Yon of Gascony on my behalf as I shall devise it unto you. Write that I send him salutation of good love, and that if he will do for me as he saith I shall increase his realm with fourteen good castles, and I send him four mantles of scarlet furred with ermine to clothe withal the traitors when they go to the plain of Vaucouleurs, and there shall they be hanged, if God will.”

Then the chamberlain wrote the letter, and when he had made it the Emperor sealed it and called the messenger before him, and said :

“Take these letters to King Yon from me, and recommend me to him.” Then he gave him ten marks of gold and a ring that he took from his finger.

When the seneschal was gone, Charlemagne sent for Fulkes of Morillon and Ogier the Dane, and said to them : “Lords, I have sent for you to tell you my secret, but I will that none should know it but we three only, until that it be accomplished.”

“Sire,” said Ogier, “if you think that we should discover your secret, tell it us not.”

“Certes,” said the Emperor, “ye be well worthy to know all. Go ye then into the plain of Vaucouleurs with three hundred knights well armed ; there shall ye find the four sons of Aymon. Bring them to me, dead or alive.”

“Sire,” said Ogier, “we have never seen them but armed. How may we know them?”

“Right well may ye know them, for each of them will bear a scarlet mantle furred with ermine, and carry a rose in their hand.”

“Sire,” said Ogier, “that is a good token and we will do your bidding forthwith.”

Thereon they made no tarrying but rode forth to the plain of Vaucouleurs, and set themselves in ambush in a little wood thereby. Would that Renaud and his brothers but knew of this treason for then should they have come thither not on mules but on good war horses, armed at all points ! When Fulkes and Ogier were in ambush, Fulkes said to his men : “Fair lords, now am I come to the point that I may avenge myself on Renaud whom I hate, for that he slew my uncle. King Yon has betrayed them, and they shall come hither anon, all unarmed save their swords. I pray you smite well upon them, then shall I know who loveth me. Let none of them escape.”

Now tells the tale of King Yon at Toulouse, how
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he received the letter of Charlemagne, and called his secretary Gendard to him and said : " Look what this letter saith."

GENDARD
READS THE
MESSAGE

Straightway the clerk broke the seal, and when he had read the treason he began to weep sore tenderly.

Then said the king : " Hide nothing from me, but tell me all that the letter containeth."

Then he shewed how Charlemagne sent him word if he would do as he told him, he would increase his power by fourteen good castles, " moreover he sendeth you four mantles of scarlet furred with ermine to give to the four sons of Aymon, for Charlemagne would do hurt to no man but to them ; and he doth you to wit that his folk are in ambush, abiding the four sons whom ye shall deliver."

When King Yon had heard this letter he took with him a hundred men well-armed, and rode to Montauban, where his sister came to him and took him by the hand and would have kissed him as she was wont to do. The king, full of evil, turned his face away, saying he had the toothache, and bade that men should make him a bed ready for he had need of rest. When he was laid down, he said : " What have I wrought against these generous knights ? They shall be surely hanged to-morrow if God help them not. Truly I am another Judas. I have lost the love of God and also mine honour. But I must needs do it, since I have promised it so."

As King Yon was thus thinking, Renaud and his brethren

brethren returned from hunting, bearing with them four great wild boars, and as they came in they heard the noise of the horses, and weened that some stranger knights had come to take service with him.

His esquire told him that King Yon had come, and Renaud sent for his horn, and said to his brothers :

“Take each of you your horn, and blow a welcome to King Yon.”

So they blew till the castle rung again. Then King Yon arose and said :

“Alas ! how evilly have I wrought against these knights.”

When the sons were come into the hall, King Yon said : “Marvel not that I have not embraced you ; for I am laden with great pain.” Then said Renaud : “I and my brothers shall serve you to our power.”

“Grammercy,” said the King, and called on his steward to bring him the scarlet mantles. Then he made them put them on, and prayed them to wear them for his love ; and when he saw them he was nigh weeping.

After supper was over King Yon took Renaud by the hand and said to him :

“Fair brother and friend, I have that to tell you which you know not. Wit ye that I have been at Monbadel, and spoken with Charlemagne, who accused me of treason because I keep you in my realm, whereon I laid my gage before the company, and no

one durst speak against me. After this we spoke many words together, and at last King Charlemagne was willing for my love to make peace with you in this manner. To-morrow early ye shall go to the plain of Vaucouleurs, all unarmed save your swords, mounted on mules, and wearing the mantles I have given you, bearing in your hands a rose. I shall send with you eight earls of my lineage, and there shall you find Charlemagne and Naymes of Bavaria, Ogier the Dane and all the twelve peers of France. Then shall ye do him reverence and cast yourselves at his feet, and he shall restore you, and give you back your lands."

"Sire," said Renaud, "I have great doubt of Charlemagne, for he hates us."

"Fear nothing," said King Yon, "he has made oath before all his lords."

"Then," said Renaud, "we shall follow your counsel."

"What say you?" said Alard. "You know well that Charlemagne hath sworn our death. I am surprised that you should yield yourself unarmed into his hands. For me, never shall I go unarmed."

"God forbid," said Renaud, "that I should mistrust my lord, King Yon."

Then he turned him to the King, and said :

"We shall be there to-morrow early in the morning, whatsoever haps. God hath holpen us well,

that we have peace with King Charlemagne who hath made us such mortal war."

Then he took leave of King Yon and went unto his wife's chamber with his brothers.

When she saw him she took him between her arms for great love and kissed him.

"Lady," said Renaud, "I ought well to love you, for your brother, King Yon, hath travailed sore to make peace for me with Charlemagne, which all the twelve peers of France could not do."

Then said the lady: "I thank God with all my heart; but tell me where this peace is to be made, and how?"

"To-morrow we ride to the plain of Vaucouleurs, and there the peace shall be made; but I and my brothers must go there unarmed on our mules, with each a rose in hand, in sign of peace. There shall we find Naymes and the twelve peers to receive our oaths."

When the lady heard these words she said to him: "Sir, if you will believe me, you will not go there; the plains of Vaucouleurs are right dangerous, surrounded by four great woods. Take you a day to speak with Charlemagne in the meadows of Montauban, and go mounted on Bayard and your brethren with you. Moreover, take two thousand knights and deliver them to Maugis your cousin, to keep them in ambush if you have need of them, for I misdoubt me sore of treason. I dreamed this

night that I was at the windows of the palace, and saw come out of the wood full a thousand wild boars who slew you and tore your body to pieces, while the tower of Montauban fell to the earth. Moreover, I saw Alard your brother slain by a traitor shot, and your brother Richard hung on an apple tree. Then he cried out, 'Help, brother Renaud!' and as you rode thither on Bayard, he fell down beneath you."

"Lady," said Renaud, "hold your peace, for he who believeth overmuch in dreams, doth against the will of God."

Then said his three brothers: "If we must go there, let us not go as men of counsel, but as brave and worthy knights, having each of us his arms on him, and let Renaud be mounted on Bayard, who at need could carry us all four."

"Say what you will," said Renaud. "I shall go there whatso happeth."

Then went he out of his chamber and came to King Yon, and said to him: "I marvel that my brethren will not go with me because they may have no horses with them. May we not have leave to take our horses with us?"

"No," said the king, "for Charlemagne feareth you too sore, and also I have given hostages that you would bear no manner of arms, and that ye shall ride upon mules. If ye go there otherwise arrayed, he shall think that I wish to betray him,
and

and he shall ruin all my land. I have laboured sore to bring you at peace. Go if you will, and if not leave it."

So Renaud went out from King Yon and came again to his own chamber, where he found his wife and his brothers. They asked him if he would ride on Bayard, and he answered them that he could not have leave so to do. "But my brethren," said he, "fear you not. King Yon is a true man, he shall conduct us by eight of the greatest earls of his realm. I have never seen any evil in him."

"Sir," said his brothers, "we will go gladly with you, since you will have it so."

On the morrow when Renaud saw the day he rose and said to his brothers: "Arise and let us make ready to set out, for Charlemagne shall haply be angry if he be sooner at the plains of Vaucouleurs than we."

So they made them ready and went to the Church of St. Nicholas, and offered many rich gifts at the offering, and after the mass was sung they mounted their mules and rode away with the eight earls who all knew the treason. The four sons of Aymon wore their mantles of scarlet furred with ermine, and bunches of roses in their hands, and their swords girded. God help them, for they are now in the way never to come back to Montauban. When King Yon saw them go he fell down in a swoon for grief, and then began to make great sorrow for that he had

betrayed the best knights in the world and the most worthy. Then his folk came round him and comforted him saying that Renaud would perceive the trap, but King Yon feared for his vengeance and the wrath of Maugis his cousin.

Now telleth the tale of the four sons of Aymon, who went to their death by the means of the traitor King Yon. Yet by his treason he destroyed the name and kingdom of Gascony, for never since him has there been a king of that land. As the brothers rode on Alard began to sing full sweetly, and Guichard and Richard did likewise. Pity it was to see such worthy knights go singing to their death. Renaud rode behind them with his head bowed down, and as he heard them singing he lifted his hands to heaven and prayed: "Great God, Who cast out Daniel in the lion's den, and saved Jonah from the fish's belly, preserve me and my brothers from death and imprisonment: meseemeth we go in great peril." And when he had finished his prayer his eyes waxed wet for pity that he had of his brothers, lest they should come to harm. Alard, seeing that his brother had his eyes full of tears, said to him:

"What ails you, brother, you weep not without some great occasion? This is the day that we make peace with Charlemagne. Sing with us, for it is a great pleasure to hear you sing!"

So they rode forth at their mules' pace singing and talking, till they came to the plain of Vaucouleurs.

Now the fashion of this plain is such that in it is a rock right steep and high, and it is environed by four forests, the least of which is a day's journey through, and four great rivers run through it. There is neither castle nor town for twenty miles from it, and therefore the treason was there devised. In the plain four roads crossed, to France, to Spain, to Galicia, and to Gascony, and on each of these roads was an ambush of five hundred men well armed to take Renaud and his brethren. Ogier the Dane was the first to see them, and he said to his folk :

“ Fair lords, ye know that Renaud is my cousin, I pray you that ye will do no harm to him or his brethren.”

Then they answered him with good will, and Renaud passed thus by their ambush without hurt into the open plain. When they were come there and found nobody, they were sore abashed, and Alard said to his brother Richard : “ I doubt me we are betrayed by Renaud.”

“ I promise you my heart quaketh,” said Richard ; and when he had thus spoken, he said to Renaud : “ Brother, why do we tarry here since we have found nobody with whom we may speak ? If there were but twenty armed knights they should lead us where they would. You would not believe us at Montauban ; I fear we shall repent it. If my cousin Maugis were with us, and we had your horse Bayard, we should

should not fear Charlemagne. Let us go, for I believe that King Yon hath betrayed us.”

THEY SEE
FULKES

As they were turning to go, Renaud saw nigh a thousand knights coming towards them, and Fulkes de Morillon at their head, his shield before his breast, and his spear low in the rest. Renaud knew him well by his shield, and said: “What shall become of us? We must die this day.”

Then Alard asked him of the matter, and Renaud said: “See you not Fulkes de Morillon coming to slay us?”

Then Alard waxed wroth, and said: “Ha! fair brethren, now is the day come that we shall all die through mortal treason, for Renaud hath betrayed us. Certes, I should never have thought that any treason should have entered into so noble a man. Ha, Renaud! son of Aymon, you have betrayed us! Draw out your swords, brothers, the traitor must perish with us.”

Then they drew their swords, and rushed on Renaud; but he laughed at them for love, and made no defence. Then Richard cried: “Alas, what had I thought to do? I would not hurt my brother for all the good in the world.”

Alard and Guichard said to Renaud: “We be all brethren, of one father and of one mother; tell us whence comes this treason?”

“Brother,” said Renaud, “I have more pity of you than of myself, for I brought you here against your will ;

THEY COME
ON THEIR
ENEMIES

will ; if I had believed you, this would not have happened. But I hope that God will give us the grace to return. Let us recommend ourselves to Him, and think to defend us well."

" Brother," said Richard, "will you help us?"

" Yea," said Renaud, "doubt not thereof." Then he turned to the earls and said : " Fair lords, King Yon hath sent you with us for our surety, therefore I pray you help us."

" Renaud," said the Earl Ansom, "we have nought to do here ; let us flee."

" Traitor!" cried Renaud. " I shall smite off your head." And with his brothers he set hands to sword and smote off the head of the earl. When he was slain the other seven fled, and Renaud could not pursue them, for his mule fell down under him. So he set foot to earth, and cried out :

" Ha, Bayard ! my good horse, why am I not mounted on thee and well armed ! I should be avenged before I die."

Guichard said : " Brother, let us light from our mules, and shrive ourselves to one another, and then go upon that high rock to defend ourselves."

" You are right," said Renaud. " Let us do a thing that shall bring us great worship ; since we cannot escape, let us kill them that come first upon us."

Then they embraced each other, took off their mantles and wrapped them round their arms, and sword in hand came to their enemies.

When Fulkes de Morillon saw the four sons of Aymon coming to him so boldly, though unarmed and on mules, he cried out : THEY WILL
NOT YIELD

“ Renaud, you are come to your death, I promise you. King Yon hath betrayed you. Now shall be avenged the death of Berthelet whom ye slew. Will you defend you or yield you? If you will defend you, I shall slay you forthwith.”

Renaud said to him : “ Fulkes, trow you that I shall yield me to Charlemagne or to you, quick? If I can reach you, I shall first smite off your head. Do as a knight ought to do; let us go, and we shall be all four ready to become liegemen of Charlemagne, and I shall give you my castle of Montauban, and if Charlemagne maketh war on you for love of us, we will serve you with four hundred knights. At least, if you do not wish to be a traitor in all men’s eyes, choose you twenty of your best knights well armed and on good horses, and we four shall meet them unarmed and on mules. We will fight with them, and pardon them our death; but if we overcome them, then shall you let us go free.”

“ Your prating shall not serve you,” said Fulkes. “ I had liefer found you thus than a thousand marks of gold. Now is your cousin, Maugis the wise, far from you and all your folk, so that you have no succour, for all my men have promised to Charlemagne that they will slay you.”

“By my faith,” said Renaud, “we shall defend ourselves to the utmost of our power.”

Then said Alard to Renaud: “Brother, what order shall we keep in fighting?”

Renaud answered: “Two and two, you and Guichard behind, Richard and I in front, and let us smite well hard, I pray you, sith that by no other wise may we escape.”

“Fair brother,” said Alard to Guichard, “we were well deceived when we trowed that Renaud had betrayed us.”

“By my faith,” said Guichard to Alard, “I fear not sith that our brother Renaud shall be our help, for as long as he is alive, we shall defend ourselves, and when he is dead I would not live might I choose.”

Shortly to tell, the four sons of Aymon set their faces against three hundred knights and were not afraid though they were but four.

When Fulkes saw Renaud come he bore down his spear and smote him so great a blow that his spear entered into his thigh, and overthrew him to the earth. Alard saw it and cried out: “We have lost Renaud; now may we not escape. We shall be dead or taken. Let us yield us prisoners.”

Renaud heard this and said: “Fie on you, what do you say? I have no harm on me, thanked be God, and shall sell me dear yet before I die.” Then he rose up quickly, took the spear with both hands, and pulled it out of his thigh with great grief; and

turning to Fulkes de Morillon, sword in hand, said :
“ If you will do like a man, light down on foot as I
am, and see what I can do.”

When Fulkes heard these words he turned and
thought to strike him on his head, but Renaud drew
back a little, and then ran on Fulkes and struck him
on the helm so that neither iron nor steel might save
him, and as he saw him fall he said :

“ Ha, traitor, may thy soul perish with thy body ! ”

Straightway he mounted Fulkes' horse, took his
lance and said : “ Brothers, be sure that while I live
ye shall come to no hurt. The Frenchmen shall
have a good neighbour in me.” Then he turned on
the enemy with great wrath and slew in short space
four earls, three dukes, and eleven knights, crying
out “ Montauban ! ” When he had shown this noble
prowess, he looked round for his brothers, but he
saw none of them. “ Alas ! ” said he, “ where are my
brethren gone? We shall never come together again.”
Then he perceived Alard, who had won a horse with
shield and spear, for he had slain a knight ; he was
sore hurt and his brother was with him. When
they were come together again, they began to make
so great a destruction that none might abide them,
and the Frenchmen drew back, saying :

“ This passeth all wonder : they be not knights
but devils. Let us attack them both behind and
before, for if they resist longer, they shall do us great
hurt.”

GUICHARD
IS TAKEN

Forthwith they ran on the four sons so hard that they parted them, but Renaud rode through the press, and with Alard and Richard saved himself on the rock Montbron ; but Guichard was taken prisoner, for his mule was killed under him, and he was sore wounded. They bound him hand and foot and laid him across a little horse, sore wounded as he was, and led him off, beating him, and telling him that he should be hung by Charlemagne. When Renaud saw this he called his brother Alard to him, and said : “ What shall we do ? They are taking away our brother. We shall never have praise if we let him be borne away.”

“ We be no more than two, and they are in great number,” said Alard.

“ Great God,” said Renaud, “ if the king harm my brother, men shall point at us and say, ‘ See, yonder is the son of Aymon, who let his brother be hanged and durst not succour him.’ ”

“ Brother,” said Alard, “ go before, and I will follow you.”

When Renaud heard that he cast his shield behind him, and abandoned care of his body like a lion, caring not how the game should go, so that the Frenchmen must needs make him way to pass, and many made him way for the love of Ogier. At last he came to his brother and cried :

“ Let go the knight, ye be not worthy to touch him ; ” and when those around saw Renaud they fled

fled for fear, and left Guichard free. Then said Renaud, "Go and unbind Guichard and mount him on horseback; give him a spear and follow me."

"Brother," said Alard, "I shall go, but if we part once we shall never come together again; let us keep together and help one another."

They came together to Guichard, unbound him, and set him on horseback, shield at neck and spear in hand.

Meanwhile, Richard was right sore wounded, and was so weary that he might scarce defend himself more on the rock, for he had slain five earls and fourteen knights. Then came Gérard, cousin of Fulkes de Morillon, who had sworn to avenge his death. He spurred his horse and smote Richard so fiercely that he brought him to the earth and laid bare his bowels. Then he cried out:

"Now are there no longer four sons of Aymon. I have slain Richard the bold fighter. If God give me health I shall bring the others to Montfaucon to be hanged."

Then Richard rose up to his feet, and holding himself with one hand he struck Gérard with his sword and smote him down dead at his feet.

"Now bear your boast," said he, "that you have slain one of the four sons of Aymon." Then he fell down from weakness and said: "Oh Renaud, my brother, this day shall part our company. Ha, Castle of Montauban, I commend you to God's keeping!

keeping! Ha, King Yon, you have betrayed us and sold us to King Charlemagne!" After he fell a-weeping: "O Father, King of Glory, succour this day my brethren, for of me they may have neither help nor succour, for I am near to death."

Now tell we of the other brothers, who fought bravely against their enemies; but their deeds would have availed them little but for a narrow pass in the rocks, where men might not come to them but from the front. When they were there, Renaud said to Alard:

"What is become of our brother Richard? I left him here by this fir tree, when we had so much ado. I will wite tidings of him if I may."

"Brother," said Alard, "if you will believe me, abide here. If he is dead we may not help him; we too shall be dead before even."

"Ah!" said Renaud, "shall we fail our brother Richard? I shall learn some tidings of him if I go alone."

"Brother," said Alard, "if we depart from one another, we shall never come together again."

"Dead or quick, I shall find him wheresoever he be," said Renaud, and spurred his horse around the rock.

When those who had chased Richard saw Renaud and his two brothers they took to flight, and Renaud went a little, and found his brother lying on the ground well nigh dead, holding his bowels with his hands,

hands, and about him were the folk he had slain. Then had he great pity in his heart, and he came to his brother and kissed him, sore weeping.

THEY BEAR
HIM TO
THE ROCK

“Ha, fair brother!” said he, “it is great pity of you, for certes never man was worth you. Alas, this day! In the morning, when we departed out of Montauban, we were four brethren, all good knights, and now we be but three, sore wounded and good for nothing. I pray God I may avenge your death on them ere I die. I shall set thereto my good will.”

As Renaud was thus making his moan, he heard Alard and Guichard calling to him for help, for they were in sore strait; and when Richard heard Alard he opened his eyes and said:

“Brother, what do you here? See yonder that rock. If we might do so much as to climb up there, I believe we should be safe from our enemies, for it cannot be but that by this Maugis knoweth our case.”

“Would God we were there, brother,” said Renaud.

“Think you that you shall recover health?”

“Yea,” said Richard, “if you escape, and else not.”

When Renaud heard this he was right glad, and called Alard, saying:

“Brother, take Richard upon your shield, and lead him to yonder rock. Guichard and I will make way for you.”

Then Alard lighted down, and took up Richard

THEY
DEFEND
THEM

and laid him on his shield, and followed Renaud and Guichard through the press. They did so much that at the last they came to the rock, and wite it well, Renaud did such feats of arms that all his enemies marvelled, for he set nought by his life, but fought as a man desperate, and slew at that time nigh thirty knights.

When they were come on the rock, Alard set down his brother on the earth, and began to defend himself.

While they thus defended themselves with great woe, Ogier the Dane came up with his company, and Morgon of Frisia, who was with him, cried out to Renaud : "Vassal, we have sworn your death; this day shall ye die! Great fools were ye to believe King Yon; he has sold you to Charlemagne."

When Alard saw so many fresh soldiers come he was sore afraid, and said to Guichard :

"Certes, if we were five hundred men, not one of us should escape."

"Surely," said Guichard, "it is no pity of us nor of Richard, but the great pity is for Renaud, who is the best knight in the world."

Thus they spoke together, and came to Renaud and kissed him, and said : " Renaud, give us a gift, if it please you, for the love of our Lord God."

"Lords," said Renaud, "what ask you of me? This day must I needs see you die before mine eyes."

“Brother,” said Alard, “men say it is better to have one harm than two. If you die here, none shall avenge you; if we die, you shall avenge us. We pray you, dear brother, go your ways and return to Montauban, for you are well horsed. When you be there, mount upon Bayard, and bring with you our cousin Maugis to succour us.”

“Brother,” said Renaud, “I could not shame myself more than to leave you in such sore peril. Either we shall all escape or all die together. Now God that suffered death and passion save us!”

As they were thus speaking, Earl Guimart came up, and cried:

“Knights, ye be taken, and must die with shame on this rock. Tell me, will you yield you, or defend you?”

“Certes,” said Renaud, “now speak ye naught, I shall never yield me as long as I live. I had liefer die like a knight than hang like a thief.”

“Lords, let us assault them,” said Guimart, “they may not long keep them against us.”

Then said Ogier: “You may well assault them, but I shall in no wise help you. Ye may take them well without me,” and he withdrew himself and his men a bowshot away, and began to make as great sorrow as though the world was finished before his eyes.

“Ha! fair cousins, I, unhappy man, that am of your kin, suffer you to die before mine eyes, and
cannot

cannot help you, for I have promised it to Charlemagne."

There were before the rock four earls who made assault on them, two on one side, and two on the other, and Renaud kept one side, and Alard and Guichard the other, and Alard was sore wounded and bled till he was faint and fell down to the earth.

Then he said : " Ha, brother Renaud, let us yield us, for neither Richard nor I can help you."

" Brother," said Renaud, " what say you ? If I had trowed to escape for any gold, I should have yielded me this morning. Ye wot well that all the gold in the world shall not save us from shameful death if we be taken. Ha, Alard, succour me for the love of Heaven. We are not Normans nor Bretons, but are all of one blood."

" You say truth," said Alard, " but you would not believe how feeble I am."

When Richard that lay above thus wounded, as I have told you, heard this dispute, he raised his head and said : " Brother, cut off some of my shirt and bind me round my wound so that my bowels may not fall, and I shall set me to my defence with all my heart."

Then said Renaud : " Now art thou worth a true man."

When Alard heard this he was ashamed, and took again strength beyond his power, and cried out to Ogier with a loud voice : " Cousin, what do you for
158 your

your lineage? It shall be great shame to you if you succour us not."

OGIER
GIVES
THEM
REST-TIME

When Ogier heard this, he would have given great store of wealth to deliver them, so he sat spurs to Broisart his horse, and came to the rock, and said to them that assaulted it: "Withdraw yourselves a little, till I have spoken with them to know if they will give themselves up. It is better that we have them quick than dead."

"Sir," said the Frenchmen, "we shall do your commandment, but we leave them with you in the name of the king."

Then he came more nigh the rock, and called to him his cousins, the four sons of Aymon, and said:

"Fair cousins, rest you a little, and if ye be hurt bind up your wounds and make good garnishing of stones, and so defend you nobly with all your might, for you shall never have pardon of Charlemagne. When Maugis hears of this he shall come and succour you, and thus shall ye escape, and otherwise not."

"Cousin," said Alard, "you should defend us yourself."

Then said Ogier: "I may not do so, for King Charlemagne hath made me swear, and of this that I do he shall give me no thanks."

So Renaud bound up his brethren's wounds as well as he might, and when he had lapped them all Alard wrapped up his wound, and they rested themselves

selves for a while, till Renaud rose and went to the rock to gather great stones to defend themselves withal.

Now the Frenchmen began to murmur at Ogier, for that he made too long tarrying, and they cried :

“Ogier, tell us if they will yield them or no, or if they will defend them.”

“Yea,” said Ogier, “as long as they have life in their bodies.”

“Then,” said the Frenchmen, “we go to the assault again.”

“I promise you,” said Ogier, “I shall help them with all my power.”

When Guimart heard this, he said: “We command you in the King’s name of France, that you come to the battle with us against the four sons of Aymon, as you have sworn.”

“Lords,” said Ogier, “for God’s mercy let us withdraw ourselves and let them go in peace. You know they be my cousins german, and I shall give each of you large goods.”

“Ogier,” said they, “we shall not do so, but we shall bring them prisoners to Charlemagne, and we shall tell him what you have done, whereof he shall owe you little thank.”

Ogier answered in great wrath : “If there be any of you so bold as to lay hand on the four sons of Aymon, I shall smite off his head, come what may.”

The Frenchmen said that they would not leave,
160 and

and that when they had taken them, they would see who should take them away. And they began to assault the rock again.

Then Renaud, seeing them come, said : “ Ha, Maugis! where are you now, that you know not this mishap. I was a fool and over hasty, that I spoke not with you before I parted. Ha, Bayard! if I were on your back, I should never be on the rock for fear of Frenchmen.”

Then the assault began, and if it had not been for the prowess of Renaud they should have been taken that time by force ; and when the assault was over Renaud was so weary that he had like to have fallen to the earth. And Ogier his cousin betook himself to weeping for that he could not help them, and at the last he thought of a way, for he sent three hundred knights away to intercept Maugis, if he should come along the high road to Montauban.

Now sheweth the history that when Gendard, who was secretary to King Yon, saw Renaud and his brethren go to their deaths, he was right sorry for it, for two principal causes ; the one that the King his master had wrought such treason, the other for the great pity to slay such worthy knights as the four sons of Aymon were. So he began to weep bitterly, and at the last Maugis came upon him and found him, as he went to the kitchen to order meat for King Yon.

Then said Gendard : “ It is ill with you, Maugis,

for if God put no remedy in you, you have lost Renaud and his brethren, for King Yon hath betrayed them shamefully," and thereon he shewed him all the treason.

When Maugis heard this he said: "For certain my heart telleth me that Renaud and his brethren are dead."

"Truly," said Gendard, "they are gone all unarmed and cannot defend themselves, and there is a great host in ambush for them. They must be dead or taken."

When Maugis heard this he took up a knife, and would have struck it into his breast, but Gendard took him by the hand and said:

"Have mercy on yourself. Light on horseback, and take with you all the men-at-arms you may, and Bayard, and go to the valley of Vaucouleurs; and when you come there you shall see if they be alive, and succour them right well."

Then Maugis, without any word of this to King Yon or his sister, the wife of Renaud, commanded all those who bore arms to be ready at once; and when they came to him Maugis shewed them all the treason that was done, and they were sore grieved and desperate.

Then Maugis mounted on Bayard, though no man had done it before, and wite ye well, he was one of the fairest knights in the world and well like a valiant man. So they went out of Montauban, five
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thousand

thousand men well armed, and seven hundred good archers that would never go back for any fear of death, and set themselves to the way, not by the road but through the woods, with great diligence.

Now tell we of Renaud and his brethren on the rock of Montbron, full of woe and pain. As Renaud was resting himself he turned his sight towards the wood, and saw Maugis come with his folk, shield at neck, sword in hand, and mounted on Bayard, who was bounding along like a stag ; and when Renaud saw it his body shivered all suddenly for great joy, and he forgot all the sorrow of the day, and said to his brothers :

“ Be merry and fear not, here cometh Maugis to succour us with a great number of our folk. Now he sheweth well that he is our kinsman and friend.”

“ Brother,” said Alard, “ is it true that we shall have help anon ? ”

“ Yea,” said Renaud.

“ Now complain I not,” said Alard.

When Richard, that lay thus embowelled, heard the words, himseemed that he dreamed, so he forced himself that he sat upright, and said :

“ Renaud, meseemeth that I have heard Maugis named, or else it is come to me by a vision.”

“ By my faith,” said Renaud, “ we have succour of Maugis.”

“ Shew me him,” said Richard, “ for God’s sake.”

Then Renaud held him up in his arms and he saw

Maugis riding to them like a tempest ; and when Richard saw him he fainted with joy ; but when he was come to himself he said :

“Now am I whole, and feel neither ill nor sore.”

“Brother Renaud,” said Alard, “what shall we do? If the Frenchmen perceive the coming of Maugis, they shall flee, and I would not that they should so do till we be first avenged on them. Let us go down from the rock and begin the battle ; so shall Maugis come upon them, and they shall not escape us.”

Then Renaud, Alard, and Guichard went down ; and the Frenchmen, seeing them, said :

“Here come the sons of Aymon to yield them prisoners ; let us not kill them, but bring them alive to the Emperor.”

Then cried they : “Renaud, if you yield you with good will, we shall all pray Charlemagne that he have mercy on you.”

When Ogier heard this, he weened it had been truth, and spurred Broisart to the rock, crying out :

“What do ye, that ye leave your rock which hath been the saving of your lives?”

“Ogier,” said Renaud, “we be not such fools as you ween ; fly while you may.”

While they thus spake, Ogier saw Maugis coming, mounted on Bayard and leading a great army, and his heart jumped in him for joy.

“Fair lords,” said he, “certes, if we were twenty thousand, we might not fight this host.”

Then came up Maugis and his host, and when he saw Ogier he came to him and said :

“I hold you a fool to come here to work treason. It longeth not to you, you be of our lineage. I defy you to the death.”

Then he struck Bayard with his spurs and ran on Ogier and wounded him sore in the breast. Ogier would have turned on him, but Bayard had smelled his master and could not be held from him. So Maugis lighted down and kissed his cousins full dearly.

Then Renaud armed him and lighted upon Bayard, calling to his brothers, “Arm you quickly,” and ran upon Ogier so furiously that he bore him from the saddle. Then Renaud caught hold of Broisart, and made Ogier to mount again, saying :

“Now have you the reward of the good that you have done us. Keep you well, for I defy you henceforth.”

While this was done, Maugis rode upon Guimart, and smote his spear through shield and body, calling out, “Montauban Clermont !” Then he took sword in hand and fell furiously on the Frenchmen, so that they put themselves to flight, Ogier with them, and fled across the river Dordonne.

When Ogier was come over, he lighted down from Broisart, and Renaud called to him in scorn :

“Ogier, I trow ye be a fisher, do you catch eels or salmon? Come again to this side, or I shall pass over to you. You have falsed your faith to Charlemagne, for you leave here Fulkes de Morillon and Guimart, and four hundred of your Frenchmen.”

Then the Frenchmen said to Ogier: “Well find you now the reward of your goodness; if you would have done your devoir, the four sons of Aymon had been taken.”

The Frenchmen, when they had said this, left him there on the river bank, and with him there were but ten men, and seeing himself thus left alone he said: “I am well worthy to be served thus; oft happeth evil for a good turn.” Then said he to Renaud: “O madman, you blame me wrongfully and without cause. You and your brethren should have been hanged by now if I had not preserved you. If I feared no other than you, I should come to you right soon.”

Renaud said to him: “Ogier, you speak well at your ease, but you do nought of these things.”

Then Ogier spurred Broisart into the river, and when he was come to level ground he made him ready to fight, all wet as he was. Then Renaud had pity and said:

“Cousin, I have no will to fight, for now I know how well you have this day served me.”

“Renaud,” said Ogier, “mock me not. You have called me traitor before many knights, and if I return thus,

thus, men might say to Charlemagne that I had betrayed him falsely. My spear is yet whole; it were great shame if I break it not on one of you.”

COURTAIN :
THE
SWORD OF
OGIER

Then Renaud grew wroth, and said: “Ogier, I defy you to the death. Guard you well.”

They ran one upon the other so strongly that they brake their spears and fell down to the earth over the crupper of their horses, but they rose up quickly and set hands to their swords. Bayard and Broisart, when they saw their masters at the ground, ran on one another and straightway began to bite and cast their feet at each other. Ogier, when he saw that would save his horse, for he knew Bayard was the stronger; but Renaud cried: “What do ye, Ogier? you have enough to do with me without striking my horse;” and with that he struck him so great a blow on the helm that he felled him to the ground, but the stroke slid aside and cut nigh a hundred mails of his flancard, and wounded him sore on the hip.

Then Ogier rose up in great wrath, and said to his sword Courtain: “Ha! good sword, much have I loved thee! Avenge me now on this man, or I shall never have trust in thee. When I was at Gastburg in Almayn with Charlemagne, Roland and Oliver tried their swords at the block, and when I smote afterward to assay you I cut off half a foot, and then I broke you. But because you were so good I amended you again, and thence art thou called Courtain.”

Then Ogier struck Renaud on his helm and made him reel, and said : " I have yielded you your own again, now are we quit. Will you begin afresh ? "

Renaud yea said him, and they began another medley, but then there came Alard, Maugis, Guichard, and their folk, and when Ogier saw them he passed the river and dismounted there, for he had no saddle. When Renaud saw this, he called him, and said :

" Ogier, come fetch your saddle, for it shall be a great shame to you if you ride thus. Thank God that you be thus departed from me without further harm, for I had well nigh slain you."

" Renaud," said Ogier, " it longeth not to a good knight to threaten one so, for you were well nigh taken."

Then Renaud would have passed the river again, but Maugis and Alard letted him, and Alard said : " Fair brother, what is this that you will do? Who that doth you good loseth well his time. You know well that but for Ogier we should have been dead this day, and the succour of Maugis had helped us but little. Let Ogier be in peace, for there is not a better knight in the world than he."

Then he cried to Ogier : " Fair cousin, depart in peace, well have you holpen us." Then he said that they should return to the rock to wite how their brother Richard did, and Ogier went away with his folk and came to the tent of the King.

When Roland and Oliver saw Ogier come thus wounded, they trowed that Renaud and his brother were taken; then they called Duke Naymes, Solomon, Richard of Normandy, and the Earl of Guidelon, and they said to one another: "What shall we do? If Charlemagne maketh our cousins, the four sons of Aymon, to be hanged, we be dishonoured for ever."

When Charlemagne saw Ogier, he said: "Where be the four sons of Aymon? Have you taken them or slain them?"

"Sire," said Ogier, "wite it that they be no children, but the best knights of the world. We found them in the plain of Vaucouleurs, clothed in scarlet furred with ermine, riding on mules, with roses in their hands. King Yon had well kept his promise to you. Yet they seized both horses and spears, and when Renaud had gotten a horse he slew Fulkes de Morillon, and at last they found a strong rock, and defended themselves there a long while. Yet should they have been taken and slain if it had not been for Maugis, who came with five thousand knights and slew the Earl Guimart."

"So they be escaped," said the King.

"Yea, verily," said Ogier.

Then was Charlemagne full wroth, and said: "How am I shamed for four wretches! Certes, this wearies me sore."

Then said Ogier: "Renaud gave me so terrible a
169 stroke

stroke that the corner of my helm fell down to earth, and of the knights we took with us, scarce three hundred are come again."

When Roland heard this he was much wroth, and said: "Ogier, I saw never so strong a coward as you be. There is no knight who would not have done better. How have you eyes to dare behold any man? You have spared them, for they be your cousins and friends. The King shall be blamed, if he maketh you not to be hewn in pieces."

Ogier answered and said: "Roland, you lie falsely, for I am not such as you tell. I nor none of my kin did never amiss to Charlemagne, and here is my pledge to defend me body to body. Of a better kin am I come than you be, Roland. Gerard of Rousillon is my uncle who brought me up, Dron of Nanteuil and Beuves of Aigremont are my uncles, and Geoffrey of Denmark was my father. Turpin the Archbishop and Richard of Normandy are my kin, and thus are the four sons of Aymon of my lineage. Now, good Sir Roland, tell me your lineage, and my sword shall shew you if I be true or no."

Roland would have smitten Ogier with his sword, but Ogier set hands to Courtain, and said:

"Beware, I shall make the head to fly from your body, if you come any nearer."

Charlemagne was wroth when he saw these barons moved so sore, and Duke Naymes and Earl Aymery said to Roland:

“What will you do? Ogier is not such as you make him; in his lineage was never man born to work treason. He is the best knight of all France. We marvel how Charlemagne suffereth you to take such pride on you; and if he suffereth it, we will not do so for anything.”

Then said the King: “Fair nephew, let this alone, for it longeth not for you to say so. If Ogier hath done amiss in anything he shall abide it full dearly.”

“Sire,” said Ogier, “there is no man in France so hardy that shall say I have done treason against you, but that I shall fight against him and shew him that he lied falsely.”

Then Ogier told how he had come to the rock Montbron, and how he had neither fought for his cousins nor against them, and said that henceforth he would help the sons of Aymon in whatso place they should need it.

“Moreover,” said he, “if Roland saw Renaud mounted on Bayard, he should not take him for a coward, nor would he dare to meet him.”

“Certes,” said Roland, “you have much praised him. Would to God that I might meet him once, mounted on Bayard and armed from head to foot, to know if he is as valiant as you say.”

Now leave we to tell of Charlemagne and of his twelve peers, and return to speak of Renaud, ill at ease for love of his brother, wounded to death on the rock Montbron.

Now sheweth the history that after Renaud and his brethren had destroyed the Frenchmen, they returned to the rock of Montbron where they had left their brother Richard. Seeing him so wounded they said :

“Alas ! we have lost our brother Richard, the most valiant of us all.”

And as they stood round him in grief, Maugis came up mounted on Brocart; and when he saw the great wound that Richard had he was wroth and full of pity, and said :

“Fair cousin, if you will promise me before all your barons to come with me to the tents of Charlemagne, and to aid me to avenge the death of my father, I shall deliver Richard to you, whole and sound without any sore.”

Renaud kissed him and said : “Come, deliver me my brother Richard whole again, and if there be more you would have of me, command it.”

Then Maugis took a bottle of white wine, and washed the wound right well, and took away all the blood that was thereabout. Then took his bowels and put them again inside his body, and with a needle and thread sewed up the wound without doing him hurt. This done, he took a salve and anointed all the wound, and it was as whole as though he had never been hurt. And he gave him a drink, and when Richard had drunk of it he rose to his feet and said :

“Where are Ogier and his folk? Are they escaped from us?”

AND HIS
BRETHREN

“Brother,” said Renaud, “we have discomfited them, thanks be to God and to Maugis that came to succour us, for else we had been all dead.”

Then said Alard: “Fair cousin, heal me I pray you, for I have a great wound in the thigh.”

“And I also,” said Renaud.

“And I also,” said Guichard.

Maugis said to them: “Fair cousins, be not dismayed; I shall help you all anon.”

He took white wine and washed their wounds, and anointed them sweetly, and anon they were whole. Then they mounted on horseback, and went their way to return to Montauban.

As they went on their way, a spy departed and came to Montauban in haste, and said to King Yon:

“Sir, I bring you tidings. Wite that Renaud and his brethren be escaped from the plain of Vaucouleurs, where you sent them, and have discomfited Ogier the Dane and all the folk of Charlemagne, and slain Fulkes de Morillon and the Earl of Guimart, and a great number of knights.”

King Yon was sore abashed at these tidings, and said:

“Here be evil tidings! How may this be? Did they find the ambush of King Charlemagne?”

“Yea, certainly,” said the spy, “and should have been

been cursedly handled if Maugis their cousin had not succoured them, and discomfited Ogier."

"Alas! wretch that I am, what shall I do?" said King Yon. "If I wait for Renaud, I am dead, and none will defend me against him. Judas was never greater traitor than I am. Let us go hence forthwith, and if we can gain the Forest of the Serpent, we may escape at our ease to the Abbey of S. Lazarus, where I will take such habit as the monks there have, and thus shall we be saved; for when Renaud finds us shorn as monks he shall do us no harm."

Now there was at that time a spy called Pignaut with them, who was well nigh seven feet high, and went as fast as any horse could trot. When he heard what King Yon purposed, he went out of Montauban and passed through the Forest of the Serpent, so that in short time he met with Renaud and his party, who were bringing with them much prisoners. Anon as they passed him he ran to Montbandel, and came to Roland and said to him:

"Sire, I bring you good tidings."

"What good tidings, friend?" said Roland.

"Sire, wite it that King Yon fleeth away all unarmed, he and his folk, through the Wood of the Serpent to the Abbey of S. Lazarus, and there will he take the habit and become a monk."

"By my faith," said Roland, "I shall go and meet them with four thousand knights, and avenge

Renaud and his brethren on them, and hang them as traitors, for I never loved traitors, and never shall, please God.”

ROLAND
HEARS THE
NEWS

“Sire, there is more. I saw the four sons of Aymon at the ford of Balançon, bringing with them many prisoners.”

“Friend,” said Roland, “you have deserved a great reward for your good news.”

Then he called to him Oliver, and said : “Let us light on our horses at once, and bring with us Guidelon and Richard of Normand. And you, Ogier, come with us and see the prowess of Renaud. We shall have with us but four thousand, and they have as many ; so shall we fight without advantage.”

“Certes,” said Ogier, “I shall go with you to see you take him, and when you have him I promise to lend you a rope.”

Thus they set out and came to the ford of Balançon and passed to the abbey.

When the abbot saw them he came out to them with his convent, singing the *Te Deum*, and when they had sung the abbot said :

“Sire, you be right welcome. Will you anything that we can do ?”

“Lord Abbot, we thank you,” said Roland, “wite you that we seek here the falsest traitor in the world, that men call King Yon. I will hang him like a thief.”

Then answered the abbot : “You shall not, sir, an
please

please you, for he has taken our habit, and we shall defend him against all men."

When Roland heard the abbot say this, he took him by the hood, and Oliver the prior, and threw them so roughly against a pillar of marble stone that their heads were well nigh broken.

Then said Roland : " Now, Master Monk, deliver me that brother of Judas, King Yon, for I have sworn that he shall never do treason more."

The abbot, hearing this, fled away as fast as he could with all his monks, and Roland set hand to his good sword Durandel, and entered into the cloister, where he found King Yon on his knees before an image of Our Lady.

" Arise, sir monk," said Roland, " come with me before Charlemagne and he shall make you to be hanged. Where are the four sons of Aymon that you should have delivered? You shall be paid for the treason you have done, and I shall avenge Renaud and his brethren."

Then he made him to be set backwards on a horse, and bound and blindfolded him, and put his monk's hood on his head. Then King Yon called one of his men that he heard nigh him, and said :

" Friend, go to Montauban, and bid Renaud that he come and succour me, for he is my man, and that he take no heed to my evil deed, but to his own worthiness."

" Sire," said the knight, " I wot well that Renaud

will not set one foot forth to save you, because of the great treason you have done him."

RENAUD
RETURNS

"He shall," said King Yon, "I know so much of his nobility."

So the knight went from him with a good will.

Here leave we to speak of Roland and Oliver, and return again to shew of the four sons of Aymon.

The history sheweth that when Renaud and his brothers were made whole of their wounds they returned to Montauban. And when they were come Dame Clare came out to meet them, and with her her two children, Aymonet and Yonet, their faces all disfigured with weeping. When she saw her husband she trembled for joy, and the two children ran to embrace their father and their uncles. But Renaud spurned them away, and as she would have taken him in her arms and kissed him, he would not suffer her, and said :

"Get you out of my sight, for you shall never have my love again. Get you to your brother; it hath not holden in him that we be not dead, if God and our cousin Maugis had not succoured us."

"Sire, for God's mercy," said Clare, "I swear to you, by all the hallows, that I am nothing guilty, for I told you that you should not believe the King my brother. I love the least part of your body much better than King Yon or all the land of Gascony." And she fell down in a swoon before him.

Then Richard took her up, and said : "Madam,

discomfort not yourself so sore. Let Renaud say his will, you shall still be our sister. My brothers, let us pray our brother Renaud to pardon our sister, for she is not guilty in this matter. If we had listened to her, we should not have gone one foot out of this place. Now ought we to think of the green and russet mantles of ermine, and the good horses and palfreys that our lady gave us, more often than did Renaud. Let us reward her for it, for at need the friend is shewn."

So they went to Renaud and said: "Fair brother, for God's love be not so angry. You know that your lady hath no part in the treason that her brother hath done to us. If you would have believed her, we should not have gone thither, wherefore we pray you to pardon her."

Then said Renaud: "My brethren, for love of you I grant the same."

Forthwith they went to the lady, and brought her to her husband, and he took her by the chin and kissed her with great love.

Then began joy and right great feast at Montauban, and they washed them and went to their meat. As they sat at table, there came in the messenger of King Yon, and said to Renaud:

"Sire, King Yon sendeth you word by me that you come to succour him, for otherwise he cannot escape death, since Roland and Oliver lead him to be hanged at Montfaucon. Do this, sire, if it please

you, for God, and forgive him as God pardons sinners. He knoweth well that he hath deserved death."

"God's curse have he," said Alard, "who stirs a foot to save him."

Renaud said never a word when he heard the messenger, but looked on his brethren and began to weep, beholding them. Then said he :

"Lords, hear what I shall say to you." Then he recounted to them how he was driven out of his lands by Charlemagne, and how they wandered without a home till they came into this land. "Then," said he, "I spoke to King Yon and shewed him how I had war with Charlemagne, and he shewed me great love, and gave me his sister to wife, and built Montauban for me. Moreover, my children are his nephews, and I found him never in fault ; but Charlemagne is so great and so mighty a king, that for fear of him King Yon hath betrayed us, whereof he is not to be blamed overmuch, seeing that against Charlemagne nothing hath power, and he hath done it by evil counsel that his barons gave him. I pray you all make you ready, for I will go and succour him. It were great reproach to my children that their uncle should be hanged as a thief."

Then Alard and Guichard said that they would not succour a traitor. But Richard said :

"Ye shall, an it please you, for Renaud is our lord, and we must obey him."

Then all the Gascons began to cry out : “ Blessed be the hour that ever Renaud was born. No man on earth is worthy as he is. Sire, we shall make you the lord of Gascony, but suffer not the King to be led away, for it were great shame to the realm of Gascony that men had hanged their king.”

Renaud took his horn and blew it three times till he made all Montauban to sound with it, and when all men were armed and come before him, he mounted on Bayard and went out with six thousand mounted men, and well nigh a thousand on foot. And when they were out of Montauban he said to them :

“ Lords, remember you that your lord is in great danger and peril of death. I pray you all do this day that that shall turn to our worship. You know that Roland hateth me to the death. I pray you attend upon me this day, and ye shall see me do as a good knight.”

Alard said to him : “ Be sure and certain that as long as life is in our bodies we shall not fail you.”

And with this word they put them to the way.

Alard and Guichard rode in the fore front till they perceived the folk of Roland ; then they made their men to tarry and sent to Renaud. When he saw them he put his folk in array and devised his battle honestly.

Now Roland, when he saw such a great array, called to him Turpin and Guidelon, and said :

“Lords, I see many folk before us ; perchance it is Renaud and his brethren.”

“Sir,” said the bishop, “yea, they be they verily. They make them to be well known wherever they go ; nor can we escape but fight them.”

When Ogier saw them he was well content, and said to Roland :

“Now have you what you have so long desired. Now shall I see how you shall take them and lead them prisoners to Charlemagne. So shall Bayard be your own, and the war be finished.”

“Ogier,” said Roland, “these be reproaches ; but you shall see before even who shall be master of us two.”

So Roland set all his folk in ordinance of battle the best that he might.

Renaud, seeing this, called his brethren and said : “Lords, here come the Frenchmen ; yonder are Roland and Duke Naymes and Ogier. Abide here for the rear guard ; if we have need, come and help us.”

“Sir,” said Maugis, “we tarry too long from the assault.”

“I go first of all to overthrow the pride of Roland ; let every man do his part with all his power.” And when his brethren heard that Renaud would prove himself upon Roland they began to say :

“Ha, brother, will ye that we be all dead at once? You are wrong, for he cannot be hurt with
181 iron.

iron. Let Roland alone, and assay yourself on others."

"I know well that Roland is hardy and brave, and that his match is not in the world for knight-hood, but I am in the right and he is in the wrong. If he will have peace he shall have it, and if he will have war he shall find me ready. I pray you speak no more of it, but see that you bear yourselves well against our enemies, for they are noble knights."

Roland, seeing Renaud come in such good order, said to Oliver: "What think you of that folk?"

"Certes," said Oliver, "Renaud knoweth more of war than any other, and meseemeth he hath more folk than we have, wherefore he may well win over us."

"You say truth," said Roland, "but you know well that the Gascons are cowards of nature."

"That is true," said Turpin, "but they have with them as good a leader as is in the world."

Roland, hearing this, waxed almost mad, because men praised Renaud so much, and spurred his horse against Renaud, and Renaud bade his men halt till he had spoken with Roland, and came out to meet him. So he lighted down a foot, and pitched his spear in the earth, and ungirt Flambard his sword, and came before Roland and said:

"Roland, I cry you mercy. You know well I am your kinsman. If you wish, I and mine will be your men, and I will give you Bayard and the Castle of

Montauban, if you will make my peace with Charlemagne. Moreover, I shall forsake France and go over sea with Maugis and my brethren to make war on the Saracens."

Roland had great pity when he heard Renaud speak in this manner, and said: "I dare not speak of it, but if so be that you will deliver up Maugis."

"I shall never do that," said Renaud, "for Maugis is no man to be given away for peace."

Then he rose up and armed himself and mounted on Bayard and went again to Roland, and said: "Wite that I shall never more cry you mercy, for you be so proud that you will do nothing for me. Now have you with you a great company, and also I have of my side men enough, and if they assemble together it cannot be but that great harm should come to both. If you will, we shall fight, and if you overcome me you shall bring me to Charlemagne, and if I can conquer you, you shall come with me to Montauban."

"Will you do this that you have said?"

"Yea, without fault," said Renaud.

"Then," said Roland, "I wish before to take leave of Oliver, my fellow, for I have promised him a part in all my battles."

So Roland came to his folk and Oliver, and Ogier the Dane said: "What think you of Renaud, have you spoken to him?"

"Certes," said Roland, "he is a good knight; he
hath

hath required me to do battle with him body to body, and that our folk be still of the one side and the other."

Oliver said to Roland: "You shall do this if it be your pleasure, for either you or I must fight him."

Then Bishop Turpin and the earls that stood by, said: "Roland, what is this that you will do? He is of your lineage and ours; leave that offer and make your folk to assemble with his, it is better than to see one or other of you perish."

"I will do as you wish," said Roland, and he bade his folk put them in ordinance, and began to cry: "Mountjoy St. Denis!"

So they came to the setting on of spears, and then was many a knight brought to ground, and many horses that ran masterless through the field. Renaud put himself among the thickest of the Frenchmen, and smote so hard that he overthrew man and horse to the ground, and after broke his spear. So he put hand to sword, and cried: "Montauban!" and he broke thus the first line of the Frenchmen.

Richard, his brother, saw this, and came on shouting: "Ardenne!" and made as great slaughter that it was wonder to see, and Renaud stayed to look on him.

Then Richard said to him: "Where be your great strokes that you were wont to give? Smite on them, for they be almost overcome." So Renaud
184 began

began to smite, and smote harder than he did before.

The Frenchmen, seeing that the discomfiture was on their side, cried to Roland to come and help them, and he came into the medley and cried :

“ Renaud, where are you? I am all ready to do the battle you ask of me.”

Then Renaud put Flambard in his sheath and took a short thick spear, and came against Roland, saying :

“ Where are you, and why have you tarried so long? ” And they spurred their horses one against the other.

When Solomon of Brittany saw this, he came to Duke Naymes, and Turpin, and Oliver, and said : “ Lords, may ye suffer that one of the best knights in the world be slain before your eyes? ”

“ Certes, ” said Naymes, “ that shall be great sorrow for us. ”

Then they prayed Oliver that he would go to Roland and bid him not fight with the sword against Renaud, but take a lance and break it on him.

“ Lords, ” said Ogier, “ let this alone, you know not Renaud as I do ; let them shift boldly, for Roland shall be as fain to leave the battle as Renaud. ”

“ Ogier, ” said they, “ you speak for envy. If you should fight with Roland, you should say otherwise.

Let this battle be deferred, if it may be in any wise."

Oliver came to Roland and told him all that the barons had said.

"God confound them," said Roland; "they take away this day the desire of my uncle Charlemagne." Then he turned to Renaud, and said: "Sire, you have this day essayed my sword and not my spear."

"Roland," said Renaud, "if you leave your sword, I shall owe you no thank; I fear you not, let us make an end of our battle."

Roland would not do so, but did as his barons had sent him word, and ran upon Renaud with his spear, and they struck each other so sore that their spears flew to pieces, and their horses staggered, and Roland and Melantes, his horse, fell to the ground, and Renaud passed by them shouting "Montauban!"

When Roland was thus overthrown he was ill-content; he rose up straightway and took his sword in his hand to kill Melantes, saying: "Evil steed, why should not I kill thee, since thou hast fallen under the stroke of a Gascon? Never shall I trust thee more."

"You do your horse great wrong," said Renaud, "for it is long since he hath eaten, and therefore he cannot work, but Bayard hath eaten well this night." So saying, he lighted down on foot. When Bayard saw his master afoot he ran on Melantes,
186 and

and smote him such great strokes with his feet that he had almost broken his thigh. Roland ran to Bayard to defend his horse, but Renaud came before him, and ran in and gave him such a stroke on the helm that he broke it, and the blow slid off on the shield and cut it. Then Roland drew back and set hand to Durandel, his sword, and smote Renaud on the shield, and clove it by the midst through and through, and thus they were quit. And as they would have begun again the battle, Maugis came and said to Renaud :

“Cousin, mount upon Bayard, for it were great pity if one of you were dead.”

Ogier and Oliver made Roland to mount again, and wite it well, Ogier was glad because Roland had been cast down by Renaud. Then Roland began to cry : “Where are you, Renaud? Let us perform our battle, for men know not yet which is the better of us two.”

Then said Renaud : “You have the courage of a brave knight, but men will not suffer us to fight here; let us cross the river, and go to the Wood of the Serpent, and there may we fight without let.”

So they spurred their horses away, but Oliver took head of them, and would not suffer Roland to go by any means. As Renaud was near the river he looked and saw King Yon environed with well four score knights, and when Renaud saw it he set hands to his sword, and cried : “Let go the King Yon, evil folk
that

that ye be." Then he entered among them, and smote down a knight dead to the earth. The others put themselves to flight, and said :

"Let us flee, for the soul of him that wilfully suffereth himself to be slain, shall never come to the mercy of God." So they fled to the thickest of the forest and left King Yon.

Renaud came straight to him, unbound him, and unstopped his eyes, and said : "Ha, evil King, how had you the heart to betray my brethren and me? Did we ever anything to your displeasure? We might have been all hanged ere this. It is well reason that I smite off your head."

When King Yon saw that Renaud had delivered him, he kneeled down before him, and said : "Certes, noble knight, I pray you, you yourself cut off my head, and let it done by no other. All this made me do the Earl of Anjou and Earl Anthony. Now slay me, for such an evil man ought not to live longer."

"Now light up on horse," said Renaud ; "you shall be paid as you have deserved."

Now leave I here to tell of Renaud and King Yon, and return to speak of Roland and of Oliver.

After that Renaud was gone to the Wood of the Serpent, Roland, Ogier, and Oliver, fought against the sons of Aymon and Maugis, and the battle was sharp and fell, so that great scathe was made of both parts, but at the end the loss fell on Roland and his

folk. As he was in the way, Ogier met him and said:

“How came your shield to be thus broken, Roland? Your horse is wounded too, and you have fallen. I trow you have met the son of Aymon. Have you brought him with you? Where is he?”

Roland drew his sword and ran on Ogier, but Oliver and Earl Guidelon came between them, and he turned off, and rode some way till he heard a voice behind him:

“Turn again, Roland. I am Richard. Let us have a course, for I would see thy shield.” Then they spurred their horses, and Richard was overthrown with his horse in a heap on the ground, but he rose up quickly, and mounted on horseback, sword in hand, to defend himself.

Now when Roland saw it was one of the four sons of Aymon, he cried out “Mountjoy St. Denis! If he ’scape us now, tell it to Charlemagne.”

Then the French set upon him all at once, and killed his horse under him, and though he slew two knights yet was he borne to earth. Roland came to him and said: “Now yield you, Richard, or you must die.”

“Sir,” said he, “I yield me to you, for there is no better knight,” and he gave up his sword, and when he was put on a mule they led him away.

A certain yeoman saw all this mishap, and came to Renaud with the evil tidings. Then Renaud

asked if they that had taken his brother were far away, and the yeoman said they were. Then came his brothers thinking to find Richard with him, and when they heard the tidings, Alard said that Renaud was much to blame, for that he had brought them to rescue King Yon. Then he said to his brother Guichard: "Let us go and kill this traitor, lest he work us more harm yet."

But Renaud forbade it and said that he would go to Charlemagne and deliver his brother, or die. His brethren were holding him back, when Maugis came to them, and when he knew of them the reason of their sorrow, he bade them return with him to Montauban, and promised that he would go himself and deliver Richard. So, making their moan as they went, they came to Montauban, and entered the base court of the castle, and as they came to the donjon, the lady Clare met them with her two sons, Aymonet and Yonet, each of them with a staff in their hand. When the sons of Renaud saw King Yon, they came to him and said:

"Ha, bad King, why did you betray our father and our uncles? If you were not a prisoner, we should slay you." And when Alard saw them so brave, he took them up in his arms, and embraced them, and wept.

Then said the lady: "Fair brother, tell me the occasion of your sorrow."

"Lady," said Alard, "we have lost our brother

Richard, for Roland is leading him prisoner to Charlemagne.”

MAUGIS
WORKS HIS
MAGIC

Now tells the tale of Maugis, that when he lighted from his horse he went into his chamber, and did off his armour and his clothes, and took from his chest a certain herb and ate it, and forthwith his body swelled out greatly. Then took he another herb and rubbed him with it till he became black as a coal, and his eyes reeled in his head, as one near death; and he put on him a great mantle and a hood, and on his feet great boots; and so with a pilgrim's staff in his hand he passed out of Montauban, and came by his art magic to the tent of Charlemagne before that Roland had arrived. When he saw the King come out of his pavilion, he drew near him, and said:

“May God keep you, King Charlemagne, from death and treason.”

“Vassal,” cried the King, “I trust no such a beggar as you be, for my enemy Maugis hath oftentimes thus deceived me.”

Then Maugis replied: “Sire, if Maugis be evil, all other poor folk be not so. I come from Jerusalem, where I have worshipped at the Holy Grave, and now must I pass to Saint James in Galicia, if God will. It was but yesterday that I passed over Gironde with ten men, my servants, and as I passed below Montauban, I met with brigands who slew my men and took from me all that I had, and so let
me

me go glad of my life. After, I asked of the country folk what men they were, and they told me they were the four sons of Aymon and a strong thief called Maugis, and they were constrained to do as they did for the poverty they lived in at Montauban. Sire, ye be the best king of the world; I pray you, avenge me on the four sons of Aymon and on Maugis."

When Charlemagne heard these words he asked him his name, and Maugis said his name was Guidon of Brittany, a rich man in his country.

"Pilgrim," said Charlemagne, "I cannot have revenge on them for myself. I promise you if I take them they shall die."

"Sire," said Maugis, "I leave me in the hands of God, since you will not right me."

The barons who stood by said to the King that this pilgrim seemed good and true, and that he should be aided, wherefore the King gave him thirty pounds of money, and they brought him meat, and he ate and drank of the best. Then Maugis thanked him fairly, and said he would give him half the good works of this pilgrimage.

Now while they spake together, Roland and his men were bringing Richard into the camp, and Duke Naymes seeing him on the road to Charlemagne's tent, said:

"Why do you give up Richard to the King? Set him free, and say it was another."

A certain yeoman standing thereby heard this, and straightway came to the King's tent and said :

THE KING
DOES
WRONG TO
RICHARD

“Sire, we have been beaten at the ford of Balançon by Renaud, but Roland hath brought with him prisoner one of the four sons of Aymon.”

Charlemagne could not hide his joy, and came out of his tent to meet them.

“It is well seen that you have been in the fight, for Richard would not have been taken else. Ha, traitor! you shall be hanged; but first shall you suffer evils and torments.”

“Sire,” said Richard, “you hold me prisoner, but while Renaud can mount on Bayard, or Maugis be alive, I shall not be hung.”

Then Charlemagne, full angry, took a staff in his hand and smote Richard on the head, so that the blood ran down. Whereon Richard ran on him, and took him by the waist and threw him on the ground. Ogier and Solomon ran up and held Richard fast so that he did the King no harm, and said to Charlemagne that he did wrong to strike his prisoner.

While this struggle was going on, Maugis stood by leaning on his staff, so that Richard on turning saw him, and knew him well. Then was he glad at heart and said to the King :

“Sire, where shall I be hanged?”

“At the gibbet of Montfaucon,” said the King.

When Maugis heard this, he made no longer tarrying,

tarrying, but went out of the tent, and returned to Montauban to Renaud and his brothers, who made great sorrow when they saw him return alone. When he was come in, he told them how Richard was not hanged yet, because the King had sworn to hang him on Montfaucon ; then he went to his chamber and took an herb which restored him to his natural size, so that he could arm himself and set out with his cousins to the rescue.

The sons of Aymon and Maugis rode towards Montfaucon till they were come within a bowshot of it, and there they put them in ambush in a wood that lay on either side of the gallows.

Bethink you now that for three days they had not slept, and marvel not that in short space sleep fell on them and they forgot their brother. May God have pity on him, or he must die.

Charlemagne called to him Duke Naymes and Richard of Normandy, and said to them: "Lords what counsel give you me? I fear lest Renaud come and succour his brother."

As he spoke, he looked before him and saw Béranger of Valois and said: "You hold wide lands of me, I will acquit you of your service if you will see that Richard is hanged."

"Sire," said he, "it were great shame to me if I did it, and also you ought not to counsel me to do it."

When he saw that Béranger would not, the King called Earl Guidelon and said: "You hold Bavaria

of me, and should serve me with two thousand men ; if you will hang Richard I will give you Macon.”

CHARLES
TEMPTS
HIS PEERS

“I will not do it,” said he, “nor shall he have harm if I may help him.”

“Go out of my sight,” said the King, and called on Ogier, “it is shewed me that you wrought treason on the plain of Vancouleurs ; now shall it be seen if they said truth. If you will go and hang Richard I will give you the city of Laon, and hold you quit of all service.”

“Sire,” said he, “you wot Richard is my cousin, and I shall defy any man who shall hang him.”

Then said the King to Archbishop Turpin : “I will make you Pope if you will hang Richard.”

“Sire,” said he, “you know well that I am a priest, and Richard is my cousin. Would you that I should do him treason ?”

Then Charlemagne called Solomon of Brittany and promised him Anjou, but he answered that he would not do it. Then he turned to Roland and said : “Nephew, I will give you Cologne if you will hang him.”

“Sire, if I did this I should be a traitor, for I promised that he should have no harm of his body. If you make him to die, no man shall believe my faith.”

When Charlemagne saw that he might not bring about his will, he was so wroth that he knew not what to do, and he rose on his feet and said : “Lords,

ye know well that I am the son of King Pepin and Queen Bertha, and I fled into Spain to Alafua on the sea: and there I did many marvels of arms, and was made a knight, and did conquer Galienne, my love, who forsook fifteen kings bearing crowns for my sake. And she came with me into this pleasant France, and then was I crowned king. But the same day I was crowned the twelve peers of France purposed to have made me die at the Christmas following, and our Lord sent an angel to warn me to hide myself, nor wist I where I should hide me, till I found a strong thief Bazyn who brought me into a pit. And by his aid I took my enemies and punished them afterward at my will, and so I shall do by you, if there be any that will do contrary to me." Then said he to Hector: "I shall give you the earldoms of Clermont and Montferrant if you will go hang Richard."

"When I am lord of that land my father holdeth in his hand, sire, I shall fulfil your commandment. Is it in earnest that you speak?"

"Yea," said Charlemagne.

"By my head, sire," said he, "you would not be with me to see Richard hang for half your kingdom."

When he heard himself thus reprovèd, Charlemagne took a staff and cast it at Hector so it broke on the post, and when the twelve peers saw that they went out of the pavilion. Then said the king: "Where be my twelve peers gone?"

“Sire,” said Duke Naymes, “they have not gone without a cause; it becomes you not to smite your lords.”

The King called to him Richard of Normandy and said: “You know well that you are one of those that I love best in this world, but you must do one thing for me; go, hang Richard, the son of Aymon, at Montfaucon.”

“Sire, with a good will,” said he, “so that you come with me with a thousand of your knights.”

Then he called Duke Naymes and said: “What counsel give you?”

“Sire, you know that Renaud, his brethren, and Maugis are of the best knights in France, and as every man knoweth well, this war hath lasted right long, for it began sixteen years ago. If it please you deliver Richard to his brethren, and they will be your men, and no prince in Christendom may war against you.”

“Naymes,” said the King, “they have all wrought against me; Richard must be hanged.”

“You shall not do it,” said Naymes, “he is of our family.”

Then came Ogier the Dane, and said: “Leave him alone, the more you pray him, the worse he will do. This day shall be seen who loves Richard.”

So they went out and assembled their folk in arms, well-nigh twelve thousand men, and Ogier
cried

RICHARD
BIDS THEM
YIELD HIM
UP

cried out, "Now shall we see who will be so bold as to hang Richard."

Then came they into the tent where he lay bound hand and foot, and Richard thanked them fairly for all their travail for him, and prayed that they should not quarrel with their lord for his sake. When Ogier heard this he thought that Richard had fallen mad, but Richard called him and said: "Cousin, I have seen Maugis right now, and I wot he hath not forgotten me. He who leads me to the gibbet shall lose his head, and many with him."

Then the twelve peers came to Charlemagne and said: "Sire, we be all your sworn men. All that we have said and done was to save our cousin, but seeing your will is that he be hanged, we will speak no more against it."

"Now speak you wisely," said the King, "and I pardon you all."

Charlemagne called to him Ripus of Riplemonde, and said: "If you will do so much as to hang Richard, I will make you my chamberlain for life."

"Sire," said he, "I will do it gladly, for Renaud slew my uncle at Balançon. But make me sure that when I come again from hanging Richard that none of your twelve peers shall do me an evil turn afterward."

The King called on his peers and made them to swear this, and when he had taken their oath Ripus went to his tent and armed him, and returned to

the king, who bade him take with him a thousand knights. Then Richard was handed over to him, bound, and with a rope round his neck like a thief, and so he passed before the tent of Charlemagne. As they rode on their way the Frenchmen made great sorrow for Richard, but when Ripus saw the gallows set up, he said to him, " See, yonder is your lodging where this day shall be avenged the death of my uncle Fulkes of Morillon."

When Richard saw him so near the place and no rescue, he thought to keep Ripus with words and said : " If you will deliver me, I will give you two hundred marks of fine gold and make you a great lord."

Ripus made him answer that he would not set him free for ten of the best cities in France. Then Richard asked for a priest to come and shrive him, and when he was come he showed him many more sins than he had committed, to the intent that he should have time to be succoured. But when he saw that his help came not, his confessor gave him absolution and went from him all weeping, and Ripus came to him and put the halter round his neck, and Richard made him ready to die. At the last he turned to Ripus and asked for time to say one last prayer, and those that stood by said he should have it, so Richard prayed with good heart and devoutly to God who had wrought great marvels aforetime, to save him if it were His will.

Then he began to weep, and said : “ Ripus, do with me what you will.”

Now tells the tale of Bayard, the good horse who understood the word that was spoken as well as a man. When he heard the noise that the folk made about the gallows and saw that his master slept fast, he came to Renaud and smote with his foot on his shield till he waked him. Then Renaud sprang to his feet and looked toward Montfaucon and saw his brother there on the ladder, and made no more tarrying, but lighted on Bayard and set off. And Alard, Guichard, and Maugis awoke for the noise and came after Renaud to give him succour. Then Ripus looked round as he would have strangled Richard, and saw Renaud and Maugis and their men, and was sore abashed.

“ Richard,” said he, “ you are delivered out of my hands. Here come Renaud and Maugis to succour you. Have mercy on me, for I only brought you here to make peace between Charlemagne and the twelve peers of France: I knew right well you should be delivered.”

“ Why do you mock me in this fashion?” said Richard.

“ I mock you not,” said Ripus, “ you may see them a bowshot from here; go down from the ladder and have mercy on me.”

Richard turned his head aside and saw Renaud coming at a great pace, and said : “ Ripus, I shall

never claim Renaud for my brother, if he hang you not to the same gibbet you made ready for me." As he spoke, Renaud came up and Maugis with him who would have slain Ripus, but Renaud said :

RIPUS IS
HANGED IN
RICHARD'S
STEAD

"Cousin, touch him not, I would not for much that another than I should avenge on him my dear brother Richard."

Then he drew out Flamberge and felled him dead to the earth, and after he alighted down and took Richard in his arms, and unbound him, and kissed his mouth saying : " Brother, are you not ill at ease ? "

" Nay," said he, " but let me be armed, I pray you, in the armour of Ripus."

So it was done, and the halter that was on Richard was put on Ripus and he was hanged there with fifteen of his company whom Charlemagne loved best, to keep watch there instead of Richard. When all this was accomplished Renaud would return to Montauban for rest and food, but Richard showed him the great love he had found among the peers, and asked leave to show himself to Ogier and his kinsmen. So Renaud gave him his horn, and put in ambush four hundred knights while the host should draw near in case of need ; and Richard came near the host of Charlemagne bearing the banner and arms of Ripus. When Ogier saw him come, he said to himself, " Alas, we have lost Richard," and with that he spurred his good horse

RICHARD
COMES
BACK AS
RIPUS

on Richard, and the Frenchmen followed him to stay his hand.

Ogier cried out : “ Ripus, you are but dead, for you have slain my cousin. Charlemagne shall not save you.”

But Richard cried out : “ Ha, cousin, I am Richard, do you not know me? We have hung Ripus and I have come to show me to my friends. Look me in the face.”

Then Ogier went to him and kissed him and said : “ Where is Ripus?”

“ He is Archbishop of Montfaucon and is giving the benediction with his feet, for my brother hath hanged him.”

Then said Ogier : “ See to yourself, cousin, here cometh Charlemagne,” and he went back to the king.

Charlemagne said to him : “ Why went you to Ripus before me?”

“ Sire,” said Ogier, “ if it were not for your love I should have slain him.”

Then said the King, “ I shall defend him against all men,” and spurring his horse to Richard, he said : “ Come near, my special friend, Ripus, and take no fear of any man ; I will defend you.”

When Richard heard this, he answered : “ I am not the traitor Ripus, but Richard the son of Aymon. You smote me to-day on the head with a staff and did me great wrong, wherefore my brother

has hanged Ripus and fifteen of his fellows with him. Beware of me, for I defy you."

The King, hearing him thus speak, spurred his horse on Richard, and they gave each other such strokes on the shields that their lances flew into pieces, and with the shock Richard was unhorsed. He rose and struck Charlemagne on his helm so great a stroke that he stunned him a little, and the blow glanced and struck through his horse's neck and killed him, so that the King fell to the ground.

Charlemagne cried out, "Montjoie St. Denis," and Richard blew his horn, and there began a right sore medley between the Frenchmen and the sons of Aymon.

Now Renaud saw that the sun was gone down, and was in doubt for his brethren lest they be slain or taken ; and as he was calling them, Charlemagne came as fast as his horse could gallop against him, though he knew him not, and they smote each other so that their spears flew in pieces and they fell to the ground. Then they rose up, and Charlemagne said : " If I be beaten by one knight I ought not to be King or bear crown."

When Renaud heard him he knew that it was the King, and drew on one side, saying, " Alas, how am I diffamed ! I have fought with the King. It is well fifteen years since I have spoken with him, but I shall now if I die for it." Then he went to Charle-

magne and knelt before him, saying, "Sire, give me truce till I have spoken with you."

"With a good will," said the King, "but I wot not who you be, though you joust well."

"Sire, I am Renaud, son of Aymon. I cry you mercy, and beseech you to have mercy on me and my brethren. You know well that I am your vassal, and that you have chased me from your land and mine fifteen years ago, and because of that many noble knights are dead. I speak not for fear of death, nor desire of riches, but for desire of your love only. Suffer us to have peace with you and we shall be your men, and I will give you Montauban and my good horse Bayard, which I love best in the world after my brethren and my cousin. And if this cannot satisfy your mind, pardon my brethren, and I shall forswear France for evermore and go to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem barefoot, and Maugis and I will never return, but make war against God's enemies."

"Renaud, you speak for naught. You shall have no peace with me but if you do that I shall tell you."

"Sire," said Renaud, "what shall that be?"

"You shall give me Maugis to do my pleasure with him, for I hate him more than anything in the world."

"And, sire, if I deliver him to you, what will you do with him?"

“ I shall make him to be drawn by four horses in Paris, and then I will take the limbs one from another, and burn them, and cast the ashes in the wind.”

HE WILL
NOT GIVE
UP MAUGIS

“ Sire, will you not take towns and castles and gold for the ransom of Maugis? ”

“ Nay,” said Charlemagne.

“ Sire, we shall never be in accord, for if you had all my brethren in your prison, I would not give up Maugis to save them.”

“ Beware,” said the King, “ you shall have no peace from me. Defend yourself.”

Then Charlemagne smote him with his sword Joyeuse on the helm, and the stroke slid on the shield and cut a great part thereof, so that Renaud was sore angry, and caught the King with both his arms by the back and waist, and laid him on the neck of his horse, Bayard, thinking to have taken him to Montauban. The King began to cry out : “ Ha, Roland, where are you : Oliver, and Duke Naymes, and Turpin : if ye suffer me to be thus taken it shall be great shame to you.”

Then came knights on all parts to the succour of Charlemagne or the help of Renaud, and many shields were cloven and cuirasses pierced. Roland, when he came into the fight, ran upon Renaud, and gave him so great a stroke that he was nigh stunned and said, “ Vassal, you have done evil to carry off

the King in this wise. You shall leave him and pay full dear before you escape."

Then Renaud drew Flambard and ran upon Roland, letting the King slip to the ground, and there was a great battle between them, but the press was so great that Roland must put him to flight, would he or no. When Renaud saw that the King and Roland were escaped, he said to his brethren: "We have wrought ill, for if ye had been by me we should have brought Charlemagne with us to Montauban."

"Sir," said they, "we are right sorry, but we had so much to do in another place that it is well we escaped with our lives. Let us sound our horn by reason of the night, and pass to Montauban."

When this was done the King sounded a retreat, and when he came to his host he said: "It goeth not well with us, for Renaud hath put us from the field."

"Sire," said Roland, "you did great folly when you jousted with Renaud, for if he had slain or taken you the war would have been at an end."

As Renaud and his host were mounting the hill of Montfaucon he called to him his chief knights and said: "Take your way toward Montauban, and my brethren, Maugis, and I shall come behind for fear of surprise. So they abode behind till their folk were passed the ford except the last company, and then he said: "I will go assail King Charlemagne

in his tent, whatsoever hap, and show his folk what I can do."

MAUGIS
IS TAKEN

So they came at last to the host, and when Renaud saw the pavilion of Charlemagne he said to his brethren, "I pray you, govern you wisely."

Then Richard spurred his horse and rode to the pavilion and cut the cords so that it fell to the ground and with it the great golden eagle of massive work, and Richard called to Maugis, "Cousin, help me to bring away this gain."

So they took the eagle of gold and put it in safety and returned to the fight.

But Maugis went again to the tent and found there the King and said to him: "You have troubled us long, Sir Emperor, but you shall pay full dearly your coming into Gascony. I shall avenge the death of my father so that you will no more make war on us." With this he bear up his spear to have thrust it through the breast of Charlemagne, but he escaped the stroke and the spear entered into his bed, well nigh two feet.

Then Charlemagne cried out for help, and when Maugis looked round he saw neither Renaud nor his brethren near him, for he had over-long tarried in the tent of Charlemagne, so he set spurs to his horse to follow them. And as he came to the ford he met a great company of Frenchmen, who set upon him forthwith. Shortly to tell he was overthrown by Oliver of Vienne, and yielded him on condition

that Oliver should save his life if possible, and Oliver took an oath of him that he would not escape. When he had taken his oath, he made Maugis to be unarmed, and wrapped up his wound, and laid him on a bed, where he slept soundly.

While Maugis was thus taken, Renaud and his brethren departed home with their booty, thinking that he was safe in Montauban.

Charlemagne was so sore distressed that he began to call together his peers, and when they were assembled he said: "Lords, you are all my vassals, and for fifty years no man hath wronged you and you have no neighbour that dare assail you. Now because I am old, I am, meseems, but half a King, and when ye fail me I am no King. You have left me for love of Renaud, and he hath taken me and chased me out of the field. Since it is thus with me, I seek not to live longer or to be your King; take my crown and give it to Renaud and make him King in my place."

When the twelve peers heard this they were sore abashed, and no man durst say a word, till Duke Naymes said: "Sir Emperor, God forbid you should do as you say. I wite well that we have supported Renaud, but you ought to consider that it was for no malice, but for good intention. We weened to have made peace in this war that has so long endured, but we see that you will not pardon the four sons of Aymon. Take again your crown
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and be not wroth with us ; we shall promise to serve you faithfully and to take Montauban before a month be past.”

OLIVER
YIELDS UP
MAUGIS

Then said the King, “I tell you for certain that I will not be your King until you yield me Renaud or Maugis, who hath mocked at me so often.”

He was turning away with these words when Oliver came in and asked wherefore the King was so sore angry, and when Duke Naymes told him, he said : “Sire, pardon us then, and I shall deliver to you Maugis this even.”

“Oliver,” said Charlemagne, “I am not a child that men mock with.”

“Sire, if you will promise me that you will take again your crown and keep us as you have done aforetime, I will bring him now before you.”

Then Oliver and Roland went to the tent, and other knights with him, and found Maugis asleep. And Oliver said : “Maugis, you must come to Charlemagne.”

“Oliver,” said Maugis, “you have broken faith, but I know that the King will be more courteous than you have been.”

When he was in the pavilion, Oliver said to Charlemagne : “Sire, you have promised that if I brought Maugis you would take again your crown, and keep us as in manner aforetime.”

“Certes, it is truth.”

“Now hold you, Sire, here Maugis, whom I have conquered by force of arms.”

Then was Charlemagne right glad, and said to Maugis, “Now shalt thou be rewarded for thy pride, for many times hast thou angered me sore.”

“Sire,” said Maugis, “you will do with me what it pleases you, since I am in your hands, but I counsel you to let me go and make peace with Renaud. You shall get nothing by my death, for I have cousins who will avenge me. When you have slain me you can do no more, and you shall grieve sore for me before twenty-four hours be past.”

“Wretch,” said Charlemagne, “speak not so boldly, for thou shalt die an ill death before another night be past.”

Now leave we Charlemagne and tell of the great grief of Renaud when he was come to Montauban and found not Maugis. Straightway he made search among the host if any man had seen him, but no one had heard news of him. At the last Renaud said: “Leave your sorrow, I pray you, for I will put me again in the way and go to the wood of the Serpent to ask tidings from the Abbot of St. Lazare. Farewell, till I come again.”

Then Renaud armed him and issued out of Montauban and came to the ford, and when he was come thither he found a certain lad that came to water horses. The lad asked him who he was, and

he said that he was one of Ripus's men escaped, and asked what did the King.

THE KING
WILL HAVE
MAUGIS
HANGED

"Sir," said he, "the King is right merry, and hath forgotten Ripus, for men have brought him Maugis, whom he so hated."

"And is he dead?"

"Sir, he is yet alive."

Then the lad went his way, and Renaud abode in thought, for if he assailed the King he might slay Maugis at once for fear of his escape, so he cast about for some place of rest till Maugis should be brought out to die.

The history tells that when Charlemagne saw that Maugis was in his hands, he called to him his peers and said: "Lords, make a great gallows to be raised, that Maugis may be hanged thereon before supper."

Duke Naymes said: "Sire, if you will believe me, you will not make him to be hanged by night, for Renaud and his brethren will mock you, and say that you were afraid of them. Wait till daybreak be here and then hang him, and if Renaud come to succour him, they shall hang together."

"Naymes," said the King, "you mock me, he will surely escape."

"Sire," said Maugis, "I shall give you surety that I do not go."

"Who would be so hardy as to be thy surety," said the King.

Then Maugis looked about him and saw the

THE
TWELVE
PEERS ARE
SURETIES
FOR
A NIGHT

twelve peers and said : “ Sir Oliver, you promised you would help me towards Charlemagne, now I require you to be my surety, and you Duke Naymes, and Roland, and Ogier, and Bishop Turpin, and Richard of Normandy, for the love of the good knight Renaud, I pray you be my sureties.”

“ Maugis,” said Duke Naymes, “ will you promise to us on your faith that you shall not go without our leave ? ”

“ Yea,” said Maugis.

Then came the peers of France and said to Charlemagne : “ Sire, we will be surety for Maugis on our lives and lands, and will deliver him to you again to-morrow morning.”

“ My lords,” said the King, “ I remit him to you, but if you yield him not up, you shall never return into sweet France again.”

“ Lords,” said Maugis, “ since you have done me one good turn, do me another : I pray you get me some meat for I am an hungered.”

“ Now hear this man,” said the King, “ he hath so little term to live and he will eat. Let him sit near me, for so we shall be sure of him.”

Then were they set at table, and the King durst neither eat nor drink, but Maugis ate right well. When Oliver saw that, he began to laugh and said to Roland : “ Have you seen how the King durst not eat supper lest Maugis should work witchcraft upon him ? ”

After supper Charlemagne called his seneschal and said : " Bring me thirty torches to burn all night ;" and turning to Roland he said : " Fair nephew, and ye the twelve peers of France, I pray you to watch with me this night to keep Maugis, and play at tables, and chess, and other games, that you may be well wakeful. Moreover, set a guard outside of knights that, if he escape us, they may take him."

When he had said this he sat him on his bed, and bade Maugis sit beside him, and then the twelve peers.

" Sire," said Maugis, " where shall I sleep ?"

" You shall have evil rest here," said Charlemagne, " you shall not sleep again as long as you live, for you will be hanged at the springing of the day."

" Sire," said Maugis, " you do me wrong. Wherefore did I give you hostages but only to have my ease as long as I live ? Suffer me to sleep, or release my hostages."

" All this shall not avail thee, false thief," said Charlemagne, " thy sureties are discharged."

Then the King made bring great irons, and fettered him with him, and put a long chain round a pillar, and gave him a great collar of iron round his neck whereof he kept the key himself. And when he was thus fastened he said : " Maugis, you will not escape me now."

" Sire," said Maugis, " you mock at me, but I tell you

you before the twelve peers that I shall be in Montauban before it is light."

Then Charlemagne would have stricken off his head, but Roland prevented him because Maugis was a prisoner and bound.

After they had played long time they began to have great lust to sleep, and when Maugis saw it he said his charm, and they fell into a strong sleep so that Charlemagne fell backward upon his bed, and all the peers lay with him. Then he said another charm of such virtue that the fetters and collar and chain of iron fell on the ground asunder, and Maugis saw Charlemagne lying with his head awry, and put a pillow under it, and ungirded him, and took Joyeuse, his sword, and then he went to Roland, and took Durandal, and after Hautclere from Oliver, and Courtain from Ogier, and then he took the coffer of treasure and the crown. When he had done this, he took an herb and rubbed the emperor's lips and unhosed him. Then he nudged him with his finger and said: "I promised you I would not go without taking leave," and he went out of the pavilion and through the camp to Montauban.

When the King heard Maugis he rose in great wrath, and called on his peers, but he could not wake them; so he bethought him of an herb he had brought from over-sea, and rubbed it on the faces of Roland and his twelve peers, and they awoke and stood up abashed. Then Duke Naymes said:

“Where is Maugis?”

“By my faith,” said the King, “you shall render him to me, for you have let him go wilfully.”

“Roland,” said Oliver, “saw you him go?”

“Nay,” said Roland.

“I saw him well go,” said the King.

“Sire,” said Roland, “you ought then to have told us of it;” and in saying this he looked at his side and saw not Durandal, his sword, and cast a great sigh.

Then said the King: “Nephew, where is your sword? Maugis has enchanted us, no one has his sword left. Full little have I got of thy taking, thou false thief, Maugis.”

As Maugis came to the ford where Renaud was lying, heavy and full of sorrow because he could have no tidings, Bayard smelled him, and came to him whether Renaud would or no. When Maugis saw Renaud, he knew him and said: “Knight, who be you that ride at this time of night?”

And Renaud made answer: “You know well that I am your cousin, Renaud. Thanked be God that you are delivered from Charlemagne.”

“You forgot me behind you,” said Maugis.

“Cousin, it was not my fault. I should have succoured you or died with you.”

Then Maugis thanked him, and Renaud asked him what he carried, and he told him. So they came to Montauban, and the brothers asked him where he

A TRUCE
IS OFFERED

was when they lost him ; so he told them all that befel him and they had great feast, and the next day they went to hear mass in the church of Montauban. And after mass they took the booty, and Renaud made the eagle to be borne on the high tower of Montauban, and when the sun shined on it it cast a light for five miles around, and Charlemagne and his army saw it.

Charlemagne, when he knew that he could not recover his crown by force of arms, called to him Naymes and Turpin, Hector and Ogier, who were of the kindred of Renaud, and sent them to Montauban to bid Renaud return what had been taken, and he would give them truce for two years. So they came to Montauban, and Renaud made them a great feast, and granted their demand. Then Ogier would have Renaud to come with them to reconcile him to Charlemagne, and they all pledged them that he should have no harm or they would lose both life and lands. But when they were come to the ford of Balançon, Ogier began to say :

“ Lords, you know how the King is of evil heart against Renaud. Let us know first his will or ever he see Renaud.”

“ You say well,” said Naymes. “ I will go with you to him, and Renaud shall stay here with Archbishop Turpin and Hector.”

There was a certain spy at the ford of Balançon, named Pinabel, who heard all this, and stole away
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from the company and came to Charlemagne: "Sire," said he, "I bring you tidings. Renaud and Alard his brother are at the riverside of Balançon with Bishop Turpin and Hector, while Duke Naymes and Ogier are come to ask leave if they may bring them with surety."

Then the King sent for Oliver and said: "Go, without delay, and take two hundred knights well-armed to the ford of Balançon, where ye shall find Renaud and Alard, and bring them to me."

While Oliver was on his way, Duke Naymes and Ogier came to Charlemagne, but he answered them not a word. Then Ogier said: "Sire, we have obeyed your orders, why make you so evil cheer?"

"Ogier," said the King, "where is Renaud? For you have brought him with you."

"Sire," said he, "it is true, we have brought him with us to take surety for the truce you have given him."

"By St. Denis," said the King, "if I can have him once in my hand he shall die."

"Sire," said Ogier, "say not so, for if you do what you have said, Duke Naymes, Turpin, Hector and I will yield you evil for evil, and save Renaud with all our power. If you do us this dishonour we shall forsake the homage and the faith we owe you."

When Oliver was come to the ford he saw Renaud and came on him so that he could not mount on

Bayard. Then Renaud turned to Turpin and Hector and said : " Vassals, you have betrayed me falsely."

" Sir," said the Archbishop, " I swear to you on my faith that we know nothing of this : I promise you we shall live and die with you."

Then they told it to Oliver and to Roland who had followed him, how they had brought Renaud on their faith, and they all took Renaud with them and came to the tent of Charlemagne.

Now Oliver would have presented him to the King, but Ogier came forward and told how he had been sent to Renaud to offer a truce on condition that the booty should be restored, and how Renaud had restored the eagle, the crown, the treasure, and the swords, and how they had brought him with them in surety. " If you will do as a true emperor, send him again to Montauban with what he hath given us, and after do your worst on him."

Charlemagne told him that he spoke in vain and threatened to burn Renaud, but Ogier said that he would defend his word even against the King.

Then said Renaud : " Sire, you have called me traitor. Wite it that neither I nor any man of my lineage is such. If any man saith it, I will fight in the quarrel, body to body."

" By my faith," said Charlemagne, " I will prove it on your body."

" Now you speak as a king, sire," said he ; " here

is my gage, and here are my hostages," and he turned to his four kinsmen. Then said Renaud: "Who is it that shall make the battle?"

"Myself shall it be," said Charlemagne.

"Sire, an it please you, I shall fight for you myself," said Roland.

"Sire," said Renaud, "choose whom you please."

Then a day and hour was set, and Renaud and his hostages returned to Montauban.

NOW SHEWETH THE TALE, THAT when Roland saw the day he rose from his bed and went to hear mass, and after he armed himself and came to Charlemagne. Then the King said: "Fair nephew, God have you in His keeping from death and prison, for you know that Renaud is in the right and we do him wrong. I would not for the half of my realm that harm should come to you."

"Sire," said Roland, "it is too late to repent now; since you knew you were wrong, you should not have accepted the battle; now the thing is come so far forth I cannot leave it. May God guard me in mercy."

Now tells the tale of this fight, that it was right sore and cruel between them, for they left not one piece of their harness whole, insomuch that the barons who looked on had great pity of the one and the other, and Duke Naymes cried out: "Ha, Charlemagne, cursed be your cruelty, for by your hate you put to death two of the best knights of the world."

Renaud, seeing that neither of them could overcome the other, said to Roland that they should alight from their horses and fight on foot, so that the good steeds should not be harmed, and when this was done they ran on each other like lions. But when they could not win at this game, Renaud took Roland by the body in manner of wrestling a great while, but the one could cast down the other by no way. Then at the last they let each other go to take breath, for they were right weary so that they might hardly stand, and their arms and helmets were all cut and broken, and the ground all stamped as if men had threshed corn thereon.

Then Charlemagne had great fear for Roland, and knelt down and prayed, "Glorious Lord, that made heaven, earth, and sea; and delivered Margaret from the belly of the dragon, and Jonah from the fish, deliver my nephew Roland from this battle mortal, and send me a token whereby I may depart these knights from one another to their honour."

Also the sons of Aymon prayed for their brother since he was so sore weary. And when the prayers were made, God for the prayer of Charlemagne sent a miracle, for so great a cloud arose that they might not see each other.

Then Roland called to Renaud: "Where are you? Is it night, for I cannot see you."

"Nor I," said Renaud.

"I pray you," said Roland, "take me with you to
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Montauban, and wite that I ask you, because I know well that you be in the right, and I am in the wrong."

RENAUD
LEADETH
ROLAND
AWAY

Roland, when he had said this, recovered his sight, and saw his horse and mounted thereon, and Renaud mounted on Bayard.

The King seeing this was sore abashed, and cried: "See, lords, Renaud leadeth Roland with him;" and the barons spurred their horses and followed them to the gate of Montauban.

There Charlemagne cried out: "Renaud, this that you have done shall avail you little, you shall never have peace with me while I am alive."

And when he had said this, he returned to his army, and bade them forthwith to encamp before the castle of Montauban, so that the King's tent was before the great gate, and the whole army encamped around it.

When the host was set, the watch on the gate came to Maugis and told him how Charlemagne had set his tent before the great gate.

"Be content," said Maugis, "Charlemagne seeketh his own hurt, he shall have it sooner than he weeneth."

So Maugis told it to Renaud, and Renaud bade him keep good watch in the night, lest evil should come.

After all were asleep Maugis went to the stable and saddled Bayard, and came out through the great gate

gate to the tent of Charlemagne. There he so wrought with his magic that he brought all that were in the host to sleep. Then he went to the bed of the King, took him in his arms, set him on Bayard, and brought him into Montauban, and laid him in his bed. After he lit a torch and set in his chamber, and went to Renaud.

“Cousin, what would you give to him who should deliver the King into your hand?”

“By my faith, I have nothing that I would not give,” said Renaud.

“Will you promise to do him no harm of body, and I will deliver him to you.”

“I promise you that upon my faith,” said Renaud.

Then Maugis led him into his chamber and showed him Charlemagne, and said that he should guard him well. Then Maugis came to the stable where he had left Bayard, and took some straw and rubbed his back and his head. Then he kissed him all weeping and took leave of him, and put on him a cloak and wallet, and came to the porter, and so passed out of Montauban.

The history tells that Maugis went so long that he came to the river of Dordonne, and passed over it in a boat, and when he was over he entered into a forest and walked till even. At the last he came to a little hill, and on it was a hermitage with a fair spring before the door. There Maugis entered and prayed our Lord to pardon his sins, and made a vow to

dwell in that place, and to eat none other but such wild herbs as grew in the wood. Then he prayed God that Renaud might have peace with Charlemagne, and when he had done his prayer he let go his horse and set him down to do penance for his evil deeds he had done.

IN THIS PART TELLS THE TALE THAT Renaud called his brethren to him, and said : " Tell me, my brethren, what we shall do with Charlemagne, whom we have in our hands ? "

" I cannot tell, " said Richard, " but if you will believe me, you will hang him forthwith, and when he is dead no man shall make us afraid. "

When Renaud heard this he said naught, and Richard said that he would hang him if Renaud would deliver him up.

Renaud said : " My brethren, ye know well that he is our sovereign lord, and that our kinsmen are here to make peace for us. If we slay him, right or wrong, all the world should run on us, and we should never be without war. "

Alard said : " You have spoken wisely, but if we cannot have peace with him, let us keep him prisoner. "

" Lords, " said Richard, " we have a good head in Renaud our brother, let him shift with the King as he will ; " and thereto they all accorded.

The four brethren left the chamber of the King and came into Roland, and when he saw them he
 marvelled,

marvelled, but sent for his fellows as Renaud had told him, and when they were all come, he said :

“ Lords, ye be all my friends, gramercy to you, wherefore I will hide nothing from you. I have here a prisoner by whom I shall have peace and my inheritance again.”

“ Renaud,” said Roland, “ I pray you tell us who it is.”

“ It is Charlemagne the Emperor.”

“ Have you taken him by force of arms?”

“ Nay, verily, I wot not how my cousin Maugis did it, but he hath brought the King out of his pavilion, and brought him into his chamber here fast asleep.”

“ I marvel much,” said Duke Naymes, “ for you know well that the king is kept day and night.”

“ Lords,” said Ogier, “ God hath done this by friendship for Renaud, for this war hath lasted too long, and many good knights have lost their life in it.”

When they had thus spoken, Renaud brought them into the chamber where Charlemagne lay so fast asleep that they could not wake him.

Then said Roland : “ Where is Maugis? Let him come and wake him and all we will fall at his feet and cry him mercy, and I pray you be not the prouder in words that you hold him prisoner.”

“ By my faith, I should rather die than say to my sovereign lord a foul word. I shall put me, my

brethren, and my goods to his will, and pray him to grant us peace with him. And I will go fetch Maugis to you.”

MAUGIS
CANNOT
BE FOUND

Renaud went out to seek Maugis and could not find him, and when the porter wist that he sought Maugis, he said : “ Sir, you seek him for naught, for he went his ways out right now, clothed poorly, and came not again.”

When Renaud heard this he knew that Maugis had gone his way because he would no longer abide the wrath of Charlemagne, and he began to weep full sore, and his brothers with him when they heard it, but Richard gnashed his teeth and said : “ We be now all lost, since we have lost Maugis ; ” and drew his sword to have slain Charlemagne.

But Renaud hindered him, and Ogier and Naymes said : “ Richard, Richard, refrain, for it were not well done to kill a man that sleepeth. Before we depart hence we shall set all at peace.”

And as all the lords turned to weep for the loss of Maugis, he added : “ Ye do not well to make so great sorrow for we cannot get any good by it. Let us begin to speak of your peace, that must be made with Charlemagne, that an end may be had to this war.”

As they were speaking of this matter, suddenly Charlemagne began to move, and arose on his feet and looked about him, and when he saw he was at Montauban in the subjection of Renaud he was so

THEY ALL
CRY MERCY sore angered, that all they that were there thought him mad. When his wits were come to him again he knew that Maugis had done this thing, and he swore that he would make no peace till he were out of Montauban, and they had brought Maugis to him.

Richard waxed angry when he heard this, and said : “ Were it not that I have promised to do you no harm at this time, I should strike off the head from your body.”

But Renaud restrained his brethren and said : “ My brethren if it please you, you shall come with me to cry mercy to our sovereign lord Charlemagne.”

Then Renaud and his brethren, Roland, Oliver, Ogier, Duke Naymes, Turpin, and Hector fell on their knees before the Emperor, and Renaud said : “ Noble Emperor, have mercy on us, for my brethren and I yield us unto you to do your pleasure and will of us, our lives being saved ; and there is nothing that we will not do for love of you. And if it please you not to pardon me at least pardon my brethren, and give them again their lands, and I shall give you Montauban and Bayard ; and so I shall go into the Holy Land with Maugis and serve the Temple.”

“ If all the world speak to me,” said the King, “ I should never consent to peace till I have Maugis in my hands.”

“Alas,” said Renaud, “I had rather let myself be hanged than consent to the death of Maugis. He hath not deserved that we should betray him, but rather to be lord over us.”

“Think not, Renaud, though I am a prisoner, I shall do anything against my will.”

“Sire, my intent is to humble myself before you ; I had liefer that we suffer wrong of you, than you of us. Tell me, sire, how I shall deliver you Maugis, who is our life, hope, and succour ; our sword and spear ; our guide and defence in all places. If you had all my brethren in prison and would make them to be hanged, I would not give him up to buy back my brethren. Also, I swear to you on my faith that he is gone I wot not where.”

Then Duke Naymes said : “Sire, methinks you ought to take the fair offer which Renaud has made, before other harm comes to you, and all they of your court shall be glad of it.” And in the same way spoke the others.

Charlemagne answered and swore by St. Denis of France, that he should make no peace, but if he had first Maugis in his hands.

When Renaud heard him he rose to his feet in anger and said : “Sire, I would that Charlemagne should know my will, which I show before him to you. Since I can find no mercy in him, I pray you blame me not if from henceforth I seek my right in all manners that a true knight may. Sire, you may

go hence when it pleaseth you, you shall have no harm of me as now, for you are my lord, and when God pleases we shall be at peace with you."

The barons of France that were there wondered sore at the great kindness of Renaud, but his brother Richard was wroth and said that it was great folly to let their enemy go scatheless.

Then Renaud called a gentleman of his and said: "Go and fetch hither Bayard, for I will that my sovereign ride upon him to his host," and when he was come again, Renaud said to Charlemagne: "Sire, you may go at liberty to comfort your folk," and Renaud conveyed him to the gate of Montauban, and when he was gone he made it to be shut again.

The French were right glad to see their King again, and asked him how it went with him, and if he had granted peace.

"Lords, it is well with me, but I have made no peace, nor ever shall."

"Sire, how have you been delivered?"

"By my faith, Renaud delivered me against the will of his brethren."

"Sire, did you not see Roland and Oliver, Naymes and Ogier?"

"Yea, surely, but they have all forsaken me for love of Renaud, I shall show them that they have not well done." This said, he lighted down from Bayard, and sent him again to Renaud.

So Renaud came to his kinsmen and said:

“Lords, I know well ye be not in the grace of Charlemagne for love of me, therefore I quit you of all quarrels that I may lay on you, and give you leave to go when it please you.”

Then they thanked him greatly, and said that they would have him in their remembrance to make accord with the King; and after they came to the camp and fell down before Charlemagne, saying:

“Sire, we be come in your presence to cry you mercy, and to take us into your good grace. Since you will not have peace, we have forsaken Renaud and his brethren, and they shall have no succour of us.”

“Lords,” said the King, “I pardon you, but I pray you let us assault Montauban by night and day till it be taken, and all within it put to death. I am sure that they want victuals within, and worse for them, they have lost the traitor Maugis, who was their hope and comfort.”

When he had said this, Duke Naymes said: “Sire, you say that they of Montauban have no meat, and that the taking of this castle is a thing that may be done lightly. I promise you if you tarry here till their victuals be done, you shall stay here longer than you ween of. Take heed of the courtesy that Renaud hath done you, and how he saved your life, and of his great meekness, and the trust he had in you when he loaned you his good horse Bayard. Think, too, how we waste and destroy

the country and the fields, and dispend great good which for your honour were better to be employed on the Saracens than on the four sons of Aymon."

Then King Charlemagne became pale as a white cloth for the great wrath he had at his heart, and said: "Duke Naymes, by my faith, if there be any man so bold as to speak more of peace with the sons of Aymon, I shall never love him. I shall take them whatsoever it cost me, ere I depart from this siege."

Then Ogier said to the King: "Cursed be the hour that Renaud suffered not Richard to strike off thy head. You had not so threatened him now."

And when Charlemagne heard it he bowed his head, and said after: "Lords, make you ready, for I will now give assault to Montauban."

When they were ready they came in good order, and brought ladders and other instruments and engines to break down the walls, and when the King saw them so well appavelled he ordered the assault.

Renaud saw the movement and sounded his horn three times, and forthwith all they of the castle armed themselves and came on the walls to defend the castle. The Frenchmen came near, and entered into the ditch and dressed up their ladders to the wall, but they within defended so strongly with casting of stones, that many of the Frenchmen were slain. Great pity it was to see the Duchess and the young children bearing stones for their uncles to throw.

And when Charlemagne saw that the ladders were overthrown he knew that he should not take Montauban by force, and made the trumpet to be blown to call his folk back, and when they heard it they were glad, for they were shrewdly handled.

AT LAST
THERE IS
FAMINE

Charlemagne swore by St. Denis of France that he would not depart till they were famished, and he set before every gate of the castle two hundred knights, that nobody might pass in or out; and when Renaud saw that he fell on his knees and prayed that they might have peace, but Richard rebuked him for that he had let Charlemagne go free.

SO LONG ABODE THE EMPEROR AT the siege of Montauban, that they who were in it had great need of victuals, and he that had any meat hid it straightway, for men could get none for gold or silver, and the dearth was so great that one brother hid his meat from another, and the father from his child, and the child from its mother. The poor folk died for hunger in the streets, and Renaud had need to make a great charnel-house and carry them there. Moreover, Charlemagne, by the report of his folk knew the great scarcity of victuals there, and was right glad and said to his lords: "Now cannot they escape. Renaud shall be hanged and Richard drawn by horses. God be thanked that I have brought the town so low. Let no man be so hardy as to move my will to the contrary."

When

When the kindred of Renaud heard this they were sore grieved, and with great pain Ogier kept his eyes from weeping, lest Charlemagne should perceive his sorrowful heart.

The story tells that all this while Aymon held the party of the King against his sons; but when he heard how the Emperor threatened them he was wroth, for whatsoever war he made against them, he loved them dearly, as a father should love his child. He could not keep himself for his great sorrow, and said: "Sir Emperor, I beseech you that you will bring my sons to right, for though I have forsaken them, yet are they my children." But the King would not hear him.

Then when he saw the barons that spake to one another, he said: "Lords, it is now long time since we first besieged this castle, and we have lost many of our folk. I command you to make great engines to bring down the towers. You, Roland, shall make seven and Oliver six, Naymes and Turpin and Ogier four, and you, Duke Aymon, three."

"How should I do this," said Aymon, "for they are my children, not knaves but the best knights of the world; if I saw them die I should lose my wits for anger."

Then Charlemagne said: "If any man gainsay me I will strike off his head."

"Sire," said Duke Naymes, "be not angry, for what you have commanded shall be done."

So engines were made to cast great multitudes of stones, and for fear of them the folk went and hid under the ground ; and so they of Montauban endured this mischief also. So great was the dearth and mortality that men wist not where to put the dead, for the charnel-house was full, and the young men went with a staff, or fell grovelling on the ground for feebleness.

When their food was well nigh done Renaud had great sorrow because he might put no remedy thereto, and he began to call for Maugis to help him, and when the Lady Clare saw it she said : “ Fair lord, we have yet more than a hundred horses ; I pray you let one of them be killed, and you, myself, and our poor children eat of it, for it is more than three days since we have eaten a meal.” And when she had said this she fell in a swoon for hunger. Then when she came to herself, she cried : “ Alas, my children, who should ever have weened that you should die of hunger ? ”

Renaud made a horse to be slain and dressed for meat to his folk, but it lasted not long before them, and soon all the horses in Montauban were eaten, save Bayard and the horses of the three brothers. When there was nothing more, Renaud came to his brethren and said : “ What shall we do ? We have only our four horses. Let us kill one of them and eat.”

“ By my head,” said Richard, “ it shall not be mine ;

mine ; kill your own, for it was your pride and folly in releasing Charlemagne that has brought us to this pass. If you had believed me, this mishap would not have befallen us."

Then Aymon, the son of Renaud, said : " Hold your peace, my uncle, for men ought to let pass the thing that cannot be amended. Do as my father commandeth you, and all shall be well."

Great pity had Richard of this nephew when he heard him speak thus wisely, and he kissed him and said to Renaud : " Command my horse to be slain when it please you, and give some comfort to this folk and my lady and your children. For my little nephew hath well deserved to eat of it for his good counsel."

" Brother," said Alard, " kill which you please, except Bayard ; I had rather die myself than Bayard be slain."

" You say well," said Guichart.

So the horses of the three brethren were killed and eaten, and there was no more to eat in Montauban.

Then said Guichart : " My brethren, we must yield ourselves or else die here for hunger."

" Will you yield you to the most cruel king of the world, for him to make us to be hanged shamefully ? If any pity could be found in him, I would yield me gladly, but let us rather eat Bayard, my horse, and my children, and our own bodies, before we yield us."

Then they cast their minds to slay Bayard, but when they came to the stable Renaud looked on him, and he loved him so greatly that he bade them slay him first before they laid hand on Bayard. The duchess and her children cried out that they would die for force of hunger, and at the last, Renaud said to them to take courage till night and he would fetch them meat.

When night was come he mounted on Bayard and went secretly out of Montauban and came to his father's pavilion, which he knew well, for he had marked it that day. It happed so that he found Duke Aymon alone before his tent, seeking to have some tidings of the castle of Montauban.

When Renaud saw his father, he said: "Who art thou, that goest so late all alone?"

Aymon knew his son as soon as he heard him speak, and was glad, but he said: "And who art thou thyself?"

Then Renaud knew him and said: "Father, for God's sake have pity on us, for we die of hunger; all my horses are dead. We have only Bayard, who has saved our lives so often. If you will not have pity on me, save my young children."

"Ah, fair son," said Aymon, "I cannot help you, for I have forsworn you, go your way; my heart is right sorry that I may not give you succour."

"Sir, you speak ill," said Renaud. "If you help

AYMON
GIVES HIM
FOOD

us not, my wife, my brothers, and my children will die of hunger ere three days be past."

When Aymon heard this he had great pity and said: "Son, the king doth you great wrong, light down from your horse and take what it pleases you from my tent, but I will give you nothing, to save my oath."

"Gramercy, dear father," said Renaud, and then he entered into the pavilion and loaded Bayard with bread and with flesh, both salt and fresh, and Bayard bore more than ten horses should have done. Then when he was laded, Renaud took leave of his father and returned to Montauban, and when they saw him bring so much victual they swooned for joy, and Renaud weened they had died of hunger. But they rose up and did eat, and after went to sleep, except Renaud, who would keep watch himself.

When the next night was come Aymon, who could not forget his children, made his steward to come before him, and said: "You know how I have forsworn my children, whereof I am in great sorrow, for they are yonder in poverty and misease. We have three engines that Charlemagne hath bid me make to hurt them, now must we help them. See that you put in the engines bread and flesh in great plenty, instead of stones, and let this be cast into the castle. I repent me sore of the harm I have done them."

“Sir,” said the steward, “you say well, for all the world blames you for what you have done.”

AYMON
CASTS
FOOD INTO
MONT-
AUBAN

So he filled the engines with victuals, and commanded the master to throw them into Montauban. Many of the host blamed Aymon sore that he made his engines to be cast against his children, but Renaud went hither and thither within the castle, and found the victuals his father had cast in, and was right glad and happy. He made the victuals to be gathered up and put in a sure place, and found that they had enough for three months with good governance.

Ye must understand that Charlemagne had some knowledge of how Duke Aymon had given victuals to his children, so he called him and said: “Aymon, who maketh thee so bold as to give food to my mortal enemies? I know thy wiles, thou mayest not excuse thyself.”

“Sire,” said Duke Aymon, “I will not deny it, for I tell you truly, I will not fail my children as long as I can help them. They be no thieves, or traitors, or murderers, but the most valiant knights of the world, and the truest. You have too long wrought this folly.”

Then Duke Naymes came forth and said: “Sire, send home Aymon, you have kept him here too long; you ought not to blame him that he will not see his children destroyed.”

The King said: “Since you have judged it you shall

THEY FEED
ON THE
BLOOD OF
BAYARD

shall not be gainsaid. Go forth out of my host, Duke Aymon, you have wrought me more damage than profit."

"With a good will," said Aymon, and he called his horse and parted, saying to the twelve peers of France: "Lords, I pray you have a care for my children, for they be come of your blood."

Then Aymon went to his own land, and Charlemagne bade them break the engines, and thus Renaud abode in good peace.

After a good space of time their victuals began again to be eaten up, so that they scarce could stand on their feet for hunger, and Alard said to Renaud: "Slay Bayard, for I and my brethren may live no longer without food."

Renaud came to Bayard to slay him, but the horse made such great joy to see him that he could not, and he bethought him long and advised him how Bayard should not die.

Then he called for a basin and made Bayard be let blood, and then he stopped the vein, and gave the blood to Alard to be dressed, and when it was cooked they had thereof great sustenance. But on the fifth day Bayard was so feeble that when they would have let blood, none came, and when the Duchess saw that she said: "Sir, since he gives no more blood, let him be slain, and your children eat of him."

But Renaud would not, and they sat them down to wait for death, the which was nigh enough.

There was an old man among them who said to Renaud: "Sir, I see that Montauban may no longer be defended, but in you is not the fault. Come with me and I shall show you a way by which we may escape without danger. Now know that there was once before a castle here, and the lord that builded it first made a way under the earth that bringeth folk into the Wood of the Serpent, and when I was a child I went through it. Dig here and you shall find it and we may escape without danger."

Then Renaud came to the place, and they digged in the earth and found the way that the old man said, and Renaud, his wife and children, his brethren and the remnant of his folk, put themselves in the way, and Renaud made great plenty of torches to be fired that they might see the better.

When they had gone a long while in the cavern Renaud stopped and said: "My brethren, we have done ill, for we have left King Yon in prison. Certes, I had liefer die than leave him to perish like a famished wolf."

Then he returned to the castle, though his brothers would have him stay, and brought King Yon out of prison with him. Certes, he had little welcome from the lady or the sons of Aymon.

So long they went that they came to the mouth of the cave and found them in the Wood of the Serpent at dayspring, and when Renaud had

looked about him he said: "Meseemeth we be nigh the hermitage of my good friend Bernard."

"Sir," said Alard, "you say truth; but what shall we do?"

"Let us go there and abide till night be come, and then take our way to Dordonne. Moreover it cannot be, but he shall have some meat for my wife and children."

They put themselves to the way, and went but little till they found the hermitage; but as they went through the wood they parted from one another, and like wild beasts ate grass as if it had been fruit.

Then Renaud was sad and cried out: "Lords, ye do ill to separate thus, gather you together and come to the hermitage. If we find Bernard he will make us good cheer."

Renaud knocked at the gate, and when Bernard heard it he came out and received Renaud and his folk right gladly and embraced him. Then said he: "Fair lord, you be right welcome, whence come you and how is it with you?"

"My friend Bernard," said Renaud, "I have left mine heritage by force of hunger and go to Dordonne. I pray you if you have any meat that you will give it to my wife and children, for they are so sore famished that they die for hunger."

Bernard had great pity for the distress wherein he saw Renaud and his folk, and on the other part he was right glad they had escaped from Charle-

magne. He came to the duchess and said: "Madame, you are right welcome, you are in a good place to take your rest at ease." Then he went into his chamber and brought out bread and wine and all such as God had sent him and laid it before Renaud and said: "Lord, take such victual as I may give you, in despite of Charlemagne."

All that day Renaud sojourned with Bernard and he served and comforted them with all his power, and gave the oats of his ass to Bayard. When night was come, he found the means for them to have three horses, whereof the duchess had one and the children the other twain, and thus Renaud and his folk passed through the wood till they came to Dordonne. And when they of the city knew that their lord was come, that they had desired so long, they were glad and came out to meet him in fair company and made great feast through all the town. And the barons of the country came to pay homage to him as their lord and master.

THE HISTORY TELLS THAT IT HAPPED on a day that Charlemagne rode nigh the castle to wite how they bore themselves in Montauban, and when he saw no one, he sent for his barons and said: "Lords, it is now eight days that we have seen nobody on the walls of Montauban, I believe that they are all dead."

"Sire," said Duke Naymes, "it were good to send men there to see the truth."

They lighted on horseback, and came to the gate in semblance to attack the castle, and when they saw that none came to defend, Charlemagne weened that they were dead of hunger and made fetch a ladder and mount the walls. Straightway Roland mounted up, and after him Ogier, Oliver, and Duke Naymes. When they were upon the wall they saw no man, so they came down and went to the gate to open it for Charlemagne. The King was sore angry when he found no man within, and said that all this was done by Maugis ; he walked up and down, and at last he found the way there as they went out, and when he saw it he called Ogier the Dane to him and said : " See here the work of Maugis."

Then said Duke Naymes : " This cave was made more than a hundred years ago. It is Saracens' work."

Then Charlemagne smiled with angry heart and said : " Seek where this hole will lead men to ; I shall not be easy till I know it."

When Roland heard this he put himself in the cave with a company bearing lighted torches, and they went so long that they came to the end of the cave and found them in the Wood of the Serpent, and when he looked about he could not know where he was. " Lords," said he, " meseemeth it were folly to seek after Renaud, for he knoweth well the country, and we not at all."

" Let us return to your uncle," said they.

Charlemagne asked them when they came out if they had found any issue.

“Yea, without fail; Renaud and his folk have escaped you, and they have Bayard with them. We have seen his track.”

When he knew this for certain, Charlemagne sent messengers far and wide for tidings of Renaud, and his army came into Montauban and lodged there six days.

There came a messenger to Charlemagne and said: “Sire, I have seen the four sons of Aymon in great joy, keeping open court in the city of Dordonne; Renaud gives great gifts to his men, I know not where he has found so great a treasure; and he hath made a great assembly to defend him against you, if you in any wise assail him.”

The King was much angry when he heard this, and swore by St. Denis that he would never lie in a bed till he had taken Dordonne, and when he had so sworn, he commanded his barons to truss their baggage, and pass to Dordonne to assail it. Straightway they took their route and arrived at Montorgueil which was so near Dordonne that men might see from it the steeples of the town. There they lodged and kept good ward for fear of the sons of Aymon, and when the day was come they put them on the march.

When Renaud saw this he said to his brethren that he would not let himself be besieged again as
243 at

RENAUD
COMES OUT
TO MEET
HIM

at Montauban, but that this time he would attack Charlemagne, and if he could take him he would not spare him again. Incontinent he sounded his horn and arrayed his folk in arms before the town, and said to his brethren: "My brethren, this day must we die or bring the war to an end. Let each of us prove him a good knight, and come nigh me in the battle that we may be the first to smite our enemies."

Then he chose a hundred of his best knights and bade them to be with him in the first line, and greatly they thanked him for the honour. This done he spurred Bayard and came fair upon the folk of Charlemagne.

Now when the King saw this great army he wondered greatly and said: "Where have they found so great a folk? They seem no less than before. But I swear I will do justice on him and his brethren ere long."

Then he put him on horseback to fight with Renaud, but Duke Naymes restrained him and counselled him once more to make peace, but Charlemagne rode forth in great wrath.

THE TALE TELLS THAT ONCE MORE Renaud would have made submission to Charlemagne, so he made a vow before his brethren that he would ask it once more, and if Charlemagne refused, he should never ask it again. So he came and said: "Sire, for God's mercy suffer that we have

peace and accord with you that this long war may finish, and your wrath be put away from us, and I shall be ready to do all you will, and give you Bayard, my horse, that I love."

RENAUD
ASKS
PEACE
ONCE
MORE

Then said the King: "Go, false glutton, the world shall not keep me from slaying thee."

Then said Renaud: "False King of France, I defy you!" and with his lance he smote a knight whom the King sent against him, and returned to his own folk.

When Richard saw his brother come again, he said: "Brother, what tidings; shall we have peace or war?"

"Brother," said he, "let us do the best we can, for peace we shall not have."

Then said Richard: "God bless you for the tidings you bring. We shall this day do great deeds against Charlemagne."

Long were it to tell the history of this battle, for the four sons of Aymon did great deeds, and no man could stand before Renaud. On the other side Duke Naymes bore the Oriflamme of France, and the twelve peers fought round Charlemagne for they feared lest he should come upon Renaud in the fight. But at the last Renaud saw that his folk were too few for the host, and he said to his knight who bore his banner: "Friend, go to Dordonne as quietly as thou art able, I and my brethren will watch the rearguard."

When Charlemagne saw that Renaud and his
company

company were on the road to Dordonne, he cried out: "Now after them, lords, for they be discomfited!" but this cry of his lost many a knight his life, for Renaud and his brethren slew well nigh a hundred that followed them. And as they were at the gate, Richard of Normandy would joust with Richard, Renaud's brother, and he was overthrown and taken prisoner and brought into the city in despite of the folk of Charlemagne.

Then they shut the gates and disarmed them and rested, for they had well need of it. And when Charlemagne saw that the four sons of Aymon were safe and that they had taken prisoner one of the twelve peers of France, he feared sore lest Renaud should make him to die, and since he might do no other, he commanded that the city should be straitly besieged and swore that he would never leave it till the four sons of Aymon were shamefully hanged.

"Sire," said Roland, "you know that I am he that hath most hurted the sons of Aymon, nor have I ever spoken to you of peace with them, but now am I constrained to move you thereto. For fifteen years you have warred against them and have had always the worse of the war, and not without cause. I promise you if you had warred so long on the Saracens, you should have been lord of the most part of them, and won you great honour. What is worse, Richard of Normandy, one of the best
246 knights

knights you had, is taken, and if Renaud should slay him, it shall be great dishonour to you and set all France in a flame, for Richard has great friends; and I tell you, if I were in the case that Renaud is in, I would slay him, since I might have no peace with you. Wherefore, sire, if you will believe me, for your own honour you shall send word to Renaud to deliver you again Richard of Normandy all armed on his horse and you will make peace with him. I promise you, sire, he will do it right gladly and aught else withal you command him."

Then said Charlemagne: "Have you aught else to say?"

"Nay, sire."

"I swear to you on my faith that the four sons of Aymon shall never have peace with me; I fear nothing for Richard, for Renaud would rather put out his own eyes than do him any ill."

When as Renaud and his folk were out of their harness he ordained good watch on the walls, then he sent for the Duke of Normandy, and said: "Richard, you know well Charlemagne doth me great wrong; I tell you for certain that if you do not make peace for us I shall smite your body in four."

"Sir," said the Duke, "I am in your danger, you have taken me in war, and if you do to me otherwise than you ought, you shall have great dishonour. As long as I live I shall not fail Charlemagne."

Then Renaud ordered that Richard should be guarded within his chamber, and well served of that appertaining to his estate.

While Charlemagne was thus before Dordonne, assaulting it and casting great stones against the wall, King Yon fell sick of a great sickness, and shrove him of his sins, beseeching God to have mercy on him. Then he died, and Renaud made him to be buried worshipfully, but there was no man wept for him, because of the great treason he had done.

HERE LEAVES THE HISTORY TO SPEAK OF THIS MATTER AND TELLS OF MAUGIS.

It fell on a day that Maugis had watched long in his hermitage and fell asleep. He dreamed that he was at Montauban, and saw Renaud and his brethren making their complaint to him of Charlemagne, who would take from them their good horse Bayard, but Renaud had him fast by the bridle, and would not let him go. Then Maugis arose and swore that he would go and see whether the brethren had need of him, and then pass to the Holy Land. So he shut the door of his hermitage and put him to the wood, and about the hour of noon he found two men making great sorrow. Maugis said: "God be with you."

"God is not with us, but rather the devil," said they. "There are in this wood strong thieves who have robbed us of the cloth we had to sell, and slain our fellow because he spake angrily to them."

Maugis had pity on them and said : “ Come with me, and I will pray these thieves for God’s sake to give you back your good, and if they will not I shall fight with them.”

When the merchants heard him thus speak they looked at him to see if they might know him. One of them said : “ There are seven of them armed, and you are alone and so weak that you cannot hold up your stick.”

“ Let this fool alone, he does not know what he says,” said the other ; “ go thy way, brother, and leave us in peace, or I shall give thee such a stroke that thou shalt feel it.”

Maugis said : “ Brother, thou dost not well to speak to me so, I cannot do thee good by force.”

Then he went his way and overtook the thieves, and said : “ Lords, God save you ; I pray you tell me why ye took away the goods of these merchants. You knew well it is not yours, I pray you let them have their own again.”

When the thieves heard this from Maugis they were angry, and the master of the thieves said : “ Go thy way, or I shall give thee such a stroke with my foot as shall burst thy heart open.”

When Maugis saw that this thief feared neither God nor man, he was right an-angered, and smote the master thief so strongly with his palmer’s staff that he cast him dead to the ground. Then all the other thieves ran on Maugis to slay him, but he dealt

so well with his staff that he slew five of them, and the other twain began to flee into the wood, and Maugis to cry: "False thieves, turn again, and give up your spoil."

When the merchants heard this cry they came to Maugis, and found the thieves that had robbed them dead. They said to one another: "Here is a good pilgrim! I ween it is my lord, St. Martin."

Then they kneeled before him and begged his pardon, and he bade them stand up and take their goods again, but he prayed them to tell him where Charlemagne was.

"Sir," said they, "Charlemagne has taken Montauban, but not the four sons of Aymon, for they went out by a cave in the earth and came to Dordonne. There the King has laid a siege against them, and will not make peace."

Then Maugis bade them adieu, and put him in the road for Dordonne, and so much he went that he came into the host of Charlemagne, and went straight towards the city leaning on his staff.

When the soldiers saw him they said: "This pilgrim will not go far. He cannot stand on his feet."

"By my oath," said another, "it might well be Maugis to deceive us."

"Not so," said another, "Maugis is not alive."

While they thus devised together, Maugis came to the wicket of the gate and found means to enter

within and pass to the palace to ask alms. There he found Renaud and the duchess, his wife, their children, and his cousins, and many noble knights at their meat. He leaned against a pillar of the hall and began to look on his cousins, that he loved so much above all things in the world. The seneschal weened he was a poor hermit and bade them serve him for the love of God, so they gave him bread and wine and flesh. But he asked them to give him only black bread and water in a treen dish, for he dared eat none other meat. When Renaud saw this poor man so lean and pale before him he had great pity of him, and sent him a dish from his own table, and Maugis set it before him, howbeit he would eat none of it.

Then Renaud said to himself: "Who is this? If he were not so lean I would say it was my cousin Maugis," and he left his meat to look upon him.

When all men were gone to their ward and there was nobody within the hall for whom he would restrain him, he said: "Good hermit, I pray you for God's sake, tell me if you be Maugis or no?"

Then Maugis could hide him no longer and said: "I am Maugis, without doubt, and I am glad that I see you and your brethren in good plight."

So Renaud went and kissed him a hundred times and said: "Cousin, put off this poor cape I see on you."

Then said Maugis: "Cousin, be not displeased;
I have

I have made a vow to God that I will eat only bread and wild herbs, and drink none other than water, and wear none other clothes than such as these be, to bring my soul to bliss by serving God."

Renaud asked him for news of where he came from and what he had done, and when Maugis had told him, he called his brothers and his wife and told them, "Maugis is here."

When they heard that their hearts stood still for joy and they ran to him and kissed him and the duchess wept sore and Aymonet and Yonet made great joy. And when Renaud would have clothed him, Maugis would take neither linen nor shoes, but only a hood and cloak, a bag and a pilgrim's staff well shod with iron, and when he had these he would go to the Holy Sepulchre to serve God there. "Moreover when I have so done, I shall come again to see you, and after I shall go again to my hermitage and live there as a beast, on roots and wild herbs, as I did before I came here."

When the morrow was come Maugis took his staff and went to hear mass, and after he took his leave of every one and went out. Renaud and his brethren conveyed him to the wicket-gate and kissed him, and also the Duchess Clare and her children. He was not far gone when he was environed by the folk of Charlemagne, and one said to the other: "Here is the hermit of yesterday, better clothed than he was. It is surely Maugis."

“Let be,” said the others; “this must be a hundred years old, it cannot be but that he is a good man. It were sin to do him harm.”

THE PEERS
WILL HAVE
PEACE

Maugis passed through them and said nothing.

Now was Charlemagne sore an-angered, because he could not have Richard of Normandy, and he called his barons to him and complained to them.

“Uncle,” said Roland, “I marvel greatly at what you say, we have showed you counsel, you would not hear it. I promise you you shall never see Richard till you make peace with Renaud. Consider well the great courtesy he showed you, when he had you at his will in Montauban and let you go free, and you showed him no mercy therefore. But since he cannot make peace with you, he will not waste courtesy but do us as much harm as he can, and he has prisoner our best knight.”

“Nephew, he is not harmed; Renaud keeps him in great honour.”

“Sire,” said Duke Naymes, “if Renaud hath not slain him he is the kindest man in the world, but I believe rather that he is dead than otherwise, for we can have no news of him.”

The King began to sigh, and Turpin and Ogier came and said: “Sire, Duke Naymes says truth, Renaud has great cause to be angry with you.”

Then Charlemagne said: “Go, lords, to Dordonne, and tell Renaud on my behalf, that if he will send me Richard of Normandy, and give Maugis

into my hands he shall have peace with me all the days of his life."

"Sire," said Duke Naymes, "you send us in vain for Maugis has left him these years past, and if Renaud would deliver him he could not."

"Go," said the King, "you will at least hear what he shall say to you and know how Richard doth."

So they went to Dordonne, though they feared Renaud greatly, bearing each of them a branch of an olive tree in his hand in token of peace, and when they came to the gate it was opened for them, and they came into the town to the palace.

When Renaud knew that they were come, he sat on his couch with his feet crossed and swore that he would not ask Charlemagne for anything, for through him he had lost Montauban and his cousin Maugis. When Duke Naymes came to him and had given his message, Renaud made answer: "Lords, ye be right welcome, as the knights of the world whom I ought to love best. I marvel me greatly of Charlemagne; would God I had him here as I have Richard of Normandy; he should leave his head for a pledge of peace, and I should be avenged of him. Wherefore go tell your King that I have not Maugis, and that if I had he should not have him. Because I have lost my cousin for him, I shall make to-morrow Richard to be hanged on the chief gate of the city, in despite of him. Moreover, let no man of Charlemagne come here again,

for I shall strike off the heads of such as come from him to me.”

THE KING
DOES NOT
BELIEVE
THE
THREAT

When the barons saw that Renaud was so angry, they durst no longer tarry there, but took their leave and returned to the King, who said: “Lords, ye be welcome. What tidings bring you? Have you seen Richard?”

“Sire,” said Duke Naymes, “Renaud doth you to wit that you shall not have Maugis, and for vengeance that he hath lost him by you he shall hang to-morrow Richard of Normandy upon the great gate of the town, and all of your men that he may take. Yet more he saith, that if he had you in his hands, if you would not grant him peace you should leave your head.”

Then said Roland: “Sire, we find in Holy Scripture that God cursed the tree that never bore fruit, and thus shall it be with you if you will not condescend to peace with the four sons of Aymon who have prayed you so humbly. I swear to you, if Richard is hung, you shall lose honour and worship all your life days.”

Charlemagne said to his barons: “Lords, you ween to make me afraid with your words. I swear to you, if Richard comes to harm, I will hang up Renaud and every man of his lineage.”

Then were Ogier and Turpin in great wrath, and Duke Naymes said: “Sire, wite well that we be sore abashed that you threaten us as well as Renaud.

I marvel me not that he is wroth ; and if he hangeth Richard, what may we do thereto? Wherefore I counsel all my fellows of the lineage of Renaud that we go our ways and let you carry on the war alone."

The other peers said that he gave good counsel, and Charlemagne bade them withdraw and return again next day.

In the morning, after he had heard mass, Renaud called his brethren and said : " It goes full ill with us that we cannot have peace with Charlemagne, but, since it is so, I shall anger him full sore, for I shall hang the Duke Richard of Normandy before his eyes."

His brethren agreed with him, and, shortly to tell, the gibbet was set up where Charlemagne could see it plainly. Wite it that Roland was the first man to see it, and he cried out : " Sire, now see how they will hang Duke Richard. He hath well served you, and now he is full ill rewarded for it. It is a shrewd example to them that serve you."

" Alas ! " said Oliver, " the gallows is righted up."

" Peace," said Charlemagne, " they do all this but to prove us ; they dare do him no harm of his body."

But Oliver, who was watching the town, said : " Ha, Roland, I see the ladder is set up all ready to the gibbet."

Renaud called ten of his folk and said to them :

“Go and bring Duke Richard, for he is to be hanged.”

RICHARD
IS PLAYING
CHESS

When they came into the chamber of the Duke, they found him playing at chess with Yonnet, the son of Renaud, and they said: “Sir Duke, come forth, for Renaud hath commanded that you shall be hanged.”

Duke Richard looked at them over his shoulder, but said naught, and bade Yon play, for it was time to go to dinner. When the sergeants saw that Richard took no heed of them, they would have taken him by the arms and said: “Rise up, Duke Richard, for you will be hanged in despite of Charlemagne.”

Then Richard struck one of them with a queen he had in his hand, and a second with a rook, and a third with his fist, so that they fell dead, and the others fled out of the room in fear. When they had gone, Richard sat him down and said: “Play well, child, or you shall be mated. I trow these ribalds were drunken.”

When Yonnet heard him speak thus, he said nothing, but played, yet he could not save the mate.

Then Richard said to the yeoman there: “Cast these carles out of the window,” and he did his command straightway.

Now Alard was without, waiting for Richard to be brought out, and he saw the bodies cast out of the window, and came to his brother and told him.

RICHARD IS
BROUGHT
OUT

Then Renaud came to the tower where Richard was, and said to him: "Lord, why have you slain my men?"

"Cousin," said Richard, "hear me, if it please you. Ten ribalds came right now and laid hands on me, saying you had commanded them, which thing I will not believe, so I made them to flee out in great haste, and some of them I slew. I would not have acted thus if I had held you as you hold me, and if I have done amiss, now take ye amends on me."

"You may say what you will, Richard," said Renaud, "but if I have not peace this day with Charlemagne, you shall be hanged."

Then he made him to be taken and bound, and brought to the place where the gallows were righted, and said: "Richard, choose one of these two things, either make me have peace with Charlemagne, or help me against him. If you will not you shall be hanged, and if you will take my part against Charlemagne I will set you free forthwith."

"Renaud, you speak like a child, think you I shall leave Charlemagne my sovereign lord for fear of death. But give me a messenger, and I will send him to Charlemagne and his barons, to wite if he be disposed to let me die here shamefully."

Then Renaud said to one of his folk: "Go, and do what Richard of Normandy shall tell you."

"My friend, you will go to Charlemagne and tell
258 him

him on my behalf that I pray him as my sovereign lord, if ever he loved me, to pardon Renaud, and that I will take on me to make satisfaction for him if he hath in anything misdome, as the twelve peers of France may judge. And if he will not do so, let him look hither and see me hang shamefully. And say to Roland and all my fellows, that if ever they loved me they shall show to Charlemagne how great a shame it shall be to him to let me die shamefully."

The messenger went straightway to the army of the King, and found him in his tent, and said to him all that Duke Richard commanded, then he turned him about to Roland and the peers, and said: "Lords, Duke Richard prayeth you, and Roland above all, that if ever you loved him, you will pray Charlemagne to make peace, or he is dead without mercy."

Then Roland said to the King: "Sire, suffer not that you be blamed. You know well that Duke Richard hath ever served you at your need, make peace with Renaud, for it were great shame to let him die."

Then Duke Naymes and Ogier said: "If you will not make peace to recover our fellow Duke Richard of Normandy, in short time you shall see your land destroyed before you."

Then Charlemagne swore in great wrath that Renaud should never have peace till he gave up Maugis.

“Take no fear for Richard,” said he, “Renaud would sooner blind himself than hurt him.”

Then the peers cried out, and Oliver said: “Why dare not Renaud touch Richard? I know so much of him that if he had you there he durst well hang yourself or all of us.”

“Sir Oliver,” said the messenger, “I swear to you that Renaud ceased not all this day to pray Richard that he would forsake Charlemagne, whereof Duke Richard would do nothing.”

And when he had said this, he said to the King: “Sire, give me leave to go, if it please you, and tell me what I shall say to Richard of Normandy from you.”

“Friend,” said the King, “tell him to fear naught for Renaud shall not dare to do him harm.”

Then the messenger, who was a wise knight, said: “Sir Emperor, ye be overproud; Renaud setteth little by you, and Alard waiteth well for my coming again, for he would rather than a hundred thousand pounds hang Richard.”

When the twelve peers saw the messenger go with an ill answer they were full sorry and much angry.

Then Roland came to the King, and said: “Sire, I now go out of your service without your leave. Ogier, what will you do? Will you come with me and leave him here, for he is beside himself?”

Ogier said to Roland: “You say truth; I shall go gladly with you where you will, since he suffers such

a valiant man as Duke Richard to die, he would do the same for us, for he hath neither love nor pity in him."

Then Oliver stood up and said: "Lords, I will go with you, I have dwelled here too long."

"And I also," said Duke Naymes and Hector.

Bishop Turpin seeing this, sighed and said: "It is evil to serve you, Charlemagne, for good service you yield evil reward. If I dwell any longer with you may God punish me for it."

Charlemagne said: "Lords, fear nothing, Richard shall have no hurt."

"Sire," said Duke Naymes, "you do great wrong to say so, but a fool never believes till he feels. Ween you to make us fools with your words? We can see the gallows set up for our friend. A mischief take me if I dwell with you any longer."

When he had said this he went out, and all the peers with him, and ordered his tents to be pulled down straightway, and the host of Charlemagne were sore afraid when they saw that the twelve peers had left the army with their forty thousand men.

When the messenger was returned to Dordonne, Renaud asked him what the King had said.

"Sir," said he, "you have missed having peace. Charlemagne sends you word by me that you do no harm to Duke Richard;" then turning to Richard, "Sir Duke, now may you know how much Charlemagne loveth you, for ye gat neither help nor succour

succour of him, and for love of you Roland and the twelve peers been an-angered with him and have pulled down their tents to leave him, and none abide save Earl Ganelon and his lineage, for their tents are not touched.”

When Renaud heard this he changed his intention and could not keep him from weeping. He embraced his cousin and said: “I pray you pardon me the great shame I have done you.”

“Renaud,” said Richard, “I blame you not, the great pride and cruelty of Charlemagne is cause of all this.”

Then he was unbound and Renaud said: “Let us lean upon this wall and see what Charlemagne will do.”

Charlemagne the Emperor, seeing all his barons leave him was sore angry, but in a little while his wrath went from him and he called a knight and said: “Now light on horseback and ride after Roland and the other barons, and tell them to come and speak with me, for I will pardon Renaud if they come again to me.”

“Sire,” said the knight, “God be thanked that hath brought you to this mind.” Then he rode hastily after the twelve peers of France.

Renaud, who was with Duke Richard at the gate of Dordonne, saw this and said: “Cousin, I see a knight come out of the tent of Charlemagne; I ween we shall have this day peace.”

“Sir,” said Richard, “you shall have good peace ; I ought dearly to love my fellows who have saved me from death.”

THE PEERS
COME BACK

The knight rode till he overtook Roland, and told him to return, for the King would pardon Renaud for their love.

Then they returned again and Renaud, who was watching them, said : “Cousin, I believe that the peace is made.”

When Charlemagne saw his barons come to him again, he said : “Lords, ye are of great pride to make me become peaceable against my will. I hate Renaud so much for his pride that I may not see him. I will that he go to the Holy Land, poorly clothed, on foot, and that he give me his horse Bayard. Then I shall render to his brothers their lands and heritages, and else not. Thus look well which of you shall do this message.”

“Sire,” said Duke Naymes, “I shall go to Renaud with a good will ;” and he set out for Dordonne.

When Renaud saw him come he came out to meet him, and said : “Sir, now have I that I have desired so long. Naymes, shall I have peace?”

“Yea, under a condition. You must go poorly clothed and begging your bread for God’s sake to the Holy Land, and leave Bayard with Charlemagne, and this done you shall have peace, and your brethren shall have their heritages.”

Then said Renaud : “Naymes, you are right welcome,

RENAUD
ACCEPTS
AND GIVES
UP BAYARD

welcome, I promise you I am ready to do the commandment of the King. I will set out to-morrow."

He took Bayard from the stable and gave him to Duke Naymes, and took his banner from him and set it on the high tower in token of peace, and when Charlemagne saw it he showed it to Roland who said: "How meek is Renaud and good of nature to make peace in this way."

"Roland," said Ogier, "Renaud is a lamb full of meekness, and in him are all the good conditions a knight ought to have."

Then came Duke Naymes leading Bayard, and said: "Sire, Renaud is ready to do all you have commanded him, and he shall depart to-morrow if you will."

"And where is Duke Richard?"

"Sire, he is well in Dordonne and abideth to convey Renaud on his road."

Renaud made great cheer with his brethren, and said: "Be not sorry that I go, I have made this peace more for you than for myself; I pray you hold well together till I return."

When he had said this he went to his chamber and put off his good raiment, and clad him in a poor mantle and great shoes, and took a great staff well ironed, and came to the hall to the duchess his wife. But she fell down in a swoon when she saw him so arrayed, and he ran to take her up and said:

“ Lady, take it not so sore at heart, for I shall soon come again if God will, and my brethren shall abide with you and serve you as their lady. I am so glad of the peace that inasmuch I am already returned. Madam, my dear wife, I pray God keep you from all evils.”

And with this he kissed her full sweetly and went on his way.

The Duchess when she saw he was gone, said: “ Oh, good husband Renaud, whose like is not in the world, God be with you, for I shall never see you again.”

And when she had said these words she went into the chamber and took off all her noble raiment and cast it into a fire, and took on her a poor smock, saying that she should never wear other clothes till she saw her lord again.

Richard and his brothers, and his folk went on the way with Renaud, till he thought they had gone far enough, then he turned toward them and said: “ Lords, I pray you return home again, for as long as you are not there, I am not at my ease. Comfort the Duchess, my brethren, and keep watch over my children.”

Then said Alard: “ Dear brother, come again shortly, for your departure is so heavy that I trow I shall die for sorrow.”

Then they embraced him, and Duke Richard said: “ I promise and swear to you that I shall defend

defend your brethren and your children against all men ; doubt not for them, they shall want nothing."

WHEN RENAUD WAS DEPARTED, Richard and his brothers dressed them nobly and came to the tent of Charlemagne ; and when he saw them he was right glad, and sent barons to meet them. And when they were before the King they kneeled humbly at his feet and said : " Sire, Renaud our brother recommendeth him humbly to your good grace and sendeth to you Richard of Normandy, whom you see here. He prays him to recommend us to you, for he has gone over-sea to accomplish your commandment."

" Friends," said Charlemagne, " ye be right welcome. Since we be friends I shall bring you to such honour as pertaineth to knights such as ye are, and if Renaud comes safe again from his voyage I shall hold him as dear as my own nephew Roland, for he is of great worthiness."

When the King had thus spoken with the brothers of Renaud, he kissed Duke Richard and said : " I pray you tell me what prison Renaud gave you, and what food."

" Sire, I had better prison and was more at mine ease than ever knight was, for I was served of the same as Renaud and sometimes better."

Charlemagne, when this was done, commanded that every man should depart for his own country. And he took his road to the city of Liège. When he

was on the bridge over the river of Meuse, he made Bayard to be brought before him, and said: "Ah, Bayard, thou hast often angered me, but now am I come to the point to avenge me." And when he had so said, he made a great millstone to be fastened to the neck of Bayard and cast him from the bridge into the river, so that he sank to the bottom of it. And the King rejoiced and said: "Now have I my desire, for you are dead without remedy."

THE KING
SLAYS
BAYARD
FOULLY

When the Frenchmen saw the great cruelty of Charlemagne, and how he avenged him on a poor beast, they were ill-content. Bishop Turpin said to Ogier: "What think you of Charlemagne? He hath well showed at this time his great felony."

"Sir," said Ogier, "it is true. It was great folly to slay such a beast."

Oliver said to Roland: "Charlemagne waxeth foolish." And there was none of the twelve peers but that wept for Bayard.

Ye ought to know that when Bayard might not come up for the great stone at his neck, he smote so hard on the millstone that it brake in two, and Bayard came again to the water's edge and passed over at the other side. Then he made a marvellous high cry, and shook himself, and ran as swiftly as a tempest into the Forest of Ardennes; and wite it for truth that the folk of that country say that he is still alive in the Forest of Ardennes, but when he

seeth man or woman he flees away that no man may come near him.

NOW TELLS THE STORY THAT WHEN Renaud was departed from Dordonne, he went so far that he came to Constantinople, and there he lodged with a holy woman, who served him as well as she could, and told him of another pilgrim she had who lay there ill. Then Renaud would see him, and he knew him for his cousin Maugis ; so he began to speak to him, and said : “ Friend, how is it with you ? ”

When Maugis heard his voice, he leapt out of bed as if he had never been ill, and embraced him, and asked him how he came there in such poor clothes.

Then Renaud told him all as ye have heard, and the treaty he had with Charlemagne.

Then Maugis was right glad, and said : “ Cousin, I am now made whole by the tidings you have brought me. We shall go together, and shall not die of hunger, for I have well learnt how to beg bread.”

Long were it to tell of their journey, but at the last they came near to the city of Jerusalem, and were right glad of it. They were astonied to see a great army about the city, and asked an old man of the country who they were, and he told them that the Admiral of Persia had taken the city by surprise and held the King prisoner in the name of Mahound.

A party of the Persians came by to attack the
268 host,

host, and as they went they rode over a lodge that Renaud and Maugis were making ; so Renaud took up a beam of his house and fell on them and slew many of them, so that the Christians who were fighting with them remarked how he fought, and wondered who they were. The leader of the Christians saw these two pilgrims, and demanded of them who they were ; and when at the last they told him, he begged Renaud to take the rule of them and lead the attack. So Renaud agreed, and he and Maugis armed them to fight for the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre. Shortly to tell, they did so well that they entered the town with their friends next day, and to save his life the Persian Admiral gave up the city, and went to Jaffa with his army to return to his own land.

When Renaud and Maugis had worshipped before the Holy Sepulchre, King Thomas whom they had rescued, and his barons, made them great cheer for many days, and gave them great gifts, but Maugis would take nothing, nor change his dress. Then he led them in great honour to the port of Jaffa and gave them a great ship, and put them on board of it, and took leave of them honourably. Wite it, that by fortune of the wind they were eight months without coming to land, but at the last they came on shore at a town named Palermo.

The King of that land was at the windows of his palace, and said to his lords : “ I see a ship setting
her

her goods on land, there must be some great man in it for the horses that they are taking out. Let us go and see."

When he was come down to the port he knew Renaud, and was right glad, and they embraced each other. Then said the King: "You are right welcome, for the Admiral of Persia is come into my land and wasteth it, and but yesterday he drove me out of the field."

"Sire," said Renaud, "I shall help you with all my power, and if the Admiral come to-morrow doubt not that I shall do my best."

When the battle was come Renaud and Maugis put themselves in the front, and did great damage to the Saracens, so that the Admiral saw them and would come out to do battle with them. As he came near he heard their cry, "Montauban!" and knew them to be the same as had defeated him at Jerusalem.

Then all trembling with fear he said to his nephew: "We were wrong to come here to make war on King Simon; I left these knights at Jerusalem and now they are here. I would I were in my ship in the middle of the sea."

Then he ordered his men to retire, and he turned bridle and fled to his ship, and Renaud and the folk that were with him followed after them and slew many of them.

After these things the King returned to the city and

and shared out the spoil, and feasted Renaud honourably for the space of four days.

Then Renaud would depart, and asked leave of the King, and took ship and never ceased till he came to Rome. Here he took land and went and confessed him to the Pope, and then returned to their ship and took their way to France, and at the last came to Dordonne, and when his brethren heard it they came out to meet him in great joy.

Renaud looked on Alard and saw his visage pale, and said: "Brother, how are my wife and children, for I do not see them?"

"Have no doubt for them," said Alard, "they are well at Montauban, and we have repaired again the town, and fortified the castle with victual."

Then came Maugis, and said: "Sire, learn what Alard dare not say: my lady, your wife, is deceased out of this world. Ever since you departed she ceased not to weep, and so long she sorrowed that she died at last."

When Renaud heard this he swooned to the earth for sorrow, and after, he said: "Ha, Charlemagne, well may I hate you, for by you I have lost my wife."

Then he came to the church and saw the tomb of his wife, and wept, saying: "What a pilgrim I am! There is none in the world so unhappy as I. I have lost all my joy and comfort since I have lost the fairest lady in the world, and the best!"

As he was saying these words his children came and kneeled before him, and he embraced them and said : " My fair children, see that ye be good men, for I fear me that ye shall lose me soon."

Then he began to make more sorrow than before, and the town was in mourning for ten days.

After this it fell that Renaud must needs pass to Montauban, and Maugis went with him, and all on foot to do honour to Maugis. And they of Montauban made great joy of the coming of their lord, so needs must Renaud put force on him to hide his grief. When he was in his castle he looked down from the window and saw it was as well peopled as ever, and was right glad of it.

The next day Maugis took leave of Renaud and his brethren, and departed for his hermitage. There he lived alone on roots and herbs for seven years, and died in the eighth about Easter. About this time too died the old Duke Aymon, and Renaud parted his goods among his brethren, and they married richly and nobly. He lived at Montauban with his sons, and taught them all knightly manners, and when they were grown he sent them to Charlemagne to be made knights.

When they were come to Paris the King received them kindly, but the two sons of Fulkes de Morillon sought to quarrel with them, and the lineage of Ganelon backed them up. At the last it was so commanded that they should fight in the parvis of

Notre Dame, and the two sons of Renaud bare them right nobly, and slew their enemies.

And when Renaud saw how his children were worthily grown up he called them to him, and said : " I wish that Yonnet should have Dordonne, and Aymonet Montauban. I fear me I have offended God greatly, and meseemeth that the time is come to amend myself."

Then his brethren wept, for they feared what he should do, but he went to his chamber and remained there all night. When the morning was come he rose and put a coat of russet on him, and a staff in his hand, and came to the gate of the town and bade open it.

Then said the porter : " Sir, whither do you go at this hour? I will wake your brothers, for you are in great danger of thieves."

" Friend," said Renaud, " wake them not: my trust is in God. Tell my brethren when thou seest them to-morrow that I greet them well, let them think always to do well, and love each other as they ought to do, for they shall never see me more. Through me has many a man died, and I feel my soul sore grieved."

Then he took the ring off his finger and gave it to the porter, who thanked him and said : " Ah, lord, you put all your country in great sorrow for your departure."

Then he stood at the gate and watched him till he

might see him no longer. When it was full day he went to find the brothers of Renaud, and told them what he had been commanded, and they all grieved sore for the love of Renaud, praying our Lord to be with him, and to comfort his brethren.

WHEN RENAUD DEPARTED FROM Montauban he took his way through the woods, and found naught to eat but wild apples and medlars, and when night was come he laid him down under a tree and slept till it was day. So he went on through the woods for eight days, till he came to a house of religion where the monks would have given him meat, but he took nothing but bread and water.

The next day he departed, and at the last he came to Cologne on the Rhine, where he found the Church of St. Peter, a building where there were many masons. And when he saw this he went in and kneeled by the high altar, and prayed to our Lord with great devotion.

When he had made his prayer he looked upon the place and the workmen that wrought there, and said to himself that it was better to serve the masons on this work than to walk still in the forest among the wild beasts.

Then he went to the master mason and said : " Master, I am a stranger and have no goods of this world whereby I may live : if it please you I shall serve the masons of such things as them needeth for their work."

“ Friend,” said the master, “ you seem not to be issued out of a poor house, you are more like a king than a mason. I dare not put you to work, notwithstanding you be so poorly arrayed.”

“ Master, care not therefor, for I shall serve you truly after my power.”

“ My friend, since it pleaseth you, it pleaseth me right well. Go help these four that you see there, that may not bear the stone, for they be but knaves.”

“ Master,” said Renaud, “ be not angry with the poor folk ; I will go and fetch it at once.”

Then Renaud cast his mantle from him and came to the four men that held the stone, and said : “ Lords, an it please you, go fetch another stone, and I shall bear this.”

“ Friend,” said they, “ you say well, if you can do as well we will let you.”

Then Renaud took up the stone and charged it on his neck, and bare it unto the wall where it should be set.

The other labourers were abashed, and said : “ We shall earn but little as long as this man is with us.”

But the master mason was glad, and when Renaud had brought the stone where as it should be set, the master said to him : “ Friend, put not the stone down yet.”

So Renaud held the stone in his arms till the

RENAUD
WILL TAKE
BUT ONE
PENNY

master made the place ready, and then he laid it down. Afterwards the master commanded him to fetch mortar, and Renaud came down and laded of the mortar more than ten men could carry, and bare it to the master mason, and said: "Master, I shall serve you well of everything. Work as fast as you can, I shall bring you more stones and mortar myself than can occupy you."

Then he went down again and brought up a great heap of stones, and said: "Fair masters, think to work well, for when these stones are laid and the mortar used, I shall bring you more."

When it came at even that the labourers should leave work and receive their money, the master mason set him down to pay the labourers, which took five pence a day. Then the master called Renaud, and said: "Come hither, my friend, take here what it please you, for you have served better than any of the other."

Then Renaud came forward and sore against his will took a penny.

When the master saw that he said: "You shall have twenty more, or else my conscience should be charged with your labour, and if you will work, you shall have as much every day, for there was never so good a labourer."

"Master," said Renaud, "if you will that I work any more, give me a penny to buy bread to sustain myself, for this I do for the love of God and none other."

Then Renaud took leave of the master mason, and went to the town and bought bread and so had no more to his supper but bread and a little water and went and laid him on a little straw. When the day was come he rose and went to his work and found no one there, so he went to the church to pray. While he was within the masons came, and when they were on the walls they asked if the strong man were come. So Renaud came out and fetched up stones and mortar for them all that day, and thus he lived for many days, serving the masons as it is said for the love of God.

He did so truly his duty that the other labourers had great envy of him, for they saw that they were all set aside for the great service that he did the masons, so they said to one another: "We be defamed by this great knave that doth so much labour; we shall never get anything as long as he is here, for he serveth all the masons with all they have need of, and we be left alone."

Then said one: "If you will believe me, we shall slay him."

"How say ye that," said another, "it is impossible; he is so strong that if we set upon him he will kill us."

"Friend," said he, "see you yonder vault by the great house? Wite it that that great knave sleepeth there every night when we go home. Let us go there this night when he is asleep, and take each of

us a pickaxe or a hammer, and dash the brains out his head, and when we have slain him we shall put him into a great sack and cast him into the river, and thus there shall be no more heard of him."

Then they agreed to what this traitor said, and they did as they purposed sooner than they weened to have done.

At noon, when the masons left work and went to their dinner, Renaud went and rested himself under the vault, and when the traitors saw that, there came to him the first that had spoken the treason and smote him with a great mason's hammer deep into the brain.

When Renaud felt the stroke that had been given him, he set his arms in form of a cross upon his breast and said: "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on my soul, and pardon them that have brought me to this death." And when he had said these words, his soul departed.

Then these traitors put him in a great sack and laded the cart with his body and carried him to the Rhine wherein they cast him. When they had done so they laded the cart with stones, and brought them to the church as they were wont to do.

As they were by the way they met the master mason that said: "Gallants, you begin to mend, you have done much work since dinner."

"Master," said they, "do not praise us, but go to your purse and give us some drinking money."

Then they began to say: "Where is that great lurden gone that he will not help us, we hold him gone to seek his wife."

A FAIR
MIRACLE
IS SHOWN

When the master heard that he was not there, he said: "I believe that ye have chased him away; if I wite that ye have done so, ye were better at Jerusalem."

"Master," said they, "you may say what you will, but we did never say word to displease him."

Now when the noble Renaud was cast into the Rhine, Our Lord showed for him a fair miracle. For all the fish of the river gathered them about the corpse, and bore him above the river so that he appeared to every man's sight, and when night was come, there was so great light about the corpse that all they that saw it weened the river was afire.

WHEN ALL THE FOLK OF THE CITY saw this fair miracle they ran thither, and the Archbishop of St. Peter went with his college in a procession, singing with great devotion, and tarried on the bank of the Rhine.

"Lords," said the Archbishop, "I shall tell you my advice. This is the body of some saint that Our Lord will have honour done to that is come here from somewhere. God wills not that it be lost in the water, see ye not how the fishes hold it up."

Then the bishop commanded that men should go in boats and see what it was, and straightway

they knew him for the great man that was one of the labourers for the masons at the Church of St. Peter.

Then the master mason went to his labourers and said: "False traitors! ye have slain the good man; confess the truth and deny it not."

And they confessed it and begged to be punished, but the Archbishop bade them do penance all their lives and sin no more.

Then was the body brought to hand, and put on a cart to bear it to the church, and the Archbishop sang the mass with great devotion, and after he commanded four lords who were there to take up the body and bear it, but they could not move it, and they marvelled and said: "We be not worthy to move this holy corpse, for we are sinners and unshriven."

While they thus spake, the body rose up and was borne to the cart, which moved by the power of God, no man aiding, and went straight out of the city and passed before the tomb they had made ready for it. Then said the Bishop: "We may well see that this is a holy corpse by this great miracle that God doth show before us all. Let us go after and do him honour, for it were not well to let him go thus alone."

So all the clergy and all the common people, little and great, that might go, followed the holy body, and in the city of Cologne abode neither man nor
280 woman.

woman. At the last the cart came to a little town called Croine, and there it abode still, and God showed many miracles by him, so that folk came from France and Germany to it, and their offerings built a royal church and great. Now the Archbishop of Cologne and his clergy came to the corpse and uncovered its face that everybody should see him if haply any man or woman might name him.

AND STAYS
AT
CROINE

NOW ON A DAY THE BRETHREN OF Renaud were on a mountain, sorry because they could get no tidings of their brother Renaud, and there came a pilgrim that saluted the barons.

“Pilgrim,” said Alard, “if you know any news, tell it us, I pray thee.”

Then the pilgrim told them that he came from Croine, and of the miracles done there by a certain man who was a giant, and who had wrought at the Church for the love of God, and had been traitorously slain there; moreover, he told them of the manner of his work, and of his death, and of the miracles shown.

Then the brothers began to weep, for they knew within themselves that it was Renaud, and they made them ready, and came to Croine after many days. So they lighted before the church and found there a great press of folk, but at the last they might come in and see the holy corpse on a bier uncovered. Then went they as nigh him as they could for to look him in the face, and they knew

him to be their brother, and they fell all down in a swoon to the earth.

When the Archbishop saw that, he said: "Sirs, I believe we shall soon know that we have desired so long, for I ween that these lords know well this holy corpse."

Then said Alard: "Alas! what shall we do? Poor are we of honour and weal since we have lost the brother by whom we were so sore dreaded. Alas! who hath laid hands on you? for he could not have known your goodness. We ought well to be sorry, since we have lost our hope, our trust, our comfort. Ah, brother Renaud, why had you ever the heart to abandon us as you did, seeing that you loved us so much?"

When the brethren had wept a long time they came and kissed the corpse on the mouth, one after the other, and he should have had a hard heart who had not wept with the three sons of Aymon.

Then the Archbishop came to them and said: "Lords, be not displeased for what I shall say to you. Ye do not well to make so great sorrow, but rather you should make great joy and be glad for your brother, who is a saint in heaven and hath suffered martyrdom in its service; and you see now before your eyes the great miracles that he doth. Now tell us, I pray thee, what ye be, and how is this holy body named, and what his name was when
282 he

he lived in this world, to the extent that it may be written above his tomb.”

RENAUD
IS KNOWN

Then said Alard: “Lord, since it pleases you to know, wite you that this corpse was called Renaud of Montauban, and we three that be here are his brethren. Well I wot that ye have heard of the four sons of Aymon, with whom Charlemagne warred so long.”

When the people heard that they were the four sons of Aymon, and that the holy corpse was the good Renaud of Montauban, they began all to weep for pity and for joy, because they saw the noblest and worthiest knight of the world dead in the service of the Lord doing penance. Then the brothers laid Renaud in his tomb that was right rich, where the holy corpse resteth to this day, and every year is kept for him great solemnity and feast.

HERE AT THIS TIME ENDS THE HISTORY OF RENAUD OF MONTAUBAN, TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM CAXTON AND NOW NEWLY TRANSLATED AND ABRIDGED BY ME, ROBERT STEELE, AND PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO. FOR GEORGE ALLEN. LONDON. MDCCCXCVII.



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