

Chanson de Rolland.

THE SONG OF ROLAND

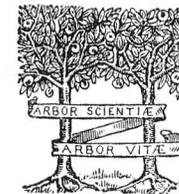
TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE BY

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ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S COUNSEL

Dopo la dolorosa rotta, quando
Carlo Magno perdè la santa gesta
Non sonò sì terribilmente Orlando

Inferno, xxxi.



LONDON

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1880

His Durindana beat down with mine.
 The Franks shall perish and France decline."
 Thus were mustered King Marsil's peers,
 With a hundred thousand heathen spears.
 In haste to press to the battle on,
 In a pine-tree forest their arms they don.

79

LXXXII.

They don their hauberks of Saracen mould,
 Wrought for the most with a triple fold ;
 In Saragossa their helms were made ;
 Steel of Vienne was each girded blade ;
 Valentia lances and targets bright,
 Pennons of azure and red and white.
 They leave their sumpters and mules aside,
 Leap on their chargers, and serried ride.
 Bright was the sunshine and fair the day ;
 Their arms resplendent gave back the ray.
 Then sound a thousand clarions clear,
 Till the Franks the mighty clangour hear.
 " Sir Comrade," said Olivier, " I trow
 There is battle at hand with the Saracen foe."
 " God grant," said Roland, " it may be so.
 Here our post for our king we hold ;
 For his lord the vassal bears heat and cold,
 Toil and peril endures for him,
 Risks in his service both life and limb.

For mighty blows let our arms be strung,
 Lest songs of scorn be against us sung.
 With the Christian is good, with the heathen ill :
 No dastard part shall ye see me fill."

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

The Prelude of the Great Battle.

80

LXXXIII.

OLIVIER clomb to a mountain height,
Glanced through the valley that stretched to right ;
He saw advancing the Saracen men,
And thus to Roland he spake agen :
“ What sights and sounds from the Spanish side,
White gleaming hauberks and helms in pride?
In deadliest wrath our Franks shall be !
Ganelon wrought this perfidy ;
It was he who doomed us to hold the rear.”
“ Hush,” said Roland ; “ O Olivier,
No word be said of my stepsire here.”

81

LXXXIV.

Sir Olivier to the peak hath clomb,
Looks far on the realm of Spain therefrom ;
He sees the Saracen power arrayed,—
Helmets gleaming with gold inlaid,

Shields and hauberks in serried row,
 Spears with pennons that from them flow.
 He may not reckon the mighty mass,
 So far their numbers his thought surpass.
 All in bewilderment and dismay,
 Down from the mountain he takes his way,
 Comes to the Franks the tale to say.

82

LXXXV.

"I have seen the paynim," said Olivier.
 "Never on earth did such host appear :
 A hundred thousand with targets bright,
 With helmets laced and hauberks white,
 Erect and shining their lances tall ;
 Such battle as waits you did ne'er befall.
 My Lords of France, be God your stay,
 That you be not vanquished in field to-day."
 "Accursed," say the Franks, "be they who fly.
 None shall blench from the fear to die."

Roland's Bride.

83

LXXXVI.

"In mighty strength are the heathen crew,"
 Olivier said, "and our Franks are few ;
 My comrade, Roland, sound on your horn ;
 Karl will hear and his host return."

"I were mad," said Roland, "to do such deed ;
 Lost in France were my glory's meed.
 My Durindana shall smite full hard,
 And her hilt be red to the golden guard.
 The heathen felons shall find their fate ;
 Their death, I swear, in the pass they wait."

84

LXXXVII.

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

85

LXXXVIII.

"Roland, Roland, yet wind one blast !
 Karl will hear ere the gorge be passed,
 And the Franks return on their path full fast."
 "I will not sound on mine ivory horn :
 It shall never be spoken of me in scorn,

That for heathen felons one blast I blew ;
 I may not dishonour my lineage true.
 But I will strike, ere this fight be o'er,
 A thousand strokes and seven hundred more,
 And my Durindana shall drip with gore.
 Our Franks will bear them like vassals brave.
 The Saracens flock but to find a grave."

86

LXXXIX.

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

87

XC.

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

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

88

XCI.

When Roland felt that the battle came,
 Lion or leopard to him were tame ;
 He shouted aloud to his Franks, and then
 Called to his gentle compeer agen.
 "My friend, my comrade, my Olivier,
 The Emperor left us his bravest here ;
 Twice ten thousand he set apart,
 And he knew among them no dastard heart.
 For his lord the vassal must bear the stress
 Of the winter's cold and the sun's excess—
 Peril his flesh and his blood thereby :

Strike thou with thy good lance-point, and I
 With Durindana, the matchless glaive
 Which the king himself to my keeping gave,
 That he who wears it when I lie cold
 May say 'twas the sword of a vassal bold."

89

XCII.

Archbishop Turpin, above the rest,
 Spurred his steed to a jutting crest.
 His sermon thus to the Franks he spake :—
 "Lords, we are here for our monarch's sake ;
 Hold we for him, though our death should come ;
 Fight for the succour of Christendom.
 The battle approaches—ye know it well,
 For ye see the ranks of the infidel.
 Cry *mea culpa*, and lowly kneel ;
 I will assoil you, your souls to heal.
 In death ye are holy martyrs crowned."
 The Franks alighted, and knelt on ground ;
 In God's high name the host he blessed,
 And for penance gave them—to smite their best.

90

XCIII.

The Franks arose from bended knee,
 Assoiled, and from their sins set free ;
 The archbishop blessed them fervently :

Then each one sprang on his bounding barb,
 Armed and laced in knightly garb,
 Apparelled all for the battle line.
 At last said Roland, "Companion mine,
 Too well the treason is now displayed,
 How Ganelon hath our band betrayed.
 To him the gifts and the treasures fell ;
 But our Emperor will avenge us well.
 King Marsil deemeth us bought and sold ;
 The price shall be with our good swords told."

91

XCIV.

Roland rideth the passes through,
 On Veillantif, his charger true ;
 Girt in his harness that shone full fair,
 And baron-like his lance he bare.
 The steel erect in the sunshine gleamed,
 With the snow-white pennon that from it streamed ;
 The golden fringes beat on his hand.
 Joyous of visage was he, and bland,
 Exceeding beautiful of frame ;
 And his warriors hailed him with glad acclaim.
 Proudly he looked on the heathen ranks,
 Humbly and sweetly upon his Franks.
 Courteously spake he, in words of grace—
 "Ride, my barons, at gentle pace.
 The Saracens here to their slaughter toil :

Reap we, to-day, a glorious spoil,
 Never fell to Monarch of France the like."
 At his word, the hosts are in act to strike.

92

xcv.

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

* See Note Z.

The Mellay.

93

xcvi.

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

Nor shall France this day her fame forego.
Strike in, my barons ; the foremost blow
Dealt in the fight doth to us belong :
We have the right, and these dogs the wrong."

94

xcvii.

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

95

xcviii.

A king was there of a strange countrie,
King Corsablis of Barbary ;
Before the Saracen van he cried,
" Right well may we in this battle bide ;
Puny the host of the Franks I deem,
And those that front us, of vile esteem.
Not one by succour of Karl shall fly ;
The day hath dawned that shall see them die."
Archbishop Turpin hath heard him well ;
No mortal hates he with hate so fell :
He pricked with spurs of the fine gold wrought,
And in deadly passage the heathen sought ;
Shield and corselet were pierced and riven,
And the lance's point through his body driven ;
To and fro, at the mighty thrust,
He reeled, and then fell stark in dust.
Turpin looked on him, stretched on ground.
" Loud thou liest, thou heathen hound !
King Karl is ever our pride and stay ;
Nor one of the Franks shall blench this day,
But your comrades here on the field shall lie ;
I bring you tidings : ye all shall die.
Strike, Franks ! remember your chivalry ;
First blows are ours, high God be praised !"
Once more the cry, "*Montjoie !*" he raised.

96

XCIX.

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

C.

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

CI.

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

CII.

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

CIII.

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

CIV.

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

CLVIII.

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

CLIX.

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

140

CLX.

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

141

CLXI.

Once more pressed Roland within the fight,
 His Durindana he grasped with might ;
 Faldron of Pui did he cleave in two,
 And twenty-four of their bravest slew.
 Never was man on such vengeance bound ;
 And, as flee the roe-deer before the hound,

So in face of Roland the heathens flee.
 Saith Turpin, "Right well this liketh me.
 Such prowess a cavalier befits,
 Who harness wears and on charger sits ;
 In battle shall he be strong and great,
 Or I prize him not at four deniers' rate ;
 Let him else be monk in a cloister cell,
 His daily prayers for our souls to tell."
 Cries Roland, "Smite them, and do not spare."
 Down once more on the foe they bear,
 But the Christian ranks grow thinned and rare.

CLXII.

Who knoweth ransom is none for him,
 Maketh in battle resistance grim ;
 The Franks like wrathful lions strike.
 But King Marsil beareth him baron-like ;
 He bestrideth his charger, Gaignon hight,
 And he pricketh him hard, Sir Beuve to smite,
 The Lord of Beaune and of Dijon town,
 Through shield and cuirass, he struck him down :
 Dead past succour of man he lay.
 Ivon and Ivor did Marsil slay ;
 Gerard of Roussillon beside.
 Not far was Roland, and loud he cried,
 "Be thou for ever in God's disgrace,
 Who hast slain my fellows before my face

Before we part thou shalt blows essay,
 And learn the name of my sword to-day.
 Down, at the word, came the trenchant brand,
 And from Marsil severed his good right hand :
 With another stroke, the head he won
 Of the fair-haired Jurfalez, Marsil's son.
 "Help us, Mahound !" say the heathen train,
 "May our gods avenge us on Carlemaine !
 Such daring felons he hither sent,
 Who will hold the field till their lives be spent."
 "Let us flee and save us," cry one and all.
 Unto flight a hundred thousand fall,
 Nor can aught the fugitives recall.

CLXIII.

But what availeth ? though Marsil fly,
 His uncle, the Algalif, still is nigh ;
 Lord of Carthagera is he,
 Of Alferna's shore and Garmalie,
 And of Ethiopia, accursed land :
 The black battalions at his command,
 With nostrils huge and flattened ears,
 Outnumber fifty thousand spears ;
 And on they ride in haste and ire,
 Shouting their heathen war-cry dire.
 "At last," said Roland, "the hour is come,
 Here receive we our martyrdom ;

The Death of Roland.

168

CLXXXIX.

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

169

CXC.

High were the mountains and high the trees,
 Bright shone the marble terraces ;
 On the green grass Roland hath swooned away.
 A Saracen spied him where he lay :
 Stretched with the rest, he had feigned him dead,
 His face and body with blood bespread.
 To his feet he sprang, and in haste he hied,—
 He was fair and strong and of courage tried,

In pride and wrath he was overbold,—
 And on Roland, body and arms, laid hold.
 “ The nephew of Karl is overthrown !
 To Araby bear I this sword, mine own.”
 He stooped to grasp it, but as he drew,
 Roland returned to his sense anew.

170

CXCI.

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

171

CXCI.

Roland feeleth his eyesight reft,
 Yet he stands erect with what strength is left ;

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

172

CXCIII.

He smote anew on the marble stair.
 It grated, but breach nor notch was there.
 When Roland found that it would not break,
 Thus began he his plaint to make.
 "Ah, Durindana, how fair and bright
 Thou sparklest, flaming against the light!
 When Karl in Maurienne valley lay,
 God sent his angel from heaven to say—

'This sword shall a valorous captain's be,'
 And he girt it, the gentle king, on me.
 With it I vanquished Poitou and Maine,
 Provence I conquered, and Aquitaine;
 I conquered Normandy the free,
 Anjou, and the marches of Brittany;
 Romagna I won, and Lombardy,
 Bavaria, Flanders from side to side,
 And Burgundy, and Poland wide;
 Constantinople affiance vowed,
 And the Saxon soil to his bidding bowed;
 Scotia, and Wales, and Ireland's plain,*
 Of England made he his own domain.
 What mighty regions I won of old,
 For the hoary-headed Karl to hold!
 But there presses on me a grievous pain,
 Lest thou in heathen hands remain.
 O God our Father, keep France from stain!"

173

CXCIV.

His strokes once more on the brown rock fell,
 And the steel was bent past words to tell;
 Yet it brake not, nor was notched the grain,
 Erect it leaped to the sky again.
 When he failed at the last to break his blade,
 His lamentation he inly made.

* See Note EE.

“ Oh, fair and holy, my peerless sword,
 What relics lie in thy pommel stored !
 Tooth of Saint Peter, Saint Basil's blood,
 Hair of Saint Denis beside them strewed,
 Fragment of holy Mary's vest.
 'Twere shame that thou with the heathen rest ;
 Thee should the hand of a Christian serve,
 One who would never in battle swerve.
 What regions won I with thee of yore,
 The empire now of Karl the hoar !
 Rich and mighty is he therefore.”

174

CXCIV.

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

175

CXCVI.

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

176

CXCVII.

Beneath a pine was his resting-place,
 To the land of Spain hath he turned his face.
 On his memory rose full many a thought—
 Of the lands he won and the fields he fought ;
 Of his gentle France, of his kin and line ;
 Of his nursing father, King Karl benign ;—
 He may not the tear and sob control,
 Nor yet forgets he his parting soul.
 To God's compassion he makes his cry :
 “ O Father true, who canst not lie,
 Who didst Lazarus raise unto life agen,
 And Daniel shield in the lions' den ;
 Shield my soul from its peril, due
 For the sins I sinned my lifetime through.”

He did his right-hand glove uplift—
St. Gabriel took from his hand the gift ;
Then drooped his head upon his breast,
And with claspèd hands he went to rest.
God from on high sent down to him
One of his angel Cherubim—
Saint Michael of Peril of the sea,
Saint Gabriel in company—
From heaven they came for that soul of price,
And they bore it with them to Paradise.*

* See Note FF.

PART III.

THE REPRISALS.

The Chastisement of the Saracens.

177

CXCVIII.

DEAD is Roland ; his soul with God.
While to Roncesvalles the Emperor rode,
Where neither path nor track he found,
Nor open space nor rood of ground,
But was strewn with Frank or heathen slain,
“Where art thou, Roland?” he cried in pain :
“The Archbishop where, and Olivier,
Gerein and his brother in arms, Gerier ?
Count Otho where, and Berengier,
Ivon and Ivor, so dear to me ;
And Engelier of Gascony ;
Samson the duke, and Anseis the bold ;
Gerard, of Roussillon, the old ;
My peers, the twelve, whom I left behind ?”
In vain !—No answer may he find.
“O God,” he cried, “what grief is mine
That I was not in front of this battle line !”

For very wrath his beard he tore,
His knights and barons weeping sore ;
Aswoon full fifty thousand fall ;
Duke Naimés hath pity and dole for all.

178

CXCIX.

Nor knight nor baron was there to see
But wept full fast, and bitterly ;
For son and brother their tears descend,
For lord and liege, for kin and friend ;
Aswoon all numberless they fell,
But Naimés did gallantly and well.
He spake the first to the Emperor—
“ Look onward, sire, two leagues before,
See the dust from the ways arise,—
There the strength of the heathen lies.
Ride on ; avenge you for this dark day.”
“ O God,” said Karl, “ they are far away !
Yet for right and honour, the sooth ye say.
Fair France’s flower they have torn from me.”
To Otun and Gebouin beckoned he,
To Tybalt of Rheims, and Milo the count.
“ Guard the battle-field, vale, and mount—
Leave the dead as ye see them lie ;
Watch, that nor lion nor beast come nigh,
Nor on them varlet or squire lay hand ;
None shall touch them, ’tis my command,

Till with God’s good grace we return again.”
They answered lowly, in loving strain,
“ Great lord, fair sire, we will do your hest,”
And a thousand warriors with them rest.

179

CC.

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

CCI.

God wrought for Karl a miracle :
In his place in heaven the sun stood still.
The heathens fled, the Franks pursued,
And in Val Tenèbres beside them stood ;