

Deuers la teste sur le q̄r li descent.
 De suz un pin i est alet curant.
 Sur l'erbe uerree siest culches adenz.
 De suz lui met s'espee 7 l'olifan en sumer.
 Turnat la teste vers la pazene gent.
 Pur co la e fait que il uoelt uerremene.
 Que carl diet 7 creste sa gent.
 Li gentils quens qui li fut moit cunquerant.
 Clemez sa culpe emenuz 7 suuent.
 Pur ses pechez deus en pur offrid lo grant. *doi.*
Cosent roit de sun vent ni ad plus.
 Li chert espaigne est en un pui agne.
 Al une main si ad sun piz batuz.
 De meit culpe uert des tues uertuz.
 De mes pechez des granz 7 des menuz.
 Que io ai fait des lurs que nez fu.
 Tresqua cest iur que est li consour.
Ls un des trez guanz en ad uerz leu tendue.
 Li angles del ciel i descendent a lui. *doi.*
 Li quens roit se ni dyluz un pin
 En uerz espaigne en ad turner sun uis.
 De plusurs choses a remembrer li p̄st.
 De tante uerz cum li bers 9 quist.
 De duler france des homes de sun lign.
 De carlemagne sun seignoz ki l'urrit.
 Ne poer miter nen plus 7 ne suspire.
 Qu'il auz sun meisme ne uolt meore en uis.

Page from the Oxford Manuscript of *La Chanson de Roland*
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The Song of Roland

THE LEGEND THAT TUROLDUS RELATES

The Oxford Version Translated
 Into Modern English Verse By

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THE EMBASSY
AND
THE CRIME OF GANELON

XXVIII

Ganelon rides under an olive tree tall,
He has joined the Saracen messengers all.
Blancandrin, to wait his coming, did tarry!
The words they exchange with each other are wary.

³⁷⁰ Says Blancandrin: "Charles is most marvelous of men,
Who conquered Pouille and Calabre, and then
To England he passed the salty sea,
For Saint Peter, there conquered the tribute he.
What seeks he of us in our own country?"

³⁷⁵ Ganelon responds: "Such is his whim,
Never will there be man who prevails against him."

XXIX

Said Blancandrin: "The Franks are noble men.
Much wrong their dukes and counts do then
To their lord, who such counsel to him take,

³⁸⁰ Himself, and others, confounded to make."
Said Ganelon: "I know truly of no man to blame,
Except Roland, and he yet of it shall have shame.
Yestermorn sat the Emperor in the shade;
Came there his nephew, in his hauberk arrayed.

³⁸⁵ He had pillaged to Carcassone near,
And held a red apple in his hand here:
'Take it, good Sir,' to his uncle, Roland said,
'I present you the crown from every king's head.'
Such pride, as his, ought well to cease,

³⁹⁰ For each day he exposes himself without fear;
Should he be killed, we then would have peace."

XXX

Said Blancandrin: "Roland is fierce, I hear,
Who all nations wishes to put in fear,
And all the lands he wishes to claim.

³⁹⁵ On what race, counts he to do the same?"
Said Ganelon: "Upon the French race he doth call;
They love him so much, they won't fail him at all.

Silver and gold he to them doth present,
Horses and mules, silks and armament!

⁴⁰⁰ To the Emperor's own desires, he is very provident,
He will conquer for him the lands from here to the Orient."

XXXI

So much Ganelon and Blancandrin ride,
That they pledge their faith on either side
That they should seek Roland to kill.

⁴⁰⁵ So far they ride, by way and hill,
They under a yew in Saragossa alight.
A throne, in the shade of a pine, is in sight,
Which Alexandrian silk enfolds.

There is the King, who all Spain holds.

⁴¹⁰ Twenty thousand Saracens are around,
Not one there utters a word or sound,
For the news that they would wish to hear.
Behold Ganelon and Blancandrin draw near!

XXXII

Blancandrin comes before the King,

⁴¹⁵ By the hand, he Count Ganelon doth bring.
He says to the King: "May Mohammed save you,
And Apollo, whose holy laws we hold, too!
Your mission we made to Charles the King.

He raised on high both of his hands,

⁴²⁰ He praised his God, nor said other thing.

Here you he sends a noble baron of his lands,
Who is of France a powerful man;
By him you will hear if have peace you can."
Responds Marsile: "Now let him tell,
And we to him will listen well."

XXXIII

425 Count Ganelon had reflected well on his part;
He commences to speak with skill and art,
As a man who well it knows to do.
He says to the King: "May God save you,
The Glorious, whom to adore we owe!

430 Charlemagne, the valiant, of you demands so:
That holy Christianity you receive;
Half Spain to you in fief he will leave.

If you do not wish to accede to this course,
You shall be taken and bound by force,

435 To the Capital at Aix, you shall be led,
By judgment there will be finished;
There you will die in shame and degradation."
King Marsile felt much indignation:

A golden dart, garnished with plumes, he held;
440 To strike him did wish, but was withheld.

XXXIV

King Marsile changed his colour's shade,
Brandishment of the shaft of his javelin he made.
When Ganelon saw, to his sword went his hand;
From the scabbard, two fingers' length he drew the brand.

445 To it he said: "You are a beautiful thing;
Long have I borne you in the court of the King:
The Emperor of France shall never say
I alone died in this foreign country today,
Before to you, they shall the better pay."

450 The Pagans cry: "Break up the melee!"

XXXV

So much he was prayed by the better Saracens,
Marsile seated himself on his throne again.
Said the Caliph: "You put us in a bad case,
To try to strike the Frenchman, who us doth face;
455 To listen, and hear what he says, is your place."

"I will suffer it, Sir," Ganelon said.

"Not all the gold that God has made,
Nor all the wealth in this country,
Will keep me from speaking, if you permit me,

460 What Charlemagne, the King, who powerful doth be,
By me informs his mortal enemy."

He is in a sable mantle dressed,

With silk of Alexandria covering it:

He throws it to earth, and Blancandrin receives it.

465 But his sword, he does not wish to quit.
In his right hand, its hilt of gold he pressed.

Said the Pagans: "A noble baron is it!"

XXXVI

Towards the King, Ganelon then made his way,
And said: "You do wrong to be carried away;

470 For so you mandates Charles, who France doth hold;
You receive the faith of the Christian fold;

Half Spain he will give in fief to you,
The other half shall have Roland, his nephew.
You will have a proud partner there, indeed.

475 If to this accord you will not accede,
To Saragossa, you to besiege, he will ride;
By force, you will be taken and tied.

You straight to the seat at Aix he will lead;
You there will have no palfrey, nor steed,

480 Nor mule, nor mulet, to ride, take heed,
You will be thrown on a vile pack horse instead;
By judgment, there you will lose your head.

Our Emperor to you sends this word."
In his right hand, to the Pagan, it he delivered.

XXXVII

485 From his ire, Marsile of colour had lost a great deal.
He discarded the wax, as he broke the seal;
And a glance at the letter did all reveal.
"This Charlemagne, who holds France in his sway,
That I remember his d'olour and ire, he doth say:
490 'Tis of Basan, and his brother Basile, dead;
Of whom, in the mountains of Haltoie, I took the heads.
If I will redeem the life of my body,
I must send him my uncle, the Caliph, quickly;
Otherwise, he will not love me more."

495 Then spoke his son, Marsile before,
And he said: "Ganelon has spoken folly;
'Tis not right he should longer living be.

Deliver him to me,
And justice you shall see."
Ganelon heard, and brandished his sword fine,
500 Came and stood with his back to the trunk of the pine.

XXXVIII

Into the orchard, went the King;
His better men into assembly did bring.
There came Blancandrin, with hoary hair,
And Jurfaleu, his son and heir,
505 And the Caliph, his uncle, faithful and true.
Said Blancandrin: "Call the Frenchman, too.
Pledged to our profit his faith doth be."
Said the King: "You lead him here to me."
Ganelon, by the right hand to the fingers, he did bring
510 Into the orchard and up to the King;
And they did then prepare
That infamous treason there.

XXXIX

"Good Sir Ganelon," Marsile did say,
"I have done folly to you today,
When, in anger, I would a strike at you take.
515 With these sable skins, I gage you reparation to make;
They are worth more than five hundred pounds of gold:
Ere tomorrow night a fine amend you shall behold."
"I will not refuse," Ganelon him did tell;
"May God, if it please Him, recompense you well."

XL

520 Said Marsile: "Ganelon, know truly,
To love you much, my desire doth be;
Of Charlemagne, I wish to hear you tell.
He is very old, and has used his time well,
To my knowledge, he two hundred years has amassed;
525 By many lands has his body passed.
So many blows on his shield did he take,
So many rich kings did he beggars make:
When will he cease to war so much?"
Said Ganelon: "Charles indeed is not such;
530 No man, who him doth see and know,
But will tell you the Emperor is a valiant foe.
I know not enough to praise him to you,
But more honour he has and more virtue:
His great value, who could recount it?
535 God made him to shine with such courage and wit,
He would rather die than his barons quit."

XLI

Said the Pagan: "Much marvel do I hold
Of Charlemagne, who is white and old;
To my knowledge, two hundred years old and more.
540 So many lands he has traveled o'er!

Took of lances and spears so many a blow!
Reduced to begging so many a foe!
When will he weary of warring grow?"
"It will not be," said Ganelon,
"So long as lives his nephew on.
545 There is not such a valiant baron as he
Beneath the sky's great canopy;
Brave, too, his comrade, Oliver, doth be.
The Dozen Peers,
Whom Charles holds so dear,
Make the vanguard, with twenty thousand knights near:
Secure is Charles, that no man he fears."

XLII

550 Said the Saracen: "I marvel at it quite,
Of Charlemagne, who is old and white;
To my knowledge, he has more than two hundred years.
He has conquered lands both far and near,
Such blows from good sharp spears he did brook,
555 So many powerful kings he killed, or conquered took;
When will he weary on war to look?"
Said Ganelon: "It will not be,
While Roland, yet living is he.
From here to the Orient, no vassal is such.
Brave also is Oliver, his comrade dear.
560 The Twelve Peers, whom Charles loves so much,
Make the vanguard with twenty thousand Franks sure:
No living man he fears, Charles is secure."

XLIII

"Good Sir Ganelon," King Marsile, said he,
"I have such forces, none more fine will you see;
565 I can have four hundred thousand knights.
With them, Charles and the French can I fight?"
Ganelon responded: "This is not for you:

Of your Pagans, great loss you would have, too;
Leave folly, and to wisdom hold.
570 Give the Emperor so much of possessions and gold,
All the French at it will marvel hard.
For twenty hostages, which you will send,
To sweet France, the King his way will wend.
He will leave behind him his rear guard,
575 Will be there, I believe, Count Roland, his nephew,
And Oliver, the brave and courteous, too.
The counts are dead, if you will believe me.
The fall of his great pride Charles will see,
And he will desire no more
Against you ever to war."

XLIV

580 "Good Sir Ganelon," King Marsile said,
"To kill Roland, how shall I be led?"
Said Ganelon: "To tell you that, well I know.
The King by the best ports of Cize will go,
His rearguard he will have placed behind,
585 There his nephew, Count Roland the mighty, you will
find,
And Oliver, in whom so much faith has he;
Twenty thousand Franks they have in their company.
Of your Pagans, a hundred thousand to them send!
A battle with them let these first fend:
590 The men of France will be wounded much,
I can't say that yours will escape from such.
With another like battle upon them fall,
Of such that may Roland not escape at all.
You will have done a worthy deed;
595 No more to war all your life will have need."

XLV

"Who could make Roland die there with that band,

Would have lost to Charles then his right hand,
The marvelous hosts would no longer be grand,
Charles would not assemble such a great force again,
600 The Great Land would in repose remain."
Marsile kissed him on the neck when he heard;
And then to open his treasures he stirred.

XLVI

Said Marsile: "Why should our talk longer endure?
Counsel is no good, of which one is not sure:
605 The betrayal of Roland swear to me."
Ganelon responded: "As you please, let it be."
On the relics of Murgleis, his own blade,
The treason he swore; himself traitor he made.

XLVII

A throne was there of ivory.
610 Marsile had a book brought before it,
Where the law of Mohammed, and Tervagan, was writ.
The Saracen of Spain, this sworn has he:
"If Roland, in the rearguard, he find, then
Him he will combat with all his men,
615 And, if he can, he will die there indeed."
Said Ganelon: "Well may your vassals succeed!"

XLVIII

Now came a Pagan, Valdabrun,
Who raised the King Marsiliun.
Brightly smiling, he said to Ganelon:
620 "Take my sword, better hath no man who doth live.
Between the quillons, there are more than a thousand mangons.
In friendship, good Sir, it to you I give,
That you against Roland give aid to us,
That, in the rearguard, we may find him thus."

625 Count Ganelon said: "It shall be the case."
Then they kissed each other on chin and face.

XLIX

Afterwards, there a Pagan, Climbodin, came.
With a bright smile, to Ganelon said the same:
"Take my helmet, a better I never did see;
630 Then us aid against Roland, the Marquis,
In such measure we him may be able to shame."
Ganelon responded: "That well I will seek."
They kissed each other on mouth and cheek.

L

Then came the Queen Bramimonde. She
635 Said to the count: "Sir, I love you greatly;
For much my lord, and his men, prize you.
To your wife, I will send of necklaces two:
They are made of amethysts, rubies, and gold,
They are worth more than all the wealth Rome doth hold.
640 Your Emperor never such fine ones did know."
Them he took, and in his boot did stow.

LI

The King did Malduit, his treasurer, call:
"The treasure for Charles, is it ready all?"
"Yes, Sir, it is ready," he was told,
645 "Seven hundred camels laden high,
And all are charged with silver and gold;
Twenty hostages, the noblest under the sky."

LII

Marsile did Ganelon by the shoulder hold:
"You are very valiant and wise," him he told.

"By this law held most saving by you,
650 Guard, from us, not to turn your heart you do.
I will give you a mass of these treasures of mine:
Ten mules, charged with gold of Arabia fine;
There will never be a year, the same to you I do not make.
The keys of this large city take,
655 These treasures to King Charles present;
Then judge Roland with the rearguard be sent.
If him I can find at passage or portal,
I'll deliver to him a battle mortal."
Ganelon responded: "Too long I delay."
660 He mounted, and entered upon his way.

LIII

The Emperor approached his kingdom;
To the city of Galne he had come.
Count Roland it had taken and destroyed. It appears,
From that day 'twas deserted a hundred years.
665 Of Ganelon, the King did news await,
And the tribute of Spain, the country great.
One morning, at dawn, as the day grew clear,
Count Ganelon came to the encampment here.

LIV

The Emperor at early morn had stirred,
670 Mass and matins the King had heard,
He stands on the grass before his tent.
Roland is there, and Oliver, the valiant,
Naimes, the Duke, and, of others, many.
Comes Ganelon, the traitor, who perjured doth be,
675 He commences to speak with great perfidy,
And says to the King: "Of God saved be!
Of Saragossa, I bring the keys to you;
And to you have brought great treasure, too,
And twenty hostages; guard them well!

680 King Marsile, the valiant, to you doth tell:
Of the Caliph, not him to blame you owe.
I saw four hundred thousand armed men go,
In hauberks clad, some with helmets laced,
And swords whose hilts with gold were encased;
685 Who embarked with him upon the sea.
They fled from Marsile and Christianity;
Which they did not wish to take or keep.
Before that they four leagues did make,
Tempest and storm them did overtake;
690 You will see them no more, they are drowned in the
deep.
Were he alive, I had brought him to you.
Of the Pagan King, Sir, in truth believe, too:
This month will not pass in your kingdom,
But he, following you, to France will come,
695 Will receive the faith of Christianity,
With joined hands, will your vassal be,
The Kingdom of Spain, he will hold of you."
Said the King: "Our thanks to God are due!
Well have you done, will be recompensed without bound."
700 Through the host he made a thousand bugles to sound,
The Franks strike camp, their packhorses load,
Toward sweet France, they take the road.

THE REARGUARD: ROLAND CONDEMNED TO DEATH

LV

Charlemagne all Spain had devastated,
The castles taken, the cities violated.
705 Said the King: "My war is finished indeed."
Toward sweet France, the Emperor rides his steed.

Count Roland plants the ensign nigh,
On the top of a hill, against the sky.
The Franks encamp through the whole country,
710 The Pagans ride through the great valleys.
In hauberks clad, and with breastplates, they ride,
Their helmets are laced, and their swords at their side,
Shields at their necks, lances ready alway.
In a wood on the summit, they make their stay;
715 Four hundred thousand await the dawn so.
God! What dolour the French do not it know!

LVI

The day departs, the night grows late,
Charles goes to sleep, the Emperor great.
That he is at Cize's great ports, he dreams:
720 Between his hands, his lance of ash seems;
Ganelon, the Count, from him rudely takes it,
And, with such ire, he brandishes and shakes it,
Toward the sky, the splinters fly.
Charles sleeps, and is not awakened thereby.

LVII

725 Another dream came, after this of the lance:
That he was at his chapel at Aix in France,
His right arm a bear did cruelly bite.
Towards Ardenne, of a leopard he caught sight;
Himself to assail, it did fiercely bound.
730 From the hall descended then a greyhound;
Who, to Charles, in leaps and gallops came,
The right ear of the bear, it did maim,
And furiously with the leopard did combat.
Cry the French: "What a great battle is that!"
735 They know not which the victory will take.
Charles still sleeps on, and does not awake.

LVIII

The night departs, and the dawn appears clear.
Among this host, the bugles sound.
Very proudly rides the Emperor here.
740 "Sir Barons," says the Emperor to those around:
"See these ports and narrow passages here—
For me adjudge who shall guard the rear."
Says Ganelon: "Roland, this stepson of mine;
No baron you have so valiant and fine."
745 When it the King hears, he looks at him fiercely,
And says: "You a living devil be,
Mortal rage has entered in your body.
Who shall be in the vanguard before me?"
"Ogier of Denmark," Ganelon responded.
750 "You have no baron who better can do it," he said.

LIX

Count Roland, when he hears himself chosen, he
Then speaks by the law of chivalry:
"Sir Stepfather, I should hold you dear;
On me you have adjudged the guard of the rear.
755 King Charles, who holds France, shall lose, indeed
With knowledge of mine, nor palfrey, nor steed,
Nor mule, nor mulet, that man can bestraddle,
Nor there shall he lose nor packhorse, nor saddle,
That will not be purchased with sword blows."
760 "You speak truth," said Ganelon, "well I know."

LX

When Roland hears he will guard the rear,
Angrily he speaks to his stepfather here:
"Ah, ignoble wretch of a vile race!
You think the glove will fall from me in this place,
765 As it fell before King Charles in your case?" *

* See line 331.

LXI

"Just Emperor," said the Baron Roland:
 "Give me the bow, which you hold in your hand.
 I am sure no one shall reproach me at all,
 That from me it shall fall, as Ganelon let it fall
⁷⁷⁰ From his right hand, when receiving the staff," he said.
 The Emperor remained with lowered head;
 He stroked his beard, and twisted his mustache,
 Nor could help that tears from his eyes would dash.

LXII

After this, to the King, Duke Naimés came;
⁷⁷⁵ Better vassal was not in the court than the same.
 He said to the King: "Well it you have heard,
 Count Roland is by anger stirred,
 The rearguard is adjudged on him in this case,
 You have no baron can change what is told:
⁷⁸⁰ Give him the bow, which now you hold,
 Then find those, who well will aid him, you believe."
 The King gave, and Roland it did receive.

LXIII

The Emperor, to Roland, said he:
 "Good Sir Nephew, now know truly,
⁷⁸⁵ Half my host I will leave in your company.
 Retain them here for your safety."
 Said the Count: "Not one to me shall be lent.
 God me confound, if the family lament!
 Twenty thousand valiant Franks I retain with me;
⁷⁹⁰ Pass the ports in all security,
 You need fear no man, while I living be!"

LXIV

Count Roland is mounted upon his steed,
 His comrade Oliver advances with speed;
 Comes there Gerin and the brave Count Gerier,
⁷⁹⁵ And comes there Othon and Berengier,
 And Astor, and Anseis, the bold,
 And Gerard of Roussillon, the old,
 And comes the powerful Duke Gaifier.
 Says the Archbishop: "By my head, I will go."
⁸⁰⁰ Says Count Gautier: "And I, also,
 Roland's man I am, who with him fights."
 Between them, they choose twenty thousand knights.

LXV

Count Roland, Gautier de l'Hum did call:
 "Take a thousand Franks, of our land, all,
⁸⁰⁵ Occupy the defiles, and the mountains,
 That the Emperor, of his, may lose not one."
 "For you, I will do it well," Gautier said.
 A thousand French, of France, Gautier led,
 And patrols the defiles, and on the hills then;
⁸¹⁰ Nor, for bad news, will descend again,
 Ere seven hundred swords are drawn to fight.
 King Almaris, of the Kingdom of Belferne bright,
 Will deliver them a fierce battle ere the night.

LXVI

Dark are the valleys, the mountains high,
⁸¹⁵ The dark rocky defiles sinister lie.
 That day the French pass them in dolour great,
 Fifteen leagues the echoes reverberate.
 When they arrive in Tere Major, their land so great,
 And see Gascony, their lord's estate,
⁸²⁰ Their fiefs, and domains, then come to mind,

And the daughters, and wives, they had left behind:
Not one is there but weeps tenderly.
Above all the others, Charles, anguished is he:
At the ports of Spain, he has left his nephew;
825 Pity takes him, and he can't help but weep, too.

LXVII

The Dozen Peers in Spain have stayed:
Twenty thousand Franks their company made,
They have no fear, nor to die fear.
The Emperor has returned to France, so dear,
830 Beneath his mantle, his face he hides.
Alongside him, Duke Naimides rides,
And asks of the King: "Why this sorrow?"
Says Charles: "He does wrong, who asks to know,
Such great sorrow I have, I can't help but lament.
835 By Ganelon, France with destruction will be rent—
An angel vision in the night to me came,
That my lance was broken in my hands by the same,
Who adjudged my nephew to guard the rear.
I have left him there in a foreign country;
840 My God! If he should be lost to me,
I will never have another so dear."

LXVIII

Charlemagne, of it, cannot help but weep;
A hundred thousand Franks for him have pity deep,
And feel great fear for Roland's fate.
Ganelon, the traitor, his treason was great:
845 Great gifts he has had from the Pagan King;
He gold, and silver, and silks, did bring,
Mules, and horses, and camels, and lions.
Marsile called of Spain the barons:
The counts, admirals, dukes, and viscounts,
850 The emirs, and the sons of the counts;

Four hundred thousand, in three days, gathered round.
In Saragossa, he made his tambours to sound:
On the highest tower, they Mohammed raised;
Every Pagan there, him adored, and praised.
855 Then, in great fury, did they ride
Through Certaine's valleys, and mountain side.
They see the banners of the Franks.
The rearguard, with the Twelve Peers in their ranks,
Shall not leave them in battle untried.

LXIX

860 Before Marsile his nephew came,
On a mule, touching with a stick the same.
He said to his uncle, and smiled the while, too:
"My good Sir King, I have long served you,
I have had much pain, and known dolour, too,
865 Fought battles, and conquered the field for you.
Give me a boon—the first blow against Roland of France;
I him will kill with my sharp lance.
If Mohammed will but give me aid;
The delivery of all Spain shall be made,
870 From the Ports of Spain to Durestant quite.
Charles will be weary, so his Franks will give up the fight.
Indeed, you will not have more war while you live."
King Marsile the glove to him did give.

LXX

The nephew of Marsile the glove did hold,
875 And called to his uncle, proud and bold:
"Good Sir King, to me you have made a gift great.
Choose me twelve barons of your state,
And I will the Twelve Companions combat."
The first, Falsaron, responded thereat,
880 The brother of King Marsile, who
Said: "Good Sir Nephew, I will go with you;