

# The Song of Roland

*Translated by Charles  
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*Anonymous Old  
French epic, dating  
perhaps as early as the  
middle 11th century.*

## I

Charles the King, our Lord and Sovereign,  
Full seven years hath sojourned in Spain,  
Conquered the land, and won the western main,  
Now no fortress against him doth remain,  
No city walls are left for him to gain,  
Save Sarraguce, that sits on high mountain.  
Marsile its King, who feareth not God's name,  
Mahumet's man, he invokes Apollin's aid,  
Nor wards off ills that shall to him attain.

## II

King Marsilies he lay at Sarraguce,  
Went he his way into an orchard cool;  
There on a throne he sate, of marble blue,  
Round him his men, full twenty thousand, stood.  
Called he forth then his counts, also his dukes:  
"My Lords, give ear to our impending doom:

That Emperour, Charles of France the Douce,  
Into this land is come, us to confuse.  
I have no host in battle him to prove,  
Nor have I strength his forces to undo.  
Counsel me then, ye that are wise and true;  
Can ye ward off this present death and dule?"  
What word to say no pagan of them knew,  
Save Blancandrin, of th' Castle of Val Funde.

### III

Blancandrins was a pagan very wise,  
In vassalage he was a gallant knight,  
First in prowess, he stood his lord beside.  
And thus he spoke: "Do not yourself affright!  
Yield to Carlun, that is so big with pride,  
Faithful service, his friend and his ally;  
Lions and bears and hounds for him provide,  
Thousand mewed hawks, sev'n hundred camelry;  
Silver and gold, four hundred mules load high;  
Fifty wagons his wrights will need supply,  
Till with that wealth he pays his soldiery.  
War hath he waged in Spain too long a time,  
To Aix, in France, homeward he will him hie.  
Follow him there before Saint Michael's tide,  
You shall receive and hold the Christian rite;  
Stand honour bound, and do him fealty.  
Send hostages, should he demand surety,  
Ten or a score, our loyal oath to bind;  
Send him our sons, the first-born of our wives;-  
An he be slain, I'll surely furnish mine.  
Better by far they go, though doomed to die,  
Than that we lose honour and dignity,  
And be ourselves brought down to beggary."

## IV

Says Blancandrins: "By my right hand, I say,  
And by this beard, that in the wind doth sway,  
The Frankish host you'll see them all away;  
Franks will retire to France their own terrain.  
When they are gone, to each his fair domain,  
In his Chapelle at Aix will Charles stay,  
High festival will hold for Saint Michael.  
Time will go by, and pass the appointed day;  
Tidings of us no Frank will hear or say.  
Proud is that King, and cruel his courage;  
From th' hostage he'll slice their heads away.  
Better by far their heads be shorn away,  
Than that ourselves lose this clear land of Spain,  
Than that ourselves do suffer grief and pain."  
"That is well said. So be it." the pagans say.

## V

The council ends, and that King Marsilie  
Calleth aside Clarun of Balagueue,  
Estramarin and Eudropin his peer,  
And Priamun and Guarlan of the beard,  
And Machiner and his uncle Mahee,  
With Jouner, Malbien from over sea,  
And Blancandrin, good reason to decree:  
Ten hath he called, were first in felony.  
"Gentle Barons, to Charlemagne go ye;  
He is in siege of Cordres the city.  
In your right hands bear olive-branches green  
Which signify Peace and Humility.  
If you by craft contrive to set me free,

Silver and gold, you'll have your fill of me,  
Manors and fiefs, I'll give you all your need."  
"We have enough," the pagans straight agree.

## VI

King Marsilies, his council finishing,  
Says to his men: "Go now, my lords, to him,  
Olive-branches in your right hands bearing;  
Bid ye for me that Charlemagne, the King,  
In his God's name to shew me his mercy;  
Ere this new moon wanes, I shall be with him;  
One thousand men shall be my following;  
I will receive the rite of christening,  
Will be his man, my love and faith swearing;  
Hostages too, he'll have, if so he will."  
Says Blancandrins: "Much good will come of this."

## VII

Ten snow-white mules then ordered Marsilie,  
Gifts of a King, the King of Suatilie.  
Bridled with gold, saddled in silver clear;  
Mounted them those that should the message speak,  
In their right hands were olive-branches green.  
Came they to Charle, that holds all France in fee,  
Yet cannot guard himself from treachery.

## VIII

Merry and bold is now that Emperour,

Cordres he holds, the walls are tumbled down,  
His catapults have battered town and tow'r.  
Great good treasure his knights have placed in pound,  
Silver and gold and many a jewelled gown.  
In that city there is no pagan now  
But he been slain, or takes the Christian vow.  
The Emperour is in a great orchard ground  
Where Oliver and Rollant stand around,  
Sansun the Duke and Anseis the proud,  
Gefreid d'Anjou, that bears his gonfaloun;  
There too Gerin and Geriers are found.  
Where they are found, is seen a mighty crowd,  
Fifteen thousand, come out of France the Douce.  
On white carpets those knights have sate them down,  
At the game-boards to pass an idle hour;-  
Chequers the old, for wisdom most renowned,  
While fence the young and lusty bachelours.  
Beneath a pine, in eglantine embow'red,  
I Stands a fald-stool, fashioned of gold throughout;  
There sits the King, that holds Douce France in pow'r;  
White is his beard, and blossoming-white his crown,  
Shapely his limbs, his countenance is proud.  
Should any seek, no need to point him out.  
The messengers, on foot they get them down,  
And in salute full courteously they lout.

## IX

The foremost word of all Blancandrin spake,  
And to the King: "May God preserve you safe,  
The All Glorious, to Whom ye're bound to pray!  
Proud Marsilies this message bids me say:  
Much hath he sought to find salvation's way;  
Out of his wealth meet presents would he make,  
Lions and bears, and greyhounds leashed on chain,

Thousand mewed hawks, sev'n hundred dromedrays,  
Four hundred mules his silver shall convey,  
Fifty wagons you'll need to bear away  
Golden besants, such store of proved assay,  
Wherewith full tale your soldiers you can pay.  
Now in this land you've been too long a day  
Hie you to France, return again to Aix;  
Thus saith my Lord, he'll follow too that way."  
That Emperour t'wards God his arms he raised  
Lowered his head, began to meditate.

## X

That Emperour inclined his head full low;  
Hasty in speech he never was, but slow:  
His custom was, at his leisure he spoke.  
When he looks up, his face is very bold,  
He says to them: "Good tidings have you told.  
King Marsilies hath ever been my foe.  
These very words you have before me told,  
In what measure of faith am I to hold?"  
That Sarrazin says, "Hostages he'll show;  
Ten shall you take, or fifteen or a score.  
Though he be slain, a son of mine shall go,  
Any there be you'll have more nobly born.  
To your palace seigneurial when you go,  
At Michael's Feast, called in periculo;  
My Lord hath said, thither will he follow  
Ev'n to your baths, that God for you hath wrought;  
There is he fain the Christian faith to know."  
Answers him Charles: "Still may he heal his soul."

## XI

Clear shone the sun in a fair even-tide;  
Those ten men's mules in stall he bade them tie.  
Also a tent in the orchard raise on high,  
Those messengers had lodging for the night;  
Dozen serjeants served after them aright.  
Darkling they lie till comes the clear daylight.  
That Emperour does with the morning rise;  
Matins and Mass are said then in his sight.  
Forth goes that King, and stays beneath a pine;  
Barons he calls, good counsel to define,  
For with his Franks he's ever of a mind.

## XII

That Emperour, beneath a pine he sits,  
Calls his barons, his council to begin:  
Oger the Duke, that Archbishop Turpin,  
Richard the old, and his nephew Henry,  
From Gascony the proof Count Acolin,  
Tedbald of Reims and Milun his cousin:  
With him there were Gerers, also Gerin,  
And among them the Count Rollant came in,  
And Oliver, so proof and so gentil.  
Franks out of France, a thousand chivalry;  
Guenes came there, that wrought the treachery.  
The Council then began, which ended ill.

## XIII

"My Lords Barons," says the Emperour then, Charles,  
"King Marsilies hath sent me his messages;  
Out of his wealth he'll give me weighty masses.

Greyhounds on leash and bears and lions also,  
Thousand mewed hawks and seven hundred camels,  
Four hundred mules with gold Arabian charged,  
Fifty wagons, yea more than fifty drawing.  
But into France demands he my departure;  
He'll follow me to Aix, where is my Castle;  
There he'll receive the law of our Salvation:  
Christian he'll be, and hold from me his marches.  
But I know not what purpose in his heart is."  
Then say the Franks: "Beseems us act with caution!"

## XIV

That Emperour hath ended now his speech.  
The Count Rollanz, he never will agree,  
Quick to reply, he springs upon his feet;  
And to the King, "Believe not Marsilie.  
Seven years since, when into Spain came we,  
I conquer'd you Noples also Commibles,  
And took Valterne, and all the land of Pine,  
And Balaguet, and Tuele, and Sezilie.  
Traitor in all his ways was Marsilies;  
Of his pagans he sent you then fifteen,  
Bearing in hand their olive-branches green:  
Who, ev'n as now, these very words did speak.  
You of your Franks a Council did decree,  
Praised they your words that foolish were in deed.  
Two of your Counts did to the pagan speed,  
Basan was one, and the other Basilie:  
Their heads he took on th' hill by Haltilie.  
War have you waged, so on to war proceed,  
To Sarraguce lead forth your great army.  
All your life long, if need be, lie in siege,  
Vengeance for those the felon slew to wreak."



## XV

That Emperour he sits with lowering front,  
He clasps his chin, his beard his fingers tug,  
Good word nor bad, his nephew not one.  
Franks hold their peace, but only Guenelun  
Springs to his feet, and comes before Carlun;  
Right haughtily his reason he's begun,  
And to the King: "Believe not any one,  
My word nor theirs, save whence your good shall come.  
Since he sends word, that King Marsiliun,  
Homage he'll do, by finger and by thumb;  
Throughout all Spain your writ alone shall run  
Next he'll receive our rule of Christendom  
Who shall advise, this bidding be not done,  
Deserves not death, since all to death must come.  
Counsel of pride is wrong: we've fought enough.  
Leave we the fools, and with the wise be one."

## XVI

And after him came Neimes out, the third,  
Better vassal there was not in the world;  
And to the King: "Now rightly have you heard  
Guenes the Count, what answer he returned.  
Wisdom was there, but let it well be heard.  
King Marsilies in war is overturned,  
His castles all in ruin have you hurled,  
With catapults his ramparts have you burst,  
Vanquished his men, and all his cities burned;  
Him who entreats your pity do not spurn,  
Sinners were they that would to war return;  
With hostages his faith he would secure;

Let this great war no longer now endure."  
"Well said the Duke." Franks utter in their turn.

## XVII

"My lords barons, say whom shall we send up  
To Sarraguce, to King Marsiliun?"  
Answers Duke Neimes: "I'll go there for your love;  
Give me therefore the wand, also the glove."  
Answers the King: "Old man of wisdom pruff;  
By this white beard, and as these cheeks are rough,  
You'll not this year so far from me remove;  
Go sit you down, for none hath called you up."

## XVIII

"My lords barons, say whom now can we send  
To th' Sarrazin that Sarraguce defends?"  
Answers Rollanz: "I might go very well."  
"Certes, you'll not," says Oliver his friend,  
"For your courage is fierce unto the end,  
I am afraid you would misapprehend.  
If the King wills it I might go there well."  
Answers the King: "Be silent both on bench;  
Your feet nor his, I say, shall that way wend.  
Nay, by this beard, that you have seen grow blench,  
The dozen peers by that would stand condemned.  
Franks hold their peace; you'd seen them all silent."

## XIX

Turpins of Reins is risen from his rank,  
Says to the King: "In peace now leave your Franks.  
For seven years you've lingered in this land  
They have endured much pain and sufferance.  
Give, Sire, to me the clove, also the wand,  
I will seek out the Spanish Sarazand,  
For I believe his thoughts I understand."  
That Emperour answers intolerant:  
"Go, sit you down on yonder silken mat;  
And speak no more, until that I command."

## XX

"Franks, chevaliers," says the Emperour then, Charles,  
"Choose ye me out a baron from my marches,  
To Marsilie shall carry back my answer."  
Then says Rollanz: "There's Guenes, my goodfather."  
Answer the Franks: "For he can wisely manage;  
So let him go, there's none you should send rather."  
And that count Guenes is very full of anguish;  
Off from his neck he flings the pelts of marten,  
And on his feet stands clear in silken garment.  
Proud face he had, his eyes with colour, sparkled;  
Fine limbs he had, his ribs were broadly arched  
So fair he seemed that all the court regarded.  
Says to Rollant: "Fool, wherefore art so wrathful?  
All men know well that I am thy goodfather;  
Thou hast decreed, to Marsiliun I travel.  
Then if God grant that I return hereafter,  
I'll follow thee with such a force of passion  
That will endure so long as life may last thee."  
Answers Rollanz: "Thou'rt full of pride and madness.  
All men know well, I take no thought for slander;  
But some wise man, surely, should bear the answer;  
If the King will, I'm ready to go rather."

## XXI

Answers him Guene: "Thou shalt not go for me.  
Thou'rt not my man, nor am I lord of thee.  
Charles commnds that I do his decree,  
To Sarraguce going to Marsilie;  
There I will work a little trickery,  
This mighty wrath of mine I'll thus let free."  
When Rollanz heard, began to laugh for glee.

## XXII

When Guenes sees that Rollant laughs at it,  
Such grief he has, for rage he's like to split,  
A little more, and he has lost his wit:  
Says to that count: "I love you not a bit;  
A false judgement you bore me when you chid.  
Right Emperour, you see me where you sit,  
I will your word accomplish, as you bid.

## XXIII

"To Sarraguce I must repair, 'tis plain;  
Whence who goes there returns no more again.  
Your sister's hand in marriage have I ta'en;  
And I've a son, there is no prettier swain:  
Baldwin, men say he shews the knightly strain.  
To him I leave my honours and domain.  
Care well for him; he'll look for me in vain."  
Answers him Charles: "Your heart is too humane.

When I command, time is to start again."

## XXIV

Then says the King: "Guenes, before me stand;  
And take from me the glove, also the wand.  
For you have heard, you're chosen by the Franks,"  
"Sire," answers Guenes, "all this is from Rollanz;  
I'll not love him, so long as I'm a man,  
Nor Oliver, who goes at his right hand;  
The dozen peers, for they are of his band,  
All I defy, as in your sight I stand."  
Then says the King: "Over intolerant.  
Now certainly you go when I command."  
"And go I can; yet have I no warrant  
Basile had none nor his brother Basant."

## XXV

His right hand glove that Emperour holds out;  
But the count Guenes elsewhere would fain be found;  
When he should take, it falls upon the ground.  
Murmur the Franks: "God! What may that mean now?  
By this message great loss shall come about."  
"Lordings," says Guene, "You'll soon have news enow."

## XXVI

"Now," Guenes said, "give me your orders, Sire;  
Since I must go, why need I linger, I?"  
Then said the King "In Jesu's Name and mine!"

With his right hand he has absolved and signed,  
Then to his care the wand and brief confides.

## XXVII

Guenes the count goes to his hostelry,  
Finds for the road his garments and his gear,  
All of the best he takes that may appear:  
Spurs of fine gold he fastens on his feet,  
And to his side Murgles his sword of steel.  
On Tachebrun, his charger, next he leaps,  
His uncle holds the stirrup, Guinemere.  
Then you had seen so many knights to weep,  
Who all exclaim: "Unlucky lord, indeed!  
In the King's court these many years you've been,  
Noble vassal, they say that have you seen.  
He that for you this journey has decreed  
King Charlemagne will never hold him dear.  
The Count Rollant, he should not so have deemed,  
Knowing you were born of very noble breed."  
After they say: "Us too, Sire, shall he lead."  
Then answers Guenes: "Not so, the Lord be pleased!  
Far better one than many knights should bleed.  
To France the Douce, my lords, you soon shall speed,  
On my behalf my gentle wife you'll greet,  
And Pinabel, who is my friend and peer,  
And Baldewin, my son, whom you have seen;  
His rights accord and help him in his need."  
— Rides down the road, and on his way goes he.

## XXVIII

Guenes canters on, and halts beneath a tree;

Where Sarrazins assembled he may see,  
With Blancandrins, who abides his company.  
Cunning and keen they speak then, each to each,  
Says Blancandrins: "Charles, what a man is he,  
Who conquered Puille and th'whole of Calabrie;  
Into England he crossed the bitter sea,  
To th' Holy Pope restored again his fee.  
What seeks he now of us in our country?"  
Then answers Guene "So great courage hath he;  
Never was man against him might succeed."

## XXIX

Says Blancandrins "Gentle the Franks are found;  
Yet a great wrong these dukes do and these counts  
Unto their lord, being in counsel proud;  
Him and themselves they harry and confound."  
Guenes replies: "There is none such, without  
Only Rollanz, whom shame will yet find out.  
Once in the shade the King had sate him down;  
His nephew came, in sark of iron brown,  
Spoils he had won, beyond by Carcasoune,  
Held in his hand an apple red and round.  
"Behold, fair Sire," said Rollanz as he bowed,  
"Of all earth's kings I bring you here the crowns."  
His cruel pride must shortly him confound,  
Each day t'wards death he goes a little down,  
When he be slain, shall peace once more abound."

## XXX

Says Blancandrins: "A cruel man, Rollant,  
That would bring down to bondage every man,

And challenges the peace of every land.  
With what people takes he this task in hand?"  
And answers Guene: "The people of the Franks;  
They love him so, for men he'll never want.  
Silver and gold he show'rs upon his band,  
Chargers and mules, garments and silken mats.  
The King himself holds all by his command;  
From hence to the East he'll conquer sea and land."

### XXXI

Cantered so far then Blancandrins and Guene  
Till each by each a covenant had made  
And sought a plan, how Rollant might be slain.  
Cantered so far by valley and by plain  
To Sarraguze beneath a cliff they came.  
There a fald-stool stood in a pine-tree's shade,  
Enveloped all in Alexandrin veils;  
There was the King that held the whole of Espain,  
Twenty thousand of Sarrazins his train;  
Nor was there one but did his speech contain,  
Eager for news, till they might hear the tale.  
Haste into sight then Blancandrins and Guene.

### XXXII

Blancandrin comes before Marsiliun,  
Holding the hand of county Guenelun;  
Says to the King "Lord save you, Sire, Mahum  
And Apollin, whose holy laws here run!  
Your message we delivered to Charlun,  
Both his two hands he raised against the sun,  
Praising his God, but answer made he none.



He sends you here his noblest born barun,  
Greatest in wealth, that out of France is come;  
From him you'll hear if peace shall be, or none."  
"Speak," said Marsile: "We'll hear him, every one."

### XXXIII

But the count Guenes did deeply meditate;  
Cunning and keen began at length, and spake  
Even as one that knoweth well the way;  
And to the King: "May God preserve you safe,  
The All Glorious, to whom we're bound to pray  
Proud Charlemagne this message bids me say:  
You must receive the holy Christian Faith,  
And yield in fee one half the lands of Spain.  
If to accord this tribute you disdain,  
Taken by force and bound in iron chain  
You will be brought before his throne at Aix;  
Judged and condemned you'll be, and shortly slain,  
Yes, you will die in misery and shame."  
King Marsilies was very sore afraid,  
Snatching a dart, with golden feathers gay,  
He made to strike: they turned aside his aim.

### XXXIV

King Marsilies is turn'ed white with rage,  
His feathered dart he brandishes and shakes.  
Guenes beholds: his sword in hand he takes,  
Two fingers' width from scabbard bares the blade;  
And says to it: "O clear and fair and brave;  
Before this King in court we'll so behave,  
That the Emperour of France shall never say

In a strange land I'd thrown my life away  
Before these chiefs thy temper had essayed."  
"Let us prevent this fight:" the pagans say.

### XXXV

Then Sarrazins implored him so, the chiefs,  
On the faldstoel Marsillies took his seat.  
"Greatly you harm our cause," says the alcaliph:  
"When on this Frank your vengeance you would wreak;  
Rather you should listen to hear him speak."  
"Sire," Guenes says, "to suffer I am meek.  
I will not fail, for all the gold God keeps,  
Nay, should this land its treasure pile in heaps,  
But I will tell, so long as I be free,  
What Charlemagne, that Royal Majesty,  
Bids me inform his mortal enemy."  
Guenes had on a cloke of sable skin,  
And over it a veil Alexandrin;  
These he throws down, they're held by Blancandrin;  
But not his sword, he'll not leave hold of it,  
In his right hand he grasps the golden hilt.  
The pagans say. "A noble baron, this."

### XXXVI

Before the King's face Guenes drawing near  
Says to him "Sire, wherefore this rage and fear?  
Seeing you are, by Charles, of Franks the chief,  
Bidden to hold the Christians' right belief.  
One half of Spain he'll render as your fief  
The rest Rollanz, his nephew, shall receive,  
Proud parcener in him you'll have indeed.

If you will not to Charles this tribute cede,  
To you he'll come, and Sarraguce besiege;  
Take you by force, and bind you hands and feet,  
Bear you outright ev'n unto Aix his seat.  
You will not then on palfrey nor on steed,  
Jennet nor mule, come cantering in your speed;  
Flung you will be on a vile sumpter-beast;  
Tried there and judged, your head you will not keep.  
Our Emperour has sent you here this brief."  
He's given it into the pagan's nief.

### XXXVII

Now Marsilies, is turn'ed white with ire,  
He breaks the seal and casts the wax aside,  
Looks in the brief, sees what the King did write:  
"Charles commands, who holds all France by might,  
I bear in mind his bitter grief and ire;  
'Tis of Basan and 's brother Basilye,  
Whose heads I took on th' hill by Haltilye.  
If I would save my body now alive,  
I must despatch my uncle the alcalyph,  
Charles will not love me ever otherwise."  
After, there speaks his son to Marsilye,  
Says to the King: "In madness spoke this wight.  
So wrong he was, to spare him were not right;  
Leave him to me, I will that wrong requite."  
When Guenes hears, he draws his sword outright,  
Against the trunk he stands, beneath that pine.

### XXXVIII

The King is gone into that orchard then;

With him he takes the best among his men;  
And Blancandrins there shews his snowy hair,  
And Jursalet, was the King's son and heir,  
And the alcaliph, his uncle and his friend.  
Says Blancandrins: "Summon the Frank again,  
In our service his faith to me he's pledged."  
Then says the King: "So let him now be fetched."  
He's taken Guenes by his right finger-ends,  
And through the orchard straight to the King they wend.  
Of treason there make lawless parliament.

### XXXIX

"Fair Master Guenes," says then King Marsilie,  
"I did you now a little trickery,  
Making to strike, I shewed my great fury.  
These sable skins take as amends from me,  
Five hundred pounds would not their worth redeem.  
To-morrow night the gift shall ready be."  
Guene answers him: "I'll not refuse it, me.  
May God be pleased to shew you His mercy."

### XL

Then says Marsile "Guenes, the truth to ken,  
Minded I am to love you very well.  
Of Charlemagne I wish to hear you tell,  
He's very old, his time is nearly spent,  
Two hundred years he's lived now, as 'tis said.  
Through many lands his armies he has led,  
So many blows his buckled shield has shed,  
And so rich kings he's brought to beg their bread;  
What time from war will he draw back instead?"

And answers Guenes: "Not so was Charles bred.  
There is no man that sees and knows him well  
But will proclaim the Emperour's hardihead.  
Praise him as best I may, when all is said,  
Remain untold, honour and goodness yet.  
His great valour how can it be counted?  
Him with such grace hath God illumined,  
Better to die than leave his banneret."

## XLI

The pagan says: "You make me marvel sore  
At Charlemagne, who is so old and hoar;  
Two hundred years, they say, he's lived and more.  
So many lands he's led his armies o'er,  
So many blows from spears and lances borne,  
And so rich kings brought down to beg and sorn,  
When will time come that he draws back from war?"  
"Never," says Guenes, "so long as lives his nephew;  
No such vassal goes neath the dome of heaven;  
And proof also is Oliver his henchman;  
The dozen peers, whom Char'les holds so precious,  
These are his guards, with other thousands twenty.  
Charles is secure, he holds no man in terror."

## XLII

Says Sarrazin: "My wonder yet is grand  
At Charlemagne, who hoary is and blanchèd.  
Two hundred years and more, I understand,  
He has gone forth and conquered many a land,  
Such blows hath borne from many a trenchant lance,  
Vanquished and slain of kings so rich a band,

When will time come that he from war draws back?"  
"Never," says Guene, "so long as lives Rollanz,  
From hence to the East there is no such vassal;  
And proof also, Oliver his comrade;  
The dozen peers he cherishes at hand,  
These are his guard, with twenty thousand Franks.  
Charles is secure, he fears no living man."

### XLIII

"Fair Master Guenes," says Marsilies the King,  
"Such men are mine, fairer than tongue can sing,  
Of knights I can four hundred thousand bring  
So I may fight with Franks and with their King."  
Answers him Guenes: "Not on this journeying  
Save of pagans a great loss suffering.  
Leave you the fools, wise counsel following;  
To the Emperour such wealth of treasure give  
That every Frank at once is marvelling.  
For twenty men that you shall now send in  
To France the Douce he will repair, that King;  
In the rereward will follow after him  
Both his nephew, count Rollant, as I think,  
And Oliver, that courteous paladin;  
Dead are the counts, believe me if you will.  
Charles will behold his great pride perishing,  
For battle then he'll have no more the skill.

### XLIV

Fair Master Guene," says then King Marsilie,  
"Shew the device, how Rollant slain may be."  
Answers him Guenes: "That will I soon make clear

The King will cross by the good pass of Size,  
A guard he'll set behind him, in the rear;  
His nephew there, count Rollant, that rich peer,  
And Oliver, in whom he well believes;  
Twenty thousand Franks in their company  
Five score thousand pagans upon them lead,  
Franks unawares in battle you shall meet,  
Bruised and bled white the race of Franks shall be;  
I do not say, but yours shall also bleed.  
Battle again deliver, and with speed.  
So, first or last, from Rollant you'll be freed.  
You will have wrought a high chivalrous deed,  
Nor all your life know war again, but peace.

## XLV

"Could one achieve that Rollant's life was lost,  
Charle's right arm were from his body torn;  
Though there remained his marvellous great host,  
He'd not again assemble in such force;  
Terra Major would languish in repose."  
Marsile has heard, he's kissed him on the throat;  
Next he begins to undo his treasure-store.

## XLVI

Said Marsilie-but now what more said they?-  
"No faith in words by oath unbound I lay;  
Swear me the death of Rollant on that day."  
Then answered Guene: "So be it, as you say."  
On the relics, are in his sword Murgles,  
Treason he's sworn, forsworn his faith away.

## XLVII

Was a fald-stool there, made of olifant.  
A book thereon Marsilies bade them plant,  
In it their laws, Mahum's and Tervagant's.  
He's sworn thereby, the Spanish Sarazand,  
In the rereward if he shall find Rollant,  
Battle to himself and all his band,  
And verily he'll slay him if he can.  
And answered Guenes: "So be it, as you command!"

## XLVIII

In haste there came a pagan Valdabrun,  
Warden had been to King Marsiliun,  
Smiling and clear, he's said to Guenelun,  
"Take now this sword, and better sword has none;  
Into the hilt a thousand coins are run.  
To you, fair sir, I offer it in love;  
Give us your aid from Rollant the barun,  
That in rereward against him we may come."  
Guenes the count answers: "It shall-be done."  
Then, cheek and chin, kissed each the other one.

## XLIX

After there came a pagan, Climorins,  
Smiling and clear to Guenelun begins:  
"Take now my helm, better is none than this;  
But give us aid, on Rollant the marquis,  
By what device we may dishonour bring."



"It shall be done." Count Guenes answered him;  
On mouth and cheek then each the other kissed.

## L

In haste there came the Queen forth, Bramimound;  
"I love you well, sir," said she to the count,  
"For prize you dear my lord and all around;  
Here for your wife I have two brooches found,  
Amethysts and jacinths in golden mount;  
More worth are they than all the wealth of Roum;  
Your Emperour has none such, I'll be bound."  
He's taken them, and in his hosen pouched.

## LI

The King now calls Malduiz, that guards his treasure.  
"Tribute for Charles, say, is it now made ready?"  
He answers him: "Ay, Sire, for here is plenty  
Silver and gold on hundred camels seven,  
And twenty men, the gentlest under heaven."

## LII

Marsilie's arm Guene's shoulder doth enfold;  
He's said to him: "You are both wise and bold.  
Now, by the law that you most sacred hold,  
Let not your heart in our behalf grow cold!  
Out of my store I'll give you wealth untold,  
Charging ten mules with fine Arabian gold;  
I'll do the same for you, new year and old.

Take then the keys of this city so large,  
This great tribute present you first to Charles,  
Then get me placed Rollanz in the rereward.  
If him I find in valley or in pass,  
Battle I'll give him that shall be the last."  
Answers him Guenes: "My time is nearly past."  
His charger mounts, and on his journey starts.

### LIII

That Emperour draws near to his domain,  
He is come down unto the city Gailne.  
The Count Rollanz had broken it and ta'en,  
An hundred years its ruins shall remain.  
Of Guenelun the King for news is fain,  
And for tribute from the great land of Spain.  
At dawn of day, just as the light grows plain,  
Into their camp is come the county Guene.

### LIV

In morning time is risen the Emperere,  
Mattins and Mass he's heard, and made his prayer;  
On the green grass before the tent his chair,  
Where Rollant stood and that bold Oliver,  
Neimes the Duke, and many others there.  
Guenes arrived, the felon perjurer,  
Begins to speak, with very cunning air,  
Says to the King: "God keep you, Sire, I swear!  
Of Sarraguce the keys to you I bear,  
Tribute I bring you, very great and rare,  
And twenty men; look after them with care.  
Proud Marsilies bade me this word declare

That alcaliph, his uncle, you must spare.  
My own eyes saw four hundred thousand there,  
In hauberks dressed, closed helms that gleamed in the air,  
And golden hilts upon their swords they bare.  
They followed him, right to the sea they'll fare;  
Marsile they left, that would their faith forswear,  
For Christendom they've neither wish nor care.  
But the fourth league they had not compassed, ere  
Brake from the North tempest and storm in the air;  
Then were they drowned, they will no more appear.  
Were he alive, I should have brought him here.  
The pagan king, in truth, Sire, bids you hear,  
Ere you have seen one month pass of this year  
He'll follow you to France, to your Empire,  
He will accept the laws you hold and fear;  
Joining his hands, will do you homage there,  
Kingdom of Spain will hold as you declare."  
Then says the King: "Now God be praised, I swear!  
Well have you wrought, and rich reward shall wear."  
Bids through the host a thousand trumpets blare.  
Franks leave their lines; the sumpter-beasts are yare  
T'wards France the Douce all on their way repair.

## LV

Charles the Great that land of Spain had wasted,  
Her castles ta'en, her cities violated.  
Then said the King, his war was now abated.  
Towards Douce France that Emperour has hasted.  
Upon a lance Rollant his ensign raised,  
High on a cliff against the sky 'twas placed;  
The Franks in camp through all that country baited.  
Cantered pagans, through those wide valleys raced,  
Hauberks they wore and sarks with iron plated,  
Swords to their sides were girt, their helms were laced,

Lances made sharp, escutcheons newly painted:  
There in the mists beyond the peaks remained  
The day of doom four hundred thousand waited.  
God! what a grief. Franks know not what is fated.

## LVI

Passes the day, the darkness is grown deep.  
That Emperour, rich Charles, lies asleep;  
Dreams that he stands in the great pass of Size,  
In his two hands his ashen spear he sees;  
Guenes the count that spear from him doth seize,  
Brandishes it and twists it with such ease,  
That flown into the sky the flinders seem.  
Charles sleeps on nor wakens from his dream.

## LVII

And after this another vision saw,  
In France, at Aix, in his Chapelle once more,  
That his right arm an evil bear did gnaw;  
Out of Ardennes he saw a leopard stalk,  
His body dear did savagely assault;  
But then there dashed a harrier from the hall,  
Leaping in the air he sped to Charles call,  
First the right ear of that grim bear he caught,  
And furiously the leopard next he fought.  
Of battle great the Franks then seemed to talk,  
Yet which might win they knew not, in his thought.  
Charles sleeps on, nor wakens he for aught.

## LVIII

Passes the night and opens the clear day;  
That Emperour canters in brave array,  
Looks through the host often and every way;  
"My lords barons," at length doth Charles say,  
"Ye see the pass along these valleys strait,  
Judge for me now, who shall in rereward wait."  
"There's my good-son, Rollanz," then answers Guenes,  
"You've no baron whose valour is as great."  
When the King hears, he looks upon him straight,  
And says to him: "You devil incarnate;  
Into your heart is come a mortal hate.  
And who shall go before me in the gate?"  
"Oger is here, of Denmark;" answers Guenes,  
"You've no baron were better in that place."

## LIX

The count Rollanz hath heard himself decreed;  
Speaks then to Guenes by rule of courtesy:  
"Good-father, Sir, I ought to hold you dear,  
Since the rereward you have for me decreed.  
Charles the King will never lose by me,  
As I know well, nor charger nor palfrey,  
Jennet nor mule that canter can with speed,  
Nor sumpter-horse will lose, nor any steed;  
But my sword's point shall first exact their meed."  
Answers him Guenes: "I know; 'tis true in-deed."

## LX

When Rollant heard that he should be rerewarden  
Furiously he spoke to his good-father:

"Aha! culvert; begotten of a bastard.  
Thinkest the glove will slip from me hereafter,  
As then from thee the wand fell before Charles?"

## LXI

"Right Emperour," says the baron Rollanz,  
"Give me the bow you carry in your hand;  
Neer in reproach, I know, will any man  
Say that it fell and lay upon the land,  
As Guenes let fall, when he received the wand."  
That Emperour with lowered front doth stand,  
He tugs his beard, his chin is in his hand  
Tears fill his eyes, he cannot them command.

## LXII

And after that is come duke Neimes furth,  
(Better vassal there was not upon earth)  
Says to the King: "Right well now have you heard  
The count Rollanz to bitter wrath is stirred,  
For that on him the rereward is conferred;  
No baron else have you, would do that work.  
Give him the bow your hands have bent, at first;  
Then find him men, his company are worth."  
Gives it, the King, and Rollant bears it furth.

## LXIII

That Emperour, Rollanz then calleth he:  
"Fair nephew mine, know this in verity;