

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallage Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow  
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil  
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# **Song and Legend from the Middle Ages**

William Darnall MacClintock

# Imprint

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## CONTENTS.

### I. FRENCH LITERATURE II. SPANISH LITERATURE III. SCANDINAVIAN LITERATURE IV. GERMAN LITERATURE V. ITALIAN LITERATURE

READING LIST. Owing to the necessarily fragmentary character of the readings of this volume, it has seemed well to the editors to indicate a list of books for those who wish a wider reading in Mediæval Literature. These books are all available and cheap.

1. French Literature. (1) Longfellow's "Poets and Poetry of Europe". (2) O'Hagan's "The Song of Roland". (3) Rourdillon's "Aucassin and Nicolette". (4) Malory's "Morte Darthur". (5) Chaucer's "Romance of the Rose". (6) Caxton's "Reynard the Fox". (7) Saintsbury's "Short History of French Literature". 2. Spanish Literature. (1) Longfellow, as above. (2) Ormsby's "The Cid". (3) Lockhart's "Ancient Spanish Ballads". 3. Scandinavian Literature. (1) Longfellow, as above. (2) Anderson's "Norse Mythology". 4. German Literature. (1) Longfellow, as above. (2) Lettsom's "Niebelungenlied". (3) Scherer's "History of German Literature". 5. Italian Literature. (1) Longfellow, as above. (2) Rossetti's "Dante and his Circle". (3) Cary's "The Divine Comedy". (4) Norton's "The Divine Comedy". (5) Campbell's "The Sonnets and Poems of Petrarch".



## PREFACE.

The aim of this little book is to give general readers some idea of the subject and spirit of European Continental literature in the later and culminating period of the Middle Ages—the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries.

It goes without saying that translations and selections are, in general, inadequate to the satisfactory representation of any literature. No piece of writing, of course, especially no piece of poetry, can be perfectly rendered into another tongue; no piece of writing can be fairly represented by detached portions. But to the general English reader Continental Mediaeval literature, so long as it remains in the original tongues, is inaccessible; and translations of many entire works are not within easy reach.

What translation and selection can do in this case, is to put into the hands of the ordinary student of the Middle Ages sufficient material for forming an estimate of the subjects that interested the mediaeval mind and the spirit in which they were treated. And this is what the general reader desires. Matters of form and expression—the points that translation cannot reproduce—belong, of course, to the specialist.

The claim that so slender a volume of selections can represent even the subject and spirit of so vast a body of literature, is saved from being unreasonable or presumptuous by a consideration of the fact that, from causes easy to trace, the national literatures of Continental Europe had many common characteristics: the range of subjects was not unlimited; the spirit is the same in all.

No English is included for two reasons: Mediaeval English literature is easily accessible to those readers for whom this book is prepared; during the special period in which the best mediaeval literature was developed, England was comparatively unproductive.

The constant aim has been to put before the reader the literature itself, with comment barely sufficient to make an intelligible setting for the selections. Criticism of all kinds has been avoided, so that the reader may come to his material with judgment entirely unbiased.

The translations used have been selected largely with a view to their accessibility, so that readers who desire to enlarge the scope of their reading may easily find the books they need. Caxton's "Reynard the Fox", and "The Romance of the Rose", attributed to Chaucer, were chosen because they convey an impression of the quaint flavor of the original, which is lost in a modern version. The slight adaptations and transliterations made in these two selections are entirely defensible on the score of intelligibility.

Our acknowledgments are due to Prof. William I. Knapp, of the University of Chicago, for the use of books from his valuable library, and for the permission, most highly prized, to print for the first time some of his translations of the Cid ballads.

THE EDITORS. Chicago, April, 1893.

## INTRODUCTION.

The Middle Ages extend from the fifth to the fifteenth century, from the fall of the Roman Empire to the establishment of the great modern states. The general outline of the history of the Middle Ages can be seen in the following excellent table:[1]

[1] Drury's "History of the Middle Ages", page XIV.

1. The decline of the Roman Empire and the successful accomplishment of two invasions.
2. The transient brilliancy of the Arabian civilization.
3. The attempted organization of a new empire by Charlemagne, and its dissolution.
4. The rise and prevalence of feudalism.
5. The successive crusades.
6. The contest between the pope and the emperor for the sovereignty of the world.

The history of these ten centuries falls naturally into three great divisions:

1. Fifth to tenth century, the destruction of the past and transition to new forms.
2. Eleventh to thirteenth century, feudal society with its customs, its institutions, its arts, and its literatures.
3. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a second time of transition.

The period, then, of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries was one of intense political life, of advanced national self-consciousness, of rich, highly-organized society. It was moreover a period of common ideas, movements, and tendencies over all Europe. Several factors enter into this result:

1. The church was completely organized, forming a common life and teaching everywhere. She had learned to employ the savage vigor and conquering instincts of the northern barbarians as defens-

es and aggressive missions of her spirit and ideas. The monasteries were homes of learning, and from them issued the didactic literature and the early drama.

2. This resulted in that romantic institution or ideal of chivalry, whose ten commandments explain so much of mediaeval life and art.[1]

[1] "Chivalry", by Leon Gautier, 1891, p. 26.

(1) Thou shalt believe all the church teaches, and shalt observe all its directions.

(2) Thou shalt defend the church.

(3) Thou shalt respect all weaknesses, and shalt constitute thyself the defender of them.

(4) Thou shalt love the country in which thou wast born.

(5) Thou shalt not recoil before thine enemy.

(6) Thou shalt make war against the infidel without cessation and without mercy.

(7) Thou shalt perform scrupulously thy feudal duties, if they be not contrary to the law of God.

(8) Thou shalt never lie, and shalt remain faithful to thy pledged word.

(9) Thou shalt be generous and give largesse to every one.

(10) Thou shalt be everywhere and always the champion of the Right and the Good against Injustice and Evil.

3. This combination of the Christian and the warrior found its public activity most completely in the Crusades. They gave a common motive and ideal to all the knights of Europe. They brought them together for thinking and for fighting. They spread national traditions and literatures. They made the whole face of Europe and the borders of the Mediterranean known to the ambitious, venturesome, daring, and heroic of every European country. The exploits of chivalric knights were told from camp to camp and taken back home to be told again in the castles.

4. Another institution of feudalism that helped to make this common subject and spirit of mediaeval literature was the minstrel, who was attached to every well-appointed castle. This picturesque poet—gleeman, *trouvere* or *troubadour* sang heroic stories and romances of love in the halls of castles and in the market places of towns. He borrowed from and copied others and helped to make the common method and traditions of mediaeval song.

5. Other elements in this result were the extensions of commerce and the growth of traveling as a pleasure.

6. Finally, the itinerant students and teachers of mediaeval universities assisted in the making of this common fund of ideas and material for literature.

(7) Behind and within all the separate national literatures lay the common Christian-Latin literature of the early Middle Ages, undoubtedly the cause of the rather startling perfection of form shown by much of the work of the period we are studying.[1]

[1] See Ebert "Allgemeine Geschichte der Literatur des Mittelalters". Vol. I., p. 11.

The result of all these unifying tendencies is to give a strong family likeness to the productions of the various European countries of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. The subject matter often varies, but the motive and form of writing are much alike. This likeness can be seen by a short survey of the more important kinds of literature of the period.



## I. THE NATIONAL EPIC.

In every country in which the national epic grew up it had the same origin and line of development. First there was the historical hero. His deeds were related by the traveling gleeman or minstrel—in brief chapters or ballads. Gradually mythical and supernatural elements came in; the number of achievements and the number of ballads grew very large; in this oral state they continued for many years, sometimes for centuries.

Finally, they were collected, edited, and written down—generally by a single editor. In all cases the names of the poets of the ballads are lost; in most cases the names of their redactors are but conjectural. "The Song of Roland", and the "Poem of the Cid" are typical, simple, national epics. The "Nibelungen Lied" is complicated by the fact that the legends of many heroes are fused into one poem, by the fact that it had more than one editor, and by the survival of mythological elements which mingle confusedly with Christian features. The national epic is the expression of the active side of chivalry. Italy has no national epic, both because she was too learned to develop a folk-poetry, and because the ideas of chivalry were never very active in her history.

## II. ROMANCES.

The numberless romances that sprang up in the literary period of the Middle Ages may be thrown into three groups:

1. Those belonging to the legend of Arthur and the Round Table. They had their starting point in the history of Geoffrey of Monmouth, which was partly invented, but had some basis in a tradition common to the Bretons and the Welsh. The romances based upon this legend sprang up apparently simultaneously in England and France. Through minstrel romances, founded upon the Breton popular tradition, the Arthur legend probably first found its way into European literature. With it was early fused the stories of the Holy Grail and of Parzival. In the twelfth century these stories were widely popular in literary form in France and Germany, and later they passed into Italy, Spain, and Scandinavia. Their influence upon the

life and thought of Mediaeval Europe is very important. They did much to modify the entire institution of chivalry.[1]

[1] Leon Gautier's "Chivalry", chap. IV., Section V.

2. The Romances of Antiquity, of which there are three varieties:

(1) Those which were believed to be direct reproductions, such as the Romances of Thebes, of Aeneas, of Troy, whose authors acknowledged a debt to Vergil, Statius, and other classic writers.

(2) Those based upon ancient history not previously versified, such as the Romance of Alexander.

(3) Those which reproduced the names and nothing else from antiquity.

These romances, too, were a common European possession. The most important and influential of them are the Romance of Troy, and the Romance of Alexander. They appear in different forms in the literature of every mediaeval nation in Europe.

3. There was in each national literature a vast number of unaffiliated romances. A romance of this group usually contained a love story, a tale of adventure, or a religious experience in the form of a story. They are not clearly distinct from the class of popular tales. On the whole, the romance is more serious and dignified than the tale. Examples of this kind of a romance are Hartmann von Aue's "Henry the Leper", and the French "Flore et Blanchefleur".

### III. LYRICS.

Perhaps no other part of its literature shows more striking proof of the common life and interests of Mediaeval Europe than does the lyric poetry of the period. In Northern France, in Provence, in all parts of Germany, in Italy, and a little later in Spain, we see a most remarkable outburst of song. The subjects were the same in all the countries. Love—the love of feudal chivalry—patriotism, and religion were the themes that employed the mediaeval lyrist in whatever country he sang. In all these lyrics much was made of form, the verse being always skillfully constructed, sometimes very compli-

cated. The lyric poetry of Italy was more learned and more finished in style than that of the other countries.

In Northern France the poet was called a *trouvere*, in Provence a *troubadour*, in Germany a *minnesinger*. The traveling minstrel was in France a *jongleur* (Provençal *jogleur*). The distinction between *trouvere* or *troubadour* and *jongleur* is not always to be sharply drawn. Sometimes in France and Provence the same poet composed his verses and sang them—was both *trouvere* or *troubadour* and *jongleur*; while in Germany the *minnesingers* were generally both poets and minstrels.

#### **IV. TALES AND FABLES.**

No distinct line can be drawn between Tales and Fables; between Romances and Tales; nor between Fables and Allegories. These varieties of writings merge into one another.

The number of tales in circulation in Mediaeval Europe was exceedingly large. These tales came from many different sources: from Oriental lands, introduced by the Moors, or brought back by the crusaders; from ancient classical literature; from traditions of the church and the lives of the saints; from the old mythologies; from common life and experience. Among many mediaeval collections of them, the most famous are the "Decameron" of Boccaccio, and the "Geste Romanorum", a collection made and used by the priests in instructing their people.

#### **V. DIDACTIC AND ALLEGORICAL LITERATURE.**

Under didactic literature we would include a large mass of writing not strictly to be called pure literature—sermons, homilies, chronicles, bestiaries, and chronologies. Nearly all these were written in verse, as prose did not begin to be used for literature until very late in the Middle Ages. The mediaeval mind, under the influence of the scholastic theology, grew very fond of allegory. The list of allegories is exhaustless, and some of the allegories well-nigh interminable. It is not easy to say whether the "Romance of Reynard the Fox" is a series of fables or an allegory. The fact that a satire on human affairs runs through it constantly, warrants us in calling it an allegory. Some phase of the Reynard legend formed the medium of

expression of the thought of every mediaeval nation in Europe. Perhaps the most popular and influential allegory of the Middle Ages was "The Romance of the Rose", written in France but translated or imitated in every other country. Dante's "Divine Comedy" is an allegory of a very elevated kind.

## **VI. THE DRAMA.**

The origin and line of development of the drama in all the countries of Mediaeval Europe is this: Dramatic representations in connection with the liturgy of the church were first used in the service; then they were extended to church festivals and ceremonies. By degrees portions of Bible history were thrown into dramatic form; then the lives of the saints furnished material. A distinction grew up between Mystery Plays—those founded on Bible history—and Miracle Plays—those founded on the lives of the saints. These plays were performed both in the churches and in the open air. They were written usually by the clergy. Gradually there grew up a play in which the places of religious characters were taken by abstract virtues and vices personified, and plays called Moralities were produced. They were played chiefly by tradesmen's guilds. Alongside the sacred drama are to be found occasional secular dramatic attempts, farces, carnival plays, and profane mysteries. But their number and significance are small. The mediaeval drama is historically interesting, but in itself does not contain much interest. It is impossible to give an idea of it by selection.

# SONG AND LEGEND FROM THE MIDDLE AGES.

## CHAPTER I. FRENCH LITERATURE.

French Literature of the Middle Ages was produced between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries, having its greatest development in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It must be divided into two sections according to the part of France where it was produced.

I. French Literature proper, or that composed in the northern half of France.

II. Provençal Literature, or that developed in Provence.

The most obvious difference between these is that the Provençal literature had little of the epic and romantic, but developed the lyric extensively, especially lyrics of love.

The following table will show the more important kinds of French Mediaeval Literature.[1]

[1] This classification is adapted from M. Gaston Paris' excellent sketch "La Litterature Francaise au Moyen Age", 1890, and Saintsbury's "Short History of French Literature", 1889.

I. Narrative Literature.

1. The National Epics.
2. Romances of Antiquity.
3. Arthurian Romances.
4. Romances of Adventure.
5. Tales and Fables.
6. Chronicles.

II. Didactic Literature.

1. Allegories — "The Romance of the Rose".
2. Satires.

### 3. Homilies, etc.

## III. Lyric Literature.

### THE NATIONAL EPICS.

The French national epics (called "Chansons de Gestes", songs of heroic deeds) are those narrative poems which are founded on early French history, and recount the deeds of national heroes. They are, for the most part, based on the deeds of Charlemagne and his nobles. They are peculiar to Northern France. Their date of production extends from the eleventh to the fourteenth century, their best development being in the eleventh and twelfth.

These epic poems number more than one hundred. They vary in length from one thousand to thirty thousand lines. The whole mass is said to contain between two and three million lines. Like all folk epics, they are based upon earlier ballads composed by many different poets. These ballads were never written down and are completely lost. The epic is a compilation and adaptation, presumably by a single poet, of the material of the ballads. In every case the names of the poets of the French epics are lost. They were *trouvères* and their poems were carried about in memory or in manuscript by the *jongleurs* or minstrels, and sung from castle to castle and in the market places. The best of them are: "The Song of Roland"; "Amis et Amiles"; "Aliscans"; "Gerard de Roussillon"; "Raoul de Cambrai". Of these the oldest and confessedly the greatest is The Song of Roland, from which our extracts are taken.

The Song of Roland is based upon the following events (the events as narrated in the poem differ widely from those of the actual history): Charlemagne has warred seven years in Spain, when Marsile, king of Saragossa, the only city that has withstood the emperor, sends a feigned submission. Roland, the king's nephew, offers to go to Saragossa to settle the terms of the treaty. He is rejected as too impetuous, when he suggests that Ganelon go. This bitterly annoys Ganelon, and when he meets Marsile he makes a treacherous plot by which Charlemagne is to be induced to go back to France, with Roland in command of the rear guard. The plan works,

and when the advanced party of the French army is out of reach, the Saracens fall upon the rear guard in the pass of Roncevalles and completely destroy it. The death of Roland, the return and grief of the king, and his vengeance on the pagans form the central incident of the poem. Ganelon is afterwards tried for his treachery, condemned, and executed.

## THE SONG OF ROLAND.

Stanza I. —

The king, our Emperor Carlemaine,  
Hath been for seven full years in Spain.  
From highland to sea hath he won the land;  
City was none might his arm withstand;  
Keep and castle alike went down —  
Save Saragossa, the mountain town.  
The King Marsilius holds the place,  
Who loveth not God, nor seeks His grace:  
He prays to Apollin, and serves Mahound;  
But he saved him not from the fate he found.

King Marsile held a council and decided to offer Charlemagne a feigned submission. Karl summons his council to consider this.

Stanza 8. —

King Karl is jocund and gay of mood,  
He hath Cordres city at last subdued;  
Its shattered walls and turrets fell  
By catapult and mangonel;  
Not a heathen did there remain  
But confessed himself Christian or else was slain.  
The Emperor sits in an orchard wide,  
Roland and Olivier by his side:  
Samson the duke, and Anseis proud;  
Geoffrey of Anjou, whose arm was vowed  
The royal gonfalon to rear;  
Gereln, and his fellow in arms, Gerier:  
With them many a gallant lance,  
Full fifteen thousand of gentle France.  
The cavaliers sit upon carpets white

Playing at tables for their delight;  
The older and sager sit at chess,  
The bachelors fence with a light address.  
Seated underneath a pine,  
Close beside an eglantine,  
Upon a throne of beaten gold,  
The lord of ample France behold;  
White his hair and beard were seen,  
Fair of body, and proud of mien,  
Who sought him needed not ask, I ween.  
The ten alight before his feet,  
And him in all observance greet.

The treacherous plot has succeeded. Charles, with the main part of his army, has gone ahead, the Saracens have fallen on the rear-guard, and are destroying it. Oliver begs Roland to sound his wonderful horn and summon aid.

Stanza 87. —

"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 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!"

Stanza 88. —

"Roland, Roland, yet wind one blast!  
Karl will hear ere the gorge be passed,  
And the Franks return on their path fall 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;