

Raoul de Cambrai

translated by

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I: Listen to a gay and cheerful song! Some of you, nay, most of you, have heard of the noble family so famous for its valour; other minstrels have sung new songs to you—but they have left the flower of them all. That is the song of Raoul, lord of Cambrai; Taillefer he was called on account of his courage. He had one son who became a noble warrior: he too was called Raoul and possessed wondrous strength. Many a dire attack he made against the sons of Herbert; but young Bernier slew him grievously at last.

II: It is not right to leave this tale untold. Make less noise and listen to the song of Guerri the Red, of dame Aalais and of Raoul, lord of Cambrai. The bishop of Beauvais was his godfather. He waged such warfare against the sons of Herbert as you shall hear presently in my song.

III: This Raoul Taillefer, of whom I am telling you, was a very noble and brave-hearted man. He served the emperor for so long that at last the emperor rewarded his services and invested him with Cambrai as his rightful fief, and a fair wife thereto, than whom was fairer never seen. All his friends and relations rejoiced, and anyone can tell you about the wedding which took place at the court of the great King Louis. After this he lived till his hair was white, and when it was God's will he died. But Aalais, his fair and noble wife, grieved sorely for him: such grief was never heard before. And the barons buried him: in the church of St. Geri they laid him to rest. It was by this baron, I tell you of a truth, that the lady Aalais was with child.

IV: They buried the brave knight Taillefer, by whom, as I have been telling you, the noble lady remained great with child. As long as God willed she carried the child, and much was the rejoicing of all those of the land, both knights and men-at-arms, at his birth. Many a one rejoiced, I know full well, who afterwards grieved sorely on his account.

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Then the noble lady took the child and wrapped him in a fine and costly cloth, and straightway called two knights—one they say was Thiebaut, the other, I know, was Acelin. “Barons,” said she, “for God’s sake, come hither; ride straight to Beauvais for me now at full speed.”

V: Dame Aalais was not faint-hearted. She laid her son in a costly purple cloth; then she called two barons of noble lineage: “Straight to Beauvais you will go for me in the morning, to my cousin, the bishop Sir Guy.” Then they left her, and small delay they made. They did not stop till they reached Beauvais, and they found the bishop in his marble palace. He was the brother of Geoffroy of Lavardin.

VI: The two knights go up to the palace and they carry the infant that they hold so dear. They find the worthy bishop and salute him in proper fashion: “Our noble lady Aalais, wife of the warrior Raoul Taillefer, prays God, the judge of all, to save and protect the holy bishop. The count is dead, and we cannot bring him back. But our lady has an heir, and she sends him hither in all affection, for she would keep him amongst his own kith and kin.” The bishop listened; then he crossed himself and thanked God Almighty and said: “Noble countess, may God direct thee! For my part, I will not delay in this matter.” So he had the font made ready in the church and the holy oils wherewith to anoint the child, and he put on his robes to perform his office.

VII: The noble bishop came to the chapel to baptize the child; for the sake of his father, the marquis Taillefer, he gave him the name of Raoul of Cambrai. Then without delay he clothed him in choice garments, and a comely nurse clad in rich apparel took the child. On the next day they all took leave and returned to their own homes. Guerri the Red was present at the baptism, and there was no fun or laughter there. But the child was petted and cherished and gently nourished by his nurse. Years and months and days passed: more than three years, so the record tells us.

VIII: Dame Aalais was not faint-hearted. You shall now hear of the distress and disorder caused by the great interminable war. The King of France had a noble youth in his service whom the French called Gibouin of Mans. He served the king with his good sword, and made many an orphan in the course of his wars. He served our noble king so well and in

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such knightly fashion that he was entitled to a full reward. Those from beyond the Rhine counselled that he should be given the fief of Cambrai which was held by Aalais, conqueror of men's hearts, of the family of Geoffroy of Lavardin. Now, if God who turned the water into wine prevent it not, a fief is about to be given and bestowed by reason of which many a knight will lie prone in death.

IX: Our emperor listened to the barons talking and advising him to give the fair Aalais to the baron of Mans who had served him so well. He took their counsel, for which he is to be blamed; he gave the glove to Gibouin, who thanked him for it and stooped and kissed his shoe. Then said the King of France: "Gibouin, my brother, I deserve thy thanks, for it is a great gift that I give thee here. But on one condition I grant it: I wish not to disinherit the boy Raoul. He is yet young, now protect him well until such time that he can carry arms. He shall hold Cambrai; no one can refuse it to him and I shall give you some other land." Said Gibouin: "I accept it on condition that you bid me marry the lady." But he acted like a fool in daring to expect this, for it afterwards caused the overthrow of many a valiant knight, for the fair lady would not accept him though she were cut to pieces for it.

X: King Louis did a very foolish thing when he took the heritage away from his nephew; and Gibouin on his side acted like a felon when he desired the land of another as his fief. It caused him afterwards to die a shameful death. Then the emperor called his messenger: "Go, saddle the Arab steed, and tell my fair sister in her heritage of Cambrai, that she take to husband the brave Gibouin of Mans. Between here and Carthage there is not such a knight to be found, and I give him all the land as a marriage portion. Tell her to come without delay to my court and bring her escort with her, and I will summon many of my kinsmen. But if she fails me because of her pride, I will seize both the land and the inheritance."

XI: The messenger took his leave and mounted the saddle of his horse; then he left Paris and rode straight for Cambrai. He entered the city by the main gate and halted by the church of St. Geri. He found the noble lady in the open space before the church with several knights in

her company. He reined in his horse and dismounted, and greeted the lady in the king's name: "The king, our protector, prays God who created heaven and earth and all things therein to save the countess and all those she loves." – "May God the Creator protect thee, brother! Tell me the king's bidding and hide it not." – "In God's name, lady, I will tell you. The king's message is that he will give you Gibouin for a husband. Know of a truth, that is the king's command." Dame Aalais sank down to the earth, tears fell from her eyes and she gave a deep sigh. Then she called her counsellors. "Ah, God!" said she, "Here is an evil message.

(Gap in the manuscript of about 100 lines. Guerri the Red hears of the king's message and swears to avenge it).

XIV: "Just Emperor," said the baron Guerri, "Are you minded to disinherit your nephew because as yet he can neither walk nor ride? By the faith that I owe you, you shall see a thousand knights overturned ere this Knight of Mans can vaunt himself in court. Just Emperor, I declare to you that if he lets himself be seen in Cambrai he may be certain of losing his head. And you too, foolish king, deserve blame for this. The child is your nephew, and you should never have thought of such a thing." But the king replied: "Let all this be! The gift is given and I cannot go back on it now." So Guerri departed, for he had no desire to remain, and ill-omened was the leave that he took! The good steeds were ready at the foot of the steps and the barons mounted. And Guerri cried at the top of his voice: "Now make ready, you young warriors who desire hard knocks! For I swear by Him who allowed himself to suffer, I would rather be cut to pieces than fail my nephew as long as I live."

XV: Guerri the Red was full of anger. He returned to Cambrai and dismounted before the church. Dame Aalais saw the knight coming and spoke to him as you may now hear: "Sir Guerri, without fail now, will you tell me the truth?" "Lady," said he, "I wish not to lie to you. The king is determined to seize your heritage for Gibouin, God curse him! – Take him for thy husband, for only so canst thou make thy peace with Louis, the ruler of France." "God!" said the lady, "I could die of grief! I would rather be burnt alive than that the king should force a greyhound to lie with a watchdog. God will allow me to bring up my

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child till such time as he can carry arms." Then said Guerri: "Lady, a blessing on you for daring to say it; I will not desert you in your great need."

XVI: Guerri the stout-hearted speaks again: "Lady Aalais, I swear by God the Redeemer that I will not fail you as long as I live. Where is my nephew? Bring him here, I pray you." Up rose two young lords and brought the child to the fore-court. He was three years old, I tell you for a fact, and he was dressed in bright silk with a tunic of crimson cloth. A more beautiful child could not be found. Guerri takes him in his arms at once and sighs deeply from his heart: "Child," said he, "you are scarce grown yet, and the knight of Mans has evil intent towards you, since he deprives you of your land." "Uncle," said the child, "I shall get it back, if I live long enough to carry arms seated on my charger." "Truly," said Guerri, "you shall not lose a foot of it, unless twenty thousand warriors die for it first." Then the knights call for water and seat themselves at the tables.

XVII: Dame Aalais and the vassal Guerri and the barons are seated at table, The seneschals have done their duty well, for they have been well trained to serve. After the meal the lady gives costly garments to the barons. Then the powerful Guerri takes his leave; he kisses the lady and departs. Straight to Arras he goes at full speed. After this many years and days passed and there was no sound of war or of discord in the land. When Raoul of Cambrai was fifteen years old he was an exceedingly courteous and noble youth and greatly beloved by his men and his nobles.

XVIII: Fifteen years have now passed and gone and dame Aalais sees her son tall and broad and well-formed. There was a nobleman in that kingdom, Ybert by name, a man of dauntless spirit. He had a son who was christened Bernier when he was small. He was grown now and well-favoured, and at fifteen years he too was both tall and strong. Count Raoul loved him dearly, and dame Aalais out of goodness of heart had fostered him from an early age. Together they went to Paris to acquaint themselves with noble knighthood, and he waited on Raoul with the wine and the spiced cup. Better had it been for him, I can tell

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you, had his head been severed from his body, for grievously and shamefully he slew him in the end.

XIX: Count Raoul, the courteous youth, had a great affection for young Bernier. Bernier was the son of Ybert of Ribemont and there was no fairer youth in any land, nor any that knew better the use of shield and spear, nor of wise speech in a king's court, albeit he was called a bastard. Raoul loved him and gladly made him his squire, but ill-mated comrades they proved to be.

XX: Dame Aalais has watched her son grow up and now she sees that he is fit to bear arms, and thus she addressed him as you may hear: "Call the ban and summon your men, so that you may see them assembled at Cambrai, and we shall soon see who is loth to serve." Raoul summoned them and spoke his mind to them: "You must not fail me when I need you."

(Gap in the manuscript of about 60 lines. Raoul goes to the king and requests him to bestow knighthood on him).

XXII: The emperor has knighted the boy and now he calls his seneschals and says: "Bring hither arms, for so I bid you"... Then the emperor spoke to his nephew: "Nephew Raoul, I see that you have grown up tall and strong, thanks be to God, the Father omnipotent,"

XXIII: Our emperor loved the boy very dearly and he gave him the helmet of a Saracen whom Roland had slain on the river Rhine. He placed it over the bonnet of his hauberk of double thickness, then he said to him: "Cousin, this bright helmet belonged to a Saracen, no arm can do it the slightest injury. Mayst thou receive the gift of faith from Him who turned the water into wine and presided over the wedding of St. Archedeclin." And Raoul spoke: "I accept it as guarantee that your enemies shall have an evil neighbour in me, and no rest from warfare by day or by night." The nose-piece of the helmet was of pure gold and there was a precious stone set in the middle of it which would illumine the path on a dark night.

XXIV: Then the king girded him with a strong sword. Its pommel and hilt were of gold and it was forged in a gloomy valley by Galant, who had put into it of his best. Except Durendal, which was the choicest

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sword of all, this sword was better than all others and no arm in the world could stand against it. Such were the arms which became him. For Raoul was fair and of noble form and, but for the immoderateness that was in him, a better vassal than he had never ruled his land. But because of his excess the outcome was grievous, for an unbridled man passes his days in sorrow.

XXV: Then the king gave him his swift battle-horse; the saddle both back and front was of gold, and there was wonderful working on it of diverse beasts all richly wrought. It was covered with costly buckram and over this another cover of goodly silk, the flaps of which hung down to the ground. Raoul jumped on proudly and seized the golden shield. There were bands of gold round the boss, and it is proof against both sword and lance. Then he seized the lance of shining gold, its sweeping pennon fixed with five nails, and took a leap forward like a man who knows how to ride; and when he stopped his horse he reined him in with such skill that not a foot forward did he carry him over the ground. The Frenchmen said: "What a comely youth he is! He will soon regain his father's land." And many a one rejoiced who was afterwards filled with grief, as you will hear if I have leisure to sing.

XXVI: Raoul of Cambrai was knighted, and for a space there were no further happenings. Our brave emperor kept him by him as his good friend and made him seneschal of France, as you have heard. And now there is not a baron from here to Ponthieu who does not send him his son or his foster child, or his nephew or cousin, and Raoul loved and cherished them like a gentle knight, and kept them in his service, and clothed them and gave them many a good Arab steed. All his enemies grieved greatly at this, especially the knight of Mans who had received the ill-fated gift of Cambrai. Raoul was loyal and hated him from his heart; later on it was the counsel of the powerful Guerri the Red which stirred up such strife and warfare as led to the death and downfall of many a baron.

XXVII: A long time passed again before the day of which I am going to tell you. It was on an Easter day, which one ought to hold sacred though one may rejoice the day after, that the baron Raoul went out of

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the church of St. Denis whither he had gone to worship. In the spacious forecourt the knights were beginning to play at fencing to amuse themselves, but their sport turned at last to earnest and their game to anger, and the two sons of Ernaut, a valiant knight of Douai, were done to death.

XXVIII: When these two boys, the sons of Ernaut, marquis of Douai, were killed, the blame fell on Raoul, for all the barons of the land said that Raoul killed them both. Count Ernaut will always be his enemy now until such time as his vengeance be sated. This was years and days after—I know not how long—and if God who suffered on the cross help him not, then woe betide Raoul of Cambrai for his deed! Guerri the Red was much troubled thereat, and with good cause, for the old man had reason to regret it, and the death of these two boys brought him many enemies.

XXIX: There was much mourning when the two boys were buried. But at the feast of Pentecost King Louis held his high court as was his wont, and he called Raoul, whom he greatly loved, and said to him: "Fair nephew, I wish you to serve me with the spiced wine at dinner to-day." "Sire," replied Raoul, "I ought not to demur; I am your vassal and must obey you." It was young Bernier who had the wine in his charge, and the noble knights had such portions that they could in no wise be rightly blamed. On the next day the valiant Count Raoul knighted Bernier and invested him with the best arms on which he could lay hands. He put a strong well-burnished hauberk on his back and laced a golden helmet on his head. Then he girded the sword wherewith he was knighted to his side and Bernier straightway mounted his good war-horse.

XXX: As soon as Bernier was mounted on his horse every one could see what a good knight he had become. He seized his gold-banded shield and held the sharp lance with its pennon fastened by five golden nails in his hand. Then he leapt forward on his horse and returned to his place again. There were many knights in the open space and they said one to another: "How well he looks in his arms, and he is unwed as yet and must be of rich and noble birth." And Raoul said: "God be thanked! I do not regret, I assure you, the arms that I gave him: he ought to gain

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great honour amongst his friends." But he was a cause of grief and anger to Raoul in the end, as you shall hear me tell. "Sir Bernier," said the wise Raoul, "you shall strike a blow at the dummy for my sake, and in order that Louis, the seasoned warrior, may see." And Bernier replied: "I will do it at your bidding. The first request you make of me shall not be refused, so help me God." So out in the meadows they made a dummy of two shields and two broidered hauberks, and the youth Bernier called out to a nobleman of great wealth who was there: "Sir Berant, I crave your attention. Guide me to the dummy, if you be willing." And Berant replied: "Willingly and gladly I do it." So with Berant guiding Bernier charged forward and such great blows he gave to the dummy as you will never see a bastard give again. He pierced both the shields and rent and spoiled both the hauberks. One of the stakes too was split and pierced through, for his lance passed right through the middle of it. So Bernier performed his feat of arms and returned; on all sides he was greatly praised, and many ladies both saw and took note of him.

XXXI: Young Bernier had performed his feat and was back again amongst the barons. He was fair and well-formed, both graceful and tall. He dismounts from his horse, his spurs still on his feet, and kneels down beside Raoul: "Sire," said he, "a great boon I ask; I am your vassal, and, by St. Simon, never shall it be told to my heirs that treason was committed by me. But I pray, in God's name, that you will not make war against the sons of Herbert." Raoul listened, the words made him sad and downcast. He went to the house with some of his comrades—so many princes that I know not even their names. Up to the palace they go in their ermine cloaks, and white-bearded Guerri took up the word. For service rendered he is going to claim the guerdon now which will empty the saddle of many a noble steed.

XXXII: The white-bearded Guerri speaks: "By my faith, sire, I will not lie to you. My nephew has served you now long time and he will get nothing from his friends if you do not recompense his services. Grant him at least the fief of Cambrai and the land of the hardy knight Taillefer." "It is not in my power," replied the king; "the Knight of Mans has it, and I have pledged it to him on such terms that now I regret from

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my heart and many a time have I repented of it since, but it was the advice of my barons." Then said the red knight: "Ill betide us then, for I claim it, by St. Geri!" Quickly he strode forth from the room and came to the palace in an evil humour. Raoul of Cambrai was playing chess like a man who expects no evil tidings. Guerri saw him there and seized him by the arm with such force that he tore and slit his cloak: "Son of a whore," he called to him, but the words were false, "miserable coward, what art thou playing here for? I tell thee for a fact, thou has not enough land of thine own on which to rub down an old pack-horse." Raoul heard these words and sprang to his feet; he spoke so loudly that the palace resounded, and many a noble knight in the hall heard him as he cried "Who takes it from me? I warrant he is too rash." Guerri replied "The king himself, and he holds thee for disgraced, and we need to be protected and guarded forsooth!" Raoul heard his words, and all his blood boiled. Two knights brought up at his father's court heard the noise and the clamour and placed themselves at his disposal straightway; and Bernier served them all with wine. Full speed they came before the king and their words did not fall to the ground. Raoul spoke, and beside him stood Guerri the Red.

XXXIII: Raoul, who was full of wrath, spoke thus: "Just emperor, by St. Amant I swear that I have served you ever since I carried arms and you have never given me the amount of a farthing. Now at least give me the glove as a pledge that I may hold my own land as my valiant father held it before me." "I cannot grant it," replied the king; "I have given it to the Knight of Mans, and for all the wealth of Milan I would not take it from him." Guerri listened, then he shouted: "I will fight for it first, fully armed on my steed, against that mercenary Gibouin of Mans." And Raoul, ill-tempered now and sullen, cried: "By the apostle whom the penitents seek, if now thou dost not take possession of thy land, this very day or to-morrow ere the sun set, never again will I nor my men fight in thy defence." These are the words that Raoul kept so well and which caused the untimely death of many a baron. "Just emperor, I tell you all this first: every one knows that the land of the father ought by right to pass to the child. By St. Amant, every one, both small and great,

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will scorn me henceforth, if I do violence to my pride any longer when I see another man holding my land. By God who made the firmament, if ever I find that mercenary of Mans, no ordinary death shall he die by my sword." The king was heavy at heart when he heard these words.

XXXIV: The knight of Mans was sitting at a table in the palace. He heard these threats and was filled with fear. He put on his cloak of ermine and came to the king: "Just emperor," said he, "now am I in a sorry plight. You gave me Cambresis by Artois; and now you cannot guarantee the possession of it to me. Here now is this arrogant Count Raoul with his fine equipment (he is your nephew, as the Frenchmen know well), and Guerri the Red, his loyal friend. I have no friend so good in all this land who would be worth anything to me against these two. I have served thee long with my Viennese blade, and never have I obtained the worth of a farthing. I shall go forth on my good Norwegian steed poorer than I came, and the Alemans and the Germans, the men of Burgundy, of Normandy and France will all talk of it, and all my service will not have earned me a doit." Sorrow filled the heart of King Louis and he beckoned Raoul to him with his broided glove and said: "Fair nephew, by God, the giver of laws, I pray you let him hold it for two or three years on such terms as I will tell you: if any count dies between here and Vermandois, or between Aix-la-Chapelle and Senlis, or from Monloon to Orleans, you shall inherit the rights and the land. You shall not lose a fraction of a penny by the exchange." Raoul listened and did not hesitate—at the advice of Guerri of Artois he accepted the pledge—it was by reason of it that he lay cold in death at last.

XXXV: Count Raoul called Guerri to speak of the matter: "Uncle," said he, "I count on your support. I will accept this gift and there shall be no drawing back from it." It was a great thing that he demanded in exchange for his father's fief, and fatal to many a baron in the end. Then they demanded hostages from King Louis; and the king hearkened to bad advice and allowed Raoul to choose some of the highest in the land. But much they regretted it afterwards. Forty hostages were sworn in and pledged to them: Lohier the king gave them, and Anceis; Gociaume was amongst them and Gerard and Gerin, Herbert of the Maine and

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Geoffroy of Anjou, Henry of Troyes and the young Gerard who held Senlis on the Beauvoisin side. Together with them the king gave them Galeran and Gaudin and then Berart, who held Quercy as his fief. Count Raoul acted in no ignoble fashion; he brought the sacred objects to the marble palace—precious relics of St. Firmin, St. Peter and St. Augustine, and the king swore without the aid of any priest that, when the time came, he would give him the possessions of the first count who should die between the Loire and the Rhine.

XXXVI: Furthermore the king gave him Oliver and Poucon, Gautier and Sinion (?), and then in addition Amaury and Droon, Richer the aged and Foucon, Berenger and his uncle Samson. These were the hostages that the king gave to Raoul. In the tower they took an oath before the king that they would support the other hostages and that if any count should die from Orleans to Soissons, from Monloon to Aix-la-Chapelle, Raoul should have his lands forthwith. Raoul was in his right, we can truly say; but the emperor acted feloniously when he granted a land to his nephew which should cause so many knights to lose their lives. Raoul was wise too to demand hostages in abundance.

XXXVII: Forty hostages the emperor gives him and Guerri the Red musters them and calls them by name. There was Gerin of Aussois and Huon of Hantone, Richard of Reims and Simon of Péronne, Droon of Meaux and Savary of Verona, Estout of Langres and Wedon of Bourborme. This last held all Burgundy as his fief and there was not such another knight from here to Spain. They swore on the relics that they would seek no excuse, and the king himself swore by his crown that no jot of his promise should fail.

XXXVIII: The emperor delivered forty hostages to Raoul in the presence of all, and on such conditions that I will tell you: that, whom ever it may grieve, he will render to him the land of any count who dies in Vermandois or in France, and that he shall not be the loser of so much as a lance point thereby. But it all came to nought through his own folly; for many a noble knight was grieved thereby and the lives of all the hostages put in danger.

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XXXIX: Hostages he had now; as many as he wanted, and for some time things remained thus—for a year and a fortnight at any rate, I know and Raoul returned to Cambrai. But during the time of which I have been speaking Herbert, a powerful count, died; he was a loyal man and wise and had a great many friends. All Vermandois was his territory, also Roie, Péronne, Origny, Ribemont, St. Quentin and Clairly. He is a fortunate man who possesses many friends! Raoul heard of his death and bestirred himself. He quickly mounted his steed and summoned his hostages; his uncle Guerri the Red of Arras accompanied him and with a hundred and forty men and much costly clothing he rode straight without stopping to demand from King Louis the fatal gift. Raoul was in his right, as I have told you; it was the king of St. Denis who was in the wrong. When the king is bad many a loyal man suffers for it. The barons arrived at the court at Paris and dismounted beneath the olive trees. Then they went up the palace steps and demanded to see the king. They found King Louis sitting upon his throne; he looked and saw all these nobles coming, headed by the eager Raoul; "Salutations to the great king Louis," said he, "on behalf of God who suffered on the cross." The emperor replied slowly: "May God, who made paradise, protect thee, nephew!"

XL: Raoul, the noble baron, spoke: "Just emperor. I desire to speak only to you; I am your nephew and you must not act unfairly towards me. I have heard of the death of Herbert, lord and suzerain of Vermandois. Now invest me at once with his land, for thus you swore that you would do, and you pledged it to me by hostages." "I cannot, brother," said the baron Louis. "This noble count of whom thou speakest has four valiant sons, than whom no better knights can be found. If now I handed their land over to you, every right-minded person would blame me for it and I could not summon them to my court, for they would refuse to serve or honour me. Besides, I tell thee, I have no desire to disinherit them: I do not wish to vex four men on account of one." Raoul listened and thought he would go mad. He cannot think, he is so enraged, but he turns away in a fury and does not stop till he reaches his

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palace and finds the hostages waiting there, whereupon he calls them to him upon their oath.

XLI: Count Raoul was very angry. He called upon Droon and Geoffroy the bold of Anjou, who was much dismayed at the news, Herbert of the Maine and Gerard and Henry, Samson and the aged Bernard. "Come hither, barons, I bid you, as you have pledged and sworn to do. To-morrow at daybreak I summon you upon your oath to my tower and, by St. Geri, you will be filled with despair." Geoffroy shuddered when he heard these words and said: "Friend, why do you alarm me thus?" "I will tell you" replied Raoul. "Herbert who owned Origny and St. Quentin, Péronne and Clairry, Ham and Roie, Nesle and Falévy, is dead. Do you think that I have been invested with this rich fief? I tell you no, for the emperor has failed towards me completely." And the barons all replied: "Give us time: for we will go to Louis and learn from his own lips how he means to protect us." "I grant it, by my faith," said Raoul, and Bernier goes to the palace and all the hostages go straightway to the king. Geoffroy speaks first and implores the mercy of the king: "Just emperor, we are in an evil plight, why has thou given us as hostages to this devil, the greatest felon that ever donned a hauberk? Herbert, the best of barons, is dead, and he wishes to be invested with the whole of his fief."

XLII: Geoffroy the bold spoke again: "Just emperor, you committed great folly when you gave your nephew such a heritage, and the title deed to some one else's land. Count Herbert is dead and he ruled a large estate. Raoul is in the right; the outrage is yours. You will have to invest him with it—we are the hostages therefor."—"God," said the king, "it nearly makes me mad to think that four men should lose their heritage on account of one! By the one who caused the statue to speak, I swear this gift will turn out to his undoing. Unless some pact of marriage stays his hand there will be grief in many a noble home."

XLIII: The king speaks, and he is sad at heart: "Fair nephew Raoul, come hither. I give you the glove, but the land is yours on such terms as I shall tell you: to wit that neither I nor my men will help thee in any way." "I ask for nothing better," Raoul replies. But Bernier heard his

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words and leapt up, and he speaks out so that all can hear: "The sons of Herbert are valiant knights, rich and possessed of many friends and never will they suffer any loss through you." The Frenchmen in the palace, both old and young, talk of the matter, and they say: "The boy Raoul has the mind of a man. He is demanding a fair exchange for his father's land. The king is stirring up a great war which will bring a sad heart to many a fair lady."

XLIV: Bernier, who does not lack courage, speaks out loudly again: "Just emperor, consider whether there be not unreason in all this. The sons of Herbert have done no wrong, and they should not be misjudged in your court. Why do you surrender their land like this? May the Lord God not forgive them if they defend not their lands against Raoul!" "So be it," said the king straightway; "since against my will he has accepted the gift, never shall the pennon float from my lance on his behalf."

XLV: Bernier speaks to Raoul of Cambrai: "I am your man, I deny it not, but for my part I will never advise you to seize their lands, for I know that Ernaut of Douai alone has fifty followers and there are no such warriors in all the land. Go now to law before any wrong is committed. If they have wronged thee, I will make amends for them. I will be surety for them out of love to thee." "By my faith," replied Raoul, "I will not think of it. The grant is made and I will not give it up at any price." Said Bernier: "Then, Sire, I will say no more until such time as I see their strong defence."

XLVI: Raoul sees that his affair has gone well; the gift has been allotted to him in the high court and Louis has not prevented it. But Bernier can scarce forbear to tear his hair. So Raoul returns to his lodgings. He mounts his horse and summons his men for the homeward journey and leaves Paris without a sound.

XLVII: Raoul departs and returns to Cambrai at full speed and the barons dismount before their dwellings. But young Bernier, was heavy at heart: he had girded scornfully at Raoul and now he will sleep first before he drinks aught or goes up to the palace or the tower, for he wishes to have no words of anger with his lady. Count Raoul

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dismounted before the steps of the palace and the fair lady Aalais kissed him on the mouth and on the cheek.

XLVIII: Dame Aalais kissed and made much of her son Raoul; she seized the noble baron by the hand and together they entered their ancestral home. Then the lady spoke to him in the hearing of many barons—"Fair son," said she, "you are tall and well-grown; you are seneschal of France, thanks be to God. But I am much amazed at King Louis; you have served him long time now and he has not recompensed your service in any way. He ought to give you now of his own free will all the land of Taillefer the bold, thine own father and my husband. The knight of Mans has had possession of it too long, and I am amazed that thou hast consented to it for so long, and hast neither killed him nor brought dishonour upon him." Then Raoul felt uneasy in his mind and he said: "Be not hard on me, dame, for God's sake, who never lies! Louis has rewarded my services. Count Herbert has died—we know this now for certain—and I have received the gift of all his land." The lady sighed when she heard his words. "Fair son," said she, "I have watched over thee many a year and these are my words: He who has given thee Péronne and Origny, St. Quentin, Nesle and Falévy, Ham and Roie and the tower of Clairay, has invested you with a deadly gift, my son. I implore thee, for God's sake, let their land be. Thy father and Count Herbert were always friends. Many a battle they fought together and never was there any disagreement or dispute between them. If thou heedest my words, by the Saints of Ponthieu, let his sons have no disagreement or dispute with thee." But Raoul replied: "I will not abandon it thus. Every one would say that I was afraid, and my heirs would be disgraced for ever."

XLIX: "Dear son Raoul," said the fair Aalais, "I nourished thee with the milk of my own breast, and why dost thou give me such a pain now beneath my heart? He who gave thee Péronne and the country round about, and Ham and Roie and the fortress of Nesle, invested thee, my son, with a fatal gift. Anyone who stirs up war against those people need have many a well-equipped steed and a goodly band of vassals. I tell thee, rather than do it, I would be a waiting-maid, or a veiled nun in a

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nunnery. All my land will be set on fire by this war." Raoul's head was bowed on his hand, and he swore by God who was born of a virgin that for all the gold of Toledo he would not give up his fief until many an entrail had been strewn and many a brain scattered.

L: Lady Aalais had no deceit in her looks; she was clothed in an ermine cloak. She called her son, and to frustrate him thus she spake "You must summon the barons of Arrouaise." "By all means, lady; but if they refuse to come, by the faith that I owe St. Hilary, if God grant that I return alive, I will blind and mutilate and hang upon gallows like thieves so many of them that all the rest will have enough to howl about."—"God," said the lady, "I see no hope at all. Guerri the Red shall be their provost and mayor."(?)

LI: "Fair son Raoul," said the noble lady, "stir not up war for such an evil cause. The sons of Herbert are very good knights; they have many possessions and many devoted friends. My son, never destroy either church or chapel, and for God's sake, never make the poor homeless. My son, lie not to me, how many men canst thou muster wherewith to begin this war?"—"A round ten thousand, lady, to that I can swear, and Guerri the Red shall be my standard-bearer. The men of Arrouaise will not dare to remain behind, however little they wish to come." "Alas!" the countess replied, "it is an evil undertaking!"

LII: "Before God," said the lady. "I cannot deny that Guerri is both valiant and prudent and of a warlike spirit. He would surely carry thy standard well and speedily subdue the land. But the men of Arrouaise are mean and cowardly; if there is booty to be gained of sheep or oxen, they will seem as fierce as lions, but when battle is joined we shall hear other news, for the scoundrels will take to flight at the first blow. Then the danger will be great for thee in the battle, for the sons of Herbert are not stupid churls—when they see thee alone there without thy companions, they will sever thy head for thee beneath the chin. And as for me, my son, I swear by St. Simon that I shall die of grief, and nothing can save me." Then said Raoul "Your words are vain; for I swear by God that, for all the gold of Avalon, I would not abandon the quest when it has been granted to me."

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LIII: "Fair son Raoul, I tell thee for certain that those men of Arrouaise are an evil crowd. If thou winnest a booty of anything of value, they will follow thee, one and all, on horse or on foot. But let them not go into battle armed with thee; their help will not be worth a farthing to thee and they will take to flight no matter whose the loss will be. Thou wilt not have an army worth a straw. The sons of Herbert are not to be despised; they will kill thee, for I can foretell the issue, and they will cut thy heart out of thy body with their sharp swords."

LIV: "Fair son Raoul, I beseech thee by the God of justice not to stir up such an unlawful strife. Tell me now, what will become of Bernier whom I brought up till he reached the age of knighthood?" "Lady, he has behaved like a presumptuous traitor: he brought me to task in the king's presence when I swore by St. Richier not to listen to a word that was raised against me; he told me that he would say no more until the day of battle and that then if need be he would stand by his uncles." When the lady heard this she thought she would go mad with anger, and she cried out loudly: "I knew it, I will not hide it from thee: this is the man whom thou hast reason to fear and by whose sword thou wilt lose thy head, if he but have the chance. My son, give heed to my advice: make thy peace with the sons of Herbert; let this dispute be arranged and settled. Leave their land alone—they will love thee for it and will help thee to carry out thy other war and drive the knight of Mans from the land." Raoul listened to her words, but they only made him more angry and he swore that not all the gold of Montpelier would stop him. "Let that knight be accursed and held for a coward, who takes counsel of a woman before going into battle! Go to your apartments, lady, and take your ease; drink pleasant draughts to fatten your body. Think out for your household what they shall eat and drink, and meddle not with other things." The lady wept when she heard his words: "Fair son," said she, "there was a time when thou hadst great need of me. When the French wished to do thee an injustice and let the rights of heritage pass to that felon mercenary of Mans, I refused to have ought to do with him, but I nursed thee and brought thee up for the love I bore thee until thou couldst mount a horse and bear arms and stand up for thine own right. Then I

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sent thee to Paris to learn the ways of the court with four hundred comrades, all of noble birth and high of spirit, and not one but had a well-lined hauberk. The emperor kept thee willingly, for he is my brother and wished not to mar thy prospects; rather he knighted thee and made thee seneschal to do thee honour. Then were thy enemies much cast down, but thy friends rejoiced greatly, for they thought there would be help in case of need. And now thou wishest to go and claim a land from which no ancestor of thine ever took a penny. If now thou wilt not abandon thy design for love of me, may the Lord God, the judge of all, never bring thee back safe and sound and whole of skin." Terrible were the results of this curse, as you shall hear, and fatal in the end.

LV: Lady Aalais was heavy at heart. She had cursed her son, and she came out of her palace and entered the church of St. Geri. With arms outstretched she placed herself before the crucifix and she prayed to God who never lies: "Glorious God, for the sake of the pain that Thou didst suffer upon that Friday when Thou wast put upon the cross, when Longinus pierced Thy side and Thy blood was shed for sinners, bring me back my son safe and sound and whole. Wretched that I am, I have cursed the child that I nourished so tenderly; if he dies, I must confess the guilt is mine: it will be a great wonder if I do not slay myself with a knife." With these words she went out of the church; she saw the red Guerri in front of her and she seized his bridle and said to him: "Sir vassal, why come you riding hither? Whence did you get all your evil counsels?"—"Lady," he replied, "I will not deceive you—Your son's pride is the cause of all this. There is no man in the world so valiant and praiseworthy but, if he blamed him for it, they could never be friends again."

LVI: Guerri the Red did not wish to lose any time. As soon as he saw Raoul he called him and said: "Fair nephew, what do you mean to do? Will you abandon this war or not?" Raoul replied: "What folly I hear! I would rather be cut in pieces than abandon it now!" Immediately he summons all the barons of Artois and assembles all the grown men of Arrouaise; and they came, for they dared not refuse. You might have reckoned their number at about ten thousand. Through the gates they

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came, their armour shining and sparkling with gold and silver. The lady saw them and was nearly beside herself: "Alas," said she, "I am at my wits' end now. The sons of Herbert too will assemble their whole army and, if battle is joined, there will be great loss on both sides."

LVII: Fair Aalais was in Cambrai, and through the gate of Galeran de Tudele many a Castilian warhorse could be seen approaching, many a good vassal and fine trappings in plenty. The lady was in the chapel, and when she came out she called her son and said to him: "My dear son, what are you going to do with such a crowd as this? These men of Arrouaise are not worth a fig. They are good enough at emptying dishes, but in battle, so I have heard, they are no better than a piece of cheese." Raoul listened to her words and his heart beat furiously beneath his ribs. Angrily he held his chin in his hand and said: "Lady, we have spoken too much of this already. By our Lady of Nivele I swear I would rather be the slave of a maidservant all my days than abandon the conquest of Péronne and Péronelle, of Ham and Roie and the fortress of Nesle. King Louis, who leads the French to battle, gave me the gift in his new palace, and many a head shall be split and many a body disembowelled before I leave them anything of the value of a plum."—"God," said the lady, "I feel a sharp pain within me. It will be the cause of thy death, for thy heart is too rebellious."

LVIII: "Fair son Raoul, if thou hadst listened to me this war would not have been begun this year. It is true that I am old and my hair is white, but I have not yet taken leave of my senses." Raoul shook with anger at her words and called straightway to the fierce Guerri: "See that our men are set in motion, and let such a war be let loose on Vermandois that even the churches be burnt down and laid in ruins! Let my lady alone; she is old and past her prime. The people that I have summoned are blaming me already; they have been tried in many an encounter and are not used to being defeated in battle."

LIX: Raoul de Cambrai takes leave of his mother Aalais and rides with Guerri the Red through Arrouaise, which is his own territory. Both the knights are on horseback and well-armed. Then they cross the boundary of Vermandois; they seize the herds and take the herdsmen

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prisoners; they burn the crops and set fire to the farms. Bernier was gloomy and cast down; when he saw the land of his father and his friends ravaged with fire he was almost mad with grief. Wherever the others went he stayed behind and very loth he was to put on arms.

LX: Then Count Raoul called Manecier, Count Droon and his brother Gautier: "Take your arms," said he, "without delay; four hundred of you ride speedily and reach Origny before night-fall. Spread my tent in the middle of the church; let my pack-horses be tethered in the porches; prepare my food beneath the vaults, fasten my falcons to the golden crosses and make ready a rich bed before the altar where I may lie. I will lean against the crucifix and deliver the nuns up to my squires. I mean to destroy the place and ruin it utterly because the sons of Herbert hold it so dear." The knights reply: "We must do thy bidding." They get themselves ready quickly; they mount and each one dons his sword, his shield, his lance and his hauberk of double thickness. As they approached Origny the bells were ringing from the church tower. They remembered God, the father of justice, and even the maddest of them was constrained to kneel down. No longer could they defile the holy places—they pitched their tent outside in the meadows and they lay there till the day dawned. Then they prepared everything as if with the intent to remain there for a whole year.

LXI: Near Origny was a pleasant grove where the knights encamped themselves and awaited the dawn of day. On the next day Raoul arrived just as the bells were ringing for matins. Much he abused his knights in his anger: "Ye low-born traitors and scoundrels, like base-minded slaves ye have acted in disobeying my commands!" "We crave your pardon, sire, for the sake of the Redeemer! But we are neither Jews nor tyrants that we can destroy the holy relics."

LXII: Count Raoul was unbridled in his wrath: "Vile traitors," said he, "I bade you stretch my gold-topped tent inside the church, by whose advice has it been raised outside?" "By my faith," said Guerri, "thou goest too far. Thou hast only just been knighted, and if thou offendest God thou wilt come to an untimely end. This place is held in honour by men of worth; the holy relics ought not to be defiled. The grass is fresh

and green in the meadows; the river-banks beside are fair and open and there your advance-guards and your men can lie without fear of surprise or assault."—"As you will," replied Raoul, "at your wish I leave it thus." So they spread the coverings on the green grass and there Raoul was lodged. There were ten knights with him, and disastrous was the counsel that they took together.

LXIII: "To arms, knights," cried Raoul, "and let us attack Origny without delay! My curse on anyone who remains behind!" The barons mount, about four thousand of them, for they dare not disobey, and they ride towards Origny. They attack the fortress and those within defend themselves; and well they may, for Raoul's men come ever nearer and already they fell the trees around the town. Then the nuns came forth from their chapel each one with her psalter in her hand—all noble ladies who spent their lives in the service of God. Marsent, the mother of Bernier, was there, and she cried "Mercy, Raoul, for God's sake! If you bid destroy us, you commit a great crime, though it be an easy thing to accomplish."

LXIV: Marsent was the name of Bernier's mother. In her hand she was carrying an ancient book held in reverence since the days of Solomon and she was praying as she went. She caught hold of Raoul by his bright hauberk and said: "Sir, tell me in God's name where is Bernier, that noble baron's son? I have not seen him since I nursed him as an infant."—"In the first tent, lady, where he is playing with his boon companions. There is no knight his equal if you search from here to Nero's meadow. He urged me to make war on the sons of Herbert and said that it mattered not to him if I robbed them of all they possessed."—"God," said the lady, "what a traitor he is! They are his uncles, as every one knows. If they lose all their possessions it will be the worse for him."

LXV: "My lord Raoul, would a prayer be of any avail to cause you to withdraw a little space? We are nuns, believe me, and we shall never carry lance nor banner, nor will anyone ever lie on a bier through any act of ours."—"Truly," said Raoul, "you lack not cunning. But I will have no dealings with a woman of ill repute who would sell herself for next to

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nought.” — “Heavens,” said the lady, “what language do I hear? What strange abuse is heaped upon me. Never have I been a woman of ill repute. One man I love Ybert of Ribemont, and of him I had a son and I am proud of him to this day. For God’s sake refuse not my request. God will not turn His face from you if you serve Him well.”

LXVI: “My lord Raoul,” said the mother of Bernier again, “we know not the art of handling arms. You can easily destroy us utterly if you wish. We shall not take up shield or lance to defend ourselves, of that you may be sure. All our sustenance and all our living we draw from this altar and within the precincts of this place we support ourselves. The men who love this place are good men and they send us gold and silver. Spare the precincts and the chapel and take your ease in our meadows. At our own cost, sire, if you permit it, we will maintain you and your knights. Your squires shall be paid in kind and shall have fodder and oats in abundance.” Then said Raoul: “By St. Richier, for your sake and at your request you shall have the truce you ask for, whomever it may displease.” “My thanks for this” replied the lady, and Raoul rode on his way. Then came the good knight Bernier to see his fair mother Marsent, for great was the need he felt to speak with her.

LXVII: Raoul quickened his pace as he rode away, and Bernier came, dressed in his costliest clothes, to see his mother. He dismounted from his horse and she kissed him and took him in her arms and three times she embraced him. Then she spoke out boldly: “My son,” said she, “thou hast gained thine arms, and my blessing be upon the count who gave them thee so young, and still more on thee for deserving them! But one thing thou must explain to me. Why dost thou wish to attack thy father’s inheritance? There are no other heirs; it would fall to no one else but thee, and thou wouldst have it for thy prowess and for thy good sense.” And Bernier replied: “I myself would not attack for all the wealth of Bagdad. My lord Raoul is more wicked than Judas. But he is my lord; he gives me horses and coverings, arms and costly furnishings. I would not fail him for all the wealth until such time as all should say I acted rightly.” — “Son,” said his mother, thou art right, I grant it. Serve thy lord and God will be thy portion.”

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LXVIII: The sons of Herbert, who set great value on the large and prosperous town of Origny, had surrounded it with a pallisade for its protection; but it would have been of small avail against an attack. All around was a large and beautiful meadow where the jousts were wont to be held. The lowlands belonged to the nuns of the foundation and there grazed the cattle that brought them in their means of livelihood, and no man durst do them an injury. There it was that Count Raoul had his tent pitched; the poles of the tent were of gold and silver, and it was so large that a hundred men could lodge in it. Then it came about that three worthless vagabonds stole forth from the army and rode straight for the enclosure; they stole all they could lay hands on; they were unwilling to leave anything. But they were weighed down by the very thing that ought to have profited them. For ten men of the city gave chase, each with a crowbar in his hand, and they killed two of them, for they were overloaded. The third escaped on his horse and, galloping back to the tents, he dismounted and kissed his lord's shoe and weeping he called upon him for pity. Loudly he stated his demand—"May the Lord God abandon thee if thou dost not avenge thyself on these citizens who are so rich and proud and strong that they care not a whit for thee or anyone else. They say that they will shave thy head for thee, and that if they can get hold of thee not all the gold of Montpellier will effect thy ransom. I have seen my brother slain and cut in pieces and my nephew overthrown and murdered. By St. Richier, they would have killed me too, but I managed to escape on this horse." When Raoul heard this he was mad with anger and cried out: "Up, ye knights, I must make Origny suffer, since they have opened war upon me. Dearly they shall pay me for it, so help me God!" Without delay the knights start for Origny, for they dare not refuse—ten thousand of them in all, I have heard it said. They cross the moats, they cut down the stakes of the pallisade with their steel hatchets and trample it under foot. They cross the moat beside the fishpond and halt not till they reach the very walls. Great was the alarm of the citizens when they saw that their pallisade was useless.

LXIX: The citizens see that their fortification is gone and the bravest of them was much cast down. They man the walls of the fortress, they

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throw down stones and great sharp stakes and they kill many of Raoul's men. Not one remains behind—they are all at the walls and they have sworn by God that if they find Raoul, woe betide him! Old and young alike defend themselves furiously. Raoul is full of wrath at the defence and he swears that if the citizens one and all are not destroyed and hung he will not give a fig for his own valour. Loudly he cries: "Barons, fire the town!" And the soldiers obeyed him, for they were eager for booty. Raoul had broken the covenant between himself and the abbess; he rendered the nuns an evil service that day when the town was burnt to ashes so that nothing remained. Young Bernier was full of grief when he saw the destruction of Origny.

LXX: Count Raoul was mad with anger because the citizens had thwarted him. He swore by God and his pity that the Archbishop of Reims could not stop him now from burning them all before nightfall. He gave the order to fire the town. His men obey him; the buildings blaze, the ceilings fall in, the casks catch fire and burst their bands. All, old and young, are burnt in this pitiful crime. Count Raoul has committed a dastardly act: but yesterday he had sworn to Marsent that the nuns should not lose so much as a napkin, and now to-day he burns them all in his rage. They flee to the church, but it is of no more use than if they had made a stand against him.

LXXI: The sons of Herbert had established Marsent, the mother of Bernier, with a hundred nuns, in Origny because they set such value on the place. Count Raoul, the valiant warrior, bade set fire to the streets. The houses blaze, the roofs fall in, the cellars run with wine, the fitches burn in the crashing store-rooms, and the melting fat adds fuel to the flames. Now the towers of the church are alight; the fire mounts to the belfry; the hangings fall charred to earth, and inside the building it is a blazing furnace. The nuns are burnt to death, for nothing can withstand the heat. All the hundred of them perished in torment in the flames; Marsent, the mother of Bernier, was there, and Clamados, the daughter of Duke Renier. Prone in the midst of the blaze they lay and even the hardiest knights could not help weeping for pity. As to Bernier, when he saw how things went from bad to worse, he thought he would go mad.

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You should have seen how he gripped his shield, when with drawn sword he hastened to the church. The flames were darting up the doors and it was impossible to get nearer than a lance-throw for the great heat. But close beside a marble slab Bernier saw his mother stretched on the ground, her tender face turned upwards. He saw her psalter still burning on her breast. Then said the boy: "I can do no good here; for nothing can help her now. Dear mother, 'twas only yesterday you kissed me! What a bad son you have in me since I can neither save nor succour you. May God, the judge of all the world, receive your soul! Raoul, thou traitor, God's curse be upon thee! I wish to do thee homage no longer and if I do not avenge this dishonour I count myself not worth a shilling-piece." His grief is so great that he drops his sword and swoons three times on the neck of his charger. Then he went to take counsel of Guerri the Red, but of little use could such advice be to him.

LXXII: Young Bernier was sad at heart and he went to Guerri to seek his advice: "Counsel me, for the love of God who never lies. Raoul of Cambrai has done me a great wrong. He has burnt my mother, the fair lady Marsent, in the church of Origny. I have seen the very breasts that nourished me burning in the flames!" Guerri replied: "Sorry indeed am I, and grieved at heart for your sake."

LXXIII: The warriors return to their tents, and Bernier full of anger departs to his. He dismounts from his steed and the squires hasten to take off his boots. All his men weep to see his grief. Then Bernier addressed them: "Noble vassals, can you give me good advice? My lord Raoul hates me, for he has burnt my mother in the chapel yonder. God grant I may live long enough to avenge her." Raoul also repairs to his tent. He has caused all the trouble and it was at his commands that the nuns were burned and roasted in the flames. He dismounts from his bay courser and his trusted barons disarm him. They unlace his bright gold helmet and ungird his good sword of steel. They draw the doubled hauberk from his back and his crumpled tunic appears. In the whole of France there was no fairer knight nor better fitted to bear arms.

LXXIV: In front of his own tent Raoul dismounts from his swift horse; the princes and captains take off his tunic bordered with ermine, and no

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finer man could be found than Raoul seen without his arms. He called his seneschal who was wont to serve him with the food he liked best, and when he came without delay he gave him order: "Prepare me food and thou wilt do me a great service; roasted peacocks and devilled swans, and venison in abundance, that even the humblest may have his fill. I would not be thought mean by my barons for all the gold of a city." When the seneschal heard this he looked at him in amazement and crossed himself thrice for such blasphemy. "In the name of Our Lady," said he, "what are you thinking of? You are denying holy Christianity and your baptism and the God of majesty. It is Lent, when every one ought to fast; it is the holy Friday of the passion on which sinners have always honoured the cross. And we miserable men who have come here, we have burned the nuns and violated the church and we shall never be reconciled to God unless his pity be greater than our wickedness." Raoul looked at him and said: "Son of a slave, why have you spoken to me like that? Why did they wrong me? They insulted two of my squires and it is not a matter for wonder that they had to pay for it dearly. But, it is true, I had forgotten Lent." So he called for chessmen; these were not refused him and he sat down gloomily in the midst of the meadow.

LXXV: Raoul of Cambrai plays chess like a man who knows the game well. He has put his castle in position and has taken a knight with his pawn, and soon he has mated and conquered his companion who was seated at play with him. Then he leaps to his feet with a more cheerful face. He throws off his cloak, for the heat, and asks for wine. Ten noble youths hasten to fulfil his wishes.

LXXVI: Count Raoul asked for wine and immediately fourteen youths ran up, each clothed in his ermine cloak. One of them was the son of the noble Count Ybert and came from St. Quentin. He had seized a golden goblet and filled it with spiced wine; then he knelt down in front of the count, but never a word said the count in any language for the space of time in which a horse might have drunk his fill. The young knight watches him and swears by St. Firmin that, if Raoul does not take the wine he will spill it on the ground.

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LXXVII: As soon as Raoul became aware of the youth he quickly took the goblet and he swore by God who never lied: "Brother, good friend, I did not see you before." Then without waiting he spoke again: "Listen to me, ye hardy knights; by this clear wine that you see here, by this sword which lies on the carpet, by the saints who have served our Saviour, I declare that the sons of Herbert are in an evil plight. I will not leave them anything of the value of a farthing, and I swear moreover by St. Geri that they shall have no peace until they have fled beyond the sea."—"By God, sire," replied Bernier, it evil indeed will be their plight when it comes to that, for their Creator knows that they are no cowards, these sons of Herbert. There are fifty of them who are sworn friends and they have taken oaths and pledged themselves to stand together so long as they live."

LXXVIII: Then spoke Raoul again, nothing daunted: "Listen to me, noble knights! I swear by the Lord of all the earth that I will put the sons of Herbert to shame. I will not leave them a foot of all their lands and possessions whereon to stand if they are alive, or to be buried in if they are dead. I will drive them into the sea to sink or swim." Now hear what Bernier said in answer: "Raoul, fair sir, you are a brave man, but in some things you are greatly to be blamed. The sons of Herbert are very valiant men and good knights; so much I know for certain, that if you drive them over the sea you will have troublesome neighbours in the land whither you send them. I know I am your liege-man, but you have ill repaid my services: you have burnt my mother in the church over yonder and nothing can help her since she is dead. And now you wish to drive my uncle and my father into exile! It is small wonder if I contain not my anger; they are my uncles and my desire is to help them, and glad would I be to avenge my shame in so doing." Raoul was almost mad with anger at these words and bitterly he began to reproach the baron.

LXXIX: This is what Raoul, the handsome youth, said to Bernier: "Son of a whore, I know well that you are their man already—you are the son of my enemy Ybert de Ribemont, and you are in my tent to betray me and to learn my plans from my barons. A bastard has no right to speak as you have done. I have a great mind to cut off thy head beneath thy

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chin!" "God," said Bernier, "what a noble recompense! This is a fair reward indeed that is offered me for my services."

LXXX: Then Bernier called out aloud: "Sir Raoul, I have neither brother nor kinsman here. It is well known that Ybert is my father, and my mother too was a lady of gentle birth."

LXXXI: "Sir Raoul, I tell you of a truth that my mother was the daughter of a knight who held sway over the whole of Bavaria. She was taken from him to her undoing. There was a noble warrior in this land who took her in lawful wedlock. But he slew two royal princes with his sword in the presence of the King of France and a great and interminable war broke out. At last he fled to Gaifier of Spoleto, who kept him willingly in his service when he perceived his valour. He never returned to this land for he deigned not to be a suppliant to thee nor any other man."

LXXXII: "Then was my mother in sore need of friends. There was no one so fair in all the countries round. Then Ybert my father, who is a very gallant gentleman, took her by force—so I have been told, but he did not wed her, this I know for certain.

LXXXIII: "Sir Raoul, Ybert my father took my mother by force, but I cannot say that he took her to the altar. By reason of his position he took her into his bed and did what he willed with her; then, when the desire took him, he wedded another woman and wished to give my mother to Geoffroy. But she chose the better part and became a nun."

LXXXIV: "Sir Raoul, you commit both a sin and a crime. You have burnt my mother, and my heart is still full of wrath. God grant that I live long enough to avenge her death." Raoul listened with his head bent low; then he cried "Bastard, renegade, if I did not restrain myself for the sake of God and his pity, I would have had thee cut to pieces already. Who prevents me now from destroying thee?" Then said Bernier: "A false friend I have found in thee. I have served thee and loved thee and helped to make thee powerful; I am ill rewarded for my good service. If I had my polished helmet on my head I would fight either on horse or on foot against any well-armed knight to refute thy charge of bastard and renegade. And you yourself with all your presumption would not dare

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strike me for the archbishopric of Rheims." When Raoul heard this he seized the staff of a great lance that the hunters had left lying there. In his fury he raised it aloft and struck Bernier with such force that his head was broken and all his delicate ermine stained with blood. Then Bernier lost his temper completely and seizing Raoul in a fury he would soon have sated his desire for vengeance. But the other knights ran up quickly and parted them before any harm was done. Then Bernier shouted aloud for his squire: "Bring my arms and my thick hauberk this instant—my good sword too and my bright helmet, for I will quit this court without any leave-taking."

LXXXV: Now Count Raoul was noble at heart and when he saw that Bernier was very angry and that his head was streaming with blood he was so grieved that his thoughts were all confused. "Barons," he cried, "advise me what to do, for Bernier is departing in great anger." All the knights replied: "Sir Raoul, it is small wonder if he is angry. He has served thee with his sword and thou hast ill requited him. Thou hast burnt his mother in yonder church, and, as for him, thou hast broken his head. God's curse on anyone who blames him if he wishes to avenge himself. Thou must offer him compensation, if indeed he be willing to accept it." Said Raoul: "No better advice could I have. Bernier, my brother, before God the righteous judge, I will make thee amends in the sight of all my knights." But not so readily could the reconciliation take place. Bernier replied: "Thou hast burnt my mother who loved me so dearly, and my own head thou hast sought to break. By the One to whom we ought to pray, never will I be reconciled to you until this red blood returns to my head of its own accord. When I see that, then the great vengeance which I long to take on thee will be appeased. Not all the gold of Montpellier could make me cease to desire it."

LXXXVI: Then Count Raoul addressed him very courteously. Kneeling down and clothed in a rough tunic, he spoke thus humbly out of true affection for him: "Alas, Bernier, woe is me! If thou wilt not take rightful compensation, then let me pay the forfeit—not because I fear thee, but because I wish to be thy friend. By St. James of Compostella, I would rather lose the blood from my heart and see my bowels issuing

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from my wounds. I would rather see my palace broken into splinters as the emir of Spain might do it, or even Louis at the head of his Frenchmen, than do this thing—were it not that, by the holy virgin, I wish to make thee fair and honourable amends. Now hear what I will do: From Origny to the fortress of Nesle, a distance of fourteen leagues, for it behoves me to be exact, a hundred knights shall walk each bearing his own saddle, and I myself will carry thine upon my head. I will lead Baucent, my good Spanish war-horse, and not a man-at-arms nor a maid will I pass on the road but I say: "This is the saddle of Bernier that I am carrying!" And the Frenchmen all say: "This is a fair offer; he who refuses this has no desire to be thy friend."

LXXXVII: Raoul speaks again with great humility: "Brother Bernier, thou art a valiant knight; accept my amends and lay thine anger aside." But Bernier replied: "All this is child's play. I would not accept thy offer for all the gold of Tagus until this blood that I see here mounts to my head again of its own accord. Until such time that I take my vengeance, no peace can there be between us." Then said Raoul: "This is a sorry business, by my troth, and our parting will be grievous." But Guerri could not contain himself and he shouted: "By God, bastard, thou art presumptuous indeed! My nephew has made thee a generous offer. Henceforward is thy sentence of death written on the blade of my lance." Bernier replied: "Now is my loyalty at an end. Be sure that this blow will bring much sorrow in its train."

LXXXVIII: Now there is commotion in the camp! Young Bernier has bound a silken cloth round his head. He has put on his mailed hauberk and laced his helmet and has not forgotten to gird his sword. Then he mounts his dappled charger, hangs his embossed shield round his neck and seizes his lance with its pennon fixed. He sounds a loud blast on his horn and five knights, faithful vassals who hold their lands from him, have heard the noise and come running up full speed. They will not fail him for any living thing. There was no love shewn at the parting from Raoul's men as the procession set out. Straight towards Ribemont they made their way and there at the windows of his tiled hall was Count Ybert with a large number of the men of his land. He looked across the

valley and saw Bernier with all his belted knights. He recognized him and changed colour and said to his men: "Noble knights, I see my son approaching across the fields. The men with him are all armed and look very like men ready for a battle. Now we shall hear why Raoul has wasted our land."

LXXXIX: Just as brave Count Ybert was about to hear vespers Bernier arrived on the scene, both he and his knights, and all ran from the castle to his stirrup and asked him quickly: "For God's sake, can you tell us news? Deny it not if thou knowest ought."—"Yes, news enough I can give you," said Bernier, "but such evil tidings that I scarce know what to do. Now let anyone who wishes to hold his land see to it that his helmet is well laced. My lord Raoul wishes to destroy us all and to drive my uncles from the land. He threatens to behead every one of them; but it may be that the God of glory will stand by us." They disarmed Bernier in front of the palace and saw the blood still flowing from his head and many a knight was filled with dismay. And now vespers are over and Ybert comes out of the chapel. He advances to embrace his son and he too sees the streak of blood down his face. Great was his amazement at the sight and his grief made his senses reel: "Son," said he, "why can I not mount my charger? What man would have dared to touch you while I could still wield my armour?"—"My liege lord did this," replied Bernier, "the Count Raoul who wishes to destroy us all and has come to claim all our lands. He will not leave you the value of a denier. He has burnt Origny to a cinder; and my noble-hearted mother was burnt there too. And because I was angry on her account he struck me with a staff of apple-wood, in such wise that I am still blood-stained as far as my breeches. He offered to make amends, this I cannot deny, but I refused to accept it or sanction it. And now I come to you for advice, my father, for it is our part now to avenge our shame." When his father heard these words he began to reproach him.

XC: Thus spake the hoary-bearded Ybert: "Son Bernier, I tell thee frankly that I know the histories of many men and I never yet heard of a proud man who prospered. It is folly to waste words on him. What he has taken seven years of guile to obtain he wastes in a single day by his

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great stupidity. As long as you were small and beneath my roof, I brought you up as became a noble knight. But when you grew up, you deserted your mother and me in your pride. You trusted Raoul and his flattering words and went straight to Cambrai, where you served him and received his largesse and now he has beaten you like an old cast-off horse. I swear that you will never have any of my possessions, for I disinherit you entirely." Bernier changed colour and anxiously he spoke: "For pity's sake, my father, let me remain in your service. When I saw the church at Origny burning and my fair mother Marsent and the hundred other ladies of whom not one escaped, I would rather have been stark naked in Russia than behold such a sight. And then, by all the saints, when I spoke of it to my lord who had acted so treacherously, in the presence of my barons, he struck me such a blow beside the ear with a staff that my face was covered with crimson blood." Very wrath was Ybert when he heard these words and he swore by God to whom all men pray: "Would that this quarrel had never been begun and that your mother Marsent had not been burnt and roasted alive! That base scoundrel betrayed her by his cunning. Many a shield will be pierced and many a byrnie torn and rent to pieces ere we abandon our land to him. He has wrongfully invaded my land, and if I defend it not with my sword I am not worth a rotten apple. May God curse thee, thou felon Raoul, for first thou didst promise the nuns that they should suffer no harm and afterwards thou didst burn them in thy rage. If God suffers this it is surely the devil's work if the earth does not open beneath my feet."

XCI: Count Ybert was much troubled all that day. He called Bernier to him again and spoke to him kindly: "Be not dismayed, my son, for I swear by God that he shall pay dearly for what he has done before three days are over." Then the servants and the stewards spread the cloths and the knights sat down to table. But however much the others ate, Ybert had no desire to do likewise, but he sat sharpening a stag's bone with his knife. And the other knights admonished him and said: "Eat, sire, we beseech you, for it is Easter-tide when all should rejoice." But Ybert replied: "I can do no such thing. I am almost beside myself on

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account of my son whom you see here. He is blood-stained down to his girdle and Count Raoul must indeed be my bitter foe since he sends him to me thus covered with blood. You, older ones, must guard the land and the fortress and the high palace; but let the youths and the well-born squires go each to his place and get ready his steed, for this very moment it behoves us to be on the march." Then said Bernier: "Sire, you cannot leave me behind." – "Beyond a doubt, thou must stay, my son, for thou art sick. Take thine case now, for thou hast much need of repose." But Bernier replied: "Sire, it is useless to command. For, by the oil with which I was anointed at my baptism, no power on earth would prevent my going to avenge my shame at the risk of life and limb." At these words they all set out to make ready. All that night they rode and found themselves at Roie at break of day.

XCII: When the barons arrived at Roie, they dismounted without delay and Count Ybert did not stop till he reached the ford. He was fully armed with his shield on his neck and his white hauberk on his back. His well-tempered sword hung at his side. The head watchman, who was at his post, threw down a stone without waiting to see who was there and all but struck him on his pointed helmet. Had it struck him, he would certainly have been felled to the earth, but it fell into the clear water before the battlement. Then he shouted: "Vassal, tell me who thou art. I have hurled a stone, but I know not whether I have hit thee. Now my bow is stretched and I am all ready to shoot." Ybert replied: "Stay thy hand, brother! My name is Ybert and I am the son of Herbert, thy late master. Go, tell the valiant Wedon, my white-haired brother, that he come to me, for it is long since I saw him and I never needed him more than now."

XCIII: Then said the watchman: "Tell me again who thou art." Said Ybert: "My good friend, you shall know the truth. My name is Ybert and I hail from Ribemont. Go tell Sir Wedon, my brother, that he come to me straightway; never has a man needed his brother so urgently." The watchman replied: "God be praised." And with all speed he hastened to the palace.

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XCIV: The watchman hastened to the chamber of Sir Wedon. He shook the knocker and the chamberlain heard and roused the noble knight. As soon as Wedon saw the troubled face of the watchman he said: "Friend, tell me quickly, for God's sake, is there trouble afoot?"—"Aye, indeed, sire, greater than I have ever known. Outside yonder is a dear friend of yours: Count Ybert, if I heard his name aright." Out from his bed leapt Wedon when he heard the name. He clad himself in his ermine, he donned his hauberk, he laced his polished helmet and girded his good sword to his side. Then up came his seneschal Thierry with his Arab steed and Wedon mounted, seized his shield, took his lance with its brodered pennon and hastened from the palace.

XCV: Down the steps went Count Wedon and he did not draw rein till he reached the barrier. When he saw the crowd of armed knights he cried: "Ybert, my brother, whence come you? Are you in trouble that you come at this hour?"—"Yes, truly, brother, you are never likely to hear of greater. King Louis wishes to disinherit us; he has given our lands to Count Raoul. The Count has invaded our country with ten thousand men and it stands in sore need of defence. We must summon all our friends without delay." Count Wedon replied: "We shall have no lack of men; but I think there lies some jest behind your words for I cannot anywise believe that Count Raoul would be so mad as to bring his army against us here. Guerri the Red is a prudent man and he surely never devised such a scheme." Ybert replied: "You waste your words. Origny is burnt already and all the nuns whom you placed there he has burnt alive without pity."

XCVI: Then said Count Wedon: "By St. Richier! Has Raoul burnt Origny?"—"I swear by God he has, brother, for Bernier came from there but yesterday. He saw his mother burnt to death in the church and the hundred nuns died a cruel death with her."—"Now I must believe your words," said proud Wedon, "for I know that Bernier is no frivolous youth."

XCVII: Then spoke the hoary Ybert again: "Say, brother, for God's sake: whom shall we summon?" Wedon replied: "We shall have men in

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abundance. Let us summon Herbert of Hirson. The best-fortified dwellings of Thierache belong to him—thirty castles and strongholds in all. He is our brother and we can well trust him.” So they sent for him and Bernier took the message. A thousand noble comrades he brought and they pitched their tents beneath St. Quentin. Then they summoned Raoul, count of Soissons, and he brought a thousand knights with him. The sand was fair beneath St. Quentin and there they pitched their tents and many pennons floated in the breeze. And they swore by God and all his holy names, so the song tells us, that if they find Raoul he will have no reason to rejoice in the gift of their lands, and they will pull out the beard of Guerri the Red.

XCVIII: Bernard of Retest was the next they summoned. All one side of the province of Champagne was his domain. He swore that he would be the standard bearer and he and Gerard each brought a thousand men with them. There was not a coward amongst them. They too pitched their tents beneath St. Quentin and wrathfully they swore by their patron St. Lienart that if they find Raoul or that mongrel Guerri they will drain every drop of blood out of his body.

XCIX: Then they summoned the good vassal Richier, who ruled the country over against the valley of Rivier. He came with a thousand of his knights, all well-armed and well mounted, and they too camped beneath St. Quentin.

C: How their bright armour shone and lighted up both banks of the lovely stream! But the knights swore by God who let himself be crucified to save His people, that if they find Raoul in their land he may be sure of losing his head.

CI: Next came Wedon of Roie, bringing a thousand knights with ensigns of silk. Straight to St. Quentin they marched and gaily encamped beneath its walls. And they swore by God who guides the sinners aright that if they come across Raoul small joy will he have of his booty. “We will tear out his lungs and his liver,” said they. “We would not give a fig for the gift that Louis of France gave him, for he will not get hold of it as long as we are alive.”

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CII: Then they sent for Louis, the youngest of the four sons of Herbert, and he came with a thousand valiant knights. He was well armed and mounted on his French bay. They too encamped beneath St. Quentin, and roundly they swore that Raoul and his uncle had invaded their territory to their undoing. Whichever of them they met would lose life and limb, and an evil investiture would Vermandois prove to them.

CIII: Last of all came Ybert, the valiant baron. He was the eldest brother and the father of Bernier. Many a good knight he had with him and many a good Gascon courser you might have seen there. They dismount on the sand beneath St. Quentin and pitched their rich tents there. And they too swore that Raoul had been invested with a fief of evil omen.

CIV: As soon as the barons were afoot they started for Origny; eleven thousand of them in all and not one without his charger and his goodly armour and sword of steel. A league from Raoul's army they pitched their tents, so I have heard. Then spoke Wedon: "Noble knights and barons, a man without moderation is not worth a crab-apple. Count Raoul is a valiant knight and moreover he is nephew to the King of France. If we kill him we shall have endless trouble and the emperor will never be well disposed towards us. He will certainly deprive us of our lands and if he get hold of our persons he will have us cut to pieces. Let us send a messenger to him and request him to draw back a little from our land. Let him return to his own land and may God the righteous judge reward him. If he have any cause for complaint we will make amends without delay; not a foot of his land will we demand—rather than that will we let him have some of our own. We will build again the church and the sanctuary which he burnt without a cause and we will help him to wage his other wars and drive the knight of Mans from his land. Even his debt of honour to Bernier we will overlook."—"Whom shall we send on this mission," said Ybert. "I will go, sire," cried Bernier, but his father answered him angrily: "By my faith, babbler, you put yourself forward too much. Only the other day you were beaten over there and now you wish to go back. If you go, you will surely make some trouble and bring discredit on our cause thereby." He looked

round him and spied Gerard of Ponthieu. "You go, brother," said he. "I ask you as a favour." – "Willingly, sire," replied Gerard. "I will set out at once." And straight to his tent he went to don his hauberk.

CV: Gerard the Spaniard went to his tent; he dressed himself in a bright-coloured hauberk and laced his helmet of Pavan workmanship on his head. Then they brought him his good Norse steed and he mounted by the stirrup. Quickly he hung his shield around his neck and rode straight away across the marshes. To Raoul's tent he came and found many vassals of Cambrai and Artois. Count Raoul was sitting at the highest table clothed in a robe of costly Greek stuff. Nor did the messenger resemble a German in his bearing. He leaned upon his sharp-pointed lance and was in no embarrassment when he spoke his greeting: "May the Lord God, who created all countries and their laws and who was put on the cross for us, save Raoul, the King's valiant nephew and all his faithful vassals!" – "May God protect thee, brother," said Raoul courteously, "for thou seemest to me no mean man."

CVI: "Sir Raoul," said the baron Gerard, "if you are willing to hear my message I will deliver it without delay." – "Deliver it quickly, brother, and get you gone, for I will not have you spying out my concerns." – "No such evil intent have I," replied Gerard. Then he repeated his message from beginning to end in proper form and Raoul listened and began to think. "By my faith," said he, "I ought to agree to this. But I must speak of it to my uncle first."

CVII: Raoul went to take counsel of his uncle and told him every word of the message that Gerard had brought. Guerri heard it and began to thank God: "Nephew," said he, "thou hast reason to be proud when five counts wish to make their peace with thee. Accept their offer. boy, in God's name leave their land, for it is no concern of thine to govern it." Raoul was quite beside himself with anger when he heard this and he began to abuse Guerri: "I received the glove in the presence of many knights, and now you bid me relinquish it! If I do it the whole world will cry shame upon me."

CVIII: Raoul the fearless spoke again: "They used to say there was no more valiant man in all the world than the strong duke Guerri. But now I

find him cowardly and chicken-hearted." Guerri listened and answered proudly that not all the gold of Abbeville would make him hear such words with equanimity, nor suffer reproach from his nephew. He swore by St. Geri that now that the word "coward" had roused him the sons of Herbert and he could never be friends, unless a thousand hauberks were torn to ribbons first. "Quit this place at once," he shouted to the messenger. "Bid the sons of Herbert prepare for the defence, for they will be fiercely attacked." "So be it, by my faith," replied the messenger. "On their behalf I duly defy you! To your misfortune have you known those nuns of Origny. Be on your guard, for you will have a warm reception: we are clad, one and all, in our hauberks." At this he turned round and seized his shield. It was a wonder he did not strike some one. He did brandish his lance, but then he bethought himself of the white-haired Ybert who was waiting for a message of peace from Raoul.

CIX: Gerard departed without delay. Count Ybert came forward to meet him: "What tidings have you brought? See that you hide nothing from me." — "By my faith, sire, his presumption knows no bounds. There is no more to be done; get ready at once and put your battalions in battle array." — "God be thanked!" said Bernier, but Wedon said: "Silence, barons, and listen to me. A man without moderation soon comes to a bad end. Take a messenger and send to Count Raoul again. We will still hold open the offer that Gerard of Ponthieu made to him if he deigns to accept it. He may have thought it over by now and, if he has, right glad shall we all be." — "God," said Ybert, "I am all bewildered. Who shall the messenger be? Tell me straightly." — "I am ready to go," said Bernier. But his father said angrily: "By my faith, rogue, thou art too presumptuous. And yet, since thou has put thyself forward, no other than thou shall betake himself thither." — "Many thanks, sire," replied Bernier, and he quickly donned his hauberk and laced his helmet. Then he took his untarnished sword and leapt upon his horse. His father looked at him and said sorrowfully: "Go, my son, lose no time; and, for God's sake, see that you uphold our rights." Bernier replied: "You waste your words, for you will never be dishonoured by me."

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CX: So Bernier went forth alone and rode to the tents of Raoul's army, but he did not dismount from his horse. There was no uncertain sound about his salutation: "May the Lord God who never lied, and who blessed Adam and Eve, guard and protect these noble barons who brought me up in their midst in gentle fashion, with never a harsh word nor a contention towards me; and may he confound Raoul of Cambrai, who burnt my mother in the church of Origny with all the nuns for whom I sorely grieve, and struck me myself so cruelly that the crimson blood flowed down. May God let me live until I render him his deserts! For, by St. Geri, I will do it, if it lies within my power."—"Faith," said Raoul, "we have a mad messenger here. Is this Bernier, son of hoary Ybert? Bastard, thou art ill-fated: for in shame the old man engendered thee."

CXI: Raoul could not restrain himself: "Low-born bastard," said he, "thou shouldest return to my household and become serving-man again. So vile a son was never seen of one so noble." Bernier thought his senses would leave him at these words.

CXII: "Sir Raoul," said the boy, "let be the talk of your household. Your food and drink are not to my liking; so help me God, I would not touch them were my life at stake. But no act of folly shall be laid to my charge. The sons of Herbert have sent me hither to say that they will hold to the offer that Sir Gerard of Ponthieu brought hither to your tent, if you agree thereto, nor would I hinder this on my account. You burnt my mother in Origny church and you did your best to break my head to pieces. But you offered me justice—this I cannot deny, and many a charger might I have had in amends. A hundred coursers you offered me, a hundred mules, a hundred costly palfreys, a hundred swords with a hundred doubled hauberks, a hundred shields and a hundred golden helmets. I was angry when I saw my blood running down and I would not accept the offer. But I have taken counsel with my friends and the noble knights advise me that I refuse it not if the offer be renewed. I will pardon all, I swear by St. Richier, if my uncle can be at peace with you."

CXIII: Count Raoul considered these words, then he called Bernier to him and said: "Friend, there is true friendship in this and, by God, your

words shall not be taken amiss." Straight to his uncle he made his way. When he found him he seized him by the arm and related and confessed everything to him, even the amends he had promised to Bernier. He told him all the truth and besought him: "Refuse it not, uncle, and let us make peace and all be good friends." Gueri heard him and haughtily he replied: "You called me coward and chicken-hearted! Your saddle is ready on your good steed Fauvel, but you would not mount him to ride to battle for all the gold of Ponthieu. Flee to Cambrai, I tell you, but as for me, the sons of Herbert are all my sworn foes; they shall not escape war, for I send them my defiance!" Then said Bernier: "I thank God for this. Sir Raoul, this conclusion is foregone on account of a misdeed which you were guilty of towards me. Up to that time I had served you, but you rewarded me ill for it. You burnt my mother in Origny church and I myself was struck by you so that the crimson blood ran down." He drew three hairs of the ermine he was wearing through the chainwork of the bright hauberk and threw them towards Raoul. Then he said: "Vassal, I challenge you! Never say now that I have betrayed you." The Frenchman said: "Now go back whence you came, for you have fully delivered your message."

CXIV: "Sir Raoul," said Bernier, "the battle will be grievous and horrible, as you and others will find to your cost."—"Faith," said Raoul, "so much the more sorry am I; but our children shall be without reproach. Thou hast challenged me and I accept it in good faith. But if we could joust together in this field, one of us two would have to quit the saddle."—"In truth," said Bernier, "that would suit me well, for then I would prove at the sword's point that you wrongfully took the pledge of this land and acted thereby feloniously towards me." Raoul sweated with anger at these words and was filled with shame on account of his men present. He knew well that Bernier wished him ill, but he was unarmed, so he could but hold his tongue.

CXV: When Bernier had thrown out his challenge he turned his good shield toward his back and spurred his charger forward. He longed to strike Raoul there in the tent, for they had not gone outside. He set his horse at a gallop and rushed at him faster than a deer in a woodland

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glade. But a knight of good repute thrust himself between them and received Bernier's blow across his body.

CXVI: The knight was foolhardy in his generosity when he boldly put himself in front of Bernier to save Raoul. Bernier struck without mercy and sent his straight lance through his body. The knight fell dead and his soul departed from him. When Raoul saw it he shouted aloud: "Knights, after him at once. If this man escape us I count myself not a bean. He wished to strike me, for he would like to see me dead." A hundred knights mounted with all speed on their Orkney steeds and hurled defiance at Bernier. The boy saw his danger and turned and fled and sped upon his way. The knights followed him, but could not catch him up, for his horse bore him speedily away. Ybert was watching for him beside a leafy wood and he saw the hot pursuit. He called upon God, the son of Mary: "Look upon my son, for he is in sore need of help. If I lose him I shall never have joy again. Go to his help, my brave knights!" Fourteen horns sounded the advance and many a shield was grasped and many a lance brandished ready to strike.

CXVII: Count Ybert said a few words to them: "Forward to the attack, knights, for ours is the just cause. Bernier is returning at breakneck speed, and I doubt not he has delivered his message like a madman. A hundred knights are following at his heels and I can see the javelins flying." And now, for better or for worse, the armies have met round Bernier.

CXVIII: The barons rode in serried ranks and both sides were well equipped for battle. Even the most fearless of them weep for pity's sake, for they know that friendship will count for nothing now. As for the cowards, they are in dismay, for there will be nought but pitiless death for him who falls; they will have no other pledge this day. But the young knights rejoice and are in good spirits. Most of them have dismounted; they are well accoutred for battle and many of them have shortened their stirrups. Now in truth Bernier has set a strife afoot which will bring about the ruin of many a baron, yea, many will lose their lives this very day.

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CXIX: The armies are in sight of one another. They go forward cautiously and reconnoitre as they go. The cowards tremble as they march, but the brave hearts rejoice for the battle. Raoul's men assured each other as they went that they would bring such disaster on the sons of Herbert that, when the fathers were dead, the children would still grieve on account of it. All have armed themselves, both great and small. Guerri is leading them and with him are his sons, Renier, stout of heart, and Garnelin, a good striker with the sword. Count Raoul was seated on his iron-grey steed, and he and his uncle put their men in battle array. So close the barons rode that if you had thrown a glove on the tops of their helmets it would not have fallen to earth for a good league's space. The necks of the horses behind lie on the croups of those in front as they gallop along.

CXX: They were large armies that Raoul had brought with him—ten thousand men with Guerri for their leader and all well-armed and mounted. The sons of Herbert, and Bernier, who wished for this battle, estimated theirs at fifty thousand; this I know for a fact. The two armies come together and every good knight weeps for the pity of it and vows to God that if he escapes alive he will never in his life commit a sin again or, if he does, he will do penance for it. Many a gentle knight committed body and soul to God and took the communion there with three blades of grass, for there was no priest there with the sacrament. But Raoul swears and Guerri declares again that if they have their way the war will not cease till they have killed the sons of Herbert in shameful wise, or at least till they have chased them from the land. And Ybert on his side swears that they shall never have a foot of his land, and all his barons declare that not one of them will flee for fear of death. "God," said Bernier, "what oaths we have here. Cursed be he who first flees from the field of battle." Bertolai said he would make a song about the battle, and such a song that no other minstrel would sing a better.

CXXI: Bertolai was both wise and valiant; from the city of Laon he came and was of very high and gentle birth. He was in the thickest of the battle and he made a song which has been heard since in many a palace and you will never hear a better. It was the song of Guerri the Red and

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of fair Aalais; of Raoul, lord of Cambrai, the godson of the bishop of Beauvais, and of how Bernier slew him with the help of Ernaut, lord of Douai.

CXXII: Never was there such a battle nor such a tumult. The fighters were not Normans, nor Englishmen, but knights of Vermandois, of Cambrai and Artois. There were men of Brabant and men of Champagne, together with many a French vassal of King Louis. The sons of Herbert are fighting for their rights, but many a knight of theirs will soon lie cold and gory in death and the bane of it will last all the rest of their lives. Bernier spurs his good Norse steed and rides to strike a lowlander. Of no avail are his arms to him for they cannot withstand Bernier's blow. He falls dead on the grass at end of the lance. Then Bernier cried: "Now strike for St. Quentin without delay. Raoul's presumption has been his undoing; if I kill him not with my Viennese blade I shall be a felon, a coward and a renegade." Then each side hurls itself against the other; the trumpets sound amidst the tumult and never was such strife and confusion since God ruled the earth.

CXXIII: Great was the noise when the armies joined battle. No idle threats do they use, but they clash together both fore and aft, and you could not have heard God thundering a league away. There goes Ybert, spurring his horse and crying aloud: "Where art thou, Raoul, shew thyself for thy Redeemer's sake. Why should so many noble men lose their lives because of thee? Ride this way, and if I am vanquished thou shalt have all my land for thy behest, and the fathers and children shall betake themselves to flight and not a farthing's worth of compensation shall they claim." But Raoul heard no word of all this, for he was in another part of the field, both he and his uncle with the grizzled hair. Ybert was grieved not to find Raoul, but he spurred his horse and tilted against Fromont instead. He struck him on his shield and split it beneath the buckle. His white hauberk was of no avail to him, for Ybert drove his lance into his body and hurled him the length of its haft to the ground. "St. Quentin!" he shouted, "strike, barons. Raoul's men shall have small reason to boast. He took up the gauntlet for this land to his undoing."

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CXXIV: Then Wedon of Roie spurred his horse forward. He was one of the brothers, an uncle of Bernier, and he was fully armed on his Gascon steed. He rode at Simon, near relative to Raoul, he pierced his coat of arms beneath the buckle and drove his pennon into his body. He hurled him dead upon the sand and cried: "Strike, barons, for St. Quentin! To his misfortune Raoul received the pledge of this land. All those accursed traitors shall die."

CXXV: Then Louis, the youngest of the four sons of Herbert but most renowned of all, came galloping through the press, seated on his French battle horse that the king of St. Denis, his godfather, had given him. At the top of his voice he cried: "Where art thou, Raoul of Cambrai? Turn thy swift horse in my direction. If thou overthrowest me great glory will be thine and I cry thee quit for my country and my land, and never a claim shall one of my friends put in for it." But Raoul did not hear him; had he been there he would not have avoided him, but he was elsewhere in the thick fray where he and Guerri the Red were holding the field. Young Louis was enraged not to find him; he covered his breast with his shield and spurred his horse furiously and struck Garnier of Arras, proud Guerri's son, on his dark shield. The shield was torn and shattered below the buckle, and his hauberk was small protection to him. The lance struck his body and did its worst. Garnier fell dead and Louis returned to his own men.

CXXVI: When Louis had overthrown Garnier he shouted. "St. Quentin! Strike, barons, for Raoul has claimed our lands to his undoing!" Then Guerri spurred towards them, his shield and sword held ready. There is small need of a doctor for the man he reaches with his lance. He has overthrown fourteen knights already, but now his glance falls beside a thicket and he sees his son lying dead. Beside himself for grief he gallops up and does not draw rein till he dismounts beside him. Then he kissed him as he lay there covered with blood. "Son," said he, "I loved you so dearly. I know not who has slain you but, by St. Richier, I will hear no word of making peace till he be dead and cut in pieces." He wished to raise him on to the neck of his horse, but as he tried he saw his enemies approaching from the valley and, sad at heart, he had to put him

back upon his shield. "Son," said the father, "I must perforce leave you here, but, please God, I will avenge you well. May the judge of all the earth receive your soul!" Then he went back to his horse and in a frenzy he leapt upon him and dashed fiercely into the fight. Then indeed he might be seen sating his wrath. He searched the ranks right and left with his sword; he severed arms and trunks and heads and no charge of cowardice could be brought against him. More than twenty knights fell before him and his sword thinned the ranks round about him.

CXXVII: The fight was fierce and the stress of battle grievous. Then Guerri, as he rode at full speed, met Ernaut, lord of Douai, and they tilted at each other and great blows they struck on their good shields of Beauvais. Their lances bend, their bucklers split, but their hauberks are not torn. They both fall to the ground in the midst of the field, but they leap on their horses again, for they have taken no harm and now they have recourse to their swords.

CXXVIII: Both the counts were proud and resolute. Guerri the Red was a good knight, strong and fearless at handling arms. He grasped his shield and his sword of steel and struck Ernaut on his golden helmet. He scattered the flowers and precious stones, and if Ernaut had not drawn his head back Guerri would have cloven him to his belt. The sword slipped down his left side; it sliced off a quarter of his shield and one of the flaps of his lined hauberk. It was a great and fearful blow; Ernaut was so stunned by it that it brought him to his knees and filled him with dismay. He called on God the righteous judge: "Holy Mary, come to my aid. I will rebuild the church of Origny." As he said these words Renier the other son of Guerri, came galloping up. He saw Ernaut fall in front of his father. He grasped his shield and hastened up and would have killed him outright, but Bernier came spurring up from another part of the field and shouted loudly: "Noble knight, for God's sake do not touch him! Turn thy horse towards me and thou shalt have battle if thy courage does not fail thee." Renier was full of anger when he heard Bernier's words. He longed to fight him to avenge his dear brother Garnier. So they rode at each other and struck great blows on their quartered shields. The shields are rent and pierced through beneath the buckles,

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but the hauberks resisted the blows. Each one rides past; their lances are broken, but neither has left the stirrup and this made Bernier mad with anger.

CXXIX: Young Bernier was resolute and bold. He pulled forth his sharp sword and struck the son of Guerri such a blow on his pointed helmet that the flowers and stones were scattered, the headpiece of his hauberk was pierced and he was cloven to the teeth. Then said Guerri: "That was a blow indeed. If I wait for another such I may well hold myself for a fool." He saw so many of Bernier's men around him that his blood coursed quickly through his veins for fear. He found his horse waiting and he mounted, his shield on his neck. Then off he rode at full speed and left his son behind lying stretched in death upon the ground.

CXXX: So Guerri rode away, for he hardly knew what he was doing. As he rode back over the upland his grief for his sons became ever greater, and it was a pitiful sight to see him tearing his hair with his hands. He met Raoul and, without wasting words, he told him of his grief and discomfiture. "The sons of Herbert are low-born traitors; they have killed my sons, but, by St. Hilary, I will make them pay dearly for it before I turn back. Oh God, grant me thine aid until my desire for vengeance be sated!"

CXXXI: "Good nephew Raoul," said Guerri the Red, "by my loyalty to St. Denis, the sons of Herbert are not to be despised. They have killed both my sons. Up till midday yesterday I should not have thought they could hold out for a moment against us for all the gold of France. We have done wrong to challenge them and, unless God takes pity on us, not one of us will go home alive. For the sake of Him who suffered on the cross I beseech thee not to leave me alone to-day in the battle, and I for my part will pledge my faith that, should'st thou meet ten of thy enemies at once and they should thrust thee from thy charger, I will seat thee thereon again by main force." Raoul was glad when he heard his uncle say these words.

CXXXII: On both sides of the valiant count the press is so great that he can neither turn his horse nor strike with his sword as he would. It angers him to be so hampered; he is sweating with his efforts to break

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through by main force. But in one respect he acted in foolhardy wise, I trow—he broke the covenant he had made with his uncle. He deserted his brave uncle Guerri and the barons who were there in case of need. He went hewing his way through the mass of men and dealing deadly strokes. He struck off the heads of more than twenty men and many another fled in haste before him. Then Ybert came spurring and struck Count Morant on his shield, and Bernier galloped up and struck another one down dead, and now all the brothers are fighting hard together. Raoul's men begin to weaken; the horses flee in terror across the battle-field with broken girths and trailing reins, and many a valiant rider lies dead upon the ground. The sons of Herbert are not like thoughtless children; they have sent forward a thousand of their men lest any of the enemy should flee towards Cambrai. But Raoul is a seasoned warrior. He is not slow to avenge himself. He meets Hugo, a valiant knight and the fairest man and the hardiest fighter from here to the far East. He was still a young man, but though of tender years he wished to earn his knighthood and he rode shouting aloud his battle-cry and wreaking great havoc amongst Raoul's men. Raoul perceived him and hastened towards him; he smote him a blow with his keen sword on his helmet with all his might. Flowers and stones went scattering on the ground, the headpiece of his hauberk was split and Raoul's sword clove him to the shoulders. He fell dead and Raoul shouted: "Cambrai! the sons of Herbert will have small cause for rejoicing, for all these false knaves shall die."

CXXXIII: Raoul the count was no coward. On both sides he saw the press growing greater, so that he could not turn his good horse nor handle his shield as he would. This made him almost mad with anger, and if anyone had seen him as he swept the ranks right and left with his sword, he would never lose the memory of a valiant knight. But in one respect he is to be blamed for his thoughtlessness—he left his uncle Guerri and the barons who were there to help him in case of need. He went hewing through the press, and small use would a doctor be to anyone he reached with his sword. More than a score he had overthrown already when he saw the good vassal Richier near him. Richier's fief lay

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towards the valley of Rivier; he was Ybert's kinsman and standardbearer and first cousin to Bernier. He had come with a thousand followers to help the barons and was working havoc amongst Raoul's men. Raoul notes him and marks him for his prey. He seizes a lance, which will stand him in good stead later, and brandishes it with evil intent. Then he spurs his swift steed and smites Richier with all his force on his quartered shield. Beneath the boss he rent and pierced it, tearing the white hauberk beneath into pieces. He bathed his spear in the knight's body and hurled him to the ground at its point. Ybert's banner fell into the dust and Raoul was filled with triumph at the sight. "Cambrai!" he shouted. "Strike, barons! All these false knaves shall die to-day!"

CXXXIV: Away sped Raoul, and looking round him again he spied the valiant John, who held the region of Ponthieu and of Ham. There was no knight so large of limb in the army and no one that Raoul feared so much. He was bigger than a Saxon or a giant and had slain more than a hundred men already with his sword. Raoul took his measure as he looked at him, and when he saw him turning as he sat on his steed he would not have attacked him for all God's gold but that the thought of Taillefer, his gallant father, came to him all of a sudden and the remembrance of him gave him such courage that he would not have quitted the field for forty men. Straight towards John he rode, spurring his horse and hurling abuse at him. Then he brandished his sharp-edged spear in his hand and struck John on the front of his shield and split it right across beneath the buckle. His white hauberk was of no more use to him than a glove, for the spear passed right through his body and he fell headlong to the earth, dead and covered with blood. "Cambrai!" shouted Raoul aloud so that all could hear. "Strike, barons; hold not back. The sons of Herbert shall have small cause to boast, for the false knaves shall all lose their lives this day."

CXXXV: Then Raoul speeds away again on his swift steed to strike Bertolai on his new shield. Bertolai was a cousin of the noble youth Bernier and owned a fair castle in the valley of Metz. He was causing great slaughter amongst Raoul's men; but Raoul struck him a blow that was marvellous to see, for his shield was of no more use to him than a

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cloak, and the cape of his hauberk was torn to pieces. The pennon went right through his body and he fell dead on the slope of the valley. "Cambrai!" shouted Raoul. "Strike hard, ye young knights, for by the Lord who created Daniel, not all the ambush of the army can save him now."

CXXXVI: The ground was soft, for there had been a little rain and the mud was thick with blood and slime. The barons were in an evil plight, for many were slain and many overthrown. The good horses were tired and dispirited and the swiftest of them could do scarce more than limp along. The sons of Herbert had suffered great losses in the battle.

CXXXVII: It had been raining, and the mud was thick and horrible and the horses lost their footing, both the dappled and the bays. Then Ernaut, count of Douai, came riding up and he met Raoul, lord of Cambrai. He reproached him bitterly in words that I know well: "By God, Raoul, I shall always hate thee until I see thee dead and vanquished before me. Thou hast slain my nephew Bertolai, and Richier whom I love so strongly, and many another who is lost beyond recall." – "Sooth," said Raoul, "I will kill others yet, and thee thyself if I but get the chance." – Ernaut replied: "I will see that thou dost not. I challenge you, by St. Nicolai, for right is on my side, so help me God."

CXXXVIII: "Is it thou, Raoul of Cambresis? I have not seen thee since the day that thou broughtest grief upon me. Two young children I had by my wife, and I sent them from Vermandois to Paris, to the King of St. Denis. Thou didst foully slay them both—not with thine own hand but thou didst consent thereto. For this I hate thee, and if thy head is not taken from thee by this sword, I do not reckon myself worth a farthing." "By my troth," said Raoul, "you are a valiant man, but may I never see Cambrai again if I give you not the lie!"

CXXXIX: So the barons heap abuse one upon the other and each spurs his horse forward, though the bravest of them believes his death is near. They rain great blows upon their shields of Pavian gold, but their hauberks stand them in good stead and each has soon hurled the other to the ground. To their feet they leap again full of fierce strength and each

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becomes so well acquainted with the other's blade that the bravest heart might well quail.

CXL: Both the counts have left their stirrups and are on foot. Now Raoul was a knight of amazing strength and sure in the handling of his arms. He drew his sword from its sheath and struck Ernaut on his golden helmet so that the metalwork and precious stones were scattered. Had it not been for the head-piece of his hauberk the blade would have cloven him to the teeth. But it glanced off the left side and severed one quartering of his shield and many a ring from his thick coat of mail. Ernaut stumbled, quite dazed by the blow and fear took hold of him. He called upon God, the righteous judge: "Holy Mary, come to my aid! I will rebuild the church of Origny. Truly, Raoul, thou art much to be feared; but, please God, I will make thee pay dearly the death of those whose fate thou hast made me mourn."

CXLI: Count Ernaut was a noble knight, both gallant and skilful with his arms. He turned back furiously against Raoul and smote him hard in knightly fashion right in the middle of his helmet wrought with flowers of gold. He severed the band with its fleur-de-lys and had it not been for the head piece of his plaited hauberk the blade would have cloven him to the teeth. Raoul was filled with gloom when he felt the blow. "By St. Denis," he cried, "come what may, that was the stroke of a valiant man. It is the death of thy loved ones thou wishest to avenge. But I have no mind to justify myself towards thee for, I swear by God, thy children never received either good or evil at my hands." So damaged was Raoul by Ernaut's blow that his mouth and face were all bleeding. When he was a young man in Paris he used to teach the boys to fence; now he needed all his skill to defend himself against his enemies.

CXLII: Count Raoul was no coward and he took his well-tempered sword again in his hand and struck Ernaut such a blow on his pointed helmet that the moulded flowers and precious stones were scattered to the ground. Down his left side the blow travelled and skilfully sought his body. From his left arm it severed the hand, which fell to the ground with the shield it clasped. Now Ernaut sees that he is worsted, for his shield is lying on the ground with his left hand still in the loop, and his

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bright blood is flowing to the earth. Then Ernaut mounted his horse and fled in terror along by the wooded thicket (small sense has he who blames him), and Raoul followed him in hot pursuit.

CXLIII: Ernaut flees, with Raoul in pursuit, and he was full of misgiving, for his horse was stumbling under him and Raoul's dappled steed was gaining on him rapidly. Then Ernaut bethought himself to cry for mercy. So he stopped for a brief space in the middle of the way and cried out loudly with his clear voice: "I crave your mercy, Raoul, for the Creator's sake! If it grieves you that I struck you, I will be your man on whatever terms you wish. All Brabant and Hainaut I surrender to you and not one of my heirs shall ever claim half a foot of the land." But Raoul swears that he will think of nought else till Ernaut lies dead at his feet.

CXLIV: So Ernaut flees again, spurring with all his might, and Raoul pursues, his heart unmoved by mercy. Ernaut looks across the sandy plain and perceives the baron Rocoul, who holds sway in the valley of Soissons. Rocoul was a nephew of Ernaut and cousin to Bernier, and he had come with a thousand noble barons. Ernaut sees him and gallops towards him and cries aloud for protection.

CXLV: In fear for his life Ernaut cries aloud: "Nephew Rocoul, save me from Raoul, who will not let me go. He has robbed me of that which was meant to protect me—my left hand which holds my shield—and now he threatens to take my head." Rocoul heard him and was beside himself with anger. "Uncle," said he, "you have no need to flee. Raoul shall have battle now beyond a doubt, as hard and fierce as he can bear."

CXLVI: Rocoul was a wonderful knight, strong and fearless in the handling of his arms. "Uncle," said he, "be not dismayed." He spurred his horse with his golden spurs towards Raoul, then brandished the polished handle of his lance and each tilted at the other with all his might. Their shields were split and pierced below the bosses, but their hauberks resisted the blows and they took no harm. Past each other they gallop, their lances broken, but neither of the two has left his stirrups. Raoul was furious when he saw this. He drew his sword fiercely and struck Rocoul on his golden helmet so that the stones and flowers fell to

earth. Down on the left side slid the blade; it just shaved the shield as it descended, then came with its full weight upon the stirrup-strap and severed the leg below the knee. Down went the foot with its spur upon the sand. Then Raoul was full of glee and very spitefully he gibed at them: "Now I will give you each a fine task," said he. "Since Ernaut has only one arm and you have only one leg, one of you shall be my watchman and the other my doorkeeper. You will never be able to avenge your shame." "God," said Rocoul, "that makes my plight the worse. Uncle Ernaut, I thought to help you, but my assistance will be of small use to you now." Full of dismay Ernaut continues his flight and Raoul still pursues him, for he will not let him off.

CXLVII: Ernaut flees at full speed and Raoul pursues him pitilessly. Raoul swears by God that for all the gold in the world Ernaut shall have no respite until his head be cut off beneath his chin. Ernaut looks across the sandy plain and sees Sir Herbert of Hirson, Wedon of Roie, Louis and Samson and Count Ybert, Bernier's father, riding along. When Ernaut sees them he spurs wildly towards them and beseeches them to protect him.

CXLVIII: In terror of his life Ernaut cries to the knights: "Sir barons, save me from Raoul who will not stop from pursuing me. Many of your kinsmen he has slain already and now he has deprived me of my means of defence, for he has cut off my left hand which was ever wont to hold my shield. He pursues me now to cut off my head." Ybert heard his cries and could scarcely believe his ears.

CXLIX: Ybert spurs his good Gascon steed; he brandishes his lance so that the pennon unwinds, and smites Raoul on his shield with its lion device. He pierces the coat of arms beneath the buckle of the shield, he rends the chainwork of the bright hauberk and the pennon all but enters his side. It was a marvel that he escaped. Then a score of men rushed up to seize him, and he would have been killed or captured had not Guerri galloped up with four hundred of his men, all valiant knights and barons. In anxious haste they rushed to help him, and many a knight they hurled from his saddle.

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CL: Now Guerri has brought up his men—four hundred in all, and all well armed. Then he spurred hotly forward and smote a blow on the gilded shield of rugged Bernard of Retest. Below the buckle he pierced his shield and tore to shreds his seasoned coat of mail. The weapon passed through his body and he staggered dead from his saddle of gold. Then there was a fierce struggle indeed. Lances broken, shields rent, hauberks frayed and spoiled, feet, hands, heads severed from the bodies and many a noble vassal lying open-mouthed in death. The meadows are strewn with the slain and the grass is reddened by the blood of the wounded. So they snatched Raoul from danger; the count rejoiced to find himself free, and with drawn sword he rushed furiously again into the mêlée where the battle was hottest. On that day many a soul was parted from its body, whereby many a wife earned the name of widow. Raoul himself slew more than fourteen. Ernaut's heart was heavy at the sight, and he called upon the Saviour of souls: "Holy Mary, queen of heaven, my death cannot be averted now, for there is none of the milk of human kindness in this devil." He turned and fled again up the valley. Raoul looked round and saw him. After him he galloped again full speed and cried at the top of his voice: "By God, Ernaut, I am resolved upon thy death. By this naked sword it is decreed." Now there is not a ray of hope left in Ernaut and he replied: "I can no more, sir knight. Such is my destiny, and no defence that I can make is worth an apple-paring."

CLI: Ernaut flees, not knowing which way to turn, for he is filled with an overwhelming fear. He sees Raoul coming after him quickly. He beseeches him to have pity on him as you shall hear: "For pity's sake, Raoul, cease from this pursuit. I am a young man and I do not wish to die yet. I will be a monk and serve God and cry thee quit for all my lands." But Raoul replied: "In truth, thine end has come now. This sword shall sever thy head from thy body. Neither earth nor grass can help thee now; neither God nor man nor all the saints can save thee henceforth from death." Ernaut heard these words and sighed a sigh of relief.

CLII: For now Raoul's spirit is changed within him. Great harm these words have done him, for he has denied God in his heart. When Ernaut heard him he raised his head; his spirit revived and he reproved him

thus: "By God, Raoul, now art thou no better than a heathen, for thou art proud and wicked and full of presumption. Now thou seemest no better to me than a mad dog, since thou deniest God and his love. For the earth and the grass might well have helped me, and the God of glory, if He had taken pity on me." Then he turned again in flight, his drawn sword naked in his hand. When he had gone a little distance he looked round and saw Bernier coming full speed towards him, fully equipped with goodly armour—hauberk and helmet, shield and spear. Ernaut forgot his hand when he saw him and his heart rose for the pleasure he felt. He turned his horse toward Bernier and besought him to take pity on him for friendship's sake: "Sir Bernier," he cried, "take pity on me! Look how Raoul has ill-treated me. He has shorn off the hand from my left arm." Bernier was mad with anger when he heard these words, and trembled with fear right down to his toe-nail. He saw Raoul coming along riding like a madman. But he will have a word with him before he smites him.

CLIII: Bernier was a good knight, strong and fearless and a noble warrior. Cheerily he shouted to his uncle: "You need no longer fear, uncle Ernaut, for I will go and speak to my liege-lord." Then he leaned over the neck of his steed and shouted loudly: "Ho, my lord Raoul, son of a noble mother, you dubbed me knight, that I cannot deny, but you have made me pay it dearly since. Many a noble knight of ours you have slain. You burnt my mother in Origny church and afterwards you broke my head. You offered me amends, I grant, and I might have had many a battle-steed in payment. A hundred good coursers, a hundred mules and as many costly palfreys, a hundred shields and a hundred doubled hauberks would have been my recompense. But I was angry when I saw my blood running down, so I went and took counsel with my friends. But the valiant knights all advise me to accept the amends, and if you offer it now I will not refuse it, but will pardon everything, I swear by St. Richier, on condition that my uncle may make his peace with you. Then this battle would cease and neither you nor anyone else would have cause of complaint, for all our lands I would place at your disposal. Let the dead be, for they are past our care. My lord Raoul, for God's sake be moved by pity. Let us be reconciled and do not pursue this dead

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man any longer. A man who has lost his hand is impotent indeed." But Raoul was only more furious when he heard him. He stiffened himself so that the stirrups bent and his horse's back bowed beneath him. "Bastard," he cried, "you know how to plead. But your subterfuges will not avail you now. You shall not leave this spot with your head upon your shoulders." "By God," said Bernier, "I will not humiliate myself any more. I have cause enough to be enraged."

CLIV: When Bernier sees that Raoul is thirsting for battle and that his prayer is of no avail, he spurs his horse with all his might. Raoul gallops towards him, and each strikes a great blow on the other's shield so that both the shields split across beneath the buckles. Bernier's cause was just, and he struck such a blow that his lance and ensign reached the body of Raoul and brought him to a standstill. Then Raoul struck Bernier such a fierce blow that his shield and hauberk were Eke tow before it, and he would certainly have been killed had not God and the right been on his side so that the steel did nought but graze his side. Then Bernier turned about angrily and smote Raoul in the middle of his bright helmet so that the flowers and stones went crashing down. The blade went through the headpiece of his solid hauberk and cut right into his brain. Barons, no man, since humans die and quit this mortal life, ever felt like singing when he could scarce stand on his feet. Raoul fell from his horse, his head sunk on his breast. The sons of Herbert rejoiced, but many a one rejoiced then who afterwards had cause to grieve, as you shall hear if I finish my song.

CLV: Count Raoul tried to rise, and with a mighty effort he drew his sword. If you could only have seen him swing his sword aloft! But he cannot tell where to strike, and his arm sinks down to the ground. The sharp steel cuts right into the meadow and he can scarcely pull it out. Then his mouth began to contract and his bright eyes grew dull. He called upon God the omnipotent: "Glorious God, judge of all things, how my strength is failing me. But yesterday there was not a man beneath the sky who would have risen again had I smitten him down. An ill-fated investiture has been mine. I have no need of this land nor of any other now. Sweet Lady of heaven, come to my aid!" Bernier heard him and his

heart melted within him. He began to weep beneath his helmet, but he cried out aloud: "Sir Raoul, you were of noble birth and you dubbed me knight, this I cannot deny. But you made me pay dearly for it afterwards, for you burned my mother within the precincts of the church and you did your best to break my head. You offered me amends, I must admit, and now I need have no desire for vengeance." Then Count Ernaut cried: "Let this man as good as dead avenge his hand."—"In truth," said Bernier, "I have no mind to forbid you. But it behoves you not to touch a dead man."—But Ernaut replied: "I have a right to hate him." He made a leftward turn on his charger, holding his sword in his right hand, and he struck Raoul a pitiless blow on his helmet in his desire to break it. The blow struck off the largest jewel, then it cut through the head-piece of his lined hauberk and the blade was bathed in his brain. But not content with this, he took his sword again and plunged it into his heart. Then the soul of the gentle knight took its flight; may God receive it—if we dare pray on his behalf!

CLVI: Then Bernier cried: "St. Quentin and Douai! Raoul the lord of Cambrai is dead. Ernaut and I, Bernier, have killed him." Count Ernaut spurred his bay charger, but Bernier swore by St. Nicholas: "Would to God that I had not slain Raoul, although I was in my right to do it." Just then Guerri rode up on his big steed and saw his nephew as he lay. Great was his dismay, and this was the lament he uttered: "Nephew, I am filled with grief on your account. I will never forgive the man who has slain you and never will I sanction peace or truce or reconciliation until all your murderers are dead upon the gallows. Dear lady Aalais, what bad tidings I shall bring you! I shall never dare speak to you again."

CLVII: Thus Guerri as he rode along found his nephew lying on the sand. His sword was still in his hand, and so tightly had he grasped it between the hilt and the pommel that only with great difficulty could they take it from him. His shield with its lion device lay on his body. Guerri fell almost fainting on his breast. "Nephew," he said, "there has been foul play here. This is the work of the bastard Bernier whom you knighted in the palace at Paris. He has taken advantage of you and killed

you, but, by God, if I do not tear out his lungs and liver for him, I reckon myself not worth a spur-strap."

CLVIII: Guerri the Red saw his men being worsted and his nephew in the throes of death with his brains lying over his eyes. His grief made him almost senseless, and he lamented again aloud: "Nephew, I know not what will become of me. I swear by the One who let himself be slain that those who have robbed me of you shall never have peace if I can help it until I have brought shame and destruction upon them, or at least driven them from the land. But now I desire a truce, if I can obtain it, until I have buried thee beneath the earth."

CLIX: Guerri the Red of Arras mourned greatly for his nephew. He called Perron: "Come hither, friend, thou and Hardouin and Berard of Senlis. Ride swiftly to my enemies and demand a truce at my request until my nephew be put into the ground." And the knights replied: "Willingly, sire; we will go straightway." Spurring fast, their shields before their faces, they have soon found the sons of Herbert seated on their thoroughbred steeds. There was great joy in their camp over the death of Raoul, but many a one rejoiced then who had reason to grieve afterwards. And now the messengers address themselves to their errand, and thus, their shields still on their necks, they speak to them: "By St. Denis, you have put yourselves in the wrong. Count Raoul was of very noble birth. One of his uncles was our King Louis himself and the other was the good vassal Guerri of Arras. He who now rejoices safe and sound over his death may be dead and dismembered on account of it ere long. But now the valiant and hardy knight Guerri demands respite and a truce until his nephew be buried." – "We grant it," replied Ybert, "even should he desire it until the day of judgment."

CLX: So before midday the truce was granted, and all went searching amongst the slain. You can just imagine the grief when anyone found his father or his child, his nephew, his uncle, or anyone who belonged to him. And Guerri went to look for his dead ones; he forgot both his sons now on account of Raoul his nephew. Looking round him he saw the giant John lying dead; he was the biggest knight in the whole of France, and Raoul killed him, as many of you know. Guerri saw his body and

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went up to it, then he took Raoul's body and he opened them both with his sharp sword. He took out their hearts, as we read in the chronicle, and placed them on a fine golden shield to see what they were like. John's heart was small like that of a child, but Raoul's, as we all know, was very large—like that of an ox that draws the plough. Guerri saw it and he wept for sorrow. He called his knights and said: "Comrades, for God's sake come and see what a great heart Raoul had compared with this giant. You have pledged me your help and your support, all you noble knights, for the rest of your lives. Now see mine enemies here before me. They have killed the one I love so dearly, and if I do not avenge him I am a contemptible coward. Pierre d'Artois, hasten to them and give them back their truce, for I desire it no longer."—"Willingly, sire," he replied and spurred towards the sons of Herbert. He cried in a loud voice so that all could hear: "Take back your truce at Guerri's bidding, and know of a truth that not one of you shall escape if he has his way." When they heard these words they were filled with dismay, for they were sick of the battle and their horses were tired and restive. The messenger returned to Guerri, who quickly put his men in battle array. Alas! there will be many a sad heart before nightfall.

CLXI: Now Guerri has assembled his whole army—five thousand and seven hundred all told—in the meadowland. And the sons of Herbert have drawn up theirs in serried ranks seven thousand strong. Guerri rides with his banner raised aloft. Bernier sees him and turns pale with anger. "Look," said he, "what a dastardly trick. Guerri has brought up his main army against us. To our misfortune we granted him a truce to-day, I trow." Then Guerri charged at full speed and smote Bernier's cousin, the lusty Hugo. Such a blow he gave him that his shield was broken and pierced, and his well-worn byrnie rent and torn to ribands. The lance passed through his body and he fell dead from his gilded saddle. When Bernier saw it he cried wrathfully: "Guerri, thou perjured grey-beard, thou hast asked us for truce and respite this day, and like a traitor thou hast broken it. Before this day turns to night many a shield will be shattered and many a soul parted from its body." Then the fight began again. Guerri held his drawn sword in his hand and proved its

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strength on many a helmet. More than thirty men he slew therewith, and it was bloodstained to the hilt. Bernier turned pale when he saw such slaughter of his men, and he swore by the queen of heaven: "We two must fight together this day though I lie open mouthed in death thereby."

CLXII: Now Bernier was a noble-hearted man, and when he saw his cousin Hugo, the son of his own aunt, stretched upon the ground, he was filled with grief and lamented over his evil fortune thus: "Alack, Guerri, of what a friend hast thou robbed me. May God's curse be upon thee, thou base old man!" Then he sat erect on his long-maned steed. Guerri saw him and spurred towards him, and they struck each other fearful blows. Both their shields are pierced, but their good hauberks withstood the strain. The white-haired Guerri remained in his saddle, but Bernier was thrown from his horse. Guerri rejoiced when he saw him fall; he drew his sword and ran upon him and would have smitten his head from his body if Ybert had not hastened to his aid. Guerri saw him with displeasure. "Bastard," he cried, "I have suffered thee to live too long. Thou hast slain the ill-fated Raoul, but I swear by God that I will never have a straw's worth of pleasure until I have drawn thy heart naked from thy body."

CLXIII: Guerri spoke again "Gentle knights and barons, never shall my lineage suffer the reproach of having committed treason. Bernier, thou bastard, where art thou gone? It is but a moment since I had thee in such a plight that thy heels were pointing towards the sky, and nothing could have saved thee from death if thy father, Ybert of Ribemont, had not come to thine aid." Then Guerri charged again, brandishing his lance with its unfurled pennon. This time Herbert of Ireçon, one of the brothers and Bernier's uncle, was his victim. He struck him a great blow on his shield; through his ermine pelisse it went and cut in halves his liver and his lungs so that one half fell into the sand and the other remained upon the saddle, and the knight fell dead from his Spanish charger. Then up came Louis and Wedon and Count Ybert, Bernier's father. Great was their horror when they found their brother Herbert dead. Bernier gave his horse the rein and smote Count Faucon on his

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shield; Louis charged the duke Samson and Count Ybert the Breton Amaury. None of these three had leisure for confession. The numbers of Ybert's men became ever greater, and Guerri's men were filled with panic as Bernier and his kinsmen pushed them back. So many dead knights lay upon the ground that a man could scarcely pass along, and the best and swiftest horse must go at walking pace.

CLXIV: Guerri the Red sees his men getting worsted and he is filled with dismay. Forthwith he charges Gautier; then Pierre d'Artois made haste and smote Gilemer of Ponthieu and Hardouin rode at Elier. With such fury they struck that not one of these three had further use for weapon or for priest. Ybert's men are advancing now and Guerri's men are growing less. So many of the knights have lost their lives that there are but seven score left and of these scarce one is whole. But they rally again in the plain and they will sell themselves dearly before they flee. Guerri looks round and sees his vassals lying dead and bleeding and he is overcome with grief. With his right hand he makes the sign of the cross upon them and says: "Alas for you, my noble knights of Cambrai, for you are beyond my aid!" He weeps tenderly for them and cannot restrain himself, so that the water flows down to his breeches.

CLXV: Now Guerri has reached the edge of the wood with seven score of his gallant knights. On the other side of the marsh he spied Bernier, and Louis on his Castilian steed; Count Ybert of Vermandois was there too and Wedon of Roie with all their vassals. "Heavenly father, what shall I do?" quoth Guerri. "Here are all my enemies equipped for battle; there is Bernier who has put me to confusion and slain the one for whom I grieve. If I leave them thus and betake myself off now all the world will hold me for a coward." So with all his might he urges on his charger; but it avails him no whit, for the beast falls beneath him in the stubble.

CLXVI: Guerri the Red was in dismay, for he could not urge his horse to go so fast but that a hack before the plough would overtake him. Quickly he dismounted and took off the saddle without the aid of a squire and led his steed to and fro to cool him down.

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CLXVII: To and fro Guerri led his charger. Then the horse reared three times and rose upon his feet. He neighed so loudly that the earth resounded and Guerri was filled with joy. He put back the saddle and mounted by the stirrup. He touched him with his spurs and now the horse bounded forward more quickly than a swallow in its flight. Fiercely he called again to Bernier: "Bastard, I wish thou wert nearer. Thou has treacherously slain Raoul who knighted thee at the first and loved thee dearly. If thou wouldst come a little nearer I would invest thee with an unaccustomed death."

CLXVIII: When Bernier heard the sentence of his death he set spurs to his horse and unfurled his battle-standard. "Sir Guerri," said he, "you are to blame. Your nephew Raoul was ill-disposed of heart, but you are wilder and stronger still. And yet, to make amends, I would go as a pilgrim to Acre and become a servant in the Temple for the rest of my days."

CLXIX: Said Guerri: "That will not help you much unless my shield and spear play me false. I care not a straw for such amends unless I can slay thee first or hang thee up on high." Bernier replied: "These are idle boasts! You old villain, I will make it hot for you to-day. I will smite thee to earth, so help me God!"

CLXX: With these words the gallant knight charged. But his steed was slow and weary, whilst that of Guerri was quite refreshed. Guerri smote Bernier on his burnished shield; he broke and shattered it below the buckle and pierced the coat of mail beneath it. Close to his side went both the blade and the handle of his lance—it was a wonder that it did not enter his flesh. So firmly did old bearded Guerri hold it that Bernier was hurled out of his stirrups and Guerri joyfully turned on him with drawn sword in his hand. And now the game would have been up for Bernier had not his nephews rushed up from another part of the field. Gerard and Henry of Senlis were their names, and they rode up and parted the fighters. Guerri was furious, and he struck Gerard the proud Spanish boy on his helmet adorned with fleur-de-lys. The band of gold did not protect him, the headpiece of his choice hauberk was pierced and the sword clove him to the teeth. Down he fell dead from his charger

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and Guerri rejoiced. "Cambrai," he cried, "this one at all events is accounted for! Bernier, thou coward, where hast thou escaped to? Thou low bastard, thou hast always eluded me. I shall never be content as long as thou art alive."

CLXXI: When Bernier sees Gerard lying dead he is nearly senseless with grief. But massed troops of Vermandois are coming up and the men of Cambrai are forced to give way. Guerri was like to die of vexation, and once again he rushed into the fray, and he and all his men lay about them with fury. What a fierce battle you might have seen then! Lances broken, shields splintered, hauberks split and torn, horses that will never neigh again, feet, hands and heads lying on the ground. More than forty were slain outright. But Guerri cannot hold out any longer; he has to leave the field with his seven score men. But it grieves him sorely, "My noble vassals," he cried, "what will become of you since I must leave you and quit the field of battle?"

CLXXII: So Guerri departs leading seven score men—all that remain out of ten thousand. He looked across the valley and saw so many knights lying there disembowelled, even the most active of them unable to rise now. Guerri wept with his face in his hands. He carried away his nephew Raoul, and his grief broke out afresh; as he went across the fields and saw so many of his men slain he addressed them piteously: "My noble vassals, alas! I cannot bury you in cloister or in church. My lady Aalais, I bring you evil tidings." He has wept so much that his face is all wet and his heart fails him beneath his breast. He swears by St. James of Compostella that he will not make peace for all the wealth of Spain ere Bernier's heart be torn from out his breast.

CLXXIII: Small reason to rejoice have the sons of Herbert. Out of the eleven thousand men they had at first, and the reinforcements which the peasants had brought them, there are but three hundred left. And these are filled with grief, for it is enough to stagger the hardiest of them when they see their brothers lying dead on the sand and so many of their kinsmen slain. They bear them to St. Quentin, grieving as they go; but Guerri grieves more than all, for he carries Raoul. With heavy hearts they all dismount beneath Cambrai.

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CLXXIV: The lady Aalais was at Cambrai. For three days she had neither eaten nor slept on account of the hard words she had said to her son. She had cursed him and bitterly she had repented it. But at last she fell asleep, for she had suffered so much. She dreamed a dream which came only too true. She saw her valiant son Raoul returning from battle clad in a green tunic all slashed asunder by Bernier. Fear caused her to awake and she ran from her chamber. She met Amaury, a knight who had been brought up in her household, and she called loudly to him: "Where is my son, tell me truly for God's sake." But he would not have answered for all the gold of France. He was badly wounded with a spear, and would have fallen from his Arab steed had not a citizen caught him in his arms. But now the cry begins to be raised, and it is echoed on all sides so that everyone can hear it: "Raoul is dead, and Guerri is taken prisoner."

CLXXV: Then the gentle lady perceived that the sound of grief was growing louder. Battle-steeds are entering the gate with saddles broken beyond repair and without their brave riders. To and fro run the sergeants, the varlets and the squires, and see now, Guerri is coming in carrying Raoul on his broad shield. The good knights support him, for his head is bowed beneath his golden helmet. To the church of St. Geri they carry their burden and place the body on a bier. Then they put four golden crosses at his head and I know not how many incense-bowls or silver. The priests performed their office duly and well; but dame Aalais was overcome by grief. She sat down on a costly chair before the bier and she spoke aloud to the knights about her: "My lords," she said, "I confess to you now that I cursed my son the other day when my anger was aroused. Son, you were better than Roland or Oliver for helping your friends. When I think of that traitor Bernier who killed you, I am like to go mad with rage!" Then she fell in a swoon; they hastened to raise her up and many a gentle lady wept for pity.

CLXXVI: When the lady Aalais recovered from her swoon she lamented her son again and refused to be comforted. "My son," said she, "how much I loved you! I cared for you until such time as you could carry arms; then my dear brother, the king of France, gave you your

arms and you carried them like a warrior. But you desired that a bastard whom I had saved from dishonour should be knighted with you; and now he has ill repaid you, for he has slain you beneath the walls of Origny." As she spoke, the redoubtable Guerri came in. He went to the bier and raised the pall. Dame Aalais began to reproach him bitterly: "Sir Guerri, you are much to blame. I charged you to protect my child and you let him be parted from you in the battle. What man of worth will ever put his trust in you since your own nephew looked to you in vain for help?" Guerri was almost mad with anger when he heard these words. He rolled his eyes and frowned and looked fiercer than a wild boar. He turned in fury on the lady, and if she had been a man he would surely have struck her. "Lady," said he, "it is my turn to speak now. For this nephew of mine whom I have brought here I had to forget my own two sons who lost both life and limb before my eyes. Mine is the heart that might well burst with grief."

CLXXVII: But the lady cried again: "Sir Guerri, I put my son Raoul in your charge. He was your brother's son and he loved you dearly, yet you treacherously deserted him in the battle." Guerri replied angrily: "You speak ill-advisedly, lady, I swear by St. Denis. But I can say no more, for I am overcome with grief myself that the bastard Bernier has slain him. But they have lost more of their men than we have." — "God," said the lady, "how heavy my heart is! If it had been a powerful count who had killed you my grief would have been lightened by one half. To whom shall I leave my country and my land? For now I have no heir in very truth. Where did the bastard pluck up so much heart that he dared attack a man of such high birth? Now I have no heir, alas! save little Gautier; son of Henry he is and of my sister, and a very valiant youth." Now Gautier had followed and had come to Cambrai with his mother at full speed. They dismounted with heavy hearts; but the boy was eager and full of courage.

CLXXVIII: The boy Gautier dismounted from his horse and went into the church sad at heart. He went up to the bier and raised the pall and the noble knights around wept for pity. "Uncle," said he, "I have early learnt what grief is. Never will I forgive the man who has parted my

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friend and me, until I have slain him, or burnt him or chased him from the realm. Thou vile bastard, how I hate thee! Thou hast deprived me of the one who would have stood by me and would have been a prop to all our friends. But I swear by the saints who prayed to Jesus that, if I live long enough to lace a helmet, I will not let thee rest in a turret, in a fortress, nor behind a pallsade as far as the city of Paris, until I have torn thy heart from thy breast and split it and cut it up into a hundred pieces. Both thou and all thy friends shall be put to death for this." At these words Guerri raised his head and said to himself so that no one heard him: "If this boy lives long enough, he will give Ybert something to grieve for."

CLXXIX: Dame Aalais was full of heaviness. And now her daughter has fallen down senseless and young Gautier has lifted her from the ground. As he raised her he shifted the veil with which the bier was covered and saw Raoul's blood-stained face and the great open wound upon it. "Uncle," said the boy, "this is an evil recompense that thou hast received from the bastard Bernier for bringing him up in thy tiled hall. If God grant that I live long enough to have my visor closed, to lace my helmet and to grasp my sword, the country will not be long in peace. Thy death shall be dearly paid." Guerri raised his head at these words and answered him gravely: "In God's name, nephew, I promise that I will knight thee." Then said the wise and valiant Aalais: "Fair sir nephew, you shall have my land. Very soon all shall acknowledge your control."

CLXXX: Great was the mourning of all the knighthood. Through all the length and breadth of Apulia and Hungary you would not find a man who could truthfully say that he had seen such mourning in all his life for such a noble count. Then up came Helois his affianced bride who had the rightful title to Abbéville. She was richly clothed and swathed in a cloak of Pavia. Her skin was white as a May flower and her cheeks as ruddy as a rose. No one could look at her without smiling all the time. No more beautiful woman had ever lived; but now she came into the church all woebegone, and she cried loudly as soon as she saw the body: "My lord Raoul, what a cruel parting! Dear friend, kiss your lover, I beseech you.

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Your death is a hateful crime. When you were seated on your battle-horse you looked like a king at the head of his troops. When you had girded your polished sword and laced your helmet over the well-fitting head piece there was no fairer man and no better vassal in the whole of Europe. Alas! now is our love at an end. Cruel death! how didst thou dare attack such a prince as this? For this reason alone, that I loved you, never will I have another lord and master all my life." Then she fell senseless—so great was her grief—and the strong knights lifted her quickly from the ground.

CLXXXI: "My lord Raoul," said the noble maiden, "you gave me your oath in a church. Afterwards Hardouin of Nivelles, lord of the fair country of Brabant, wished to wed me; but I would not have taken him for all the wealth of Toledo. Holy Mary, glorious virgin, why does my heart not break beneath my breast when I see him dead whose handmaid I should be? Now this dear face and the bright orbits of these clear eyes will moulder in the ground. Your breath was fresh and sweet every morning." Then the gentle lady would have swooned again had not some one held her by the arm.

CLXXXII: "Lady Aalais," said the noble maiden. "I see that your grief is very great and since yesterday morning you have suffered so much that the rest of your life will be harmed thereby. Now, for the Redeemer's sake, leave him to me, for I have come hither; and I did right to come, for he pledged his faith to me a month ago. Sir Guerri, noble lord, I beg and pray you for the Redeemer's sake that you take off his mailed hauberk and his shining helmet and all his costly armour and garments, for I wish to take leave of my love." Guerri did her bidding, and she kissed him again and again. Then she looked at him back and front, and weeping she said: "Dear friend, I will never have another lord all my life, because our love has come to such a grievous end." When she had finished speaking they decked Raoul like a warrior prince in costly wise; the bishop chanted the mass aloud and in right seemly wise the service was performed. Then they buried the brave warrior and many of you know the whereabouts of his grave.

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CLXXXIII: When they had buried Raoul in the chapel, the knights returned to their homes; but dame Aalais kept little Gautier with her. Guerri the Red went back to Arras his domain to tend himself and rest, for he was very tired and greatly in need of it. Helois, the noble girl, returned to Ponthieu and was sought by many a noble prince and lord. But she would have none of them. Then for a long time this great war of which I am telling you ceased. But the boy Gautier caused it to break out afresh. As soon as he could mount a horse and carry arms and handle a shield he burned to avenge his uncle. So Louis and Bernier, Wedon of Roie and brave Ybert were plunged again into a conflict which cost many a brave warrior his life.

CLXXXIV: For a long time this war of which I have been telling you was in abeyance. But one day, near about Christmas time, lady Aalais, who still grieved for her son, was listening to the service in the church. As the singing ceased she came out into the square, and there she found the boy Gautier playing with his friends. The lady beckoned to him with her glove, and he came running up. "Nephew," she said, "now I know that you have forgotten your uncle Raoul and all his noble courage." Gautier's head sank when he heard her speak: "Lady," said he, "that is a cruel taunt. My heart is still heavy on account of my uncle, although I was playing with the children. Let my armour be got ready, and at Pentecost, when summer draws near, I will be armed knight if God permit. Bernier has lived too long in security, but he shall soon hear of us again; all our enemies have entered upon an evil year." Then the lady thanked God and kissed and embraced her nephew. And now the time has passed and Pentecost is here, when the fields are covered with flowers. They have sent to Arras for Guerri the Red and he has come with a noble escort. A hundred armed knights rode down the high road with him and they did not draw rein till they reached the fair city. Then Guerri dismounted before the porch and dame Aalais, who loved him dearly, went to meet him; she kissed him and said: "For pity's sake, sir, why is it so long since I have seen you?" "Lady," he replied, "upon my honour, I was so damaged in that battle that my sides were wounded in fifteen places. But, thank God, my wounds are now healed."

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CLXXXV: Said Guerri: "Lady, I must confess to you that it is five years since I mounted my warhorse. I had to leave so much blood behind in that battle that I had great need of repose. But now, by St. Richier, for seven years I have not felt so strong and light as I do now, nor so ready to wield my sword." "By heaven," said the lady, "I thank thee greatly." Guerri looked toward the high palace, and seeing his nephew he called to him: "Nephew, I love you exceedingly. How are you, tell me truly." Gautier replied wisely: "By my troth, uncle, I am big and full-grown, and quite strong enough to carry arms. I beg you, give them to me, for we have let Bernier sleep too long and it is high time we paid him another visit and woke him up." – "Nothing would please me better," replied Guerri; "I desire it more than my food and my drink." Dame Aalais hastened to prepare a shirt and breeches, golden spurs and a rich cloak of quartered silk. The costly arms are carried to the church and thither they go to hear the bishop Renier read the mass. Then they clothe the slim youth and Guerri girt him with the polished blade of steel which the noble warrior Raoul used to wield. "Nephew," he said, "may God speed thee! I knight thee this day with the prayer that God may enable thee to abase thine enemies and to help and exalt thy friends." – "May God grant your prayer, Sire," replied Gautier. Then they brought a noble steed and Gautier leapt upon it without the aid of stirrups. A quartered shield with two golden lions worked upon it was given to him, a straight and polished haft of apple-wood with ensign attached and sharp-edged blade. He bounded forward on his steed, then returned as quickly, and the onlookers said one to another: "What a handsome knight he is!" But lady Aalais began to weep as she thought of the son she had loved so dearly, albeit she now has Gautier in his place.

CLXXXVI: In a loud voice Gautier cries: "Uncle Guerri, for the love of the true God, stand by me, for you can be of great assistance to me. I wish to set out at once for St. Quentin. We shall have a thousand knights before night-fall. When the day begins to dawn let us place our ambush in some thicket and send a hundred of our men to burn the land. The traitor Bernier will soon learn whether I am capable of waging war against him. Not for riches or possessions would I refrain from going

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and acquainting myself with them.” – “Truly,” said Guerri, “you act like my son; gladly will I support and stand by you. In vain Bernier thinks himself at peace in his land since he slew the one for whom my heart is still in mourning. To horse, barons, for the love of God. My nephew wishes it and his cause brooks no delay.”

CLXXXVII: Gautier and Guerri mounted their steeds and summoned their kinsmen and their friends from all the country round. Soon a thousand knights were assembled in their shining hauberks and they rode out of Cambresis without delay. Into Vermandois they rode and placed their ambush in a wood. Then a hundred armed knights rode forth and drove in the prey; there were oxen and kine, horses and beasts of burden and many a man was reduced to beggary thereby. At St. Quentin the alarm was given, for a citizen was killed in front of the gate. Sadly Bernier put on his armour and rode forth beside his uncle Louis, Wedon of Roie and white-haired Ybert. One was mounted on a dappled steed, the other on a grey, and Ybert on the black horse that had fallen wounded beneath Raoul when he was killed. Then said Bernier: “I swear by St. Denis that never since the day when Raoul was killed has so much as a barn in my land been destroyed by war. This is Gautier, beyond a doubt. He has returned from Paris and has received his arms, you may be sure. Now may He who forgave Longinus guide us, for Gautier is an implacable foe. Let none be in too great haste to joust, for he who falls will never rise again and a man’s head will be his only ransom. This battle will be no child’s play.”

CLXXXVIII: Bernier issued forth from the gate with his two uncles and his father Ybert and five hundred armed men. Proudly they rode forth to battle; they passed the ambush and covered fourteen furlongs before ever they were seen. Then Guerri the Red and the sturdy Gautier charged them. “Cambrai,” they shouted, “there is grief in store for you. By God, bastard, your last hour has come now. I will give you such a greeting for my nephew’s sake that I would not give two straws for my own courage if you escape me this time.” Bernier heard these words and they grieved him sorely. Then the battle began in earnest; lances were broken, shields pierced, costly hauberks riven and torn, and the field

was strewn with the fallen and the slain. Guerri and young Gautier drew their swords when their lances no longer served them. Those who fell there have quitted this mortal life and not one of them will ever feel heat or cold again. A good thirty men were killed or mortally wounded there and fifty more were taken prisoner. Bernier was forced to fly, Ybert was lost in the fray and Louis among the hills, nor did Wedon of Roie remain in his place. "God," said Bernier, "eternal Father, will that old man Guerri never cease from fighting? How he revives each time there is chance of a battle!" But now the citizens of St. Quentin have come to their aid; five hundred archers with bows ready strung and more crossbowmen than I can say. "Thank God," said Bernier, "my courage is revived, for I shall be succoured by these men."

CLXXXIX: "Sir Barons," said brave Bernier, "I hear the noise of men on all sides. This man is a tough and furious fighter; his sword is much to be feared, for anyone struck by it lies straightway mute and silent in death. Guerri the Red is ruthless and cunning and there is not such a fighter in all the world. He has taken our friends prisoner which grieves me sorely, and I see so many more lying dead in the field that I am quite cast down. But I will never die with my back to the foe. Let us ride forward, for we are three times as many as they. Guerri the Red is ruthless and cunning. If he is to be found in this land again, either he or that arrogant Gautier, never will I take a penny of ransom for him, for I am quite set on his destruction. Louis shall not save him, nor any emperor nor king nor emir, even though we are beset by war all the rest of our time." With this they set spurs to their gallant steeds. Guerri looked along the hillside and saw such a multitude of men coming and bands of peasants with them all armed and carrying sparkling shields that he turned to Gautier and said two courteous words to him: "A fool is the man who hearkens to the counsel of a child. If God the Redeemer help us not there will be many a bleeding corpse ere the sun sets and the evening falls."—"How timid thou art, forsooth," quoth Gautier. "Here is a chance to avenge my kinsmen, for I see my enemies approaching."

CXC: Even as he spoke Bernier galloped up, well-armed on his Gascon steed. Up to Guerri he rode and spoke thus to him: "Aged sire,

there was a time when you and I loved each other. I adjure thee by St. Simon, give up the prisoners we demand, for what boots it to carry on this useless war? Already so many knights have been done to death on either side that we cannot number the slain. In my father's name I make this request of you." Guerri heard him and bowed his head in thought. But young Gautier called out to his uncle: "Who is this man who looks like a knight? Is it for the ransom of the prisoners that he comes?" – "By no means, sir nephew," quoth Guerri, "his name is Bernier, upon my oath, and there is no greater scoundrel in France. Let us go back and leave this worm. See how the number of his men increases every minute." – "God," said Gautier, "how my blood boils! By St. Peter, I would not turn back for all the wealth of Avalon until I have shewn him what my pennon is like." He sets spurs to his horse and charges, brandishing his lance with its pennon unfurled. He strikes Bernier on his shield with its lion device, he pierces the coat of arms beneath the boss and wrenches the chainwork of his hauberk and strikes him so fiercely in the side that the blood flows down upon the sand. With the full force of his lance he hurled him from his saddle a fathom's length from his Spanish steed. Then he hurled words of insult at him: "Thou low bastard, I swear by St. Simon that living devils have saved your life. On behalf of my uncle whom you slew I wage this war against you, for you were his man. If I did not see so many of your men here I would teach you such a hard lesson with this sword that hangs at my side, that you would have no need of a priest, for it would be the worst sermon you had ever heard in your life." – "Sooth," said Bernier, "these are the words of a fool. By threats like these I know that thou art only a child."

CXCI: But Bernier was sorely grieved when he saw that his shield was pierced and his hauberk torn and riven; moreover he himself was grievously wounded in the side. "God," said he, "it would be maddening to be overthrown in the field by a boy!" Nevertheless he humbled himself before young Gautier and spoke courteously to him. "Sir Gautier," said he, "you are nobly nurtured and courtly, and both gallant and wise in counsel. But in one thing you are to be blamed; it was not the act of a knight to threaten me. Your uncle Raoul was a very

arrogant man. I was his man it is true, but he burnt my mother in his mad anger and he struck me in his pride. I challenged him and you have no right to blame me. Since you are his nephew, make peace with me and deign to accept the amends that I offer. I will be your man and will hold my fiefs from you. A hundred well-armed knights shall serve you of their own free will and I myself, barefoot and in rags, will walk as far as your fiefs around Cambrai. For the sake of our Lord who died on the cross, take counsel with yourself and accept my offer." But Gautier was the more incensed at his words: "Bastard," said he, "you anger me. I will recognize no right of yours until I have plucked your heart from your breast and cut it up into a hundred pieces." – "Then is all friendship at an end," quoth Bernier, "for before that happens I shall have shaved your neck for you." So they set spurs to their horses again and Gautier returned all breathless to the charge. But there were too many armed men round about, the vassals of each, and full tilt they came to the rescue of their leaders.

CXCII: Then Guerri spoke aloud so that all could hear. "Nephew Gautier, now, by St. Amant, I know that thou art only a child. I care not a fig for knighthood and valour if it be not mixed with good sense. We have great and noble booty if we can get away straightway from this place." – "By my troth," replied Gautier, "I am of the same mind." So they turned and rode down the hillside. Then the others gave chase at full speed until they came up with them beside a stream. And there you might have seen another wild and grievous fight—shields split in two, lances shivered, costly hauberks riven, feet, hands and heads severed and many a noble knight lying stretched by the ford. There were so many wounded and killed that the clear water of the stream ran red. Then Guerri turned and charged and struck Droant, Bernier's brave kinsman, on his helmet, scattering flowers and gems on the ground. The blow went through the headpiece of his hauberk and clove him to the teeth. He fell dead from the back of his swift steed, and Guerri shouted his battle-cry "Cambrai" so that all might hear. "God," said Bernier, "you fill me with grief when I see you killing my kinsmen thus. You are a bane to me all my days. By the pilgrims' saint if I charge you not now that I

have the chance, no gallant man will ever look to me for aid." He sets spurs to his courser and brandishes the haft of his sharp-edged spear and strikes Guerri such a blow that his shield is split in two beneath the buckle, but the good hauberk beneath saved him from harm. Bernier held his weapon so firmly that Guerri was thrust from his saddle. Ten men-at-arms hastened up and seized him and handed him over to Bernier. Then Bernier was glad, and not a besant of ransom will he accept if there be but a chance of having his head.

CXCIII: When Gautier sees that his uncle is captured, his grief knows no bounds. He spurs his horse forward full speed and strikes Bernier on his barred shield. The shield is smashed to pieces, the hauberk is torn to ribands and Bernier is sorely wounded in the side. His right foot is forced out of the stirrup and he lies prone on the back of his steed. It was a marvel that he was not killed. With a noble effort he righted himself and recovered his stirrup by main force. Then quickly he drew his sword and struck Gautier on his jewelled helmet. Much he damaged the band of gold and the nose piece as far as it went and wounded Gautier somewhat in the face. Had it not been for the head-piece of his broidered hauberk Gautier would have seen no more of the battle. The boy was stunned by the blow and if it could have been followed by another, I warrant he would have received his death-blow. But his men hastened up, for they had not forgotten their liege lord, and there was a mortal conflict. Gautier was rescued by force and many a blow the boy delivered himself. Then Bernier and his men turned back, for already the towers of Cambrai were in sight. He raised his horn and sounded the retreat and with his men he left the field. And Gautier returned to Cambrai and what a booty he and his men took with them. The lady Aalais came forward to meet them. She saluted Guerri and said to him: "My lord, tell me by your sacred troth what you think of the new-made knight? Does my son any wise live again in him?" — "Yea, surely, lady, by my sacred troth, never saw I such a knight in all christendom. Thirty times and more has he jousted to day and never a baron survived his thrust. Whether he slays them outright or captures them alive, no man's arms can resist his blows when the heat of battle is upon him. Twice he

overthrew the bastard himself and he wounded him sorely in the side."—"By the Creator," quoth the lady, "now I have no regrets concerning what I promised him. As a fief redeemed he shall hold my land." Thus the title to his heritage was secured to him that day.

CXCIV: Now Gautier held the land with all its appurtenances. He summoned his vassals without delay and fortified every stronghold and every fortress in the land whilst he had leisure from war. Homeward too went Bernier with all his men, and many a costly battle-steed that they had conquered in the battle did he and his uncles lead back with them. To the palace at St. Quentin they returned and Ybert gently summoned Bernier and his nephew to him, and his two valiant brothers, Wedon of Roie and Louis the younger. "Barons," said he, "God knows I am in much dread of this war. In the whole of France there are no two such fighters as proud Guerri and that bold youth Gautier." Bernier replied: "Sire, you are too fearful. Pluck up heart and prepare for the battle, and let each bethink himself of his noble ancestors. Not for many a costly treasure would I suffer an evil song to be sung by wandering bard of me."

CXCV: Then Ybert spoke considered words: "Son," said he, "thou art a very valiant man. I have no friend so powerful as thou, and I put no trust in my own life. All my land do I acquit to thee, and after my death thou shalt never lose a foot of it." But Bernier swore by Jesus and his power that not for all the wealth of Ind would he sanction such a deed. "Sire," said he, "you speak very foolishly. I am a young man and all I ask for is my life and all I fear untimely death. Guerri is altogether too outrageous and Gautier arrogant beyond his years. Many a body shall be transfixed ere they work their wicked will on me."

CXCVI: Then Bernier called his barons, Ybert his father and all his friends: "My lords, in God's name let us summon all the men we can." And they consented to do so without delay and sent their messengers throughout the Vermandois. By Tuesday, ere the sun went down, there were three thousand armed men there with young Bernier at their head. The heat was great and the sand was blowing in the wind, and Bernier swore by Him who formed the fishes: "If I find those I seek I will tear

out the beard of that old Guerri, and I will take no ransom for Gautier till I have put my sword in his entrails. Since God wills not that there be peace between us, and they are so full of pride and anger that the more we humble ourselves the prouder and angrier they become: since they threaten us more and more by God and all his names when we offer them hostages or desire to put our hand between theirs, it is clear that they care not two spurs for our friendship. There is no more to be done: let us get to work."

CXCVII: When Bernier had assembled all his men there were three thousand of them all armed cap-à-pie. One fair morning they came to Cambrai, and Bernier called Geoffroy of Pierrelee. "Sound a long blast on your horn," said he, "so that the noise goes through the land, for I would not attack in secret fashion."—"Sire," replied Geoffroy, "your words please me well." He sounded his horn and the alarm was raised. The squires cut down the barricade and fire was set to the outskirts of the town. The lady Aalais had arisen early and she saw the glow of the burning town without. So great was her grief that she fell down senseless. Young Gautier raised her in his arms: "Lady," said he, "why this grief? We will make them pay dearly for this folly." He blew a furious blast on his horn and set off at full speed for the gateway. And there a furious fight took place and many were the arms and legs and heads severed. Soon more than two hundred knights lay dead on the field.

CXCVIII: The noise and shouting grew louder and louder. Gautier, that quick and valiant knight, charged like a man eager for the fray. He brandished his lance as he saw Antiaume, the brave kinsman of Bernier, approaching; in an instant he had pierced his shield and torn asunder his hauberk and plunged his lance right into his body. Antiaume fell dead and the noise grew ever greater. Then Guerri came spurring at full speed and all could see that he meant mischief, for he needed to strike no man twice. More than seven he overthrew and slew in his charge. "God," said Bernier, "I could die of rage. Will this wicked old man never get his deserts? I can have no rest till I be avenged of him."—"Vile renegade!" quoth Guerri, "it will be a long time then, forsooth, before you take your

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ease. You are too far off; you keep ever at a safe distance. Come and try your strength with me."—"Nothing loth am I," replied Bernier, and they both set spurs to their steeds and brandished the blades of their spears. Then each gave the other a fearful blow on his polished shield, so that both their shields were pierced and broken; but their hauberks resisted the blows. With such force they charged each other that the steel of their lances broke, but neither of them lost his seat as they dashed past. Each turned sharp round by the French trick of riding, and the fight would have begun again had not their vassals hastened up with helmets lowered for the battle and parted them.

CXCIX: Great was the noise of battle and the shouting grew louder. Gautier was near at hand with his fine shield painted with fleur-de-lys. Then Bernier charged in valiant fashion and struck John of Paris in the middle of his shield. So sure was the stroke that he hurled him from his saddle. Quickly Bernier seized the charger and called to his grey-bearded father: "By our Lord who pardoned Longinus, I swear that if I do not get back in exchange for this man all the booty that Gautier and his uncle have taken, we shall be hung before noon is past." Then Guerri the Red was much displeased. But Gautier approached and called to Bernier across the field. "Sir Bernier," said he, as Bernier cautiously came near, "much do I regret that thou art not my friend. I say not that to reassure thee; be on thy guard still against thy enemies, for I grieve yet on account of the marquis Raoul. But why should so many brave men lose their lives? Let us two fix upon a day when we can meet in combat. Let no living man be present besides two who shall bring word afterwards to tell which of us has been slain." "I agree thereto," said Bernier the courteous, "though I grieve much that thou urgest me to it."

CC: Then said Bernier: "Gautier, listen to me. Thou hast compelled me to this by thy relentless pride, though I take no pleasure in it. Give me thy hand; I swear to thee in good faith that no more than two shall be with us and they shall bear the evil tidings to our friends."—"So be it then," replied Gautier, and at these words they parted from each other. Bernier went with all speed to his own domain, St. Quentin. Gautier repaired straightway to Cambrai, and he and Guerri dismounted by the

stairway. The fair lady Aalais came quickly to meet them. "Nephew," said she. "how goes this grievous war? It will be your death, I know full well." – "Not so, lady, if God wills. You will yet see me leading my men and never shall this war cease until such time as I cause to rue the one who started it. I swear to you he shall either die by the sword or swing in the wind."

CCI: Gautier went into a church and not a word did he say to anyone of his intent. He humbled himself much before God on account of the battle. Not a mass did he omit, nor a vespers nor a matins. He put right away all his childish folly, nor was he seen to laugh or joke with anyone. But Guerri the Red was a cunning man. He called Gautier and spoke sternly to him: "What is the matter, nephew, in God's name? Tell me the truth and hide nothing from me." – "I must keep silence, uncle, may it not displease you. If I disclosed my intent to more than one man, I should belie my faith. I must do mortal combat with Bernier. You will remain here in my panelled hall and, if I die, you will possess all my lands and my rights devolve on you." "Forsooth," quoth Guerri, "what folly do I hear? Not for all the gold of Pavia would I abstain from going fully armed to your battleground to see your valour and your skill."

CCII: Now was the day agreed upon and the hour was fixed for the combat of which you have heard. Gautier armed himself right early without the aid of a squire. He donned his hauberk, then fixed his helmet and girded his sword to his left side. Now his golden spurs are fastened to his boots and with a leap he was on the back of his charger, his shield with its stout thongs upon his arm. Nor was his lance forgotten with its long, sharp blade and the slender pennon fixed to its point. Thus was Gautier equipped and many a time the boy surveyed himself. He was tall and lithe, full grown and well-proportioned, and small wish had he to change places with any living man. He called Ysoret, his host, and said to him: "Now pledge your troth to me that you will tell no mother's son in which direction I be gone, until such time that you see me back again. Then you shall possess this well-favoured steed, this hauberk and this jewelled helmet, my good sword too shall be yours and my banded shield as well as three hundred pounds' weight of minted deniers." He

held out his hand to him and the other answered: "Here is my hand upon it." Thus they pledged each other and Gautier set out. He did not stop till he reached the gateway and there stood Guerri richly dight in costly armour. So the two friends joined each other and it would be hard to find two such well-armed knights in any land. They came to the appointed place and dismounted straightway. They took the saddles and breastplates from their horses and led them three times to and fro till they leapt upon the sward. Then they put back the saddles and tightened up the girth-straps all ready for the encounter. Now Bernier had better look to it that he is well-prepared, for young Gautier is fully clad and Red Guerri richly armed. Bernier has risen at dawn of day and he too has costly arms whose value none can doubt. He armed himself with all the speed he could, then lovingly he told his father that he would go to St. Quentin for awhile: "You shall await me here, Sire," said he, "and I commend you to God Almighty, for I know not whether you will see me again." Then he took his leave and galloped across the meadows in the company of a vassal well mounted and well armed. Aliaume of Namur was the vassal's name; he himself had accounted for more than a hundred men in battle and no cowardice could be laid at his door. They did not draw rein till they reached the appointed place, and now all the four warriors are assembled there. Then Guerri cried out aloud: "Now is your chance, nephew Gautier! Here is the man against whom you wish to try your strength. He killed your uncle, now make him pay the price. You have no need to concern yourself on account of his companion."

CCIII: All four barons are now assembled in the field, fully armed and mailed for the combat. Bernier came riding up at full speed spurring his long-maned steed. Gautier seized his shield when he saw him and greeted him with an insult: "Bastard," said he, "I have put up with you too long. You slew Raoul in an evil hour for him, but, by God, if I take not thy head from thy body now, I am not worth a straw."—"By my faith, small chance hast thou," quoth Bernier; "my trust is in God and his strength, and before eventide thou wilt have met thy fate."

CCIV: Gautier spoke again "Brother Bernier, I beg you in the name of Christ who caused his image to float to Lucques upon the waves, grant

the request which I now have in mind. You and I are young and can prove our valour, but let these two old men who are near of an age watch that there be no foul play between us. Then, when we have fought and one of us lies dead on the battlefield, they can both go to bear the tidings to those near of kin."—"What a shameless request do I hear," quoth Bernier "a curse upon the head of him who would do this. I was mistaken when I took you to be sane. My nephew Aliaume is too valiant a knight to consent to this."—"Truly," said Gautier, "thy spirit is ungentle; no shame would accrue to thee thereby for my uncle's courage is known to all."

CCV: Then Gautier spoke like a wise man: "Brother Bernier, for the love of God I make one request of thee and no more. Let us two young men fight without delay. These others shall be ready to bear the tidings. They shall watch the battle so that they will be able to go and bear tidings of the vanquished."—"It is granted," quoth Bernier, and thereupon the two knights tilted at each other. With desperation they both rode, and each struck the other a furious blow on his shield. Both their shields were split across, their lances broke and their horses bounded beneath them. "God," said Guerri, "this is no child's play. Save my nephew Gautier, I beseech thee!"

CCVI: But Gautier was eager to renew the combat. It was the custom at this time for knights to carry two lances when they engaged in single combat. Bernier had broken one lance to splinters; the other one he had fixed upright in the meadow. He hastened now to fetch it and Gautier did the same without delay. Their two swords were still in their sheaths and they charged again with fury. Young Gautier fell, Bernier passed him and gave him such a blow that not only was his shield broken again but his hauberk too was rent and torn. But the spear did not enter his flesh though it closely pressed his side. "God," said Guerri, "I have had enough of this. My nephew is killed and I have been too long about taking the head of that bastard."—"You fool," said Aliaume, "you have no right to interfere. I will soon punish you for it if you do. My helmet is laced, my shield is on my neck and my sword at my side, and you would soon leave the back of your swift steed!" Then young Gautier called out

loudly: "Uncle Guerri, you need not be so alarmed. The bastard has not wounded me at all." He set spurs again to his horse and gave him the rein, and he and Bernier charged each other again. Their shields were shattered by the blows, but their hauberks were not damaged; so great was the shock when the two practised vassals met that their spears flew up in splinters. So they rushed past each other; then each returned by the French manner of turning, and quick as thought their keen-edged swords were drawn.

CCVII: Now both the barons have returned to the charge, their well-tempered blades in their hands. Gautier was fierce in his anger, and he struck Bernier on his helmet with such fury that the blow went home. The jewels and brass-work crashed to the ground and the circlet was broken to splinters. Had it not been for the hood which protected his head Bernier would have been cloven to the shoulders. The sword glanced off to his left, but so severe had been the blow that the blood poured from Bernier's mouth and he all but fell full length to the ground. Then Gautier shouted: "Confess thyself vanquished for, by God, bastard, thy hour has come. If I let thee escape me now I am not worth two straws. For my uncle's sake I will teach thee such a lesson that thou wilt never need another." Bernier heard these words and was dismayed. He rushed at him angrily, but Gautier turned in an instant and parried his blows, and they were soon at grips with one another beneath their shields. So fiercely they wrestled with each other that both were dragged from their horses, but they leapt to their feet and renewed the struggle again. "God in heaven," said Aliaume, "we shall lose both of them. Guerri, thou old grey-beard, do thou go and part them."—But Guerri replied: "May he who parts them before one of them is vanquished never know God's forgiveness. It is their pride that has brought about this conflict and right sorry I am that neither of them has yet avowed himself beaten."

CCVII: The two barons are in dead earnest now, and tackle one another furiously. The steel of their swords is jagged, their helmets are scored and cut, their shields are so smashed to pieces that there is not space enough to place a farthing cake on the least damaged of the two.

Next they must seek to cut through the hauberks. "Beast," said Gautier, "you will fall in a moment. You shall not leave this field with a head on your shoulders" — "Upon my oath," said Bernier, "the lady Aalais, who loved you so much, might as well give her land to some one else, for you will never be her heir." These words filled Gautier with rage and he struck Bernier such a fearful blow in his wrath that his bright helmet was useless to him. The precious stones and emblems were scattered, and the stout head-piece of his hauberk could not resist the blow. A handful of his hair was cut off and the sword entered his head as far as the bone. Then if it had not swerved to the left Bernier would have been split in sunder to his breeches. Down his body the sword travelled, bringing hundreds of meshes of his hauberk with it. It cut his flesh just above his belt so that a large piece of it fell to the earth. At this blow Bernier was almost crushed; the blood flowed from his mouth, his eyes grew dim so that perforce he stumbled; if another such blow had followed the first he would have been past help for ever. Aliaume saw that Bernier was badly wounded and he said to Guerri: "We must go to him. If either of them dies, he will be beyond our aid." Guerri replied: "These are the words of a fool. This blow is more to me than meat and drink. O God, let my great grief be now assuaged!" Bernier heard what he said and called aloud to him: "By God, Guerri, thy wish will not be granted just yet. Gautier has struck me and he shall get his due. As for me, I am all the lighter for what I have lost. We can be too much burdened by our miserable flesh; I care not for it nor wish to carry it about with me. Too solid flesh does no good to the knight who wishes to increase his honour and bring glory to his name."

CCIX: But, despite his words, Bernier was sick and weary of the battle which lasted so long and the wounds which pained him sorely. He raised his sharp sword again and struck Gautier on his helmet, scattering the precious stones and the flowers. Had it not been for the headpiece of his stout hauberk he would have been cleft down to the nose-piece. With such violence the blow fell that the blood poured from Gautier's mouth and his clear eyes grew dim. A man might have run for a furlong before he could speak a word after the blow. Then said Bernier: "Confess

thyself vanquished. I would kill thee, but thou art such a child." Proudly Gautier answered: "I swear that thou shalt proceed no further. I will have thy heart, bastard, before the sun sets to-day." And he rushed again to the attack, but neither of the two had any heart left for boasting. Then Aliaume and Guerri rode up and quickly separated the fighters.

CCX: There was great dismay at the parting of the knights. They made Gautier sit down in the meadow close to Bernier, each in sight of the other. Aliaume waited eagerly on Bernier:—"You are terribly pale," quoth he. "Tell me, for God's sake, do you think you can recover?"—"In truth," said Bernier, "I am almost smitten to death. But young Gautier has not much fight left in him either." Gautier heard what he said, and was beside himself with anger. "God curse thee, bastard," said he; "I would be torn limb from limb rather than leave this field until thy head flies from thy body."—"I am ready to fight," said Bernier, and they both leap to their feet again to put on their hauberks. Then they would have begun the combat again, but the two barons forbade them and made them swear and promise that they would not return to the fight until they could carry arms again. Unwillingly they promised, and they must not break their word. "Nephew," said Guerri, "loyal heart must keep troth. I would rather that all my land was harried than that thou shouldst do a shameful thing."

CCXI: Then the undaunted Bernier spoke again: "Nephew Aliaume, by St. Geri I ask you, what will your friends and kinsmen say if you take back your shield unscathed? Now by the saint I beg you, go try your strength with Guerri, for we shall be a laughing stock to all."—"With all my heart," quoth Aliaume, "and on such terms as you shall hear. The one that quits his saddle shall lose his horse and not regain his seat." Then said the hoary Guerri: "It is folly to urge me thus. Thou and I have never been at strife and thou hast never shed the blood of anyone of my lineage. Let be now and carry this matter no further."

CCXII: "By St. Richier," said Aliaume, "I too would gladly let this matter stand. But Bernier wills it otherwise and I would incur no reproach. This is the condition on which I enter into conflict—that he who falls shall forfeit his steed."—"Then fight I must," quoth Guerri,

“for I should be a coward did I refuse.” So each of them mounted his courser and hastened to get ready. They stationed themselves at the right distance in the field, and then they set spurs to their horses so that it was a sight to see! Each wishes to prove that he is the better knight, and they give each other fearful blows upon their quartered shields. Guerri yielded to the shock against his will. Aliaume struck him without mercy on his golden shield and split and pierced it below the buckle. His hauberk too was broken and torn and the sword entered his left side but Guerri did not leave his saddle. “Truly,” said he, “I see that thou wishest to slay me. This is an evil game at which we are playing. Thou shalt pay for it dearly if I have my way.”

CCXIII: Guerri the Red was very angry when he saw the blood running over his shield. He spurred his horse again so that it sprang forward and brandished the haft of his finely wrought lance. Then he struck Aliaume on his shield so that it was smashed to pieces; his hauberk was torn asunder and Aliaume was hurled to the ground. Nearly beside himself for rage he sprang up again and drew his naked sword. He came back to his horse which was waiting for him and leapt swiftly upon it. Then he called to Guerri and said: “Sir Guerri, thou hast unhorsed me as all can see. I would have given thee a taste of my tempered blade, nor would I have left thee whilst thy head was on thy body for a whole valley full of gold, but that the combat was to end there.” – “Truly,” said Guerri, “this is a madman’s scheme. Never yet have I left the battle unfinished.”

CCXIV: Guerri gave rein again to his horse and brandished his lance with its waving pennon. He struck Aliaume on his cantled shield; he cut off all the enamelled woodwork and the covering, he smashed the clavel of his hauberk and drove the pennon into his body. No child’s blow was that, for he pressed it hard, and Aliaume fell with his legs in the air. As he drew back his lance Guerri spoke ugly and bitter words to him. “Sir Aliaume,” said he, “I do not let you off your game. You will not take me henceforth for a shepherd, for your bowels are coming out of your wounds. It is better not to play with an old dog like me.” Aliaume swore

by St. Daniel and said: "If I do not make mincemeat of thy flesh, I am not worth a young swallow."

CCXV: When Aliaume felt that he was wounded he was nearly mad with vexation, and he leapt angrily to his feet. Guerri charged down on him again with drawn sword and shield held low. Aliaume was on his guard and struck Guerri as he approached. The blow fell upon his hauberk and cut off one of the flaps, and if the sword had fallen in a straight line Guerri would have been maimed of one of his legs. But it fell on the neck of his steed and severed it in two. The horse fell, and Guerri was dismayed. "Holy Mary, come to my aid!" he cried loudly. "This horse is not so badly wounded but that yours shall be handed over for mine." The gallant Aliaume is feeble now from loss of blood. But Guerri is raging with anger and there will be something amiss if he does not sate his vengeance.

CCXVI: Guerri the Red held a fresh shield before him and drew his polished sword than which no better could be found in all the land. He struck Aliaume upon his helmet as he rose up against him. He cut through the helmet like a piece of stuff, and the strong head-piece of his hauberk was useless. The blade entered his brain and he fell to earth. Then Guerri called out mockingly: "By God, Aliaume, here is bad news for thee. Now thou wilt have to leave me the saddle as well as the horse." Aliaume turned away with the entrails appearing out of his wounds and his heart beating fiercely beneath his breast. "Holy Mary, blessed virgin," quoth he as he tottered to his death, "never again shall I see St. Quentin or Nesle." Then he sat down with his head in his hands. Bernier perceived him and his grief broke out afresh.

CCXVII: Great was the grief and anger of young Bernier. He and Gautier both sprang to their feet and hastened towards Aliaume. Said Bernier: "Friend, I am in anguish on thy account. Art thou stricken to death? See thou hide it not from me." Said Aliaume: "What boots such a question? I shall never be sound again; never again shall I see my lands or my fiefs or my children. Do thou take pity on them. Thy pride has been my undoing. Render me now, for God's sake, a last service." — Bernier, who was sorely wounded, replied: "Sir Aliaume, I

can do nought, for I am helpless." Then said Gautier: "I am ready to help thee," and he rendered him aid in knightly fashion. He turned his head towards the east and the knight confessed his sins in the hearing of the two barons beside him, for there was no other priest at hand. Then Guerri rode up to Gautier's side on the horse that he had won. He dismounted quickly and Bernier shuddered at the sight of him.

CCXVIII: "Sir Guerri," said the faithful Bernier, "you slew Aliaume in treason." – "You lie, wretch, by St. Denis," quoth Guerri fiercely. "I was sound of skin when he attacked me and he struck with such force upon my shield that my left side was pierced and damaged. Right glad would you have been if I had been slain by Aliaume. But, thank God, my knighthood has suffered no loss. But now I swear by Him who suffered on the cross, you shall die, for I decree it." He set spurs to his horse and rushed towards Bernier. When he saw him approaching Bernier was paralysed with fear and the blood left his face. "Mercy, noble knight," said he; "an evil report concerning you will be spread about the land if I am murdered by you before the truce has ended. Your knighthood will be lowered for ever in men's eyes."

CCXIX: Bernier was filled with terror and he shouted: "Gautier, what are you thinking of? If you allow me to be cut to pieces thus all your friends will be dishonoured. With thy naked hand I saw thee pledge that I should have nought to fear except from one knight alone." – "It is as you say, Bernier," said young Gautier, "and I would rather be torn limb from limb than that you should suffer hurt before the truce is over. But when my uncle's wrath is roused, he is not easy to appease. It is better that you mount your horse as best you can, and I myself will help you to depart." So Bernier mounted his horse and Gautier held the stirrup for him. Then he accompanied him a short distance on his way. "Bernier," said he, "you have much need of a doctor, and I myself am not quite whole of skin. I help thee to escape now, but I have not learnt to love thee yet." Then they separated and the strife ceased for awhile. Bernier returned to St. Quentin. They buried Aliaume beneath the porch of a church and made great lamentations for him. Gautier went back and found Guerri the Red, and together they hastened back to Cambrai. The

lady Aalais went forth with stately mien to greet them. "My lords," said she, "you take this war too lightly, mark my words. It will be the death of you both, I swear to you by God; even now I see blood flowing from both your sides." The two warriors both replied: "We shall not die, lady, through God's mercy. Call hither your doctors now and let them name us a day when we shall be able to mount our steeds again and ride against our enemies."

CCXX: Without delay the doctors came and used all their skill to heal the barons. But they went not out again until such time as I will tell you. It was Pentecost when all the world rejoices, and our emperor who rules fair France summoned all his vassals to come to him. It were hard to tell the number of those who came, but Guerri, lord of Arras, was amongst them.

CCXXI: Our emperor summoned all his barons. Guerri was amongst them and Gautier the chivalrous. Louis was there and the wise Wedon, Ernaut who lost his arm in the battle of Origny, and many another warrior might be seen. Guerri was lodged in the main tower with his gallant nephew Gautier.

CCXXII: Our emperor summoned all his vassals; the number of them assembled on that day was reckoned at thirty thousand men. They heard mass at daybreak and then they went up to the tiled hall. The seneschal walked up and down the table with a peeled rod in his hand. He cried in a loud voice: "Hearken, lords and all ye noble people, to what the king has commanded. If anyone here stirs up strife, he shall lose his head before the evening." Guerri heard these words and changed colour. He looked at Bernier and put his hand to his sword, but Gautier pushed it back in its sheath. "Uncle," said he, "it is sheer madness to undertake anything which brings blame or disgrace on oneself or one's people. See that restraint be used, that our kinsmen be not dishonoured until such time as they can make amends."

CCXXIII: High revel they held in the royal palace. The knights were seated in places of honour; but the seneschal made one great mistake. Close to one another he put Bernier and Gautier, Guerri the Red and the warlike Ybert, Wedon of Roie and the haughty Louis, and the one-armed

Raoul de Cambrai

Ernaut whose anger was not yet appeased. There they are all together, these valiant warriors. Guerri looked round and rage made him lose his sense. He seized a large knife and would have hurled it straightway at Bernier, but Gautier made him put it down. "Uncle," said he, "you are truly to blame. Do you think that you are in a pot-house? A man who would stir up mortal strife so quickly must have some fearful shame to avenge." A dish of royal venison was placed before Guerri, upon it lay the thigh-bone of the animal's hind-quarters. Guerri looked at it and could resist no longer. He seized it and struck Bernier in the middle of his forehead. He cut right through the flesh as far as the bone so that the blood poured down his face. Bernier was beside himself with anger on account of all the knights who had seen him struck as they sat at meat. He leapt from the table and would have given Guerri such a blow on the neck as would have made him fall across the table. But Gautier sprang to help his uncle and seized Bernier by the hair. Then count Ybert rose from his seat and Louis snatched up a knotted staff; Wedon of Roie had recourse to his sword, Guerri the Red seized an iron crowbar and young Gautier a knife. On both sides the barons leapt to their feet and heavy would have been the price paid for the struggle had not men-at-arms and servants hastened up. They dragged the barons from the tables and led them before the king of France. Then said the king: "Who struck the first blow?"—"Twas Guerri the Red," replied the knights; "he struck Bernier first and so the battle began."

CCXXIV: Then said the king "Tell me, my gallant knights and barons, who was it that set afoot this strife?"—"Twas Guerri the Red," came the answer; "he began it first against Bernier." Then the king swore by St. James that he would see justice done as he had said. But Guerri spoke proudly: "Just emperor," said he, "a great folly has been committed here. By God, you are not worth a button, O king. How could I look at that vile traitor who treacherously slew my nephew? He was sister's son to you too, as all the world knows well."—"Truly," said Bernier, "your words are contemptible. I challenged Raoul in his own tent. But, by the apostle whom the pilgrims seek in Nero's meadow, you shall not lack those who wish to fight. There will be men in plenty before nightfall who

hold you for a fool." There could be no happier man than Guerri when he heard these words, for he longed to rend Bernier as a hawk longs to rend a lark.

CCXXV: Guerri spoke wrathfully again: "Just emperor, I tell you plainly all the world will despise you if you can bear to look upon the man who caused your nephew's soul to quit his body. I am amazed that you have not caused him to be torn limb from limb, or be hung on gallows or die some shameful death ere now." The king replied: "Not so can it be done. If one noble lord summons another to serve under him he must not put shame and dishonour upon him. Nevertheless I swear by St. Paul the martyr, that, if this man cannot put up a good defence, he shall surely meet his death." Bernier burned with anger at these words. "My lords," said he, "Do your worst to me. I shall be ready for the battle as soon as you."

CCXXVI: Then the boy Gautier sprang to his feet and spoke loudly so that all might hear. "Just emperor, hearken now to me. I will tackle this low bastard with my sword. I will force him to give in and to confess by word of mouth before all that he killed my uncle Raoul treacherously, as we all know."—"Hold thy tongue, wastrel," said Guerri. "Thou art too young and thou still hast the mind of a child. If anyone gave thee a tap on the nose with their glove so that a drop of blood came forth, thou would'st shed tears, beyond a doubt. But my sinews are tough and strong and my heart is bold. If anyone strikes me with their sharp-edged lance I soon pay back with my strong sword. I wish to undertake this combat with the bastard and, if I settle him not before the night fall, then woe betide the king if I escape the gallows." Then said the fearless Gautier: "Just emperor, for all the wealth of Milan I would not that any save myself should gird on his sword for this encounter."—"I would not have it otherwise," said Bernier. "I tell thee truly that, before the sun sets at eventide, thou wilt have had such a taste of battle that for no man living would'st thou strike another blow."

CCXXVII: "Just emperor," said Berner, "I will willingly do my part in this battle, but you must hear my terms. May God who suffered on the cross not permit me to return safe and sound if those things that have

happened be not as I have said." — "I myself will stand surety for you," said the king; "none the less I would have some hostages as well." — "It shall be as you wish," replied Bernier, and he called upon his father to stand aside. Young Gautier wasted no time. He went straightway to his abode; he put on his hauberk and laced his helmet; he girded his sword on his left side; then he sprang upon his steed without touching the stirrups and hung his shield on his left side. But he did not forget his lance with its pennon fixed by three golden nails. Bernier too prepared himself for the battle and clad himself richly in noble arms.

CCXXVIII: Then our emperor acted in seemly wise. He sent the knights in two boats across the Seine. Gautier of gentle birth went over, and Bernier the knight of good repute. Then the king had the holy relics brought out and placed upon the grass on a cloth of green silk. Anyone who saw the green cloth fluttering in the breeze and the relics tumbling up and down would never forget these strange happenings.

CCXXIX: Then young Bernier rose to his feet. "Barons," said he, "hold your peace and listen to me: I swear by all the saints that I see before me here and by all others who bear our prayers to God, I swear by the One who was raised upon the cross, that I rightfully took vengeance on Raoul, so help me God and his holy mercies. I likewise swear that Gautier has wrongfully risen up against me." — "By heaven, you lie, renegade," shouted Gautier, "before this evening you shall be cut to pieces." Bernier replied very humbly: "God help the right. You accuse me wrongly."

CCXXX: Bernier has taken his oath [and now Gautier comes forward]. "Barons," said he, "give ear to me. I swear by all the saints I see here before me, and by all the others through whom men pray, that Bernier has perjured himself and will be proved a liar and slain before the morning." — "Please God, you speak not truth," said Bernier, and the battle began. Gautier mounted his charger and Bernier did likewise when his was led up. Gautier was young and but newly knighted, but he attacked Bernier in proper wise. He dealt such a blow upon his shield that it was broken and pierced below the boss and the hauberk beneath was slashed and torn. The iron entered between his ribs and young

Gautier pressed him so hard that he hurled him headlong in the midst of the meadow. Then he rode on and shouted: "Bastard, you will never rise again."—"Truly," said Bernier, "your own tenure is not so secure. Overthrown is not always vanquished."

CCXXXI: Nonetheless young Bernier was heavy at heart when he found himself on foot. He drew his sword and clasped his shield and made his way back to his patient steed. He mounted by the gilded stirrup and tucked his sword into its sheath again. With lance in air he charged again and struck Gautier on his quartered shield. Beneath the boss he pierced and broke it, so that the hauberk too was slashed and rent. In Gautier's left side he bathed his lance and rode onward leaving the blade behind. Then he looked towards Guerri and taunted him "Thou vile old man, thou mayst well be disheartened. Thou shalt not see the sun set to-day ere thou and thy nephew have parted company." Gautier heard his words and shouted loudly: "Low bastard, hast thou lost thy reason? Thou wilt be punished before eventide to-day and never a foot of land shalt thou possess." Again he charged with drawn sword and struck Bernier ruthlessly upon his glittering helmet. He split and severed the band thereof and the stout head-piece of his hauberk too. His ear with half a foot of flesh he carried off and mangled him right sorely. "Heaven help me," said Bernier, "that was a bloody stroke."

CCXXXII: "O God," said Bernier, "holy Father, what shall I do? I have lost my right ear despite my just cause and I shall grieve for evermore if I do not avenge myself." He raised his lance again and aimed a blow at Gautier. An ugly wound he gave him and a stream of blood gushed forth. "Now I have thee," quoth Bernier, "and never again shalt thou set eyes upon thy land."—"Upon my oath," replied Gautier, "not a morsel shall pass my lips until such time as I hold thy heart in my hand. I know that I shall kill thee without fail before night fall. Thou has lost thine ear already and all the mud is red with thy blood."—"I can still take my revenge," said Bernier, and Ernaut of Douai cried: "My nephew will be victorious."—"Son of a whore," said Guerri of Chimai, "I will punish you if I can but get at you. Without your left arm you look like the magpie that perches on a tree where I often shoot. My arrow carries

off his leg without touching his thigh bone. If I can get near you, you shall have your deserts." Then Ybert spoke: "Count not too much on it whilst I am alive and still have any strength left. With my sword I will play a tune on you to which you will have no desire to dance. Never again shall you set eyes on the fortress of St. Nicolas." – "By heaven," said Guerri, "I will treat thee as I treated thy brother Herbert, whom I disembowelled beneath Origny when we met in battle. If I do not that I will hang thee by the neck till thou art dead."

CCXXXIII: The battle is fierce and terrible. Never did two men fight so furiously, each raining blows on the other with his sword of German steel. Their shields were of no more use to them than an old stirrup-strap for not even the buckles remained whole. Their hauberks were torn both back and front. Each tried to find the other's living flesh with his sword; each one's face was streaming with blood and the streams ran down past their stirrups. I do not think that either can go on with the struggle much longer; it is a wonder that they are not both on their biers. But now Geoffroy of Roche Angliere bestirs himself and goes back to the palace. "Just emperor," said the baron, "I swear by St. Peter, your men are no cowards. They both have stout arms and are hurling blows at each other both back and front."

CCXXXIV: Then there was great commotion up at the palace. Meanwhile the two in the meadow have no mind to spare each other. Young Gautier was a capital knight—tall and strong and every inch a warrior. He is eager to get at close quarters with Bernier. He rains great blows upon his quartered shield and one blow Bernier failed to ward off. The sharp blade glanced down to the left and sliced the flesh from his left shoulder. Right through to the bone the sword penetrated and half-a-foot of Bernier's flesh fell to the ground. If the strong sword had not turned aside, he would have been cut in halves down to his breeches. The blood streamed from his mouth and he fell half-stunned to the earth. "By my troth," said Bernier, "thou art set on my destruction." – "It is for thy chastisement," said Gautier; "that is the way to punish a traitor who kills his liege lord treacherously." – "You lie, Gautier," replied Bernier. "You do not speak the truth and you shall pay for it dearly. I shall die of

chagrin if I cannot avenge myself." Then you ought to have seen him grasp his shield and swing his good sword, and redouble his strength again and again. When young Gautier saw him coming down upon him so fiercely he put himself resolutely on his guard. Bernier struck him mercilessly—a tremendous blow he gave him in the middle of his helmet of pure gold. The helmet was split a good way down and if the blade had not glanced towards the left it would have cloven him down to the shoulders. Gautier felt it and was mad with anger. He rushed fiercely at Bernier again and they would both have been killed at last, for neither of them could survive such blows. But Guerri, as he watched, could contain himself no longer; he sounded a shrill horn and his men came up, for they durst not disobey. Then he knelt towards the church tower and swore on the relics in the sight of his knights that if he sees Gautier done to death he will tear Bernier limb from limb. Ybert heard him and he too was almost beside himself. He called up his men in ranks before him, and swore by God omnipotent that if he sees Bernier slain or overthrown, not all the gold of Montpellier, nor Louis of France himself, shall prevent him wreaking dire vengeance on Gautier. Should he meet him in the mêlée when they charged with lowered lances, he might be sure that he would lose his head. Then up rose Geoffroy and Manecier and went and announced these words to the king. "By St. Richier," said the king, "go and separate them and let them not come near each other again." More than fifty men rushed down the causeway. They ran along the beach beside the river Seine and separated the fighters without delay. Very loth they were, so I have heard, for both wished to fight on; but there would have been no hope for either of them if they had been allowed to batter each other any more. They both had great wounds that would not stop bleeding. Doctors came and bound up their wounds and fanned them to cool their bodies. Then they bore them to the palace and laid them in two rich beds they had prepared. But the emperor did a stupid thing—the two knights lay so close together that they could see each other's movements as they lay. The king went up to Gautier first and spoke gently to him: "Do you think you will recover? Tell me frankly."—"Yes, truly, Sire, you may depend upon it."—"Thank God,"

replied the king, "for I would have you make your peace with Bernier." Gautier's blood boiled again when he heard this and he cried out at the top of his voice: "God curse thee, emperor, for thou art the real cause of this war and of my uncle Raoul's death. By Heaven, you shall never see me reconciled to him, for I will cut him in pieces first." – "These are the words of a fool," said Bernier. "I swear thou shalt not live to see the month of February, though I never eat and drink again."

CCXXXV: The emperor turned away from Gautier and went straight to Bernier's bedside. Gently he spoke to him: "Gallant Sir Bernier, do you think you will recover? Tell me frankly." – "Yes, truly, Sire, I shall recover, but I am grievously wounded." – "God be thanked," said the king. "Misjudge me not, for I thought to live till thou wert reconciled to Gautier. But he is so proud and unbridled that for the wealth of ten cities he will not consent." – Said Bernier: "Sire, it cannot be otherwise. Gautier is young and but newly knighted and he thinks he can accomplish all his desires. But, by our Lord, I am as determined as he that never in my life will I surrender or recant." Gautier listened wrathfully and cried: "Vile bastard, how shameless thou art! Thou hast slain my uncle like the proven traitor thou art. He was a wise and valiant man and thy liege-lord to boot. I know not how thou canst hold out so long. Thou art badly off for thy left ear which is still lying in yonder meadow by the Seine." – "Thy words are unjust," said Bernier. "I gave thee a blow in thy left side which left a deep mark behind as thou knowest. I sorrow for it still and it grieved me sorely at the time. Thou art guilty of sin if thou wilt not make peace." Gautier listened, but no pity did he feel.

CCXXXVI: "Sir Gautier," said the courteous Bernier, "tell me for God's sake who suffered on the cross, is this war to last for ever? Our Lord himself pardoned Longinus, who thrust the sword in his side. Accept the reparation I offer, noble and peerless knight, and I will make good to the full extent of thy demands. I will cry thee quit my land and my country. I will go with thee to Cambresis and be thy serving-man, I pledge my word. I will content myself with a couple of old hacks, and no fur-lined mantles shall I wear. Water to drink and rye-bread to eat will be all that I shall beg from thy squires, and this shall be my miserable

existence until such day as pity shall move thy heart. If this touch thee not, then take my sword and slay me on the spot." Then Gautier and Guerri both cried at once: "Now thou art brought low, bastard! By heaven, never shall thy amends be accepted. Thou shalt die first, by St. Denis of France." – "All is in God's hands," replied Bernier. "I cannot die before my appointed time." As they spoke, the sister of King Louis entered the city, and all around her in the streets of Paris she heard people talking of the two vassals and how they had wounded each other. The lady's heart sank as she listened and for all the wealth of France she could not have laughed or jested till she had news of the one she loved. Down she got from her Arab steed and mounted the steps of the vaulted palace. With her escort of trusty knights she came to King Louis in the hall.

CCXXXVII: The fair lady Aalais dismounted quickly from her good mule and began to mount the palace steps with her escort of trusty knights. Her dearest friends came forward to receive her—Guerri the Red and many another noble. The emperor of France greeted her courteously as she entered and went up to her to embrace and kiss her. But the noble lady thrust him back: "Get away from me, king! A curse upon thee—thou art not fit to rule a kingdom. If I were a man I would prove to thee before sunset at the point of my sword that thou hast no right to be a king. Plain enough it is, since thou allowest to sit at thy table the man who cut thy nephew to pieces." She looked round and saw Gautier lying there. She swooned with grief and her trusty knights had to raise her from the ground. Then young Gautier shouted: "Courage, my noble vassals! Tell my great aunt what I have done to Bernier. He will be of no use to anyone for the rest of his life for I have cut off his ear with my sword." The lady stretched out her hands to heaven when she heard this. "O Lord God," said she, "receive my thanks for this." She looked in the other direction and saw Bernier lying on his bed. She picked up a crowbar and ran towards him. She would have killed him outright, but the barons would not suffer her to go near him. Then Bernier slipped from out his bed and ran and courteously he raised the lady's foot. Gently he began to kiss her slipper as he spoke: "Noble

countess, I can wait no longer. You brought me up and gave me food and drink, I know full well. Alas, Gautier, if thou art not willing for Christ's sake to make thy peace with me, see here my sword—take it and avenge thyself, for I do not wish to fight against thee any longer." Lady Aalais began to weep, for nothing could prevent her when she saw Bernier humble himself thus.

CCXXXVIII: There was a great gathering in the panelled hall. In sight of all the youth Bernier took a bandage of silk and bound it round his head. Only in breeches he was clothed, without any shirt upon him. On his face with arms outstretched he lay, holding his burnished sword, and there in presence of the king he demeaned himself to Gautier. "Have pity, Gautier, for the sake of Mary's Son who raised the dead in Bethany and was put to death himself for our redemption. Let be this folly, Sire, I pray thee, for it ought not to continue all our lives. Either kill me now or let me live in peace." But Gautier's countenance darkened as he listened. Then he spoke so loud that all the hall resounded: "By God, bastard, it shall not end thus. Thou shall either hang for it or die a death of shame—unless perchance thou takest thyself off to Hungary or Apulia." Then the whole court turned upon Gautier, and the knights cried out so that the hall resounded: "Sir Gautier, you are full of pride. When you speak thus his strength fails him; but he still has a thousand men in his employ and they will not desert him at peril of their lives." Then Bernier spoke again and his words were well considered: "My lords, take pity on me for Jesus' sake. If God omnipotent grant that my request be favourably received, this war will be ended before nightfall."

CCXXXIX: Bernier lay in the vaulted palace on his face with arms outstretched, holding his sharp sword in his hand. Then the abbot of St. Germain came forward with many costly relics of St. Denis and St. Honoré in his hand. He spoke out loudly so that every one heard what he said. "Barons," said he, "hearken to my counsel. You know well, by your most holy faith that our Lord in his loving kindness suffered his body to be tortured on the sacred cross upon that holy Friday. The blessed Longinus was near at hand and struck him in the left side. It was many a long day since he had seen ought, but now he rubbed his eyes

and he straightway perceived the light. Then he craved for pardon with a will and our Lord forgave him then and there. Sir Gautier, by the God of glory, this war has lasted too long. Bernier makes you an offer with good intent, and if you do not accept it you will be much to blame." The gentle abbot was set in his purpose; he called by name to him Count Ybert, Wedon of Roie, Louis the seasoned warrior and the prudent Sir Ernaut of Douai, who had his left hand cut off in the battle that was fought in the meadows round Origny. "Barons," said he, "listen to what I propose. Each of you take his good sword in his hand and let them be handed over to your enemies so that you may be reconciled on such terms as you shall hear: at the day of judgment may the sins of the plaintiff be pardoned in the same measure as the sins of these."—"Truly," said Ybert, "thy proposal shall not be set aside." On their knees they went in the sight of all the barons and begged for mercy without reserve. But Gautier turned aside and looked not on one of them. When the abbot saw this he was quite dumbfounded.

CCXL: The learned abbot cried: "What are you thinking of, Guerri of Arras? Bid them rise, noble knight." Then young Gautier called out loudly: "Lady, do thou bid them rise, for thy pity's sake and for the sake of the Lord God who never lied. For he can never be my friend as long as I live." Guerri laughed aloud: "Nephew," said he, "priceless indeed thou art and not one to love thine enemies. That caitiff Bernier is doomed to perish." But the abbot was very angry. "Sir Guerri," said he, "your hair is grey and your last hour may be very near. If you do not make peace now, I pray St. Denis that your soul may never reach the gates of paradise."

CCXLI: Great was the excitement in the palace whilst Bernier lay humbly before Gautier and Ybert with his brother Louis before Guerri. Wedon of Roie and noble Ernaut of Douai added their courteous prayers. Bernier cried aloud: "My lord Gautier, before God omnipotent we present you here with our five swords. We shall never require them of you again. Either let thine anger abate towards us now or take thy sword and avenge thyself at once." Hundreds of voices throughout the palace cried: "For God's sake, Gautier, and in the name of Him who

upholds everything, bid them rise, noble knight." — "God," said Gautier, "how unwillingly I do it." Briefly he said the word and raised them and they kissed one another like friends and kinsmen. But the king went away full of displeasure, for he did not desire the reconciliation. Then Guerri the Red arose and went to the window. He called out at the top of his voice: "Come hither, brother Bernier. This king is a traitor, a vile wretch I know him to be. I swear by St. Amant that he it was who stirred up this war and many of you know it. Valiant knight, let us make war on him." — "With all my heart," said Bernier, "do I consent and agree. I would not fail you for any man alive." Then grey-bearded Ybert spoke: "The whole of Vermandois I hand over to you to do with as you will. It is a wide and well-fortified land and never will I claim a foot of it or take from it the value of a denier. By St. Amant, I grieve sorely that this war has lasted so long." Said Guerri: "It cannot be otherwise now. Henceforward we shall be near kinsmen."

CCXLII: Great was the assembly in the royal palace. The lady Aalais was there and noble Ybert, Guerri the Red and the courteous Gautier, Ernaut the warrior of Douai, Louis and Wedon and Bernier; together all the counts went to the dining-hall. The king of France was full of displeasure. He summoned his barons to come and speak with him, and they came in haste to the palace, for they dared not disobey. The king went and leaned against a table. He called Ybert to him and said: "Ybert, I have always loved you dearly. After your death I intend, if it please God, to give Vermandois to one of my nobles." — "Sire," replied Ybert, "that is impossible. I allotted it to Bernier the other day." — "What, thou devil!" cried the king wrathfully. "Has a bastard then the right to claim a land?" Ybert replied in great anger: "Just emperor, by the righteous God you do wrong thus to speak ill of your liege man. At dawn today I too was your man, but now I refuse my homage unless you do the right and pledge the land to me." — "By heaven," said the king, "thine arrogance is too great. Never shalt thou have a denier from the fief; I have given it to Gilemer of Ponthieu." Then Bernier spoke: "Sire," said he, "your words are vain for, by the Creator, your protection will never suffice to prevent me cutting him to pieces." — "Hold thy tongue, thou cur," cried the king.

“Low bastard, dost thou dare dispute with me. I will have thee thrown upon a dung-heap.” Bernier was mad with anger as he listened, and he drew his sword in fury. “Gautier,” he cried, “where are you? You above all men ought to help me.” Guerri spoke in answer: “I at least will not fail thee for all the gold of Montpelier. This coward king deserves to die, for it was he who made us enter on this war and caused my nephew to be slain.” Then you should have seen how they all drew their swords and how red Guerri flourished his aloft, and how the king’s men shook and ran like foxes into their hiding-places. More than a score came off badly and even the emperor did not escape with a whole skin, for Bernier made for him and slashed his thigh with his sword so that he fell headlong to the ground.

CCXLIII: The king was much cast down and full of wrath. Then Gautier rose to his feet: “Just emperor,” said he, “you have done wrong. Me, at least, your nephew, you must not disinherit.” — “Scoundrel,” replied the king, “meddle not with my concerns; for, by God, every one shall be disinherited ere long.” Young Gautier replied: “Since you challenge me thus, henceforward be on your guard against me.” A messenger rode quickly to where the knights were quartered and cried loudly: “Noble sirs, to horse! Our barons have come to blows in the palace.” When the knights heard it how speedily they mounted! In a short time there were a thousand of them ready, and there they were hastening towards the palace.

CCXLIV: Great was the assembly in the vaulted hall and Guerri spoke in firm tones: “Just emperor, it behoves me to tell you the truth. You caused this war by your stupidity. You invested Raoul with another man’s fief. You swore to him in the presence of your knights that you would not fail him as long as you lived. We all know the price he had to pay: he was slain beside the church beneath the walls of Origny. But by the One to whom all men pray, you have not had to call up your whole army yet.” — “You old traitor,” said the king, “a curse upon you! Whatever happens you shall hold Arras no longer. Within a month the fief shall be taken from you and, if I find you still there, by Heaven, I will hang you at the main gate in the presence of all my barons.” Guerri

listened and shouted his defiance: "Now 'ware my glittering sword! Bernier, my brother, now I have need of thy aid." – "I will stand by you so long as you have need of me," replied the valiant Bernier. And so the court dispersed with many a word of anger.

CCXLV: Guerri the Red came down the steps and found a thousand armed knights at the entrance. Bernier cried loudly: "Get to work, my good men. Our squires are all ready armed. Pillage this town as fast as you may and yours be all that you can get." The knights replied: "We will obey your orders." The order was given to fire the town, and it was done then and there. In all the streets of Paris the fire was lighted, and the town burned from the palace that I have told you about to the bridge where vessels cast anchor. Of all the wealth of Paris there was not enough left that day to load the back of a peasant.

CCXLVI: In their mad wrath they burned the city. Then Guerri and Bernier departed and young Gautier quietly went his way. They had no wish to remain in the city any longer. Straight to Pierrefont they came; they rode all through the dark night and galloped full speed towards St. Quentin. All the people of the country fortified their dwellings on account of the great war which will break out. The king was in dismay for the great injury they have done him in his own city. He swears in his wrath by St. Peter that neither castle nor stronghold shall protect them; neither kinship nor vassal's rights shall save them from the punishment he will mete out to them.

CCXLVII: The knights returned to St. Quentin in Vermandois. "Sir Gautier," said the courteous Bernier, "my lord Guerri will return to Artois and you will go straight back to Cambrai. I am still oppressed by my wounds, nor will you yourself be completely healed for some months to come. The king hates us now, we may be sure; he will make war upon us in Vermandois if he can and will attack us with overpowering force. Do you summon all the men at your disposal; Guerri the valiant knight will summon his, and I will hold myself in readiness to attack Laon and will keep the country round in constant fear. No barricades or defences shall hinder me from girding on my good Viennese sword without respite." When he had finished speaking they all departed without delay:

Raoul de Cambrai

Guerri the Red went back to Artois and the lady Aalais to her lands in Cambresis.

CCXLVII: Straight to Arras went Guerri the Red, and young Gautier returned to Cambrai with his great-aunt the lady Aalais. They summon their men and their most loyal supporters; Guerri the Red has done the same, for Bernier is quite sure they will have war. The king swears by God who suffered on the cross that for all the gold of Senlis he will not fail to take vengeance on the bastard who has burned his fortress and pillaged his capital. Bernier and Gautier and the Red Guerri of Arras have shamed him in the land; if he holds not the land within two weeks and if he conquers not Vermandois by force of arms he will not value his own worth at two farthings. He called his clerks and he charged them: "Write my behests as I shall tell you. I wish to summon all my friends, my barons and my loyal vassals that I may avenge my shame. Neither strongholds nor barricades shall protect them. I will drag them forth and that right speedily." His scribes reply. "We will do it at your bidding."

CCXLIX: Gautier, Guerri and the courteous knight Bernier went to St. Quentin in Vermandois. There they lingered for the best part of a month, for they were still oppressed by their wounds. Two skilful doctors tended them and when they were healed they departed again. Guerri the Red went to Artois and with him went the chivalrous Bernier; the lady Aalais went back to her domains in Cambresis and she took Gautier back with her.