

1: Full text of "The flourishing of romance and the rise of allegory"

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And then there are hundreds of others, assigned or anonymous, in every tone, from the rather unreasonable request of the lady who demands "Por coi me bast mes maris? And besides the morality, perverse or touching, the quaint manners, the charming unusual names or forms of names, Oriour, Oriolanz, Ysabiaus, Aigline, there are delightful fancies, borrowed often since: It is not withered and hackneyed by time and tongues as, save when genius touches it, it is now. The dew is still on all of it; and, thanks to the dead language, the dead manners, it will always be on. All is just near enough to us for it to be enjoyed, as we cannot enjoy antiquity or the East; and yet the "wall of glass" which seven centuries interpose, while hiding nothing, keeps all intact, unhackneyed, strange, fresh. There may be better poetry in the world than these twelfth and thirteenth century French lyrics: But I doubt whether there is any sweeter or, in a certain [Pg] sense, more poignant. The nightingale and the mermaid were justified of their children. It is little wonder that all Europe soon tried to imitate notes so charming, and in some cases, though other languages were far behind French in development, tried successfully. Our own "Alison," [] the first note of true English lyric, is a "romance" of the most genuine kind; the songs of Walther von der Vogelweide, of which we have also spoken, though they may rise higher, yet owe their French originals service, hold of them, would either never or much later have come into existence but for them. An astonishing privilege for a single nation to have enjoyed, if only for a short time; a privilege almost more astonishing in its reception than even in itself. France could point to the chansons and to the romances, to Audefroy le Bastard and Chrestien of Troyes, to Villehardouin and Thibaut, to William of Lorris and John of Meung, to the fabliaux writers and the cyclists of Renart, in justification of her claims. No more curious contrast, but also none which could more clearly show the enormous vigour and the unique variety of the French genius at this time, can be imagined than that which is presented by the next division to which we come—the division occupied by the celebrated poems, or at least [Pg] verse-compositions, known as fabliaux. These, for reasons into which it is perhaps better not to inquire too closely, have been longer and better known than any other division of old French poetry. Anatole de Montaiglon and M. Jeanroy does to the Lyrics. But a great deal of it is occupied by speculations, more interesting to the folk-lorist than to the student of literature, as to the origin of the stories themselves. This, though a question of apparently inexhaustible attraction to some people, must not occupy us very long here. It shall be enough to say that many of these subjects are hardy perennials which meet us in all literatures, and the existence of which is more rationally to be accounted for by the supposition of a certain common form of story, resulting partly from the conditions of human life and character, partly from the conformation of the human intellect, than by supposing deliberate transmission and copying from one nation to another. For this latter explanation is one of those which, as has been said, only push ignorance further [Pg] back; and in fact, leave us at the last with no alternative except that which we might have adopted at the first. That, however, some assistance may have been given to the general tendency to produce the same forms by the literary knowledge of earlier, especially Eastern, collections of tales is no extravagant supposition, and is helped by the undoubted fact that actual translations of such collections—Dolopathos, the Seven Sages of Rome, [] and so forth—are found early in French, and chiefly at second-hand from the French in other languages. But the general tendency of mankind, reinforced and organised by a certain specially literary faculty and adaptability in the French genius, is on the whole sufficient to account for the fabliau. It presents, as we have said, the most striking and singular contrast to the Lyric poems which we have just noticed. The technical morality of these is extremely accommodating, indeed in its conventional and normal form very low. But it is redeemed by an exquisite grace and charm, by true passion, and also by a great decency and accomplishment of actual diction. Coarse language—very rare in the romances, though there are a few examples of it—is rarer still in the elaborate formal lyric of the twelfth and thirteenth century in French. In the [Pg] fabliaux, which are only a

very little later, and which seem not to have been a favourite form of composition very long after the fourteenth century had reached its prime, coarseness of diction, though not quite invariable, is the rule. Not merely are the subjects, in the majority of cases, distinctly "broad," but the treatment of them is broader still. In fact, it is in the fabliau that the characteristic which Mr Matthew Arnold selected as the opprobrium of the French in life and literature practically makes its first appearance. And though the "lubricity" of these poems is free from some ugly features which appear after the Italian wars of the late fifteenth century, it has never been more frankly destitute of shamefacedness. It would, however, be extremely unfair to let it be supposed that the fabliaux contain nothing but obscenity, or that they can offer attractions to no one save those whom obscenity attracts. And a certain proportion, including some of the very best in a literary point of view, are not exposed to the charge of any impropriety either of language or of subject. There is, indeed, no special reason why the fabliau should be "improper" except for the greater ease of getting a laugh according to its definition, which is capable of being drawn rather more sharply than is always the case with literary kinds. It is a short tale in verse—almost invariably octosyllabic couplets—dealing, for the most part from the comic point of view, with incidents of ordinary life. This naturally admits of the widest possible diversity of subject: Of these last is the best known of all the non-Rabelaisian fabliaux, "Le Vair Palefroi," which has been Englished by Leigh Hunt and shortly paraphrased by Peacock, while examples of the former may be found without turning very long over even one of M. A very large proportion, as might be expected, draw their comic interest from satire on priests, on women, or on [Pg] both together; and this very general character of the fabliaux which, it must be remembered, were performed or recited by the very same jongleurs who conducted the publication of the chansons de geste and the romances was no doubt partly the result and partly the cause of the persistent dislike and disfavour with which the Church regarded the profession of jonglerie. But, as a general rule, there is little that is serious in these frequently graceless but generally amusing compositions. There is a curious variety about them, and incidentally a crowd of lively touches of common life. Sometimes, where the fun is no worse than childish, it is childish enough—plays on words, jokes on English mispronunciation of French, and so forth. But it very seldom, though it [Pg] is sometimes intolerably nasty, approaches the sheer drivel which appears in some English would-be comic writing of the Middle Ages, or the very early Renaissance—such, for instance, as most of that in the prose "Pleasant Historie of Thomas of Reading," [] which the late Mr Thoms was pleased to call a romance. Yet the actual stuff of "Thomas of Reading" is very much of the nature of the fabliaux except of course the tragical part, which happens to be the only good part, and so the difference of the handling is noteworthy. So it is also in English verse-work of the kind—the "Hunting of the Hare" [] and the like—to take examples necessarily a little later than our time. Effect of the fabliaux on language. For in these curious compositions the esprit Gaulois found itself completely at home; indeed some have held that here it hit upon its most characteristic and peculiar development. The wonderful faculty for expression—for giving, if not the supreme, yet the adequate and technically masterly dress to any kind of literary production—which has been the note of French literature throughout, and which was never more its note than at this time, enabled the language, as we have seen and shall see, to keep as by an easy sculling movement far ahead of all its competitors. But in other departments, with one or two exceptions, the union of temper and craft, of [Pg] inspiration and execution, was not quite perfect. Here there was no misalliance. It became bright, if a little hard, easy, if a little undistinguished, capable of slyness, of innuendo, of "malice," but not quite so capable as it had been of the finer and vaguer suggestions and aspirations. Above all, these fabliaux served as an exercise-ground for the practice in which French was to become almost if not quite supreme, the practice of narrative. In the longer romances, which for a century or a century and a half preceded the fabliaux, the art of narration, as has been more than once noticed, was little attended to, and indeed had little scope. The smaller range and more delicate—however indelicate—argument of the fabliaux not only invited but almost necessitated a different kind of handling. The story had to draw to point in on an average two or three hundred lines at most—there are fabliaux of a thousand lines, and fabliaux of thirty or forty, but the average is as just stated. The incidents had to be adjusted for best effect, neither too many nor too few. And so grew up that unsurpassed and hardly matched product the French short story, where, if it is in perfection, hardly a word is thrown away, and not a word missed that is really wanted. The appearance of

irony. The great means for doing this in literature is irony; and irony appears in the fabliaux as it had hardly done since Lucian. Take, for instance, this opening of a piece, the rest of which is at least as irreverent, considerably less quotable, but not much less pointed: But the citation given will show that there is nothing surprising in the eighteenth-century history, literary or poetical, of a country which could produce such a piece, certainly not later than the thirteenth. Even Voltaire could not put the thing more neatly or with a more complete freedom from superfluous words. But the Lyons book perhaps exhibits more of the characteristic which, evident enough in the fabliau proper, discovers, after passing as by a channel through the beast-fable, its fullest and most famous form in the world-renowned Romance of Reynard the Fox, one of the capital works of the Middle Ages, and with the sister but contrasted Romance of the Rose, as much the distinguishing literary product of the thirteenth century as the romances proper—Carlovingian, Arthurian, and Classical—are of the twelfth. Not, of course, that the antiquity of the Reynard story itself [Pg] does not mount far higher than the thirteenth century. No two things are more remarkable [Pg] as results of that comparative and simultaneous study of literature, to which this series hopes to give some little assistance, than the way in which, on the one hand, a hundred years seem to be in the Middle Ages but a day, in the growth of certain kinds, and on the other a day sometimes appears to do the work of a hundred years. The growth of the Reynard story, though to some extent contemporaneous, was slower; but it was really the older of the two. Before the middle of this century, as we have seen, there was really no Arthurian story worthy the name; it would seem that by that time the Reynard legend had already taken not full but definite form in Latin, and there is no reasonable reason for scepticism as to its existence in vernacular tradition, though perhaps not in vernacular writing, for many years, perhaps for more than one century, earlier. It was not to be expected but that so strange, so interesting, and so universally popular a story as that of King Noble and his not always loving subjects, should have been made, as usual, the battle-ground of literary fancy and of that general tendency of mankind to ferocity, which, unluckily, the study of belles lettres does not seem very appreciably to soften. Assisted by the usual fallacy of antedating MSS. Investigation and comparison, however, have had more healing effects here than in other cases; and since the acknowledgment of the fact that the very early Middle High German version of Henry the Glichezare, itself of the end of the twelfth century, is a translation from the French, there has not been much serious dispute about the order of the Reynard romances as we actually have them. That is to say, if the Latin Isengrimus—the oldest Reinardus Vulpes—of or thereabouts is actually the oldest text, the older branches of the French Renart pretty certainly come next, with the High German following a little later, and the Low German Reincke de Vos and the Flemish Reinaert a little later still. The Southern Romance nations do not seem—indeed the humour is essentially Northern—to have adopted Reynard with as much enthusiasm as they showed towards the Romances; and our English forms were undoubtedly late adaptations from foreign originals. If, however, this account of the texts may be said to be fairly settled, the same cannot of course be said as to the origin of the story. Here there are still champions of the German claim, whose number is increased by those who stickle for a definite "Low" German origin. Some French patriots, with a stronger case than they generally have, still [Pg] maintain the story to be purely French in inception. I have not myself seen any reason to change the opinion I formed some fifteen years ago, to the effect that it seems likely that the original language of the epic is French, but French of a Walloon or Picard dialect, and that it was written somewhere between the Seine and the Rhine. The character and accomplishment of the story, however, are matters of much more purely literary interest than the rather barren question of the probable—it is not likely that it will ever be the proved—date or place of origin of this famous thing. The fable in general, and the beast-fable in particular, are among the very oldest and most universal of the known forms of literature. A fresh and special development of it might have taken place in any country at any time. It did, as a matter of fact, take place somewhere about the twelfth century or earlier, and somewhere in the central part of the northern coast district of the old Frankish empire. This total, however, includes developments—Le Couronnement Renart, Renart le Nouvel, and, later than our present period, a huge and still not very well-known thing called Renart le Contrefait, which are distinct additions to the first conception of the story. Yet even that first conception is not a story in the single sense. The multiplication of complaints by other beasts, the sufferings inflicted by Reynard on the messengers sent to summon him to

Court, and his escapes, by mixture of fraud and force, when he is no longer able to avoid putting in an appearance, supply the natural continuation. But from this, at least in the French versions, the branches diverge, cross, and repeat or contradict each other with an altogether bewildering freedom. Sometimes, for long passages together, as in the interesting fytte, "How Reynard hid himself among the Skins," [] the author seems to forget the general purpose altogether, and to devote himself to something quite different—in this case the description of the daily life and pursuits of a thirteenth-century sportsman of easy means. Often the connection with the general story is kept only by the introduction of the most obvious and perfunctory devices—an intrigue with Dame Hersent, a passing trick played on Isengrim, and so forth. Nevertheless the whole is knit together, to a degree altogether unusual in a work of such magnitude, due to many different hands, by an extraordinary unity of tone and temper. This tone and this temper are to some extent conditioned by the Rise of Allegory, the great feature, in succession to the outburst of Romance, of our present period. The Rise of Allegory. We do not find in the original Renart branches the abstracting of qualities and the personification of abstractions which appear in later developments, and which are due to the popularity of the Romance of the Rose, if it be not more strictly correct to say that the popularity of the Romance of the Rose was due to the taste for allegory. But the authors of the "Ancien Renart" knew better. With rare lapses, they exhibit wonderful art in keeping their characters beasts, while assigning to them human arts; or rather, to put the matter with more correctness, they pass over the not strictly beast-like performances of Renart and the others with such entire unconcern, with such a perfect freedom from tedious after-thought of explanation, that no sense of incongruity occurs. Renart may beat le vilain everybody beats the poor vilain as hard as he likes in the old French text; it comes all naturally. A neat copper-plate engraving, in the best style of sixty or seventy years ago, awakes distrust. The satire of Renart. The general fable is so familiar that not much need be said about it. The fault of excessive coarseness of thought and expression, which has been commented on in the fabliaux, recurs here to the fullest extent; but it is atoned for and sweetened by an even greater measure of irony. As to the definite purposes of this irony it [Pg] would not be well to be too sure. It is certain that they had no love of any kind for the clergy, who were not merely their rivals but their enemies; and it is not probable they had much for the knightly order, who were their patrons. It cannot, no doubt, be called kindly satire—French satire very rarely is. Renart, the only hero, though a hero sometimes uncommonly hard bested, is a furred and four-footed Jonathan Wild.

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Yet form and spirit both original. The *Contrasto* of Ciullo itself is a poem in lyric stanzas of five lines—three of sixteen syllables, rhymed a, and two hendecasyllabics, rhymed b. The rhymes are fairly exact, though sometimes loose, o and u, e and i, being permitted to pair. The poem, a simple discourse or dispute between two lovers, something in the style of some French *pastourelles*, displays however, with some of the exaggeration and stock phrase of Provençal perhaps we might say of all love-poetry, little or nothing of that peculiar mystical tone which we have been accustomed to associate with early Italian verse, chiefly represented, as it is to most readers, by the *Vita Nuova*, where the spirit is slightly altered in itself, and speaks in the mouth of a poet greater in his weakest moments than the whole generation from Ciullo to Guittone in their strongest. This spirit, showing itself in the finer and more masculine form in Dante himself, in the more feminine and weaker in Petrarch, not merely gives us sublime or exquisite poetry in the fourteenth century, but in the sixteenth contributes very largely to launch, on fresh careers of achievement, the whole poetry of France and of England. The Provençal poets deify passion, and concentrate themselves wholly upon it; but it is seldom, indeed, that we find the "metaphysical" touch in the Provençals proper. And it is this—this blending of love and religion, of scholasticism and *minnedienst* to borrow a word wanted in other languages than that in which it exists—that is attributed by the partisans of the East to Arabian influence, or at least to Arabian contact. Some stress has been laid on the testimony of Ibn Zobeir about the end of the twelfth century, and consequently not long before even the latest date assigned to Ciullo, that Alcamo itself was entirely Mussulman in belief. The text with comment, stanza by stanza, is to be found in the book cited above.

Love-lyric in different European countries. It is of the first importance to note the characteristics, in different nations at nearly the same time, of this rise of lyrical love-poetry. We find it in Northern and Southern France, probably at about the same time; in Germany and Italy somewhat later, and almost certainly in a state of pupilship to the French. All, in different ways, display a curious and delightful metrical variety, as if the poet were trying to express the eternal novelty, combined with the eternal oneness, of passion by variations of metrical form. In each language these variations reflect national peculiarities—in Northern French and German irregular bursts with a multiplicity of inarticulate refrain, in Provençal and Italian a statelier and more graceful but somewhat more monotonous arrangement and proportion. And the differences of spirit are equally noticeable, though one must, as always, be careful against generalising too rashly as to their identity with supposed national characteristics. The innumerable love-poems of the *trouveres*, pathetic sometimes, and sometimes impassioned, are yet, as a rule, cheerful, not very deep, verging not seldom on pure comedy. The so-called monotonous enthusiasm of the *troubadour*, his stock-images, his musical form, sublime to a certain extent the sensual side of love, but confine themselves to that side merely, as a rule, or leave it only to indulge in the purely fantastic. Of those who borrowed from them, the Germans, as we should expect, lean rather to the Northern type, but vary it with touches of purity, and other touches of religion; the Italians to the Southern, exalting it into a mysticism which can hardly be called devotional, though it at times wears the garb of devotion. We should then see—after a fashion difficult if not impossible in the sporadic study of texts edited piecemeal, and often overlaid with comment not of the purely literary kind—at once the general similarity and the local or individual exceptions, the filiation of form, the diffusion of spirit. No division of literature, perhaps, would serve better as a kind of *chrestomathy* for illustrating the positions on which the scheme of this series is based. But by virtue of at least one really great composition, the famous *Poema del Cid*, it ranks higher than either of these groups in sheer literary estimation, while from the point of view of literary history it is perhaps more interesting than the Italian, and certainly far more interesting than the Greek. It does not rank with French as an instance of real literary preponderance and chieftainship; or with German as an example of the sudden if short blossoming of a particular period and dialect into great if not wholly original literary prominence; much less with Icelandic and Provençal, as containing a "smooth and round" expression of

certain definite characteristics of literature and life once for all embodied. It has to give way not merely to Provençal, but to Italian itself as an example of early scholarship in literary form. But it makes a most interesting pair to English as an instance of vigorous and genuine national literary development; while, if it is inferior to English, as showing that fatal departmental or provincial separation, that "particularism" which has in many ways been so disastrous to the Peninsula, it once more, by virtue of the Poema, far excels our own production of the period in positive achievement, and foretells the masterpieces of the national poetry in a way very different from any that can be said to be shown in Layamon or the Ancren Riwle, even in the Arthurian romances and the early lyrics. Spanish can scarcely be said to have shared, to an extent commensurate with its interest, in the benefit of recent study of the older forms of modern languages. Some scattered papers may be found in Romania. It would be a good deed if the Clarendon Press would furnish students with this, the only rival of Beowulf and the Chanson de Roland in the combination of antiquity and interest. The political circumstances which attended the dying-out of the Provençal school at home, for a time even encouraged the continuance of Provençal literature in Spain: But for the general purpose of this book the fact of the persistence of the "Limousin" tongue in Catalonia and strongly dialected in Valencia having been once noted, not much further notice need be taken of this division. No important early literature remains in Galician, and of Portuguese itself there does not seem to be anything certainly dating before the fourteenth century, or anything even probably attributed to an earlier time except a certain number of ballads, as to the real antiquity of which a sane literary criticism has always to reiterate the deepest and most irremovable doubts. The fact of the existence of this dialect, and of its development later into the language of Camoens, is of high interest: It cannot claim any great antiquity: It is, of course, a most natural and constant consideration that the formation of literary languages was delayed in the Romance-speaking countries by the fact that everybody of any education at all had Latin ready to his hands. And the exceptional circumstances of Spain, which, after hardly settling down under the Visigothic conquest, was whelmed afresh by the Moorish invasion, have not been excessively insisted upon by the authorities who have dealt with the subject. But still it cannot but strike us as peculiar that the document—the famous Charter of Aviles,[] which plays in the history of Spanish something like the same part which the Eulalia hymn and the Strasburg Oaths play in French—dates only from the middle of the twelfth century, more than three hundred years after the Strasburg interchange, and at a time when French was not merely a regularly constituted language, but already had no inconsiderable literature. It is true that the Aviles document is not quite so jargonish as the Strasburg, but the same mark—the presence of undigested Latin—appears in both. Extracts of this appear in Ticknor, Appendix A. If the Aviles charter be genuine, and of its assigned date, it does not follow that at the very same time poetry of a much less uncouth character was not being composed in Spanish. And as a matter of fact we have, independently of the ballads, the great Poema del Cid, which has sometimes been supposed to be of antiquity equal to this, and which can hardly be more than some fifty years later. There is no doubt at all that these ballads which are well known even to English readers by the masterly paraphrases of Lockhart are among the finest of their kind. They rank with, and perhaps above, the best of the Scottish poems of the same class. But we have practically, it would seem, no earlier authority for them than the great Cancioneros of the sixteenth century. It is, of course, said that the Cronica General see post , which is three centuries earlier, was in part compiled from these ballads. But, in the first place, we do not know that this was the fact, or that the ballads were not compiled from the Chronicles, or from traditions which the Chronicles embodied. And in the second place, if the Chronicles were compiled from ballads, we do not know that these ballads, as pieces of finished literature and apart from their subjects, were anything at all like the ballads that we possess. This last consideration—an uncomfortable one, but one which the critic is bound to urge—at once disposes of, or reduces to a minimum, the value of the much-vaunted testimony of a Latin poem, said to date before the middle of the eleventh century, that "Roderic, called Mio Cid," was sung about. No doubt he was; and no doubt, as the expression Mio Cid is not a translation from the Arabic, but a quite evidently genuine vernacularity, he was sung of in those terms. But the testimony leaves us as much in doubt as ever about the age of the existing Cid ballads. And if this be the case about the Cid ballads, the subject of which did not die till hard upon the opening of the twelfth century itself, or about those concerning the Infantes of Lara, how much more must it be so with those that deal with such

subjects as Bernardo del Carpio and the Charlemagne invasion, three hundred years earlier, when it is tolerably certain that there was nothing at all resembling what we now call Spanish? It seems sometimes to be thought that the antiquity of the subject of a ballad comports in some strange fashion the antiquity of the ballad itself; than which nothing can be much more disputable. Indeed the very metre of the ballads themselves—which, though simple, is by no means of a very primitive character, and represents the "rubbing down" of popular dialect and unscholarly prosody for a long time against the regular structure of Latin—disproves the extreme earliness of the poems in anything like their present form. The comparatively uncouth, though not lawless metres of early Teutonic poetry are in themselves warrants of their antiquity: The Poema del Cid. If there be any force in the argument at the end of the last paragraph, it tells unless, indeed, the latest critical hypothesis be adopted, of which more presently as much in favour of the antiquity of the Poema del Cid as it tells against that of the ballads. This piece, which has come down to us in a mutilated condition, though it does not seem likely that its present length lines has been very greatly affected by the mutilations, has been regarded as dating not earlier than the middle of the twelfth or later than the middle of the thirteenth century—that is to say, in the first case, within a lifetime of the events it professes to deal with; in the second, at scarcely more than two lifetimes from them. The Roderic who regained what a Roderic had lost may have been—must have been, indeed—presented with many facts and achievements which he never performed, and there may be no small admixture of these in the Poema itself; but that does not matter at all to literature. It would not, strictly speaking, matter to literature if he had never existed. But not every one can live up to this severe standard in things literary; and it is undoubtedly a comfort to the natural man to know that the Cid certainly did exist, and that, to all but certainty, his blood runs in the veins of the Queen of England and of the Emperor of Austria, not to mention the King of Spain, to-day. A Spanish chanson de geste. It is unlucky for that criticism that Southey and Ticknor—the two best critics, not merely in English but in any language, who have dealt with Spanish literature—were quite unacquainted with the French chansons de geste; while of late, discussion of the Poema, as of other early Spanish literature, has been chiefly abandoned to philologists. No one familiar with these chansons the greatest and oldest of which, the Chanson de Roland, was to all but a certainty in existence when Ruy Diaz was in his cradle, and a hundred years before the Poema was written can fail to see in a moment that this latter is itself a chanson de geste. It was written much nearer to the facts than any one of its French analogues, except those of the Crusading cycle, and it therefore had at least the chance of sticking much closer to those facts. Nor is there much doubt that it does. We may give up as many as we please of its details; we may even, if, not pleasing, we choose to obey the historians, give up that famous and delightful episode of the Counts of Carrion, which indeed is not so much an episode as the main subject of the greater part of the poem. But—partly because of its nearness to the subject, partly because of the more intense national belief in the hero, most of all, perhaps, because the countrymen of Cervantes already possessed that faculty of individual, not merely of typical, characterisation which has been, as a rule, denied to the countrymen of Corneille—the poem is far more alive than the not less heroic histories of Roncesvaux or of Aliscans. Even in the Nibelungenlied, to which it has been so often compared, the men not the women—there the Teutonic genius bears its usual bell are, with the exception, perhaps, of Hagen, shadowy, compared not merely to Rodrigo himself, but to Bermuez and Munoz Gustioz, to Asur Gonzalez and Minaya. In scheme and spirit. It would be altogether astonishing if the chansons had not made their way, when French literature was making it everywhere, into the country nearest to France. In face of the Poema del Cid, it is quite certain that they had done so, and that here as elsewhere French literature performed its vigorous, and in a way self-sacrificing, function of teaching other nations to do better than their teacher. Difficulties of its prosody. As observed above, the earliest French chansons known to us are written in a strict syllabic metre, with a regular caesura, and arranged in distinct though not uniformly long laisses, each tipped with an identical assonance. Further, it so happens that this very assonance is one of the best known characteristics of Spanish poetry, which is the only body of verse except old French to show it in any great volume or variety. The Spanish ballads are uniformly written in trochaic octosyllables capable of reduction or extension to six, seven, or nine, regularly assonanced in the second and fourth line, but not necessarily showing either rhyme or assonance in the first and third. This measure became so popular that the great dramatists adopted it, and as

it thus figures in the two most excellent productions of the literature, ballad and drama, it has become practically identified in the general mind with Spanish poetry, and not so very long ago might have been described by persons, not exactly ignorant, as peculiar to it. It is true that its latest and most learned student, Professor Cornu of Prague,[] has, I believe, persuaded himself that he has discovered the basis of its metre to be the ballad octosyllables, full or catalectic, arranged as hemistichs of a longer line, and that he has been able to point out some hundreds of tolerably perfect verses of the kind. But this hypothesis necessitates our granting that it was possible for the copyists, or the line of copyists, of the unique MS. Paris in Romania, xxii. It is not merely that it is "rough," as its great northern congener the Nibelungenlied is usually said to be, or that its lines vary in length from ten syllables to over twenty, as some lines of Anglo-Saxon verse do. It is that there is nothing like the regular cadence of the one, or at least as yet discovered the combined system of accent and alliteration which accounts for the other. Almost the only single feature which is invariable is the break in the middle of the line, which is much more than a mere caesura, and coincides not merely with the end of a word, but with a distinct stop or at least pause in sense. Beyond this, except by the rather violent hypothesis of copyist misdeeds above referred to,[] nobody has been able to get further in a generalisation of the metre than that the normal form is an eight and six better a seven and seven "fourteener," trochaically cadenced, but admitting contraction and extension with a liberality elsewhere unparalleled. It is perhaps fair to Professor Cornu to admit some weight in his argument that where proper names predominateâ€”i. Not only is there no absolute system either of assonance or of rhyme; not only does the consideration that at a certain stage assonance and consonance[] meet and blend help us little; but it is almost or quite impossible to discern any one system on which the one or the other, or both, can be thought to have been used. Sometimes, indeed frequently, something like the French *laisses* or continuous blocks of end-sound appear: But it is very seldom that either is clearly demonstrable except in parts, while neither maintains itself for long. Generally the pages present the spectacle of an intensely irregular mosaic, or rather conglomerate, of small blocks of assonance or consonance put together on no discoverable system whatever. It is, of course, fair to remember that Anglo-Saxon verseâ€”now, according to the orthodox, to be ranked among the strictest prosodic kindsâ€”was long thought to be as formless as this. But after the thorough ransacking and overhauling which almost all mediaeval literature has had during the last century, it is certainly strange that the underlying system in the Spanish case, if it exists, should not have been discovered, or should have been discovered only by such an Alexandrine cutting of the knot as the supposition that the copyist has made "pie" of about seventy per cent at least of the whole. Some writers very inconveniently, and by a false transference from "consonant," use "consonance" as if equivalent to "alliteration. The recurrent wave-sound which has been noted in the chansons is at least as noticeable, though less regular, here. Let us, for instance, open the poem in the double-columned edition of at random, and take the passage on the opening, pp. The eye is first struck with the constant repetition of catch-endingsâ€”"Infantes de Carrion," "los del Campeador"â€”each of which occurs at a line-end some dozen times in the two pages. But this sequence is broken incomprehensibly by such end-words as *tomar*; and the length of the lines defies all classification, though one suspects some confusion of arrangement. For instance, it is not clear why "Colada e Tizon que non lidiasen con ellas los del Campeador" should be printed as one line, and "Hybalos ver el Rey Alfonso. Dixieron los del Campeador," as two. If we then turn to the earlier part, that which comes before the Carrion story, we shall find the irregularity greater still. It is possible, no doubt, by making rules sufficiently elastic, to devise some sort of a system for five consecutive lines which end *folgar*, *comer*, *acordar*, *grandes*, and *pan*; but it will be a system so exceedingly elastic that it seems a superfluity of trouble to make it. On a general survey it may, I think, be said that either in double or single assonance a and o play a much larger part than the other vowels, whereas in the French analogues there is no predominance of this kind, or at least nothing like so much. And lastly, to conclude[] these rather desultory remarks on a subject which deserves much more attention than it has yet had, it may be worth observing that by an odd coincidence the Poema del Cid concludes with a delusive personal mention very similar to, though even more precise than, that about "Tuoldus" in the Chanson de Roland.

3: The Flourishing of Romance and the Rise of Allegory, by George Saintsbury.

AS this volume, although not the first in chronological order, is likely to be the first to appear in the Series of which it forms part, and of which the author has the honour to be editor, it may be well to say a few words here as to the scheme of this Series generally. When that scheme was first.

To improve readability, dashes between entries in the Table of Contents and in chapter subheadings have been converted to periods. For short phrases, hover the mouse over the phrase which may display as boxes or question marks to see a pop-up transliteration. For longer passages, a transliteration is provided below the passage. The Twelfth And Thirteenth Centuries "The criticism which alone can much help us for the future is a criticism which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result. Examples of its verbal influence. The value of burlesque. The rhythm of Bernard. Literary perfection of the Hymns. Its influence on phrase and method. European literature in Late discovery of the chansons. Their age and history. Their isolation and origin. Their scheme of matter. The character of Charlemagne. Other characters and characteristics. Volume and age of the chansons. Diffusion of the chansons. Their authorship and publication. Hearing, not reading, the object. Singularity of the chansons. Peculiarity of the geste system. Summary of the geste of William of Orange. And first of the Couronnement Loys. Comments on the Couronnement. The earlier poems of the cycle. The story of Vivien. The end of the story. Attractions of the Arthurian Legend. Discussions on their sources. The personality of Arthur. The version of Geoffrey. How the Legend grew. Prose or verse first? The story of Joseph of Arimathea. The Legend becomes dramatic. Stories of Gawain and other knights. His story almost certainly Celtic. How it perfects the story. Nature of this perfection. The Legend as a whole. The theories of its origin. The theory of general literary growth. The English or Anglo-Norman pretensions. Oddity of the Classical Romance. Continua [Pg xv] tions. The Tale of Troy. The Roman de Troie. The phases of Cressid. Special interest of Early Middle English. Early Middle English Literature. Scantiness of its constituents. The form of the Brut. Its metre, its spelling. The Owl and the Nightingale. The prosody of the modern languages. Rhyme and syllabic equivalence. The gain of form. Merit of its poetry. Its four chief masters. Excellence, both natural and acquired, of German verse. Originality of its adaptation. Walther von der Vogelweide. Personality of the poets. The predominance of France. The rise of Allegory. The Romance and the Pastourelle. Effect of the fabliaux on language. The appearance of irony. The Rise of Allegory. The satire of Renart. The burial of Renart. The Romance of the Rose. William of Lorris and Jean de Meung. Value of both, and charm of the first. Adam de la Halle. The Jeu de la Feuillie. Icelandic literature of this time mainly prose. Its insularity of manner. Of scenery and character. Fact and fiction in the sagas. Classes and authorship of them. The five greater sagas. The parting of Asdis and her sons. Great passages of the sagas. Origin of this lyric. Many men, one mind. Though not directly on English. Limitations of this chapter. Its difficulties as a subject. Heavy debt to France. Yet form and spirit both original. Love-lyric in different European countries. The Poema del Cid. A Spanish chanson de geste. In scheme and spirit. Difficulties of its prosody. Apollonius and Mary of Egypt. AS this volume, although not the first in chronological order, is likely to be the first to appear in the Series of which it forms part, and of which the author has the honour to be editor, it may be well to say a few words here as to the scheme of this Series generally.

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