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How Thierry Vanquished Ganelon

Sir George W. Cox

It is written in the old chronicle, that after these things Charles sent and summoned many men from many lands to come and try if Ganelon had done him a treason or no; for the twenty thousand who were betrayed being dead and the pagans utterly destroyed, there was none left to bear witness against him. So the king sent and fetched Ganelon up out of prison and set him on his trial. Howbeit Ganelon contrived to get thirty of his kinsfolk chosen among his judges, and chief of them Pinabel, a man of great stature and strength of limb. Moreover, Pinabel was a ready man to pick a quarrel with any; a man cunning of tongue and very rich and powerful, so that people feared him greatly. These thirty Ganelon bribed, with part of the price he took from King Marsilius for the treason, to give judgment for him. Then Pinabel and the others went to and fro among the judges and persuaded them, saying: "We have no witnesses, only Ganelon himself, and what saith he? He owns he hated Roland, and for that cause he challenged Roland, in the presence of the king and all his court, to fight when he returned from his mission. The open challenger is not the betrayer in secret. Moreover, had he done this thing, would Ganelon have come back again to King Charles? Besides, would any man betray an army of his friends to rid himself of a single enemy? Blood enough has been shed. Slaying Ganelon will not bring Roland back. The Franks are angry since they have lost their captain, and blindly clamor for a victim. Heed not their foolish cry, for Ganelon has done no treason." To this the others all agreed, save Thierry, the son of Duke Geoffrey; and he would not.

The judges came to King Charles and said, "We find that Ganelon has done nothing worthy of death. Let him live and take anew the oath of fealty to France and the king." Then the king was grieved, and said, "It misgives me you have played me false. In my esteem the judgment is not just. Nevertheless, it is judgment: only God can alter it."

Then stepped forth the youth Thierry, Geoffrey's son. He was but a lad, very little and slender of body, and slight of limb. And he said, "Let not the king be sad. I Thierry do impeach Ganelon as a felon and a traitor who betrayed Roland and the rear-guard to the pagans, and I also say that thirty of Ganelon's kinsfolk have wrought treason and corrupted judgment. And this will I maintain with my sword, and prove upon the body of any man who will come to defend him or them." Thereto to pledge himself he drew off his right glove and gave it to the king for a

gage.

Pinabel strode forward, a giant among the throng. He looked down upon the lad Thierry and despised him; he came to the king and gave his glove, saying, "I will fight this battle to the death." The Franks pitied Thierry and feared for him, for they had hoped Naymes or Olger or some mighty champion would have undertaken the cause, and not a stripling. But Charles the king said, "God will show the right." So they made ready the lists; and the king commanded Ganelon and his thirty kinsmen to be held in pledge against the issue.

The battle was done in a green meadow near to Aachen in presence of the king and his barons and a great multitude of people. First the men rode together and tilted till their spears brake and the saddle-girths gave way; then they left their steeds and fought on foot. Thierry was wondrous quick and agile, and wearied Pinabel at the outset by his swift sword-play; but Thierry's hand was weak against his sturdy adversary, and his sword point pierced not mail nor shield. Pinabel clave his helm and hewed great pieces off his mail, but could not slay him. Then said Pinabel, "Fool, why should I kill thee? Give up the battle and the cause, and I will be thy man henceforth in faith and fealty. It shall prove greatly for thy profit to reconcile Ganelon and the king."



Thierry answered, "I will not parley; God will surely show whether of us twain be right! Guard thyself." So they fell to again, and all men saw that nothing would now part them till one was dead; and straightway they gave the lad Thierry up for lost. Pinabel's sword was heavy, and great the strength of his arm. He smote Thierry a blow upon the helm that sliced off visor and ventailles. But Thierry lifted up his sword and struck the brown steel helm of Pinabel. God put His might into the young man's arm, for the blade cleft steel and skull, and entered Pinabel's brain, so that he reeled and dropped down dead. Then all the people shouted, "God hath spoken! Away with Ganelon and his fellows."

Then King Charles raised up his hands to heaven and gave thanks, and taking Thierry in his arms embraced him for joy, and with his own hands took off his armor, and he set the noblest in the land to tend his wounds.

King Charles sat in judgment in his palace at Aachen.

He said, "Take the thirty kinsmen of Ganelon, perverters of justice, let not one escape, and hang them." Blithely the Franks obeyed his word.

But Ganelon he caused to be drawn and quartered; and thus did Charles the king make an end of his vengeance for his guard.

This is the song which Turold used to sing.

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