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Rinaldo And Bayard

Sir George W. Cox

Charlemagne was overwhelmed with grief at the loss of so many of his bravest warriors at the disaster of Roncesvalles, and bitterly reproached himself for his credulity in resigning himself so completely to the counsels of the treacherous Count Ganelon. Yet he soon fell into a similar snare when he suffered his unworthy son Charlot to acquire such an influence over him, that he constantly led him into acts of cruelty and injustice that in his right mind he would have scorned to commit. Rinaldo and his brothers, for some slight offence to the imperious young prince, were forced to fly from Paris, and to take shelter in their castle of Montalban; for Charles had publicly said, if he could take them, he would hang them all. He sent numbers of his bravest knights to arrest them, but all without success. Either Rinaldo foiled their efforts and sent them back, stripped of their armor and of their glory, or, after meeting and conferring with him, they came back and told the king they could not be his instruments for such a work.

At last Charles himself raised a great army, and went in person to compel the paladin to submit. He ravaged all the country round about Montalban, so that supplies of food should be cut off, and he threatened death to any who should attempt to issue forth, hoping to compel the garrison to submit for want of food.

Rinaldo's resources had been brought so low that it seemed useless to contend any longer. His brothers had been taken prisoners in a skirmish, and his only hope of saving their lives was in making terms with the king.

So he sent a messenger, offering to yield himself and his castle if the king would spare his and his brothers' lives. While the messenger was gone, Rinaldo, impatient to learn what tidings he might bring, rode out to meet him. When he had ridden as far as he thought prudent he stopped in a wood, and, alighting, tied Bayard to a tree. Then he sat down, and, as he waited, he fell asleep. Bayard meanwhile got loose, and strayed away where the grass tempted him. Just then came along some country people, who said to one another, "Look, is not that the great horse Bayard that Rinaldo rides? Let us take him, and carry him to King Charles, who will pay us well for our trouble." They did so, and the king was delighted with his prize, and gave them a present that made them rich to their dying day.

When Rinaldo woke he looked round for his horse, and, finding him not, he

groaned, and said, "O unlucky hour that I was born! how fortune persecutes me!" So desperate was he, that he took off his armor and his spurs, saying, "What need have I of these, since Bayard is lost?" While he stood thus lamenting, a man came from the thicket, seemingly bent with age. He had a long beard hanging over his breast, and eyebrows that almost covered his eyes. He bade Rinaldo good day. Rinaldo thanked him, and said, "A good day I have hardly had since I was born." Then said the old man, "Signor Rinaldo, you must not despair, for God will make all things turn to the best." Rinaldo answered, "My trouble is too heavy for me to hope relief. The king has taken my brothers, and means to put them to death. I thought to rescue them by means of my horse Bayard, but while I slept some thief has stolen him." The old man replied, "I will remember you and your brothers in my prayers. I am a poor man, have you not something to give me?" Rinaldo said, "I have nothing to give," but then he recollected his spurs. He gave them to the beggar, and said, "Here, take my spurs. They are the first present my mother gave me when my father, Count Aymon, dubbed me knight. They ought to bring you ten pounds."

The old man took the spurs, and put them into his sack, and said, "Noble sir, have you nothing else you can give me?" Rinaldo replied, "Are you making sport of me? I tell you truly if it were not for shame to beat one so helpless, I would teach you better manners." The old man said, "Of a truth, sir, if you did so, you would do a great sin. If all had beaten me of whom I have begged, I should have been killed long ago, for I ask alms in churches and convents, and wherever I can." "You say true," replied Rinaldo, "if you did not ask, none would relieve you." The old man said, "True, noble sir, therefore I pray if you have anything more to spare, give it me." Rinaldo gave him his mantle, and said, "Take it, pilgrim. I give it you for the love of Christ, that God would save my brothers from a shameful death, and help me to escape out of King Charles's power."

The pilgrim took the mantle, folded it up, and put it into his bag. Then a third time he said to Rinaldo, "Sir, have you nothing left to give me that I may remember you in my prayers?" "Wretch!" exclaimed Rinaldo, "do you make me your sport?" and he drew his sword, and struck at him; but the old man warded off the blow with his staff, and said, "Rinaldo, would you slay your cousin, Malagigi?" When Rinaldo heard that he stayed his hand, and gazed doubtingly on the old man, who now threw aside his disguise, and appeared to be indeed Malagigi. "Dear cousin," said Rinaldo, "pray forgive me. I did not know you. Next to God, my trust is in you. Help my brothers to escape out of prison, I entreat you. I have lost my horse, and therefore cannot render them any assistance." Malagigi answered, "Cousin Rinaldo, I will enable you to recover your horse. Meanwhile, you must do as I say."

Then Malagigi took from his sack a gown, and gave it to Rinaldo to put on over his armor, and a hat that was full of holes, and an old pair of shoes to put on.

They looked like two pilgrims, very old and poor. Then they went forth from the wood, and, after a little while, saw four monks riding along the road. Malagigi said to Rinaldo, "I will go meet the monks, and see what news I can learn."

Malagigi learned from the monks that on the approaching festival there would be a great crowd of people at court, for the prince was going to show the ladies the famous horse Bayard that used to belong to Rinaldo. "What!" said the pilgrim; "is Bayard there?" "Yes," answered the monks; "the king has given him to Charlot, and, after the prince has ridden him, the king means to pass sentence on the brothers of Rinaldo, and have them hanged." Then Malagigi asked alms of the monks, but they would give him none, till he threw aside his pilgrim garb, and let them see his armor, when, partly for charity and partly for terror, they gave him a golden cup, adorned with precious stones that sparkled in the sunshine.

Malagigi then hastened back to Rinaldo, and told him what he had learned.

The morning of the feast-day Rinaldo and Malagigi came to the place where the sports were to be held. Malagigi gave Rinaldo his spurs back again, and said, "Cousin, put on your spurs, for you will need them." "How shall I need them," said Rinaldo, "since I have lost my horse?" Yet he did as Malagigi directed him.

When the two had taken their stand on the border of the field among the crowd, the princes and ladies of the court began to assemble. When they were all assembled, the king came also, and Charlot with him, near whom the horse Bayard was led, in the charge of grooms, who were expressly enjoined to guard him safely. The king, looking round on the circle of spectators, saw Malagigi and Rinaldo, and observed the splendid cup that they had, and said to Chariot, "See, my son, what a brilliant cup those two pilgrims have got. It seems to be worth a hundred ducats." "That is true," said Chariot; "let us go and ask where they got it." So they rode to the place where the pilgrims stood, and Chariot stopped Bayard close to them.

The horse snuffed at the pilgrims, knew Rinaldo, and caressed his master. The king said to Malagigi, "Friend, where did you get that beautiful cup?" Malagigi replied, "Honorable sir, I paid for it all the money I have saved from eleven years' begging in churches and convents. The Pope himself has blessed it." Then said the king to Chariot, "My son, these are right holy men; see how the dumb beast worships them."

Then the king said to Malagigi, "Give me a morsel from your cup, that I may be cleared of my sins." Malagigi answered, "Illustrious lord, I dare not do it, unless you will forgive all who have at any time offended you. You know that Christ forgave all those who had betrayed and crucified him." The king replied, "Friend, that is true; but Rinaldo has so grievously offended me, that I cannot forgive him, nor that other man, Malagigi, the magician. These two shall never live in my

kingdom again. If I catch them, I will certainly have them hanged. But tell me, pilgrim, who is that man who stands beside you?" "He is deaf, dumb, and blind," said Malagigi. Then the king said again, "Give me to drink of your cup, to take away my sins." Malagigi answered, "My lord king, here is my poor brother, who for fifty days has not heard, spoken, nor seen. This misfortune befell him in a house where we found shelter, and the day before yesterday we met with a wise woman, who told him the only hope of a cure for him was to come to some place where Bayard was to be ridden, and to mount and ride him; that would do him more good than anything else." Then said the king, "Friend, you have come to the right place, for Bayard is to be ridden here to-day. Give me a draught from your cup, and your companion shall ride upon Bayard." Malagigi, hearing these words, said, "Be it so." Then the king, with great devotion, took a spoon, and dipped a portion from the pilgrim's cup, believing that his sins should be thereby forgiven.

When this was done, the king said to Chariot, "Son, I request that you will let this sick pilgrim sit on your horse, and ride if he can, for by so doing he will be healed of all his infirmities." Chariot replied, "That will I gladly do." So saying, he dismounted, and the servants took the pilgrim in their arms, and helped him on the horse.



When Rinaldo was mounted, he put his feet in the stirrups, and said, "I would like to ride a little." Malagigi, hearing him speak, seemed delighted, and asked him whether he could see and hear also. "Yes," said Rinaldo, "I am healed of all my infirmities." When the king heard it, he said to Bishop Turpin, "My lord bishop, we must celebrate this with a procession, with crosses and banners, for it is a great miracle."

When Rinaldo remarked that he was not carefully watched, he spoke to the horse, and touched him with the spurs. Bayard knew that his master was upon him, and he started off upon a rapid pace, and in a few moments was a good way off. Malagigi pretended to be in great alarm. "O noble king and master," he cried, "my poor companion is run away with; he will fall and break his neck." The king ordered his knights to ride after the pilgrim, and bring him back, or help him if need were. They did so, but it was in vain. Rinaldo left them all behind him, and kept on his way till he reached Montalban. Malagigi was suffered to depart, unsuspected, and he went his way, making sad lamentation for the fate of his comrade, who he pretended to think must surely be dashed to pieces.

Malagigi did not go far, but, having changed his disguise, returned to where the king was, and employed his best art in getting the brothers of Rinaldo out of

prison. He succeeded; and all three got safely to Montalban, where Rinaldo's joy at the rescue of his brothers and the recovery of Bayard was more than tongue can tell.

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