

QUATRELLES

***THE DAYS
OF CHIVALRY; OR,
THE LEGEND
OF CROQUEMITAINE***

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The Days of Chivalry; Or, The Legend of Croquemitaine

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PREFACE.

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I N translating L'Epine's charming legend, I have felt it my duty to adhere as closely as possible to the text. "Adaptations" and "versions," whether presented on the stage or set down in black and white, seem to claim for those, who give them in English, a greater share of the glory than I feel myself to deserve, in the slightest degree, in this instance. The delicacy with which the moral is interwoven in the narrative, without in the least injuring the true legendary tone of the adventures related, is as far beyond any improvement I could make, as it is above the usual clap-trap "tag" with which dramas and children's stories are ordinarily burdened.

I scarcely know to whom I should appeal as my readers, for the story I have delighted in rendering into English seems to me likely to afford pleasure in the perusal to older heads than those which I am sure would gather over the pages in the nursery. For there are a quiet humour and a delicate fancy running through the legend, amid all the exciting accounts of loves and wars, tourneys and battles,

accidents and adventures, which do not lose interest because they are illustrated by the powerful pencil of Gustave Doré. That great artist's fancy supplies these introductory lines with a tail-piece, which aptly typifies the book. Its author has ably made the doings of knights and paladins point a useful moral as well as adorn an interesting tale, just as the artist makes the arms of the chivalric age serve to frighten the birds from the fields that supply our humble daily bread.



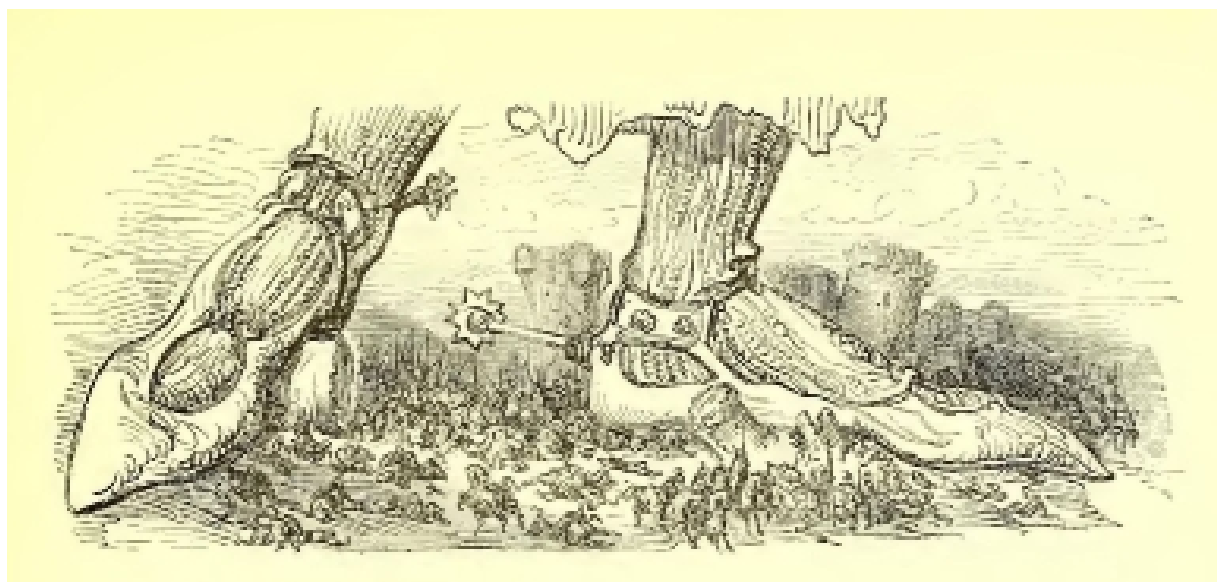


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BOOK THE FIRST — THE TOURNEY AT FRONSAC — A.D. 769.

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CHAPTER I. CHARLEMAGNE.

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THE story which I am about to relate happened (if it ever did happen) in the time of the famous Emperor Charlemagne. There is no necessity, in speaking of that remarkable epoch, to invent facts. The truth is so astounding that it will make you open your eyes quite wide enough. What marvellous doings of fairies, ogres, or demons, can compare with the deeds of Charlemagne? and what magic ring could be as potent as his sword?

But before I proceed further it will be as well to sketch for you, in a few lines, the portrait of this hero.

He was eight feet in height, according to the measurement of his own feet, which historians allege with fervour were of remarkable length. His eyes were large and piercing. When he was enraged you could almost have fancied they flashed fire. His face was broad and ruddy, his hair brown, and he wore a beard that was innocent of the barber's shears. Although he measured eight feet round the middle, his figure was wellproportioned. He devoured with ease at one repast a quarter of mutton, or a goose, or a ham, or a peacock. He was moderate in the matter of wine, which he used to take with water. His strength was so enormous that it was mere child's play to him to straighten with his naked hands three horse-shoes at a time. He could lift at arm's length, on the palm of his hand, a knight in full armour; and lie could cleave in twain, with one blow of his sword, a horseman in panoply of war—aye, and his horse into the bargain. This was mere sport to him, and often, with

a charming complaisance which was peculiarly his own, he would take pleasure in thus giving those about him an ocular demonstration of his superhuman strength.

His anger was as terrible as the thunder, for it was as ready to burst forth and to strike.

He carves out a kingdom, with the compassion of a Titus, the sound judgment of a Solomon, the piety of a Joseph, the magnificence of a Sardanapalus, and the wisdom of an Æsop, he united two qualities more rare than all these put together? when he spoke he meant what he said, and when others spoke to him he took time for reflection, in order to make sure that he thoroughly understood their meaning.

The dominion which his father bequeathed him did not suit the largeness of his views, so he carved out for himself a kingdom which was more in harmony with his gigantic instincts.





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Born in 742, and raised to the throne in 768, he had in 770 already made conquest of Aquitaine and Lombardy. Four years after Germany was subjugated by him. He made fifty-three military expeditions, and he began the ninth century by having himself crowned Emperor of the West by Pope Leo the Third. He was a generous dispenser of crowns, and gave away principalities and duchies as freely as now-a-days we give away recorderships. Pie had two capitals in his dominions: the one was Rome, the other was Aix-la-Chapelle. He promulgated the code of laws known as Capitularies. He defended religion, spread the Gospel, encouraged the fine arts, and introduced into his cathedrals organs which he imported from Lombardy. Surrounded by mighty minds, whose efforts he stimulated, and whose labours he shared, he founded many schools and universities. He died in 814, after three-and-forty years of

sovereign power—three-and-forty years of victories and wonders.

Really, my dear readers, if you are not satisfied with Charlemagne for a hero, you must be very difficult to please!





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CHAPTER II. WHICH THE AUTHOR CONGRATULATES HIMSELF ON NOT HAVING TO READ.

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I SHOULD be extremely sorry to weary you, my dear readers; in fact, I should be wretched if you were to look on this volume as serious reading, and yet I am compelled to sum up in a few words the great events which agitated France at the time my story commences. However, put a bold face on it, and bolt this chapter without taking breath, as you would swallow any peculiarly nauseous draught.

After the death of Pepin the Short, in 768, his two sons, Carloman and Charlemagne, divided his kingdom. Carloman, who was the elder, took Burgundy, Provence, Septimania, and the chief part of Neustria. His coronation took place on the 9th October, 768, at Laon. Charlemagne had part of Neustria, Bavaria, and Thuringia. He was crowned at Soissons on the same day as Carloman. Aquitaine was also shared between the brothers. You are probably aware that Pepin the Short was the founder of the second line of French kings. The first line, that of the Merovingians, was not, however, extinct when he came to the throne, for the Dukes of Aquitaine were of Merovingian descent. They sprang from Caribert, King of Toulouse, the son of Clotaire the Second. Eudes, who shares with Charles Martel the glory of having conquered the Saracens in the sanguinary battle of Poitiers, in 732, was also of this family.

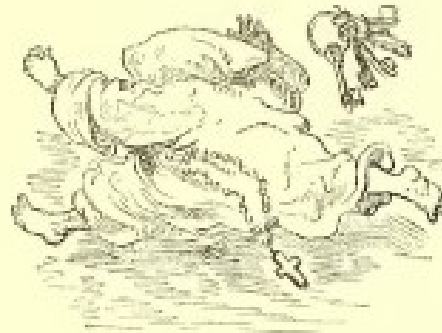
Hunald, the son of Eudes, had, at the time of Pepin's death, lived five-and-twenty years in the convent to which that monarch had consigned him. Now, the Merovingian Dukes of Aquitaine had a fierce hatred of the Carolingian Kings of France, and accordingly, as soon as Hunald heard of the accession of Carloman and Charlemagne, he quitted the monastery, took up arms, and proclaimed the independence of Aquitaine.



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The two newly-crowned kings had reason to be alarmed at an outbreak like this, for, unless put down at the outset, it might arouse and encourage the pretensions of the descendants of Clovis with regard to Neustria. Charlemagne summoned a Parliament, to which he invited his brother. They both came to it, attended by their ecclesiastics and nobles, and war was decided upon.

The two kings crossed the Loire together; but Carloman, who, if one



Hunald quits the Monastery.

may judge from the chronicles of the period, was of an unamiable disposition, had such quarrels with his brother about the partition of their inheritance, that it was even feared they would come to blows. They therefore determined to part company. Carloman returned to Laon, and Charlemagne prosecuted the enterprise alone. He overran Aquitaine without meeting any resistance, as Charles Martel had done before him. Hunald, a fugitive, and hard pressed, found himself obliged



They almost come to blows.

to seek shelter with his nephew, Wolf, Duke of Gascony. Wolf! When was a name in a fairy tale bestowed with more propriety? This Wolf was most deservedly called so, as you will see. As soon as Charlemagne discovered where his enemy had found an asylum, he dispatched some of his foremost knights to the Duke of Gascony, commanding

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In those days, my dear readers, travelling was not quite so expeditious



The Wolf of Gascony.

as it is now; so Charlemagne, foreseeing he would have to wait some months, established his camp on the borders of the forest. In the next place, in order to put the time of his stay to profitable use, and to give employment to his troops, about five leagues from Bordeaux he had a strong fortress built, which was called Fronsac, or rather Frausiac, the castle of the Franks. The building of the castle was hardly completed when the ambassadors returned, accompanied by Wolf of Gascony, who did not in the least scruple to deliver up

to Charlemagne, as a proof of his fealty, Hunald and his family, who had claimed shelter of him.

The insurrection having been thus deprived of its leader, Aquitaine submitted to Charlemagne.



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The tents of the needy warriors.

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CHAPTER III. CHARLEMAGNE'S CORTEGE.

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CHARLEMAGNE determined to celebrate the fortunate issue of his campaign. Jousts and tourneys were organised, and heralds were sent out far and wide; and before long knights began to pour in from the various provinces: some to show their courage and exercise their strength and skill, others in the hope of enriching themselves with the spoils of their vanquished adversaries.

The spot chosen for the tournament was an extent of velvet sward situated at the edge of a forest of oaks that were five hundred years old. A semi-circle of low hills formed a sort of amphitheatre, in the centre of which a vast area, reserved for the combatants, was surrounded with palisades. There were two entrances to the lists—one on the north, the other on the south—each wide enough to admit of the passage of six knights on horseback abreast. Two heralds and six pursuivants had charge of each of these entries. Small detachments were scattered about here and there to maintain order—no easy task, for the inhabitants of the surrounding country, with their wives, had assembled from all quarters alongside of the camp. On them it was difficult to impress a due observance of discipline, and the unmanageable came in for showers of blows that were not laid on less heavily because it was a conquered country.

On a level space not far from the northern gate were raised twelve gorgeous pavilions, reserved for the twelve

principal French champions who held the lists. Pennons with their colours, and those of their lady-loves, fluttering in the wind, waved in the sunlight like flying serpents. Each knight had his shield suspended before his tent, under the charge of a squire.

Further off, less costly tents served as lodgings for numerous warriors, who were drawn together either by friendship or want of means. This community formed a quaint sort of town, which had, as it were, suburbs consisting of stable-sheds, and huts of all sorts, occupied by armourers, farriers, surgeons, and artisans, whose presence on such occasions was indispensable. Merchants at these times were exempted from all tolls and taxes, and accordingly the Jews had come to sell Venetian trinkets and Oriental perfumes to the ladies; the Bretons brought their honey for sale, and the Provincals displayed their clear olive oil; and amid all these good things were to be seen, rambling about at random, jugglers, troubadours, minstrels, and all other classes of poor Bohemians, whose wits are sharp if their purses are scant. On the borders of the wood was erected a pavilion more magnificent than all the others—it was that of Charlemagne; it was of cloth of gold, with purple stripes, powdered with gold eagles, and it was so bright that one would have needed the eye of an eagle to support its lustre for an instant. All about it were knights, squires, lackeys, and pages, coming and going as thickly as bees in a hive around their queen. On either side of the royal tent, and all along the edge of the forest, were erected seats for the spectators of rank, who promised to be numerous. They flocked-in every hour in crowds, so

delighted were they with spectacles of this description, and, above all, so desirous were they of beholding Charlemagne, whose name had already begun to resound through Europe. The royal box, more lofty than the others, and more richly decorated, was a little in front of the tent. Charlemagne had ordained that the Queen of Beauty should share this with him, in order that she might be surrounded by the most valiant knights and the most lovely ladies. The two retinues attended on her amid incessant peals of mirth and merriment.

Finally, my dear readers, to finish the picture, figure to yourselves, situated half-way between the lists and the forest, and surmounted by a huge iron cross, a Gothic chapel, in which, each morning, Turpin, the good and gallant Bishop of Rheims, officiated as priest in the presence of the kneeling multitude.





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At length the day of the tournament arrived. There had been many jousts before, but never had there been one of equal magnificence. From the earliest dawn the places were all occupied. Even the old trees were as thickly loaded with curious spectators as a plum-tree in August; and the good folks were right to crowd so, for had they lived their lives six times over, they would never have seen anything equal to the sight again, it was absolutely necessary for the soldiers

to lay about with their pike-staves, in order to calm the eager ardour of the most enthusiastic; but nobody took any notice of thumps that, under any other circumstances, would have been received with an ill grace.

All of a sudden a flourish of trumpets made the air resound. A glittering advanced-guard entered the enclosure and took up their position, and then Charlemagne entered the arena at the head of a numerous escort of knights and nobles, and of ecclesiastics in rich vestments. Enthusiasm knew no bounds. "Montjoie! Montjoie!" resounded on every side. Charlemagne, who later in life affected the greatest simplicity in dress, had assumed for this great occasion the most brilliant attire. His shirt was of fine linen, its border enriched with gold embroidery. His tunic was of silk, plated with gold, and was covered with precious stones of surpassing brightness—emeralds, rubies, and topaz. His armlets and girdle were chased with the most exquisite art, and his alms-pouch, which hung at his side, was besprinkled with pearls and gems enough to dazzle a blind man. His brow was bound with a glittering diadem. His whole figure shone with an unaccustomed splendour, and he greatly surpassed in magnificence the grandest of his dukes, counts, or barons. His steed, covered with gold and rich trappings, seemed proud of the burthen it carried.

The Queen Himiltrude, a Frank by birth, advanced in the midst of her attendants. Her neck was tinged with a delicate rose, like that of a Roman matron in former ages. Her locks were bound about her temples with gold and purple bands; her robe was looped up with ruby clasps. Her coronet and her purple robes gave her an air of surpassing majesty. She

was a worthy queen of Charlemagne. But if the queen surpassed all other women in nobleness of mien, Aude, the niece of Gerard of Vienne, and sister of Oliver the Brave, surpassed her as much by her beauty, her grace, and her attractiveness. She wore a light crown, embossed with jewels of all colours. Her hair was fair, falling naturally into becoming curls; her eyes were blue as the sea of the south; her complexion was pink, like the heart of a white rose; and her hands were marvellously small. As she passed Roland, she turned slightly pale. If she had been less lovely, I should have said more about her rich attire; but what is the use, since nobody notices it? The queen must have been very strong-minded, to retain so charming a lady of honour about her person. On seeing the beautiful Aude, every one said, "There, or I'll die for it, is the Queen of Beauty!"

Aude had near her her sister Mita, fair as herself, but slightly browned by the Spanish sun under which she had been brought up. Two black eyes, full lips, a finely-cut and regular nose, hair hanging down entwined with long strings of threaded pearls and diamonds—there you have her portrait in a few words.

Her bodice was covered with small pearls; you might have called it a pearl corslet. Indeed, those who saw her pass, admiring her martial bearing and her rich breastplate, gave her the nickname of "the little knight in pearl."

After Aude and her sister came a bevy of beautiful young girls, but the people hardly cared to look at them.



At last came the pious and barons, clad in their most splendid armor.