

John Bouchier, Lord Berners

# The Book of Huon de Bordeaux.

Adapted from French Sources, 1525–1533

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*Huon, the young Duke of Bordeaux, has been summoned to do his feudal service to his liege lord, Charlemagne. On his way to Paris, he has killed Charlot, Charlemagne's oldest son, who had ambushed him, seduced by Amaury, a treacherous lord. Charlemagne orders Huon to be killed, but on the strident urging of all his lords he remits the capital punishment and replaces it with an impossible quest: Huon must go to Babylon (Old Cairo) and defy the Admiral (Amir) of Babylon by kissing his daughter four times in the presence of her father, removing the Admiral's beard and four great teeth, and taking them back to Charlemagne as a peace offering. As the story below begins, Huon, Garryn his uncle, and their entourage have embarked for the Holy Land from Brindisi, a port in southeastern Italy.*

Chapter 21. *How Huon of Bordeaux departed from Brindisi and Garyn his uncle with him, and how he came to Jerusalem and from those in to the deserts, whereas he found Gerames, and of their devises.*

WHEN HUON AND GARYN were entered into their ship, they lift up their sails and sailed night and day, so that they arrived safely at the port of Jaffa. Then they took land and drew out their horses, and rode forth. So the same day they came to Ramla and the next day to the city of Jerusalem. That night they rested, and the next day they did their pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, and there devoutly heard mass and offered according to their devotion. When Huon came before the Holy Sepulchre he kneeled down on his bare knees and, all weeping, made his prayers to our Lord God, requiring him to aid and comfort him in his voyage, so that he might return again into France and to have peace with King Charlemagne. And when they all had made their prayers and offered, Huon and Garyn went into a little chapel upon the mount of Calvary whereas now lieth Godfrey of Boulogne, and Baudouin his brother<sup>1</sup>.

Then Huon called to him all those that came with him out of France and said, "Sirs, ye that for the love of me have left fathers and mothers, wives and children and lands and seigneuries, of this courtesy that ye have showed me I thank you. Now ye may return into France and recommend me to the King's good grace and to all the other barons, and when ye come to Bordeaux, recommend me to the duchess my mother and to Gerard my brother and to the lords of my country."

Then Guichard and all the other knights answered Huon and said, "Sir, as yet we will not leave you, neither for death nor life, till we

have brought you to the Red Sea."

"Sirs," quod Huon, "of the great service and courtesy that ye offer me I thank you." Then Garyn called two of his servants and commanded them to return to his wife and to desire her to be of good cheer and that shortly he would return, the which thing they did and returned and did their message. When Huon understood that his uncle Garyn was disposed to abide with him, he said, "Fair uncle, ye shall not need to trail so much<sup>2</sup>. I would counsel you to return to your wife and children."

"Sir," quod Garyn, "an<sup>3</sup> God will, I shall not leave you no day till ye return yourself."

"Uncle," quod Huon, "I thank you of your courtesy."

Thus they went to their lodging and dined and after dinner took their horses and so rode by hills and dales, so that if I should recount all the adventures that they found in their way, it should be too long a process to show it. But as the true story witnesseth, they suffered much pain and travail, for they passed such deserts whereas they found but small sustenance, whereof Huon was right sorrowful for the love of them that were with him and began to weep and to remember his own country, saying, "Alas, noble king of France, great wrong and great sin ye have done, thus to drive me out of my country and to send me into strange countries, to the intent to short my days. I pray to God pardon you thereof."

Then Garyn and other knights comforted him and said, "Ah, sir, dismay you not for us. God is puissant enough to aid us. He never faileth them that loveth him."

Thus they rode forth in the desert so long till at last they saw a little cottage, before the which sat an old ancient man with a long white beard and his hair hanging over his shoulders. When Huon perceived him he drew thither and saluted the old man in the name

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<sup>1</sup>Godfrey of Boulogne (or, as some insist, of Bouillon) was the leader of the First Crusade and, from 1099, the ruler of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. His brother Baudouin (often Baldwin) succeeded him in 1100 and took the title of King.

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<sup>2</sup>to trail so much: accompany me any farther

<sup>3</sup>an: if

of God and of the Blessed Virgin Saint Mary. Then the ancient man lift up his eyes and beheld Huon and had great marvel, for of a great season before he had seen no man that spake of God. Then he beheld Huon in the visage and began sore to weep. Then he stepped to Huon and took him by the leg and kissed it more than twenty times.

“Friend,” quod Huon, “I require you show me why ye make this sorrow.”

“Sir,” quod he, “a thirty year past I came hither, and sen<sup>1</sup> that time I never saw man believing on the Christian faith, and by the regarding of your visage causeth me to remember a noble prince that I have seen in France who was called Duke Sevin of Bordeaux. Therefore I require you show me if ever ye saw him. I pray you hide it not from me.”

“Friend,” quod Huon, “I pray you show me where ye were born, and of what lineage and country ye be of.”

“Nay, sir,” quod he, “that will I not do first. Ye shall show me what ye be, and where ye were born, and why ye come hither.”

“Friend,” quod Huon, “sen it please you to know, I shall show you.” Then Huon and all his company alighted and tied their horses to trees.

When Huon was alighted, he sat down by the old man and said, “Friend, sen ye will know my business, I shall show you. Know for truth, I was born in the city of Bordeaux and am the son to Duke Sevin.” Then Huon showed him all his whole case and enterprise and of the death of Charlot and how he discomfited Earl Amaury and how that Charlemagne had chased him out of France and of the message that he was charged to say to the admiral Gaudys. “This that I have showed you is of truth.”

When the old man had well heard Huon, he began sore to weep. “Sir,” quod Huon, “sen it please you to know of my sorrow, Duke

Sevin my father is dead seven year past. My mother I trust be alive and a brother of mine whom I had left with her. And now, sir, sen ye have heard of mine affairs, I require you give me your counsel and advice and also, if it please you, to show me what ye be and of what country and how ye came into these parts.”

“Sir,” quod the old man, “know for truth I was born in Girondelle and brother to the good Provost Guyer. When I departed thence I was a young knight and haunted the jousts and tourneys, so that on a day it fortunated at a tourney that was made at Poitiers I slew a knight of a noble blood, wherefore I was banished out of the realm of France. But my brother the Provost made such a request to Duke Sevin your father that by his means my peace was made with the king, and my land saved, on the condition that I should go a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre to pray for the soul of the knight that I slew and to forgive my sins. Thus I departed out of my country, and when I had done my voyage I thought to have returned, but as I departed out of the city of Jerusalem to take the way to Acre, passing by a wood between Jerusalem and Nablus, there came upon me a ten Saracens, who took me and brought me to the city of Babylon, whereas I was in prison two year complete, whereas I suffered much poverty and misery. But our Lord God, who never faileth them that serveth him and have in him full affiance, he sent me the grace that by the means of a right noble lady I was brought out of prison in a night, and so I fled into this forest, whereas I have been this thirty year, and in all this space I never saw nor heard man believing on Jesu Christ. Thus I have showed you all mine affair.”

When Huon had heard the knight’s tale he had great joy and embraced him and said how often times he had seen Guyer, his brother the Provost “weep for you, and when I departed from Bordeaux I delivered to him all my lands to govern, wherefore I require you show me your name.”

“Sir,” quod he, “I am called Gerames, and now I pray you show me your name.”

“Sir,” quod he, “I am named Huon, and my younger brother is

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<sup>1</sup>Sen is a contraction of *sithen*, and Berners uses it often. It means “since” in the sense of both “from the time that” and “considering that.”

called Gerard. But, sir, I pray you show me how ye have so long lived here, and what sustenance ye have.”

“Sir,” quod Gerames, “I have eaten none other thing but roots and fruits that I have found in the wood.”

Then Huon demanded of him if he could speak the language Saracen.

“Yea, sir,” quod he, “as well or better then any Saracen in the country, nor there is no way but that I know it.”

When Huon had heard Gerames, then he demanded further of him if he could go to Babylon.

“Yea, sir,” quod Gerames, “I can go thither by two ways. The most surest way is hence a forty journeys<sup>1</sup>, and the other is but fifteen journeys. But I counsel you to take the long way, for if ye take the shorter way ye must pass throughout a wood a sixteen leagues of length, but the way is so full of the fairy<sup>2</sup> and strange things that such as pass that way are lost, for in that wood abideth a king of the fairy named Oberon. He is of height but of three foot and crooked shouldered, but yet he hath an angelic visage, so that there is no mortal man that seeth him but that taketh great pleasure to behold his face, and ye shall no sooner be entered into that wood (if ye go that way) he will find the manner to speak with you, and if ye speak to him ye are lost forever. And ye shall ever find him before you, so that it shall be in manner impossible that ye can scape from him without speaking to him, for his words be so pleasant to hear that there is no mortal man that can well scape without speaking to him. And if he see that ye will not speak a word to him, then he will be sore displeased with you, and ere ye can get out of the wood he will cause rain and wind, hail and snow, and will make marvellous

tempests with thunder and lightnings, so that it shall seem to you that all the world should perish, and he shall make to seem before you a great running river, black and deep. But ye may pass it at your ease, and it shall not wet the feet of your horse, for all is but fantasy and enchantments that the dwarf shall make, to the intent to have you with him. And if ye can keep yourself without speaking to him, ye may then well scape. But, sir, to eschew all perils, I counsel you take the longer way, for I think ye cannot scape from him, and then be ye lost forever.”

When Huon had well heard Gerames he had great marvel, and he had great desire in himself to see that dwarf king of the fairy and the strange adventures that were in that wood. Then he said to Gerames that for fear of any death he would not leave to pass that way, sen he might come to Babylon in fifteen days, for in taking the longer way he might peradventure find more adventures, and since he was advertised that with keeping his tongue from speaking he might abridge his journey, he said that surely he would that way whatsoever chance fell.

“Sir,” quod Gerames, “ye shall do your pleasure, for whichsoever way ye take it shall not be without me. I shall bring you to Babylon to the admiral Gaudys. I know him right well, and when ye be come thither ye shall see there a damsel, as I have heard say, the most fairest creature in all Ind<sup>3</sup> and the great and most sweetest and most courteousest that ever was born, and it is she that ye seek, for she is daughter to the Admiral Gaudys.”

Chapter 22. *How Gerames went with Huon and his company and so came in to the wood whereas they found King Oberon, who conjured them to speak to him.*

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<sup>1</sup>A journey is a day’s journey or, in some contexts, a day.

<sup>2</sup>Fairy with the *the* means the inhabitants of fairyland, with or without the *the* it means “enchantment, magic, illusion,” and without a *the* or *a* it means “the land of the fairies, fairyland” (*OED*)

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<sup>3</sup>Inde: India

WHEN HUON HAD well heard Gerames how he was minded to go with him, he was thereof right joyful and thanked him of his courtesy and service and gave him a goodly horse whereon he mounted and so rode forth together, so long that they came into the wood whereas King Oberon haunted most.

Then Huon was weary of travels, and what for famine and for heat, the which he and his company had endured two days without bread or meat, so that he was so feeble that he could ride no further. And then he began piteously to weep and complained of the great wrong that King Charlemagne had done to him. And then Garyn and Gerames comforted him and had great pity of him, and they knew well by the reason of his youth, hunger oppressed him more than it did to them of greater age. Then they alighted under a great oak, to the intent to search for some fruit to eat. They let their horses go to pasture.

When they were thus alighted, the dwarf of the fairy, King Oberon, came riding by, and had on a gown so rich that it were marvel to recount the riches and fashion thereof. And it was so garnished with precious stones that the clearness of them shone like the sun. Also he had a goodly bow in his hand so rich that it could not be esteemed, and his arrows after the same sort. And they had such property that any beast in the world that he would wish for, the arrow should arrest him. Also he had about his neck a rich horn hanging by two laces of gold. The horn was so rich and fair that there was never seen one such. It was made by four ladies of the fairy in the isle of Cafalone. One of them gave to the horn such a property that whosoever heard the sound thereof, if he were in the greatest sickness in the world, he should incontinent<sup>1</sup> be whole and sound. The lady that gave this gift to this horn was named Gloriande. The second lady was named Translyne. She gave to this horn another property, and that was, whosoever heard this horn, if he were in the

greatest famine of the world, he should be satisfied as well as though he had eaten all that he would wish for, and in likewise for drink as well as though he had drunken his fill of the best wine in all the world. The third lady, named Margale, gave to this horn yet a greater gift, and that was, whosoever heard this horn, though he were never so poor or feeble by sickness, he should have such joy in his heart that he should sing and dance. The fourth lady, named Lempatrix, gave to this horn such a gift that whoever heard it, if he were a hundred journeys off, he should come at the pleasure of him that blew it, far or near.

Then King Oberon, who knew well and had seen the fourteen companions, he set his horn to his mouth and blew so melodious a blast that the fourteen companions, being under the tree, had so perfect a joy at their hearts that they all rose up and began to sing and dance.

“Ah, good Lord,” quod Huon, “what fortune is come to us? Methinks we be in paradise. Right now I could not sustain myself for lack of meat and drink, and now I feel myself neither hungry nor thirsty. From whence may this come?”

“Sir,” quod Gerames, “know for truth this is done by the dwarf of the fairy, whom ye shall soon see pass by you. But, sir, I require you in jeopardy of losing of your life that ye speak to him no word, without ye purpose to bide ever with him.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “have no doubt of me, sen I know the jeopardy.”

Therewith the dwarf began to cry aloud and said, “Ye fourteen men that passeth by my wood, God keep you all, and I desire you speak with me, and I conjure you thereto by God Almighty and by the Christendom that ye have received and by all that God hath made, answer me.”

*Chapter 23. How King Oberon was right sorrowful and sore displeased in that Huon would not speak and of the great fear that he put Huon and his company in.*

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<sup>1</sup>incontinent: straightaway

WHEN THAT HUON and his company heard the dwarf speak, they mounted on their horses and rode away as fast as they might without speaking of any word, and the dwarf, seeing how that they rode away and would not speak, he was sorrowful and angry. Then he set one of his fingers on his horn, out of the which issued out such wind and a tempest so horrible to hear that it bare down trees, and therewith came such a rain and hail that seemed that heaven and the earth had fought together and that the world should have ended. The beasts in the woods brayed and cried, and the fowls of the air fell down dead for fear that they were in. There was no creature but he would have been afraid of that tempest. Then suddenly appeared before them a great river that ran swifter than the birds did fly, and the water was so black and so perilous and made such a noise that it might be heard ten leagues off.

“Alas,” quod Huon, “I see well now we all be all lost. We shall here be oppressed without God have pity of us. I repent me that ever I entered into this wood. I had been better a travelled a whole year than to have come hither.”

“Sir,” quod Gerames, “dismay you not, for all this is done by the dwarf of the fairy.”

“Well,” quod Huon, “I think it best to alight from our horse, for I think we shall never scape from hence, but that we shall be all oppressed.”

Then Garyn and the other companions had great marvel and were in great fear. “Ah, Gerames,” quod Huon, “ye showed me well that it was great peril to pass this wood. I repent me that I had not believed you.”

Then they saw on the other side of the river a fair castle environed with fourteen great towers, and on every tower a clocher of fine gold<sup>1</sup> beseeming, the which they long regarded. And by that time they had gone a little by the riverside they lost the sight of the castle,

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<sup>1</sup>A clocher of fine gold beseeming is a bell-tower with the look of fine gold.

and it was clean vanished away, whereof Huon and his company were sore abashed.

“Huon,” quod Gerames, “of all this that ye see dismay you not, for all this is done by the crooked dwarf of the fairy and all to beguile you, but he cannot grieve you, so ye speak no word. Howbeit, or we depart from him he will make us all abashed, for anon he will come after us like a madman because ye will not speak to him. But, sir, I require you as in God’s name be nothing afraid, but ride forth surely, and ever beware that ye speak to him no word.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “have no doubt thereof, for I had rather he were bresten<sup>2</sup> than I should speak one word to him.”

Then they rode to pass the river, and then they found there nothing to let<sup>3</sup> them and so rode a five leagues.

“Sir,” quod Huon, “we may well thank God that we be thus scaped this dwarf, who thought to have deceived us. I was never in such fear during my life, God confound him.” Thus they rode devising of the little dwarf who had done them so much trouble.

Chapter 24. *How King Oberon, dwarf of the Fairy, pursued so much Huon that he constrained him to speak to him at last.*

WHEN GERAMES UNDERSTOOD the company how they thought they were scaped from the dwarf, he began to smile and said, “Sirs, make none avaunt<sup>4</sup> that ye be out of his danger, for I believe ye shall soon see him again.”

And as soon as Gerames had spoke the same words, they saw before them a bridge, the which they must pass, and they saw the dwarf on the other part. Huon saw him first and said, “I see the devil

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<sup>2</sup>besten: cracked into pieces

<sup>3</sup>let: prevent

<sup>4</sup>make none avaunt: do not boast

who hath done us so much trouble.”

Oberon heard him and said, “Friend, thou doest me injury without cause, for I was never devil nor ill creature. I am a man as other be, but I conjure thee by the divine puissance to speak to me.”

Then Gerames said, “Sirs, for God’s sake let him alone, nor speak no word to him. For by his fair language he may deceive us all, as he hath done many other. It is pity that he had lived so long.”

Then they rode forth a good pass, and left the dwarf alone sore displeased in that they would not speak to him. Then he took his horn and set it to his mouth and blew it. When Huon and his company heard it, they had no power to ride any further, but they began all to sing. Then Oberon the dwarf said, “Yonder company are fools and proud, that for any salutation that I can give them they disdain to answer me. But by the God that made me, or<sup>1</sup> they escape me, the refuse of my words shall be dear bought.”

Then he took again his horn and strake it three times on his bow and cried out aloud and said, “Ye my men, come and appear before me.”

Then there came to him a four hundred men of arms and demanded of Oberon what was his pleasure and who had displeased him.

“Sirs,” quod Oberon, “I shall show you, howbeit<sup>2</sup> I am grieved to show it. Here in this wood there passed fourteen knights who disdaineth to speak to me. But to the intent that they shall not mock me, they shall dearly buy the refusing of their answer. Wherefore I will ye go after them and slay them all. Let none escape.”

Then one of his knights said, “Sir, for God’s sake have pity of them.”

“Certainly,” quod Oberon, “mine honour saved, I cannot spare them sen they disdain to speak to me.”

“Sir,” quod Gloriande, “for God’s sake do not as ye say, but, sir, work by my counsel, and after do as it please you. Sir, I counsel you yet once again go after them, for if they do not speak, we shall slay them all. For surely, sir, if they see you return again to them so shortly, they shall be in great fear.”

“Friend,” quod Oberon, “I shall do as ye have counselled me.”

Thus Huon and his company rode forth a great pace, and Huon said, “Sirs, we are now from the dwarf a five leagues. I never saw in my life so fair a creature in the visage. I have great marvel how he can speak of God Almighty, for I think he be a devil of hell. And since he speaketh of God, methink we ought to speak to him, for I think such a creature can have no power to do us any ill. I think he be not past of the age of five years.”

“Sir,” quod Gerames, “as little as he seemeth, and that ye take him for a child, he was born forty year afore the Nativity of our Lord Jesu Christ.”

“Surely,” quod Huon, “I care not what age he be of, but if he come again, ill hap come to me if I keep my words and speech from him. I pray you be not displeased.”

And thus as they rode devising fifteen days, suddenly Oberon appeared to them and said, “Sirs, are ye not yet advised to speak to me? Yet again I am come to salute you in the name of the God that made and formed us, and I conjure you by the puissance that he hath given me that ye speak to me, for I repute you for fools to think thus to pass thorough my wood and disdain to speak to me. Ah, Huon, I know thee well enough and whither thou wouldest go. I know all thy deeds, and thou slewest Charlot and after discomfited Amaury. And I know the message that Charlemagne hath charged thee to say to the Admiral Gaudys, the which thing is impossible to be done without mine aid. For without me thou shalt never accomplish this enterprise. Speak to me, and I shall do thee that courtesy that I shall cause ye to achieve thine enterprise, the which is impossible without me. And when thou hast achieved thy message I shall bring thee again into France in safeguard. And I know the cause that thou wilt

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<sup>1</sup>or: before

<sup>2</sup>howbeit: although



not speak to me hath been by reason of old Gerames, who is there with thee. Therefore, Huon, be ware of thyself<sup>1</sup>. Go no further, for I know well it is three days past sen thou didst eat any meat to profit thee. If thou wilt believe me, thou shalt have enough of such sustenance as thou wilt wish for, and as soon as thou hast dined I will give thee leave to depart, if it be thy pleasure. Of this have no doubt.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “ye be welcome.”

“Ah,” quod Oberon, “thy salutation shall be well rewarded. Know for truth thou never didst salutation so profitable for thyself. Thou mayest thank God that he hath sent thee that grace.”

Chapter 25. *Of the great marvels that Oberon showed to Huon and of the adventures that fell.*

WHEN HUON HAD well heard Oberon he had great marvel and demanded if it were true that he had said.

“Yea truly,” quod Oberon. “Of that make no doubt.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I have great marvel for what cause ye have always pursued us.”

“Huon,” quod Oberon, “know well, I love thee well because of the truth that is in thee, and therefore naturally I love thee. And if thou wilt know who I am, I shall show thee. True it is, Julius Caesar engendered me on the Lady of the Privy Isle, who was sometime well beloved of the fair Florimont of Albany. But because that Florimont, who as then was young and he had a mother who did so much that she saw my mother and Florimont together in a solitary place on the seaside—when my mother perceived that she was spied by Florimont’s mother, she departed and left Florimont her lover in great weepings and lamentations and never saw him after. And then

she returned into her country of the Privy Isle, the which now is named Chefalonye, whereas she married after and had a son who in his time after was King of Egypt, named Neptanabus. It was he (as it is said) that engendered Alexander the Great, who aft caused him to die. Then after a seven year Caesar passed by the sea as he went into Thessaly whereas he fought with Pompey. In his way he passed by Chefalonye, where my mother fetched him, and he fell in love with her because she showed him that he should discomfit Pompey, as he did. Thus I have showed you who was my father.

“At my birth there was many a prince and barons of the fairy and many a noble lady that came to see my mother whiles<sup>2</sup> she travailed of me. And among them there was one was not content, because she was not sent for as well as the other. And when I was born she gave me a gift, the which was that when I should pass three year of age I should grow no more, but thus as ye see me now. And when she had thus done and saw that she had thus served me by her words, she repented herself and would recompense me another way. Then she gave me another gift, and that was that I should be the fairest creature that ever nature formed, as thou mayest see me now.

“And another lady of the fairy, named Transline, gave me another gift, and that was, all that ever a man can know or think, good or ill, I do know it. The third lady, to do more for me and to please my mother the better, she gave me that there is not so fair a country but that if I will wish myself there, I shall be there incontinent with what number of men as I list. And moreover, if I will have a castle or a palace at mine own device, incontinent it shall be made and as soon gone again, an<sup>3</sup> I list. And what meat or wine that I will wish for it, I shall have it incontinent. And also I am King of Mommure, the which is a four hundred leagues from hence, and if I list, incontinent I can be there. Know for truth that thou art arrived at a good port. I

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<sup>1</sup>be ware of thyself: take care of yourself

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<sup>2</sup>whiles: whilst

<sup>3</sup>an: if

know well thou hast great need of meat, for these three days thou hast had but small sustenance, but I shall cause thee to have enough. I demand of thee whether thou wilt have meat and drink here in this meadow, or in a palace, or in a hall. Command whereas thou wilt, and thou shalt have it for thee and thy company.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I will follow your pleasure and never do nor think the contrary.”

“Huon,” quod he, “as yet I have not showed all the gifts that were given me at my birth. The fourth lady gave me that there is no bird nor beast, be they never so cruel, but if I will have them I may take them with my hand. And also I shall never seem elder than thou seest me now. And when I shall depart out of this world, my place is apparelled in paradise, for I know that all things created in this mortal world must needs have an end.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “such a gift ought to be well kept.”

“Huon,” quod Oberon, “well ye were counselled when ye spake to me. Ye had never before so fair adventure. Show me, by thy faith, if thou wilt eat and what meat thou wilt have and what wine thou wilt drink.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “so that I had meat and drink, I care not what it were, so that I and my company were filled and rid from our famine.”

Then Oberon laughed at him and said, “Sirs, all ye sit down here in this meadow, and have no doubt but all that I will do is done by the puissance of our Lord God.”

Then Oberon began to wish, and said to Huon and his company and said, “Sirs, arise up quickly,” the which they did. Then they regarded before them and saw a fair and a rich palace garnished with chambers and halls, hanged and bedded with rich clothes of silk beaten with gold, and tables ready set full of meat. When Huon and his company saw the rich palace before them they had great marvel. Then Oberon took Huon by the hand and with him mounted up into the palace. When they came there they found servants there ready, bringing to them basins of gold garnished with precious stones. They

gave water to Huon.

Then he sat down at the table, the which was furnished with all manner of meat and drink that man could wish. Oberon sat at the table’s end on a bank of ivory richly garnished with gold and precious stones, the which seat had such virtue given to it by the fairy that whosoever by any subtle means would poison him that should sit thereon, as soon as he should approach near to the seat he should fall down stark dead. King Oberon sat thereon richly apparelled, and Huon, who sat near to him, began to eat a great pace. But Gerames had small appetite to eat, for he believed that they should never depart thence. When Oberon saw him he said, “Gerames, eat thy meat and drink, for as soon as thou hast eaten thou shalt have leave to go when thou list.”

When Gerames heard that, he was joyful. Then he began to eat and drink, for he knew well that Oberon would not do against his assurance. All the company did well eat and drink. They were served with all things that they could wish for. When Huon saw how they were all satisfied and replete and had well dined, he said to King Oberon, “Sir, when it shall be your pleasure, I would ye should give us leave to depart.”

“Huon,” quod Oberon, “I am right well content so to do, but first I will show you my jewels.” Then he called Clariande, a knight of the fairy, and said, “Friend, go and fetch to me my cup.”

He did this commandment. And when Oberon had the cup in his hand he said to Huon, “Sir, behold well. Ye see well this cup is void and empty.”

“That is true, sir,” quod Huon.

Then Oberon set the cup on the table and said to Huon, “Sir, behold the great power that God hath given me, and how that in the fairy I may do my pleasure.” Then he made over the cup the sign of a cross three times. Then incontinent the cup was full of wine. And then he said, “Lo, sirs, ye may well see that this is done by the grace of God. Yet I shall show you the great virtue that is in this cup, for if all the men in the world were here assembled together, and that the

cup were in the hands of any man being out of deadly sin, he might drink thereof his fill. But whosoever offer his hand to take it being in deadly sin, the cup should lose his virtue. And if thou mayest drink thereof, I offer to give thee the cup.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I thank you, but I am in doubt that I am not worthy nor of valour to drink thereof nor to touch the cup. I never heard of such a dignity as this cup is of. But, sir, know for truth I have been confessed of all my sins, and I am repentant and sorrowful for that I have done, and I do pardon and forgive all the men in the world whatsoever injury hath been done to me, and I know not that I have done wrong to any creature, nor I hate no man.”

And so he took the cup in both his hands and set it to his mouth and drank of the good wine that was therein at his pleasure.

*Chapter 26. Of the great gifts that Oberon gave to Huon, as his horn of ivory and his cup, the which were of great virtues, and Huon after thought to prove the virtue of them, whereby he was in great peril of death.*

WHEN OBERON SAW that, he was right glad and came and embraced Huon, saying how he was a noble man. “I give thee this cup as it is in the manner as I shall show thee in any wise for any thing; for the dignity of the cup be thou ever true and faithful. For if thou wilt work by my counsel I shall aid thee and give thee succour in all thine affairs. But as soon as thou makest any lie, the virtue of the cup will be lost and lose his bounty, and beside that, thou shalt lose my love and aid.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I shall right well be ware thereof. And now, sir, I require you suffer us to depart.”

“Abide yet,” quod Oberon. “Yet I have another jewel the which I will give thee, because I think there be truth and noblesse in thee. I will give thee a rich horn of ivory, the which is full of great virtue, the which thou shalt bear with thee. It is of so great virtue that if

thou be never so far from me, as soon as thou blowest the horn, I shall hear thee and shall be incontinent with thee with a hundred thousand men of arms for to succour and aid thee. But one thing I command thee, on the pain of losing of my love and on jeopardy of thy life, that thou be not so hardy to sound thy horn without thou hast great need thereof. For if thou do otherwise I avow to God that created me I shall leave thee in as great poverty and misery as ever man was, so that whosoever should see thee in that case should have pity of thee.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I shall right well be ware thereof. Now I desire you let me depart.”

“I am content,” quod Oberon, “and God be thy guide.”

Then Huon took leave of King Oberon and trussed up all his baggage and did put his cup in his bosom and the horn about his neck. And thus they all took their leave of the king. Oberon all weeping embraced Huon, who had marvel why he wept, and said, “Sir, why do you weep?”

“Friend,” quod Oberon, “ye may well know, ye have with you two things that I love dearly. God aid you. More I cannot speak to you.”

Thus the fourteen knights departed, and so they rode forth a fifteen leagues or more. Then they saw before them a great deep river, and they could find no guide nor passage to pass over, and so they wist not what to do. Then suddenly they saw pass by them a servant of King Oberon bearing a rod of gold in his hand, and so without speaking of any word he entered into the river and took his rod and strake the water therewith three times. Then incontinent the water withdrew a both sides in such wise that there was a path that three men might ride afront. And that done, he departed again without speaking of any word. Then Huon and his company entered into the water and so passed thorough without any danger. When they were past they beheld behind them and saw the river close again and ran after his old course. “By my faith,” quod Huon, “I think we be enchanted. I believe surely King Oberon hath done this, but sen we be thus scaped out of peril, I trust from henceforth we shall

have no doubt.”

Thus they rode forth together singing and oftentimes spake of the great marvels that they had seen King Oberon done<sup>1</sup>. And as they rode Huon beheld on his right hand and saw a fair meadow well garnished with herbs and flowers and in the midst thereof a fair clear fountain<sup>2</sup>. Then Huon rode thither and alighted and let their horses to pasture. Then they spread a cloth on the green grass and set thereup such meat as King Oberon had given them at their departing, and there they did eat and drink such drink as they found in the cup.

“By my faith,” quod Huon, “it was a fair adventure for us when we met Oberon and that I spake to him. He hath showed me great tokens of love when he gave me such a cup. If I may return into France in safeguard, I shall give it to Charlemagne, who shall make great feast therewith. And if he cannot drink thereof, the barons of France will have great joy thereof.”

Then again he repented him of his own words and said, “I am a fool to think or say thus, for as yet I cannot tell what end I shall come to. The cup that I have is better worth than two cities, but as yet I cannot believe the virtue to be in the horn as Oberon hath showed, nor that he may hear it so far off. But whatsoever fortune fall I will assay it if it hath such virtue or not.”

“Ah, sir,” quod Gerames, “be ware what ye do. Ye know well when we departed what charge he gave you. Certainly you and we both are lost if ye trespass his commandment.”

“Surely,” quod Huon, “whatsoever fortune fall, I shall assay it,” and so took the horn and set it to his mouth and blew it so loud that the wood rang.

Then Gerames and all the other began to sing and to make great joy. Then Garyn said, “Fair nephew, blow still.”

And so Huon blew still with such force that Oberon, who was in

his wood a fifteen leagues off, heard him clearly and said, “Ah, very God, I hear my friend blow whom I love best of all the world. Alas, what man is so hardy to do him any ill? I wish myself with him with a hundred thousand men of arms.”

Incontinent he was near to Huon with a hundred thousand men of arms.

When Huon and his company heard the host coming and saw Oberon come riding on before, then they were afraid. It was no marvel, seeing the commandment that Oberon had given them before. Then Huon said, “Ah, sirs, I have done ill. Now I see well we cannot escape, but that we be likely to die.”

“Certainly,” quod Gerames, “ye have well deserved it.”

“Hold your peace,” quod Huon. “Dismay you not. Let me speak to him.”

Therewith Oberon came to them and said, “Huon, of God be thou cursed! Where are they that will do thee any ill? Why hast thou broken my commandment?”

“Ah, sir,” quod Huon, “I shall show you the truth. We were sitting right now in the meadow and did eat of that ye gave us. I believe I took too much drink out of the cup that ye gave me, the virtue of the which we well assayed. Then I thought to assay also the virtue of the rich horn, to the intent that, if I should have any need, that I might be sure thereof. Now I know for truth that all is true that ye have showed me. Wherefore, sir, in the honour of God I require you to pardon my trespass. Sir, here is my sword, strike off my head at your pleasure, for I know well without your aid I shall never come to achieve mine enterprise.”

“Huon,” quod Oberon, “the bounty and great truth that is in thee constraineth me to give thee pardon. But be ware. From henceforth be not so hardy to break my commandment.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I thank you.”

“Well,” quod Oberon, “I know surely that thou hast as yet much to suffer, for thou must pass by a city named Tormont, wherein there is a tyrant called Macaire, and yet he is thine own uncle, brother to

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<sup>1</sup>done: an obsolete form of the infinitive *do*.

<sup>2</sup>fountain: spring

thy father, Duke Sevin. When he was in France he had thought to have murdered King Charlemagne, but his treason was known, and he had been slain an thy father Duke Sevin had not been, so he was sent to the Holy Sepulchre to do his penance for the ill that he had done. And so afterward there he revinced<sup>1</sup> the faith of our Lord God and took on him the paynims' law<sup>2</sup>, the which he hath kept ever since so sore that if he hear any man speak of our Lord God he will pursue him to the death. And what promise that he maketh, he keepeth none. Therefore, I advise thee trust not on him, for surely he will put thee to death if he may, and thou canst not scape if thou go by that city. Therefore I counsel thee take not that way if thou be wise."

"Sir," quod Huon, "of your courtesy, love, and good counsel I thank you. But whatsoever fortune fall to me, I will go to mine uncle, and if he be such one as ye say I shall make him to die an ill death. If need be I shall sound my horn, and I am sure at my need ye will aid me."

"Of that ye may be sure," quod Oberon, "but of one thing I defend thee: be not so hardy to sound the horn without thou be hurt, for if thou do the contrary I shall so martyr<sup>3</sup> thee that thy body shall not endure it."

"Sir," quod Huon, "be assured your commandment I will not break."

Then Huon took leave of King Oberon, who was sorry when Huon departed. "Sir," quod Huon, "I have marvel why ye weep. I pray you show me the cause why ye do it."

"Huon," quod Oberon, "the great love that I have in thee causeth me to do it, for as yet hereafter thou shalt suffer so much ill and travail that no human tongue can tell it."

"Sir," quod Huon, "ye show me many things not greatly to my

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<sup>1</sup>revinced: refuted

<sup>2</sup>paynim's law: law of the pagans

<sup>3</sup>martyr: torture

profit."

"Sure," quod Oberon, "and yet thou shalt suffer more than I have spoken of, and all by thine own folly."

*Chapter 27. How Huon arrived at Tormont and found a man at the gate who brought him to lodge to the provost's house in the town.*

AFTER THAT OBERON had showed Huon part of that<sup>4</sup> should fall to him and was departed, Huon and his company then mounted on their horses and so rode forth so long till they came to the city of Tormont. Gerames, who had been there before, when he saw the city he said to Huon, "Ah, sir, we be ill arrived here. Behold here we be in the way to suffer much trouble."

"Sir," quod Huon, "be not dismayed, for by the grace of God we shall right well scape. For who that God will aid, no man can hurt."

Then they entered into the city, and as they came to the gate they met a man with a bow in his hand, who had been a-sporting without the city. Huon rid foremost and saluted him in the name of God. "Friend, what call ye this city?"

The man stood still and had marvel what men they were that spake of God. He beheld them and said, "Sirs, the God in whose name ye have saluted me keep and defend thou from encumbrance. Howbeit, I desire you, in as much as ye love your lives, speak softly that ye be not heard, for if the lord of this city know that ye be Christian men he will slay you all. Sirs, ye may trust me, for I am christened, but I dare not be known thereof, I have such fear of the Duke."

"Friend," quod Huon, "I pray thou show me who is lord of this city, and what is his name."

"Sir," quod he, "he is a false tyrant. When he was christened he

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<sup>4</sup>That: that which

was named Macaire, but he hath renounced God, and he is so fierce and proud that as now he hateth nothing so much as they that believe in Jesu Christ. But, sir, I pray you show me whither ye will go.”

“Friend,” quod Huon, “I would gladly go to the Red Sea and from thence to Babylon. I would tarry this day in this city, for I and my company are sore weary.”

“Sir,” quod he, “and ye will believe me ye shall not enter into this city to lodge, for if the Duke know it, none could save your lives. Therefore, if it be your pleasure I shall lead you another way beside the town.”

“Sir,” quod Gerames, “for God’s sake believe him that counselleth you so truly.”

“Know for truth,” quod Huon, “I will not do thus. I see well it is almost night. The sun goeth low. Therefore I will lodge this night here in this town whatsoever fall, for a good town would never be forsaken.”

“Sir,” quod the strange man, “sen it is so, for the love of God I shall bring you to a lodging whereas ye shall be well and honestly lodged in a good man’s house that believeth in God, named Gonder. He is Provost of the city and well beloved with the Duke.”

“Friend,” quod Huon, “God reward thou.”

So this man went on before through the town till he came at the Provost’s house, whom they found sitting at his gate. Huon, that was a fair speaker, saluted him in the name of God and of the Virgin Mary. The Provost rose up and beheld Huon and his company and had marvel what they were sen they saluted him in the name of God. Then he said, “Sirs, ye be welcome, but a God’s name I desire you speak softly that ye be not heard, for if the Duke of this city knew thou, ye should utterly be lost. But if it please thou to tarry this night here in my house, for the love of God all that I have in my house shall be yours to do therewith at your pleasure. I abandon all to you,

and sir, I thank God, I have in my house that, and if<sup>1</sup> ye bide here this two year, ye shall not need to buy anything without.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “of this fair proffer I thank you”.

And so he and his company alighted, and there were servants enough to take their horses and to set them up. Then the host took Huon and Gerames and the other and brought them to chambers to dress. Then, there they came into the hall, whereas they found the tables set and covered, and so sat down and were richly served with divers meats. When they had done and were risen Huon called Gerames and said, “Sir, go in haste into the town and get a crier and make to be cried in every market place and street that whosoever would come and sup at the Provost’s house, as well noble as un noble men, women and children, rich and poor, and all manner of people of what estate or degree they be of, should come merely and freely and nothing pay, neither for meat nor drink, whereof they should have as they wished.” And also he commanded Gerames that all the meat that he could get in the town, he should buy it and pay ready money for the same.

“Sir,” quod Gerames, “your pleasure shall be done.”

“Sir,” quod the host, “ye know well all that is in my house I have abandoned to you. Therefore, sir, ye shall not need to seek for anything farther. Take of my goods at your pleasure.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I thank you. I have money enough to furnish that we need of, and also, sir, I have a cup of great virtue. For if all the people that be within this city were here present, they should have drink enough by reason of my cup, the which was made in the fairy.”

When the host heard Huon, he began to smile and believed that those words had been spoken in japery. Then Huon, not well advised, took the horn of ivory from his neck and took it to his host to keep, saying, “Host, I take you this to keep, for it is a precious

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<sup>1</sup>that, and if: that which, if

thing. Therefore, keep it surely that I may have it again when I demand it.”

“Sir,” quod he, “I shall surely keep it, and when it please you it shall be ready,” and so took the horn and laid it up in a coffer. But after fell such an hour that Huon would have it rather than all the good in the world, as ye shall hear more hereafter.

*Chapter 28. How Huon gave a supper to all the poor men of the city and how the duke was uncle to Huon and how the duke had Huon in to his castle.*

THUS WHEN GERAMES had this commandment of Huon, he went into the city and made to be cried in divers places as he was commanded to do. When this cry was made there was no beggar, vagabond, nor ribald juggler, minstrel, old nor young, but by great flocks they came all to the Provost’s house, in number more than four hundred. And Gerames bought up bread, meat, flesh, and other victuals, all that he could find in the city, and paid for it. Thus the supper was dressed and every man set at the tables. Huon served them with his cup in his hand and made every man to drink of that he put out of his cup into other pots. And yet ever the cup was full.

When the people had well eaten and drunken the good wines and were well chafed in their brains, some began to sing and some to sleep at the table and some beat their fists on the boards that it was marvel to see the life that they led, whereof Huon had great joy. The same time the Duke’s steward came into the town to buy his master’s supper, but he could neither find bread nor flesh nor no other victuals, whereof he was sore displeased. And then he demanded the cause why he found no victuals as he was accustomed to do.

“Sir,” quod the butchers and bakers, “in the house of Gonder the provost is lodged a young man who hath made to be cried in all the city that all beggars and ribalds should come to sup at his lodging, and he hath bought up all the victuals that he could get in the town.”

Then the paynim in great despite went to the palace to the Duke and said, “Sir, I can get nothing in the town for your supper. There is a young man lodged in the Provost’s house that hath bought up all the victuals to give a supper to all the beggars, vagabonds and ribalds that can be found in the town.”

When the Duke understood that, he was sore displeased and swore by Mahound<sup>1</sup> that he would go see that supper. Then he commanded all his men to be ready in harness to go with him. And as he was going out of his palace, a traitor, who had stolen privily out of the Provost’s house whereas he had been at supper with other, he said to the Duke, “Sir, know for truth there is in your Provost’s house a knight who hath given a supper to all people that would come thither, and so there is no beggar, no ribald, nor other that will sup, but are come thither. And, sir, this knight hath a cup better worth than all this city, for if all the people between East and West should die for lack of drink, they should have all enough. For as often as ye will empty the cup, it will be full again incontinent.”

When the Duke heard that, he had great marvel and said such a cup were good for him and sware by Mahound that he would have that cup. “Let us go thither, for my will is to have that cup. All those knights shall lose their horses and baggage. I will leave them nothing.”

So he went forth with thirty knights and rested not till he came to the Provost’s house and found the gates open. When the Provost perceived him, he came to Huon, said, “Ah, sir, ye have done ill. Here is come the Duke in great displeasure. If God have not pity of thou I cannot see how ye can escape without death.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “dismay ye not, for I shall speak so fair that he shall be content.”

Then Huon with a merry cheer came to the Duke and said, “Sir,

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<sup>1</sup>In the memorable words of the *OED*, *Mahound* is “a God imagined in the Middle Ages to be worshipped by Muslims.”

ye be welcome.”

“Beware,” quod the Duke, “come not near me, for no Christian man may come into my city without my licence, wherefore I will thou knowest that ye shall all lose your heads and all that ye brought hither.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “now<sup>1</sup> ye have slain us, ye shall win thereby but little. It were great wrong for you so to do.”

“I shall tell thee,” quod the Duke, “why I will so do. That is because ye be Christian men. Therefore thou shalt be the first. Show by thy faith why hast thou assembled all this company here to supper.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I have done it because I am going to the Red Sea and because these poor men will pray to God for me that I may safely return. Sir, this is the cause that I have made them to sup with me.”

“Ah,” quod the Duke, “great folly hast thou spoken, for thou shalt never see fair day. Ye shall all lose your heads.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “leave all this. I pray you and your company sit down and eat and drink at your pleasure, and I shall serve you as well as I can. And then, sir, if I have done any wrong I will make you amends in such wise that ye shall be content, for if ye do me any hurt, it shall be to you but a small conquest. Sir, methink if ye will do nobly, ye should somewhat forbear us, for as I have heard say ye were once christened.”

Then the Duke said to Huon, “Thou hast said well. I am content to sup, for as yet I have not supped.”

Then the Duke commanded every man to be disarmed and to sit down at the table, the which they did. Then Huon and Gerames served them, and they were well served at that supper.

Then Huon took his cup and came to the Duke and said, “Sir, see you not here this cup, the which is void and empty?”

“I see well,” quod the Duke, “there is nothing therein.”

Then Huon made the sign of the cross over the cup, and incontinent it was full of wine. He took the cup to the Duke, who had great marvel thereof, and as soon as the cup was in his hands it was void again.

“What!” quod the Duke. “Thou hast enchanted me.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I am none enchanter, but it is for the sin that ye be in. Set it down, for ye are not worthy to hold it. Ye were born in an ill hour.”

“How art thou so hardy,” quod the Duke, “to speak thus to me? I repute thee for a proud fool. Thou knowest well it lieth in my power to destroy thee. There is no man dare say the contrary. Yet I pray thee tell me thine name and where thou were born and whither thou goest and of what kin thou art of.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “for anything that shall fall to me I will not hide my name nor kindred. Sir, know for truth I was born at Bordeaux upon Garonne and am son to Duke Sevin who is dead seven year passed.”

When the Duke heard how Huon was his nephew he said, “Ah, the son of my brother! Nephew, why hast thou taken in this city any other lodging but mine? Show me whither thou wilt go.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I am going to Babylon to the Admiral Gaudys, to do to him a message from King Charlemagne of France because I slew his son there.”

He showed his uncle all his adventure and how the King had taken away his land nor should not have it again till he had done his message to the Admiral.

“Fair nephew,” quod the Duke, “in like wise I was banished the realm of France, and since, I have renied<sup>2</sup> the faith of Jesu Christ, and since, I married here in this country a great lady by whom I have great lands to govern, whereof I am lord. Nephew, I will ye shall go

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<sup>1</sup>now: at such time as

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<sup>2</sup>renied: renounced



and lodge with me in my castle, and tomorrow ye shall have of my barons to conduct you till ye come to Babylon.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I thank you. Sen it is your pleasure, I will go with you to your palace.”

Then Gerames privily said to him, “Sir, if ye go thither ye mayhap repent yourself.”

“It may well be,” quod Gonder the Provost.

Then Huon commanded to truss all their gear and to make ready their horses and took with him his cup, but he left still his horn with the Provost. Thus Huon went with his uncle to his castle, and lay there all night. The next morning Huon came to his uncle to take his leave.

“Fair nephew,” quod the Duke, “I require you tarry till my barons come that shall conduct you in your journey.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “sen it please you, I am content to abide.” Then they sat down to dinner.

*Chapter 29. How the duke thought to have murdered Huon, his own nephew, whiles he sat at the table.*

WHEN THIS TRAITOR Duke saw his nephew sit at the table he called to him a knight born in France called Geoffrey, who came out of France with the Duke and had in like wise renied the law of Christ, and he was secret with the Duke. Then the Duke privily said to him, “Friend, go and arm a hundred or six-score paynims, and cause them to come hither. Let them slay my nephew and all that are come with him, for if one scape ye shall lose my favour.”

“Sir,” quod Geoffrey, “your will shall be done.”

Then Geoffrey went into a chamber whereas there was two hundred harness hanging. When he came there he said to himself, “Alas, good Lord, this villain traitor would slay the son of his brother, who when I was in France did me once a great courtesy, for I had been dead and slain if Duke Sevin his father had not succoured me.

It is reason for that he did to me to render again some reward to the son. God confound me if he have any ill for me. But I shall rather cause the false Duke to buy dearly the treason that he would do to his nephew.”

The same season there was in the castle a seven score prisoners of Frenchmen who were taken upon the sea, and the Duke kept them in prison to the intent to put them to death, he was so cruel against all Christian men. But God, who never forgetteth his friends, succoured them. This Geoffrey went to the prisons and said to the prisoners, “Sirs, if ye will save your lives, come out and follow me.”

Then the prisoners incontinent issued out of the prison and followed Geoffrey, and he brought them into the chamber where all the harness hanged. He caused them all to be armed and said, “Sirs, if ye have courage and will to issue hence, it is time now ye show your virtue.”

“Sir,” quod they, “to die in the quarrel we shall do your commandment, to come out of bondage into freedom.”

When Geoffrey heard them he was right joyous and said, “Sirs, know surely that there is here in this palace at dinner the son of Duke Sevin of Bordeaux, and he is nephew to the Duke, lord of this house, who was once christened and hath renied the faith of the our Lord God Jesu Christ. And he hath commanded me to cause seven score paynims to be armed to come and to slay his nephew and all his company.”

Thus when they were all armed, and swords by their sides, they followed Geoffrey to the palace, and when they entered, Huon said to the Duke his uncle, “Sir these men in harness that entered into this hall, be they such as ye have commanded to come hither to conduct me in my journey?”

“Ah, Huon,” quod the Duke, “it is otherwise than thou thinkest. Think surely to die. There is no remedy. Thou shalt never see fair day more.”

Then he said, “Sirs, step forth, look that no Christian man scape

you, but let them all be slain.”

Chapter 30. *How by the aid of Geoffrey and of the prisoners Huon was succoured and slew all the paynims and the duke fled and after besieged the castle.*

WHEN HUON SAW the malice of his uncle and his false treason, he was sore abashed and rose up suddenly and set his helm on his head and took his sword in his hand. Then Geoffrey came in and cried, “Saint Denis, ye noble Frenchmen, take heed that no paynim scape alive, but slay them all with sorrow!”

Then the Frenchmen drew out their swords and fought with the paynims on all parts, so that within a short time they were all slain. And when the Duke saw how they were no paynims that slew his men, he was in great fear of his life and so fled away into a secret chamber. When Huon perceived that they were Frenchmen that succoured him he pursued the Duke with his sword in his hand, all bloody with the blood of the paynims that he had slain. When the traitor Duke saw that his nephew so followed him, he fled from chamber to chamber till he came to a window opening upon the garden side and so leapt out thereat and ran away, whereof Huon and Geoffrey and the other Frenchmen were right sorrowful.

Then they closed the gates and lift up the bridges, to the intent that they should not be taken within. Then they came into the hall whereas one took quaintance of another, whereof they had great joy. But if God had not succoured them their joy had been turned to sorrow, for the Duke who was scaped.

When he came into the town he made a cry that as many as were able to bear harness should come to him, so that he and all that he could make came with him before the palace more than ten thousand persons, and they all sware the death of the Christian men within the palace. When the Duke saw he had such number he was joyful. Then he commanded his engines to be raised up and ladders on every part,

and there with pikes and mattocks they brake down a corner tower, and the Christian men within defended them valiantly. But their defence should a little availed them and our Lord God had not succoured them.

When Huon knew the danger that they were in he was sore displeased and said, “Ah, good Lord, I ought to be sore annoyed when I see that we be thus kept in by mine uncle. I fear me we shall never see more days.”

Then Gerames said, “Sir, for the love of God, blow now your horn.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “it is not in my power to do it, for the Provost Gonder hath it in keeping.”

“Ha, Huon!” quod Gerames, “In an ill hour we were acquainted with you, for now by your folly and pride we are in the way of destruction.”

Thus as they were devising, Gonder the Provost came to the Duke and said, “Sir, I have great marvel that ye will thus destroy your own palace. Great folly ye do therein. Sir, I would counsel you, leave this assault, and let there be a peace made between you and your nephew, on the condition to let him and his company go safely away.”

“Provost,” quod the Duke, “I pray thee go and do the best that thou canst. I will do as thou doest counsel me.”

Then the Provost came to the palace and said to Huon, “Sir, for God’s sake speak with me.”

“What art thou?” quod Huon.

“I am your host, the Provost, and I require you in as much as ye love your lives keep well this palace.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “of your good counsel I thank you, and I desire you for the love that ye bear me and in that ye would help to save my life, as to deliver me again the horn of ivory that I took you to keep. For without that I cannot scape death.”

“Sir,” quod the Provost, “it is not far from me,” and so took it out of his bosom and delivered it to Huon in at a window on the garden

side.

Chapter 31. *How King Oberon came and succoured Huon and slew all the paynims except such as would be christened, and how Huon slew the duke his uncle.*

WHEN HUON SAW that he was seized<sup>1</sup> of his horn of ivory he was joyful, the which was no marvel, for it was the surety of his life. Then he set it to his mouth and began to blow it. Then Gerames said, "Ah, sir, ye should never be so light to discover your secrets, for if this Provost had been untrue he might have discovered all your secrets to the Duke, whereby ye had been lost and dead. Therefore, never discover your secrets. And also, sir, I require you, as yet blow not your horn, for ye be not as yet hurt. King Oberon commanded you so at his departing."

"Why," quod Huon, "will ye then that I tarry till I be slain? Surely I will blow it without any longer tarrying."

And so he blew it so sore that the blood came out of his mouth, so that all that were in the palace began to sing and to dance, and the Duke and all such as were at the siege about the palace could not rest but to sing and to dance.

Then King Oberon, who as then was in his city of Mommure, said, "A-hey-a! I hear my friend Huon's horn blow, whereby I know well he hath some business in hand, wherefore I wish myself thereas the horn was blown, with a hundred thousand men well armed."

He had made no sooner his wish, but he was in the city of Tormont, whereas he and his men slew down the paynims, that it was marvel to see the blood run down the streets like a river. King Oberon made it to be cried that as many as would receive bapteme<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup>seized: put in possession of

<sup>2</sup>bapteme: baptism

their lives should be saved, so that thereby there were many that were christened.

Then King Oberon came to the palace. When Huon saw him he went and thanked him of his succour at that time of need. "Friend," quod Oberon, "as long as ye believe and do my commandments, I shall never fail to succour you in all your affairs."

Thus, all that were in the town and would not believe on God were slain. Then the Duke was taken and brought to the palace to Huon. When he saw his uncle taken, he was joyful. And then the Duke said, "Fair nephew, I require you have pity of me."

"Ah, untrue traitor," quod Huon, "thou shalt never depart hence alive. I shall never respite<sup>3</sup> thy death."

Then with his sword he strake off his uncle's head. Then he made his body to be hanged over the walls of the town that his illness might always be had in memory and to be an ensample to all other. Thus that country was delivered from that traitor.

Chapter 32. *How King Oberon defended Huon that he should not go to te tower of the giant, to the which Huon would not accord but went thither, whereby he was in great danger of death, and of the damsel that he found there who was his own cousin born in France.*

WE HAVE WELL heard how King Oberon came and succoured Huon. And when all was done, then he said to Huon, "My dear friend, I will take my leave of thee, for I shall never see thee again till thou hast suffered as much pain and ill and poverty and disease that it will be hard to declare it, and all through thine own folly."

When Huon heard that, all afraid he said, "Sir, methink ye say great wrong, for in all things to my power I will observe your commandment."

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<sup>3</sup>respice: remit

“Friend,” quod Oberon, “sen thou wilt do so, remember then thy promise. And I charge thee, on pain of thy life and losing forever my love, that thou be not so hardy to take the way to the tower of Dunother, the which is a marvelous great tower standing on the seaside. Julius Caesar caused it to be made, and therein I was long nourished. Thou never sawest so fair a tower, nor better garnished with chambers and glass windows and within hanged with rich tapestry. At the entry of the gate there are two men of brass, each of them holding in their hands a flail of iron, wherewith without cease, day and night, they beat by such a measure that when the one striketh with his flail, the other is lift up ready to strike. And they beat so quickly that a swallow flying cannot pass by unslain. And within this tower there is a giant named Angolafer. He took from me the tower and a white harness<sup>1</sup> of such virtue that whosoever hath it on his body cannot be hurt nor weary, nor he cannot be drowned in no water nor burned with fire. Therefore, Huon, my friend, I charge thee go not that way, as much as thou fearest my displeasure, for against that giant thou canst make no resistance.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “know for truth, the day that I departed out of France I took on me that any adventure that I might hear of, though it were never so perilous, that I should never eschew it for any fear of death. And, sir, I had rather die than to forsake to fight with that giant. There is no man shall let me. And, sir, I promise you ere I return again to conquer your said white harness. It shall do me good service hereafter. It is a thing not to be forsaken. And if I need of your aid I shall blow my horn, and ye will come and succour me.”

“Huon,” quod Oberon, “by the Lord that saved me, if thou breakest the horn in the blowing, thou shalt have no succour nor aid of me.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “ye may do your pleasure, and I shall do mine.”

Then Oberon departed without more speaking, and Huon abode

in the city, the which he gave to Geoffrey and to the Provost his host and all the land that his uncle held. Then he made him ready and took gold and silver plenty and took his leave of Geoffrey and of his host and of all other. And so he and his company departed and so rode over hills and dales night and day a certain space without finding of any adventure worthy to be had in memory.

At last he came near to the seaside whereas the tower of the giant was. When Huon saw it he said to his company, “Sirs, yonder I see a tower, the which was defended<sup>2</sup> me by Oberon. But as God help me, or<sup>3</sup> it be night I will see what is within it, whatsoever come thereof.”

Then Gerames beheld the tower and began to weep and said, “Ah, Huon, he is a fool that agreeth to the counsel of a child. Sir, for God’s sake beware that ye break not the commandment of King Oberon, for an ye do, great ill is like to come to you.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “if all the men now living should defend me to go thither, I would not obey them. For ye know well I departed out of France for none other thing but to search the strange adventures. I demand nothing else but to find adventures. Therefore, speak no more to the contrary, for or I sleep, I will fight with the giant, for though he be more harder than iron, I shall slay him, or he me. And you Gerames, and all the other, abide you here in this meadow till I return again.”

“Sir,” quod Gerames, all weeping, “it sore displeaseth me that it will be no better. Therefore I recommend you to the safeguard of God.”

Thus Huon departed and left his company piteously complaining. Huon armed him and so took his way and kissed all his men one after another and took with him his horn and cup. So all alone on foot he went forth and rested not till he came to the gate of the

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<sup>1</sup>white harness: a suit of steel (or silver) armour

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<sup>2</sup>defended: forbidden

<sup>3</sup>or: before

castle of Dunother. Then he saw two men of brass that without ceasing beat with their flails. He beheld them well and thought it was in a manner impossible to enter without death. Then he had great marvel and said to himself how King Oberon had showed him the truth and thought without the aid of the grace of God it were impossible to enter. Then he beheld all about if there were any other entry. At last he saw near to a pillar of marble a basin of gold fast tied with a chain. Then he approached near thereto and drew out his sword, wherewith he strake three great strokes on the basin so that the sound thereof might well be heard into the castle.

Within the tower there was a damsel called Sebylle. When she heard the basin sound, she had great marvel. Then she went to a window and looked out and saw Huon that would enter. Then she went back again and said, "Ah, good Lord, what knight is yonder without that would enter? For if the giant awake, anon he will be slain, for if there were a thousand knights together they should soon be destroyed surely. I have great desire for to know what he is and where he was born, for as me seemeth he should be of France. To know the truth, I will go to the window to see if I may have of him any knowledge."

Then she went out of her chamber and went to a window near the gate and looked out and saw Huon all armed, abiding at the gate. Then she beheld the blazure<sup>1</sup> of his shield, wherein was portrayed three crosses gules<sup>2</sup>, whereby she knew well he was of France. "Alas," quod she, "I am but lost if the giant know that I have been here."

Then she returned again in haste and went to the chamber door whereas the giant lay and slept, and she perceived he was asleep, for he routed<sup>3</sup> that it was a marvel to hear. Then she returned again quickly to the gate. Then she opened a wicket, out of the which there

issued such a wind that it causeth the two men with their flails to stand still in rest. When she had opened the wicket, hastily she returned into her chamber. When Huon saw the little wicket open, he advanced himself and entered, for the two men with their flails were in rest. Then he went forth, thinking to find them that had opened the wicket, but he was sore abashed when he could find no creature.

There were so many chambers that he wist not whither to go to find that he sought for. Thus he searched all about. At last he saw about a pillar fourteen men lie dead, whereof he had great marvel and said that he would return back again. Then he went out of the hall and came to the gate, weening to have found it open. But it was closed by itself, and the men again beat with their flails.

"Alas," quod Huon, "now I see well I cannot scape from hence."

Then he returned into the castle and hearkened, and as he went searching about he heard the voice of a damsel piteously weeping. He came thereas she was and humbly saluted her and said, "Fair damsel, I cannot tell if ye can understand my language or not. Know of you I would, why ye make this great sorrow."

"Sir," quod she, "I weep because I have of you great pity, for if the giant here within, who is asleep, hap go to wake, ye are but dead and lost."

"Fair lady," quod Huon, "I pray you show me what ye be, and where ye were born."

"Sir," quod she, "I am daughter to Guynemer, who in his time was Earl of Saint Omers, and am niece to Duke Sevin of Bordeaux."

When Huon heard that, right humbly he kissed her and said, "Dame, know for truth ye are my near kinswoman, for I am son to Duke Sevin. I pray you show me what adventure hath brought you into this castle."

"Sir," quod she, "my father had devotions to see the Holy Sepulchre, and he loved me so well that he would not leave me behind him, and as we were on the sea near to the city of Escalon in Syria there rose a great tempest in the sea, so that the wind brought

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<sup>1</sup>blazure: armorial bearings, heraldic device

<sup>2</sup>crosses gules: red crosses

<sup>3</sup>routed: snored

us near to this castle. And the giant, being in his tower, saw us in great danger of drowning and that we were driven into this port. He came down out of his palace and slew my father and all them that were with him except myself, and so brought me into this tower, whereas I have been this seven year and never heard one mass. And now, cousin, I pray you what adventure hath brought you hither into this strange country<sup>1</sup>?”

“Cousin,” quod he, “sen ye will know of mine adventure, I shall show you the truth. King Charlemagne hath sent me in message to the Admiral Gaudys in Babylon. I bear him a message by mouth and by letters. And as my way lay, I am come by this tower. And I demanded of a paynim who was within this tower, and he answered me and said how here should be a great and an horrible giant who hath done much ill to them that hath passed this way. And I thought to pass this way to fight with him and to destroy him and to deliver the country of him. And I have left my company hereby in a valley to tarry for me.”

“Dear cousin,” quod she, “I have great marvel that ye would take on you such a folly, for if ye were five hundred men together well armed, ye durst not all abide him if he were armed with his armour, for none can endure against him. Therefore, cousin, I counsel you to return back again or he do wake, and I shall open you the wicket so that ye shall pass out without danger.”

*Chapter 33. How the damsel, cousin to Huon, showed him the chamber whereas the giant slept, and how he went and waked him, and of the good armour that the giant delivered to Huon.*

WHEN HUON HAD well understand<sup>2</sup> the damsel, he said, “Cousin,

know for truth, or I depart hence I will see what man he is. It shall never be said to my reproach in the court of any prince that for fear of a miscreant I should be of so faint a courage that I durst not abide him. Certainly I had rather die than such a fault should come to me.”

“Ah, cousin,” quod she, “then I see well both you and I are destroyed. But sen it is thus, I shall show you the chamber whereas he sleepeth, and when ye have seen him, yet ye may return. First go into this chamber that ye see here before you, wherein ye shall find bread and wine and other victual, and in the next ye shall find clothes of silk and many rich jewels. Then in the third chamber ye shall find the four gods of the paynims—they be all of fine massy gold. And in the fourth ye shall find the giant lying asleep on a rich bed. Then, sir, if ye believe me, I would counsel you to strike off his head sleeping, for if he awake, ye cannot scape without death.”

“Dame,” quod Huon, “and God will, it shall never be laid to my reproach that I should strike any man without defiance.”

Then Huon departed from the lady, his sword in his hand and helm on his head and his shield about his neck, and so entered into the first chamber and so into the second and third, whereas he saw the four gods. When he had well regarded them he gave each of them a stroke with his sword, and then he entered into the chamber whereas the giant lay sleeping. Huon regarded him much and the bed that he lay on, the which was so rich that the value thereof could not be prized<sup>3</sup>. The curtains, covering and pillows were of such richesse that it was great beauty to behold them. Also the chamber was hanged with rich cloths and the floor covered with carpets. When Huon had well regarded all this and well advised the giant, who was seventeen foot of length and his body furnished thereafter and all his other members. But a more fouler and hideous creature was never seen, with a great head and great ears and a camoised<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A strange country is a country that is foreign or other than one's own.

<sup>2</sup>understond: understood

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<sup>3</sup>prized: estimated

<sup>4</sup>camoised: low and concave.

nose and eyen brinning<sup>1</sup> like a candle.

“Ah, good Lord,” quod Huon, “I would King Charlemagne were here to see us two fight, for I am sure then or he departed my peace should be made with him. Ah, sweet Virgin Mary, I humbly require thee to be mediatrix to thy sweet son to be my succour against this enemy, for if it be not his pleasure, against him I cannot endure.”

Then Huon fiercely advanced forth and made the sign of the cross, casting in his mind what he might do, for he thought that if he slew him sleeping it should be a great reproach to him and should be said that he had slain a man dead. And then he said to himself, “Shame have I if I touch him or I have defied him.” Then Huon cried out aloud and said, “Arise, thou heathen hound, or I shall strike off thy head.”

When the giant heard Huon speak, he awoke fiercely and beheld Huon and so rose up so quickly that in the rising he brast<sup>2</sup> the bedstead that he lay on. Then he said to Huon, “Friend, they that sent thee hither loved thee but little nor doubted not me<sup>3</sup>.”

And when Huon heard the giant speak French he had great marvel and said, “I am come hither to see thee, and it may be so that I have done folly.”

Then the giant said, “Thou sayest truth. For if I were armed as thou art, five hundred men such as thou art could not endure, but that ye should all die. But thou seest I am naked, without sword or weapon, yet for all that I doubt thee not.”

Then Huon thought in himself that it should be great shame to him to assail a man without armour or weapon. Then he said, “Go and arm thee, or incontinent I shall slay thee.”

“Friend,” quod the giant “this that thou sayest proceedeth of a

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<sup>1</sup>brinning: burning

<sup>2</sup>Brast is a northern form of *burst*, meaning “break or be broken suddenly” (*OED*) in addition to what *burst* means nowadays.

<sup>3</sup>nor doubted not me: nor was not afraid of me

good courage and of courtesy.”

Then he armed him and took in his hand a great falchion<sup>4</sup>, and Huon was withdrawn into the palace abiding for the giant, who tarried not long but came to Huon and said, “What art thou? Behold me here ready to destroy thee without thou make good defence. Yet I desire thee tell me what thou art, to the intent that I may, when I have slain thee, tell how I have slain such one that by his folly came to assail me in mine own palace. Great pride it was in thee that thou wouldest not strike me or I was armed. Whosoever thou art, thou seemest son to a noble man. I pray thee show me whither thou wouldest go, and what moved thee to come hither, to the intent that I might know the truth of thine enterprise, that when I have slain thee I may make in mine avaunt to my men that I have slain such a man, that thought scorn and disdain to strike me or I was armed.”

“Paynim,” quod Huon, “thou art in a great folly when thou reputest me but dead. But sen thou wilt know the truth, I show to thee I am a poor knight, from whom King Charlemagne hath taken his lands and banished me out of the realm of France and hath sent me to do a message to the Admiral Gaudys at Babylon. And my name is Huon, son to Duke Sevin of Bordeaux. Now I have showed all the truth of mine enterprise, and now I pray thee tell me where thou wert born, and who engendered thee, to the intent that when I have slain thee I may make mine avaunt in King Charles’ court and before all my friends that I have slain such a great marvellous giant as thou art.”

Then the giant said, “If thou slay me thou mayest well make thine avaunt that thou hast slain Agrapart the giant, who hath seventeen brethren, of whom I am the youngest. Also thou mayest say, that unto the dry tree<sup>5</sup> and to the Red Sea there is no man but is tributary to me. I have chased the Admiral Gaudys, whither as thou wouldest

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<sup>4</sup>falchion: curved broadsword, the convex edge being the cutting edge

<sup>5</sup>dry tree: gallows

go, and have taken from him by puissance divers of his cities, and he doth me yearly servage by the service of a ring of gold to buy his head withal. Also I took from Oberon this puissant tower, that for all his enchanting and fairy could not resist me. And also I took from him a rich harness. Thou never heardest of such another, for it had such virtue that whosoever can put it on him can never be weary nor discomfited<sup>1</sup>. But there is therein another virtue, for he that must wear that harness must be without spot of deadly sin, and also his mother must be without carnal copulation with any man except with her husband. I believe there cannot be found any man that may wear this harness. Also it is of such virtue that whosoever hath it on his body cannot be grieved neither with fire nor water. By Mahound I have proved it, and because I have found such courtesy in thee that thou gavest me leave to arm me, I give thee leave to assay if thou canst put on that harness.”

Then the giant went to a coffer and took out the harness and came to Huon and said, “Lo, here is the good harness. I give thee leave to assay to put it on thy body.”

Then Huon took the harness and went back a little and did off his own armour and took the said harness and incontinent did it on his body. Then hastily he did on his helm and took his shield and his sword in his hand and devoutly thanked our Lord God of his grace.

Then the giant said, “By Mahound, I had little thought thou hadst been such a man. That harness becometh thee well. Now I have quit thee thy courtesy that thou showedst me. Therefore I pray thee put off the harness and deliver it me again.”

“Hold thy tongue,” quod Huon. “God confound thee, it is need for me to have such armour. Know for truth I will not render it again for fourteen of the best cities between this and Paris.”

“Friend,” quod the giant, “sen thou wilt not render me again the armour, I am content to let thee depart quite without hurt or

damage, and also I will give thee my ring of gold, the which the Admiral Gaudys gave me, for I know well it shall stand thee in good stead if thou thinkest to furnish thy message. For when thou comest to the gate of his palace and say how thou art a messenger sent from King Charles, thou shalt find four gates, and at every gate four porters, so that at the first gate, if it be known thou be a Frenchman, one of thy hands shall be cut off, and at the second gate thy other hand, and at the third gate one of thy feet, and at the fourth the other foot, and then shalt thou be brought before the Admiral and there thy head stricken off. And therefore, to scape these perils and to furnish thy message and to the intent that thou mayest surely return, give me again my harness, and I shall give thee my ring of gold, the which when thou showest it thou shalt be received with great honour at every gate. And then thou mayest go and return surely in the palace at thy pleasure, and no man to let thee, for if thou hadst slain five hundred men there shall be none so hardy to touch thee nor to do thee any ill if thou hast this ring upon thee. For when I have need of men or money I cannot lack if I send this ring for a token. Therefore I pray thee let me have again my harness.

Chapter 34. *How Huon slew the great giant, and how he called Gerames and his company to him, and of the joy that they made for the death of the giant.*

WHEN HUON UNDERSTOOD the paynim he said, “Ah, thou fell and false deceiver, know for truth if all the preachers between the East and the West preached to me a whole year, and that thou wouldst give me all that thou hast and thy ring therewith, I would not render again the good harness that is now on my body. First I shall slay thee, and then as for thy ring that thou prayest so sore, then I will have it, whether thou wilt or not.”

When the giant had well heard Huon and saw that he in no wise could get again his harness he was then sorrowful, and also he saw

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<sup>1</sup>discomfited: defeated (in battle), perplexed



how Huon reproved him. Therewith he was so sore displeased that his eyes seemed like two candles burning. Then he yet demanded of Huon if he would do none otherwise.

“No, truly,” quod Huon. “Though thou be great and strong, I have no fear of ye, sen I have on this good harness. Therefore in the name of God and of his divine puissance I defy thee.”

“And I thee,” quod giant. “For all thy harness thou canst not endure against me.”

Then the giant approached to Huon and lift up his falchion thinking to have stricken Huon, but he failed, the stroke glent, and the falchion light upon a pillar and entered into it more than two foot. Then Huon, who was quick and light, beheld the marvellous stroke. Quickly he stepped forth with his good sword in his hands, regarding how the giant had his falchion sticking fast in the pillar. He strake the giant on both the arms near to his hands in such wise that he strake off both his hands, so that they with the falchion fell down to the earth.

When the giant felt himself so sore hurt, for pain thereof he gave a marvellous cry, so horrible as though all the tower had fallen to the earth, whereof the damsel Sebylle, being in her chamber, was sore abashed. She went out of her chamber and found a staff by the way. She took it up in her hands and came to the palace whereas she heard the cry and met the giant fleeing away to save himself. But the damsel well advised<sup>1</sup> when she saw that he fled. She cast the staff between his legs, so that thereby he fell to the earth, and Huon, who came after him with his sword in his hand, he hasted him, and gave the giant many a great stroke. And the giant cried out so high that it was great marvel to hear him. Then Huon lift up his sword and gave him such a stroke in the neck that his head flew to the earth. Then Huon wiped his sword and put it up in the sheath. Then he came to the head, thinking to have taken it up to have set in on the height of

the tower, but the head was so great and heavy that he could not remove it nor turn his body. Then he smiled and said, “Ah, good Lord, I thank ye of thy grace to have given me the puissance to slay such a creature. Would to God that this body and head were now in the palace of Paris before Charlemagne, King of France, so that he knew that I have slain him.”

Then Huon went to a window and looked out and saw where his company were. Then he said to them, a-high, “Sirs, come up hither. Ye may do it surely, for this palace is won and the giant slain.”

When Gerames and Garyn and the other heard that, they were joyful and thanked our Lord God. Then they came to the gate, and Sebylle, the damsel, went thither and opened the wicket, whereby the enchantment failed. Then they entered and followed the damsel, who brought them into the palace to Huon. When they saw him they all wept for joy and embraced and kissed him, and demanded if he had any hurt.

“Sirs,” quod Huon, “I thank God I feel no hurt.” And then he brought them thereas the giant lay dead. When they saw him they had marvel how he could be slain by Huon. They were afraid to see him lie dead. Then Gerames demanded of Huon what was the damsel that was there. Then Huon showed how she was his cousin and showed them all the manner how she came thither, whereof they had great joy and embraced her. Then they all unarmed them and went to supper and ate and drank at their pleasure, but their joy endured not long, as ye shall hear after.

*Chapter 35. How Huon departed from the castle of the giant and took leave of his company and went alone afoot to the seaside, whereas he found Malabron of the fairy, on whom he mounted to pass the sea.*

WE HAVE HEARD here before how Huon conquered the giant, the which was great joy to all his company. Then the next day Huon called all his company and said, “Sirs, ye know well the enterprise

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<sup>1</sup>well advised: devised well

that I have taken on me to do touching the Admiral Gaudys. Therefore, it is convenient that as shortly as I can to do my message that I am charged by King Charles to do to the Admiral Gaudys, wherefore I desire you all to keep good and true company with this noble damsel, and also I require you to tarry me here fifteen days, and then if I return not, go you all into France and take this noble damsel with you and salute from me King Charlemagne and all the peers of France and show them the hard adventures that I have had and how I am gone to perform his message.”

When his company understood that he would depart, they were sorrowful and said, “Sir, ye desire us to tarry you here a fifteen days. Know for truth we shall tarry here for you an whole year.”

“Sirs,” quod he, “I thank you.”

Then he made him ready to depart and armed him and took his cup and horn and also the giant’s ring, the which he did put about his arm. And then he kissed his cousin and all the other, and they all made great lamentation for his departing. Then they went up into the palace and looked out at the windows after Huon, as long as they might see him.

Huon went forth till he came to the seaside, the which was not far from the castle, and there was a little haven whereas always lay some manner of ship or vessel to pass over the sea. And when Huon came thither he had great marvel and said, “Ah, good Lord, what shall I do that I can find here no boat nor vessel to pass in? Alas, in an ill hour I slew Charlot, whereby I am in danger, howbeit I did it in my defence. Great wrong King Charles hath done to banish me out of mine own country.” Great complaints made Huon there, being alone, and began sore to weep.

And suddenly on his right hand he saw a great beast come swimming towards him like a bear. Huon beheld him and made on his head a sign of the cross and drew out his sword to defend himself, thinking the beast would have assailed him. But he did not, but went a little off from Huon and shook himself in such wise that his skin fell off, and then he was as fair a man and as well formed as

could be seen.

Then Huon had great fear and marvel. When he saw that this beast was become a man, he approached near to him and demanded what he was and whether he were an human creature or else an ill spirit that was come thither to tempt him and said, “Right now thou didst swim in the sea and traversed the great waves in guise of a marvellous beast. I charge thee in the name of God do me no hurt, and show me what thou art. I believe thou art of King Oberon’s company.”

“Huon,” quod he, “dismay thou not. I know thee right well. Thou art son to the noble Duke Sevin of Bordeaux. Noble King Oberon hath sent me to thee. Once I brake his commandment, wherefor he hath condemned me to be this thirty year like a beast in the sea.”

“Friend,” quod Huon, “by the Lord that formed me I will trust thee till I be past the Red Sea.”

“Huon,” quod Malabron, “know for truth, I am sent hither for none other thing but to bear thee whither as thou wilt. Therefore, make ye ready, and recommend thyself to the safeguard of our Lord Jesu Christ, and then let me alone.”

Then Malabron entered again into the beast’s skin and said to Huon, “Sir, mount on my back.”

*Chapter 36. How Huon passed the sea upon Malabron, who bare him to Babylon, and how Huon came to the first gate and so to the second.*

WHEN HUON SAW the beast enter again into his skin and that he tarried for him, he made the sign of the cross and prayed God to save and conduct him and so leapt up on him.

And the beast entered into the sea and swam as fast as though a bird had flown, so that within a short space he traversed the great river of Nile, the which cometh from Paradise, the which is a dangerous river for the great multitude of serpents and crocodiles that be therein. Howbeit, there were none that did him any trouble.

Then when they came to land, Huon was joyful.

Then Malabron said, "Right dearly shall I aby<sup>1</sup> the time that thou wert born, or that ever I knew thee. For the intent to do thee pleasure, I shall endure yet ten year like a beast in the sea, and thirty year I have so already, so that is in all forty. I have great pity of thee. For there is no man born of woman that knoweth the ill and poverty that shall fall hereafter to thee. And I shall suffer much for the love that I have to thee. Howbeit, I shall take it in patience. Yonder thou mayest see the city whither thou wouldest go. Moreover, thou knowest what hath been commanded thee and what thou hast to do. And yet, whatsoever fall, break not the commandment of King Oberon, and always be true, and say the truth, for as soon as thou makest any lie thou shalt lose the love of King Oberon. Thus God be with thee, for I may no longer tarry."

Thus he went again into the sea, and Huon tarried there alone, recommending himself to our Lord God and so took the way to the city and so entered in without let of any man. As soon as he was entered he met a thousand paynims going ahawking and another thousand coming homeward and a thousand horses let to be new shod and a thousand coming from shoeing. Then he saw a thousand men playing at the chess and another thousand that had played and been mated and another thousand talking and devising with the damsels and another thousand coming from drinking of the Admiral's wine and another thousand going thither.

When Huon all armed had gone a great space in the city, he had great marvel of that he had seen and met so much people. He studied thereon so much that he forgot the giant's ring on his arm, and the men that he met had great marvel of him to see him go armed afoot. He went still forth. Alas, the unhappy Huon, that could not remember the giant's ring about his arm! For lack of remembrance thereof, he suffered after so much trouble that there is no human

tongue can tell it, as ye shall hear after.

At last he came into a great place before the first gate of the palace, whereas there stood a great vine tree set upon brick pillars of divers colours, under the which the Admiral Gaudys one day in the week would come thither and would give audience to all suitors. When Huon had regarded all this, he came to the first gate of the palace. Then he cried to the porter and said, "Friend, I pray thee open the gate."

Then the porter said with a good will, "If thou be a Saracen thou shalt enter."

Then Huon was unadvised, without thinking on King Oberon's commandment or of the giant's ring about his arm, the which if he had showed forth he should not have needed to have made any lie.

When Huon heard the paynim demand whether he were a Saracen, he said, "Yea."

Then the porter said, "Then may ye surely enter."

So Huon passed the first bridge and gate, and when he came to the second he remembered himself how he had broken King Oberon's commandment, wherewith he was so sorrowful at his heart that he wist not what to do, and sware then that he would never lie more. Then he took the ring in his hand and came to the second gate and said to the porter, "Thou villain, he that on the cross died confound thee. Open this gate, for I must enter."

When the porter heard him speak so fiercely, he said, "How is it that the first porter was so hardy to suffer thee to enter in at the first gate?"

"I shall show thee," quod Huon. "Seest not thou this ring, the which is a token that I may pass and go whereas me list?"

When the porter heard him and saw the ring, he knew it well and said, "Sir, ye be welcome. How faireth the lord that ye come fro?"

Huon, who would not lie, passed the bridge and gave no answer, and so came to the third gate. The porter came to him, and Huon showed him the ring. Then the porter let down the bridge and opened the gate, and with great reverence saluted Huon and suffered

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<sup>1</sup>aby: buy

him to pass.

When Huon was thus past the three bridges, then he remembered how he had made a lie at the first bridge and said to himself, "Alas! what shall become of me, sen I have so lightly broken my promise to him that hath done so much for me? Alas! I forgot the ring that was about mine arm. Howbeit, I trust he will take no more regard to this deed than he did when I blew the horn without any cause."

Thus Huon passed the three gates of the palace.

*Chapter 37. How Huon passed the fourth gate, and how he came in to the garden, whereas was the fountain, and of that he did here.*

WHEN HUON SAW he was past the three gates, he passed the fourth gate with the ring in his hand, for he met with no man but that did him honour when they saw the ring. Then he said to the fourth porter, "Thou villain porter, God curse thee, open the gate."

When the porter heard him he had great marvel and said, "What art thou that art armed and speakest so fiercely to me? Lay away thine armour, and then show me what thou art and whither thou wilt go, for armed as thou art it is not possible for thee to enter. Show me by thy faith how hast thou passed the three other bridges."

Then Huon said, "Hold thy peace, paynim. I am a messenger sent from noble King Charlemagne, and whether thou wilt or not, I will pass this way and go to the palace to the Admiral Gaudys. There is neither thou nor none other can let me. Behold this token that I show thee." The paynim knew it anon and let down the bridge and opened the gate and kneeled down and kissed and embraced Huon's leg, desiring him of pardon in that he had caused him to tarry so long.

"Paynim," quod Huon, "good day mayest thou have."

"Sir," quod the porter, "ye may go to the Admiral, who will make you good cheer and great honour, nor there is nothing that ye can

desire but it shall be granted to you, yea and it be his alonely<sup>1</sup> daughter, for love of the lord from whom ye bring this ring to a token. And, sir, I require you how doth the Lord Anglofer? Cometh he hither or not?"

"Porter," quod Huon, "if he come hither, all the devils of hell must bring him hither."

And therewith he passeth forth without any more words but when he said to himself, "Ah, good Lord Jesu Christ, help and aid me in all my business. I was tempted with an ill sprite when I made a lie at the first gate. I did it by lightness of courage and lack of remembrance, whereof I am now right sorry."

Huon, thus being in displeasure with himself for the lie that he made, went forth till he came to the palace and entered into a fair garden wherein the Admiral took oftentimes his pastance<sup>2</sup>, for there could not tree nor fruit nor flower be wished for but there they might be found, both in summer and winter. And in the midst of this garden there was a fair fountain coming out of the river Nile that cometh from Paradise, the which fountain as then was of such virtue that if any sick man did drink thereof, or washed his hands and face, incontinent should be whole, and also if a man had been of great age, he should return again to the age of thirty year, and a woman to become as fresh and lusty as a maid of fifteen year. (This fountain had that virtue the space of forty year, but ten year after that Huon had been there, that was destroyed and broken by the Egyptians, who made war to the Admiral that was as then in Babylon.)

And when Huon had washed his hands and face in the fountain and drunk of the water, he beheld the palace and thought it marvellously fair. And when he had well regarded it he saw a little beside the fountain a great serpent who kept the fountain, to the intent that none should be so hardy to drink nor touch the fountain,

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<sup>1</sup>alonely: only

<sup>2</sup>pastance: recreation (apparently from *passe-temps*)

for if a traitor or any man that hath falsed his faith did touch it he could not scape without death.

But when the serpent saw Huon he inclined himself without making of semblant to do him any ill. Then Huon sat down by the fountain and began piteously to weep and said, "Ah, good Lord, without thy succour it is impossible for me to depart hence alive. Ah, noble King Oberon, forsake me not now in this need, for the trespass that I have done ought to be forgiven me, sen I did it negligently for lack of remembrance. Certainly I will know if for so small a cause ye will leave me, wherefore, whatsoever fall, I shall prove and assay to know the truth."

Then he took his horn and blew it so fiercely that King Oberon heard it, being in his forest. And when he heard it he said, "Ah, good Lord," quod he, "I hear the false knight blow his horn, who setteth so little by me. For at the first gate that he passed he made a false lie. By the Lord that formed me, if he blow till the veins in his neck burst asunder he shall not be succoured for me, nor for no manner of mischief that may fall to him."

Then Huon, being in the garden, blew so sore that the Admiral, who was set at his dinner, rose from the board with all his lords, and all other ladies and damsels, knights and squires, boys and scullions of the kitchen and all other came into the palace to the Admiral and began to dance and sing and made great joy. The sorer that Huon blew his horn, the more they danced and sang, and when Huon left blowing, then the Admiral called his barons and commanded them to be armed and said, "Sirs, go into this garden, for surely there is some enchanter. Therefore, take heed that he scape not, and bring him alive to me, for I will know of him the cause why he hath done this deed. For if that he escape, he shall do us more ill."

When Huon had blown a long space and saw nobody come to him, he was sore abashed. Then he began to weep and said, "Ah, good Lord God, now I see well mine end approacheth, when King Oberon faileth me, in whom I have all my trust in life and death. Ah, dear lady mother, and brother Gerardyn, I shall never see you more. Ah,

noble King Charlemagne, great wrong ye have done to me thus to banish me without desert, for that that I did was in my defence. God forgive it you. Ah, King Oberon, well thou mayest be reputed for an unkind creature, thus to leave me for one small fault. Certainly if thou be a noble man I hope thou wilt pardon me. At last I put all to God, and to Him I submit me and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, His mother. And whatsoever fall, I will enter into the palace and do my message that King Charlemagne hath commanded me to do."

So he made him ready and departed from the fountain, thinking he should find the Admiral at dinner at that hour.

Chapter 38. *How Huon came in to the palace and did his message to the admiral, and how he slew many paynims, and after taken and set in prison.*

WHEN HUON HAD been a certain space at the fountain, he departed all armed and mounted up the grece<sup>1</sup> of the palace the same time the Admiral had caused two of his principal gods to be set in the midst of the palace, richly beseen, and before them two great torches burning, so that no Saracen passed by them but made to them great reverence. And Huon passed by them and would not once look on them nor speak to no man that he met, whereof they had great marvel and said one to another, so that Huon heard them, one of them said, "I believe this man that thus entered into the palace all armed is some messenger sent from some great prince to the Admiral."

And then Huon saw a paynim king speaking to the Admiral and was newly come to the Admiral because that same day the Admiral Gaudys should have delivered to him his daughter, the fair Esclaramonde, in marriage. And Huon saw well how he was the

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<sup>1</sup>grece: stairway

greatest prince that as then was there with the Admiral.

Then Huon said to himself, "Ah, good Lord, if I acquit myself truly to King Charlemagne, I must slay this paynim king. I think it be he that I look for, sen he sitteth so near to the Admiral. God confound me, but<sup>1</sup> incontinent I will strike off his head. Then let our Lord Jesu Christ do with me at his pleasure."

Then Huon came near to the table and drew out his sword and therewith gave the said king such a stroke that his head fell on the table, so that the Admiral was therewith all bloody. Then Huon with a high voice said, "Ah, good Lord, what a good beginning is this! The rest I remit to our Lord Jesu Christ, whom I require to aid me to perform the rest of mine enterprise. In this point I have near quit myself against King Charlemagne."

Then the Admiral said to his barons, "Take this man that hath done me this offence as to murder this king sitting at my table. If he escape, look me never in the face."

Then the paynims assailed Huon on all sides and cast at him darts and swords to have slain him. But his good harness saved him from the death, and with his sword he slew many a fell paynim, so that none durst approach near him.

When he saw that he was sore oppressed, he took his ring off his arm and cast it on the table before the Admiral and said, "Sir Admiral, beware on pain of thy life of doing to me any hurt or damage, by this token that I show thee."

When the Admiral saw the ring, he knew it well. Then he began to cry that no man should be so hardy as to touch him that hath slain the paynim king. Then every man let Huon in rest, whereof he was right joyful. Then he said to the Admiral, "Sir, I will from henceforth thou do as I command thee."

"Friend," quod the Admiral, "thou mayest do in my palace what thou wilt. Whatsoever thou command shall be done. No man shall

say the contrary."

Then Huon saw where his daughter, the fair Esclaramonde, sat by her father. Then Huon went to her and kissed her three times before her father, whereof the damsel was sore abashed, but she saw him so fair and felt his mouth so sweet that she thought, without she might have him to her lover, she should die for sorrow, so that she changed colour and blushed as ruddy as a rose.

When Huon had kissed the lady, then he went to the Admiral and said, "Sir Admiral, know for truth I am christened and am a messenger sent from noble King Charlemagne to thee, because there is no prince, Christian nor heathen, but that obeyeth his commandments, except thysel. Therefore by me he sendeth thee word that sen the dolorous day of battle at Roncesvalles whereas he lost his two nephews, Roland and Olivier, he never since assembled so much people as he will do this next summer to come upon thee, both by water and by land, without thou wilt believe in the law of Jesu Christ. Therefore, if thou wilt believe me, be christened ere this mischief fall upon thee."

"Speak no more of that," quod the Admiral, "for I had rather be hewn and slain than to leave my law to believe upon thy God."

"Sir Admiral," quod Huon, "moreover King Charles commandeth ye to send him a thousand sparhawks<sup>2</sup>, thousand goshawks, thousand bears, and a thousand fair damsels, and also a handful of thy beard and four of thy great teeth."

"Ah," quod the Admiral, "I see thou art hardy and outrageous to demand of me this that thou hast said. And also I have great marvel of thy master that he is so foolish to command me by thee to send him my beard and great teeth. Ere this time, he hath sent me more than fifteen messengers and hath demanded part of this thou speakest of, but all fifteen hath been hanged, and thou art come by thy folly shalt make the sixteenth. But by reason of the ring that thou

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<sup>1</sup>but: unless, if . . . not

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<sup>2</sup>sparhawks: sparrowhawks

bearest we dare not touch thee. But I pray thee, by the faith and law that thou art of, show me what devil hath given thee that ring.”

Then Huon, sore abashed as he<sup>1</sup> that durst not make a lie for fear of King Oberon, said, “Sir, for doubt of thee, nor of no paynim here, I will not spare to show thee the truth. Know well that with this good sword I have slain the lord Angolafer the giant.”

When the Admiral heard that, he said to his lords, “Sirs, look that this ribald scape not, for by all the gods that I believe on, I shall never have joy in my heart till I see him taken.”

Then paynims and Saracens on all parts assailed Huon. When he saw that, he recommended himself to our Lord God—he thought he should never see fair day more. And so with his sword in both his hands he defended himself nobly in slaying and cutting off hands, arms and feet of the Saracens, and of many he made the brains to fly abroad on the pavement. Great horror it was to behold, for by reason of his good harness there was no paynim could do him any damage, but they gave him way, nor durst approach near him.

Huon being full of ire, as he fought he saw on the one side of the palace an arch in the wall, and so, ever still fighting, he drew thither and set his back to the arch to the intent that none should come behind him. There he fared like a wild boar in the wood and defended himself in such wise that whomsoever he touched with a full stroke had no need after of any surgeon. Thus a long space Huon endured and had no great damage. But the force of the paynims was so great that it was not possible for him to sustain<sup>2</sup> long, and he waxed so weary that his strokes feebled, and often times he called upon God and on the Virgin Mary. And on the other part the Admiral cried to his men and said, “Ah, ye faint-hearted knaves, great shame it is to you all, that one man shall so long endure against you all, that ye can neither take him nor slay him.”

Then the paynims, when they heard the Admiral so dispraise them, they came in a great rage all at once upon Huon whereas he was alone under the arch. Then a paynim, who was nephew to the Admiral, came upon Huon. When Huon saw him approach, he lift up his sword and gave the paynim on the helm such a stroke that he clave his head to the breast, and therewith his sword fell out of his hands, and another Saracen took it up. Then all the Saracens at once ran upon Huon and took him and so took from him his horn and cup and did off his harness. And when he was unarmed, the Saracens beheld him well, and many said how they never saw so fair a man before, affirming that if all Frenchmen were such as he is, there were no king able to resist them.

Chapter 39. *Of the great complaints that Huon made being in prison, and how the admiral's daughter came to comfort him, and how she departed not well content with Huon.*

WHEN HUON WAS disarmed, the paynims took and brought him before the Admiral, who was right joyful when he saw Huon, and called his barons and demanded of them what death the caitiff should die that had done them such damage as to slay one of his most puissant kings and also his nephew, beside many other. Then they all answered with once voice that he should be slain all quick incontinent.

Then stepped forth an old ancient Admiral of six-score years of age, and was of the Admiral's privy council, and said, “Sir Admiral, ye may not do thus for the love of this good day, the which is of the feast of Saint John. According to our law, there is none ought to die on that day. But, sir, respite his life for a whole year, the which shall be the feast of your gods. On that day you ought to deliver two champions to do with them your sacrifice. Let this man be one, and another shall come by that time, and which of those two champions be overcome, ye shall make your sacrifice to your gods of him. Thus ye promised your gods to do at the first day that ye took on you the

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<sup>1</sup>he: one

<sup>2</sup>sustain: hold out, bear up

seignury of Babylon. And, sir, if it were not for that this man hath slain one of your kings and your nephew, ye ought not to slay him but rather to thank him. For by him the man in the world that ye ought most to hate is slain. That was the giant Angolafer, for now by his death ye are out of all servitude and bondage and by him set at liberty.”

When the Admiral Gaudys had well heard the paynim he said, “Sen it is so that ye give me this counsel, and that of right mine ancestors hath accustomed the same<sup>1</sup>, I will not do the contrary, but it shall be as ye have said.”

Then was Huon led with four paynims to a dark prison, and the jailer was commanded to give him meat and drink sufficient. When Huon saw how he was in prison, he was right sorrowful and began to remember the noble Duchess his mother and Gerard his brother and said, “Ah, Oberon, how is it that thou art so unkind and outrageous to me, for so little offence to suffer me endure this great misery. For I know well it is not unknown to thee that the offence that I have done was but alonely by forgetfulness.”

Now let us leave speaking of Huon and speak of the fair Esclaramonde, daughter to the Admiral. When she saw it was night, and she all alone in her bed, she remembered the French knight who had kissed her three times in the presence of her father, and she was in great sorrow because he was set in prison, and said to herself, “Without he were a knight of great enterprise he would never had been so hardy to have done as he hath done this day in divers manners.” Wherefore she said he was well worthy to be beloved and succoured.

Then incontinent she rose and made her ready, and privily she took a torch of wax in her hand and lighted it and issued out of her chamber as privily as she could. It was about midnight, and every man was asleep in the palace. She went straight to the prison and

came at so good a time that she found the jailer asleep. Then she stole away the keys and went and opened the prison door, and when Huon saw the candle light and the door of the prison open, he was in great fear lest they would take him out to put him to death or to do him some displeasure. Then he began to make pitiful complaints. The lady, who could well speak French, understood all Huon’s complaints and remembered his name, because the day before she had heard himself show her father his name.

Then she said, “Huon, dismay thee not. I am Esclaramonde, daughter to the Admiral, whom this day past thou did kiss three times in the presence of my father. If it be so that thou will fulfil my will, I shall put to<sup>2</sup> my pain to deliver thee out of prison. For I am so amorous of thee, that ever sen thou didst kiss me I have had none other thought nor imagination but only on thee and to bring thee out of the danger that thou art in.”

“Dame,” quod Huon, “God reward you of the great courtesy that ye would do to me. But, fair lady Esclaramonde, ye be a Saracen, and I am christened. True it is, in that I did kiss you, was by the commandment of King Charlemagne, who sent me hither. But or else<sup>3</sup> I had rather to have been here in perpetual prison than to have touched any part of your flesh or mouth as long as ye be a Saracen.”

“Huon,” quod the lady, “sen thou art of that mind, thou shalt end thy days here in prison miserably. Nor never trust me. For if I can, I shall cause ye dearly to aby<sup>4</sup> the refuse that thou hast made me.”

Then the lady Esclaramonde departed from the prison and came to the jailer and awoke him and said, “Friend, I charge thee on pain of thy life that to this French prisoner within thy keeping, that these three days and three nights thou give him neither meat nor drink.”

“Dame,” quod the jailer, “your commandment shall be fulfilled.”

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<sup>1</sup>hath accustomed the same: have made the same their custom

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<sup>2</sup>put to: add to

<sup>3</sup>or else: otherwise

<sup>4</sup>to aby: to pay the penalty for



Then the lady for displeasure went again to her bed right pensive and full of fantasies. And Huon was three days and three nights without meat or drink, and on the third day he said, all weeping, "Ah, good Lord, I see well I must die for hunger. I humbly require Thee to aid and succour me, and grant me the grace that I consent nor do anything that should be against Thy pleasure or against Thy holy law, for any tribulation that can come to me." Thus this noble Huon complained all weeping.

There is no creature that had heard him but that should have been partakers of his great sorrow.

Chapter 39[a]. *How Huon made great complaints for the famine that he endured, and how the fair Esclaramonde came to comfort him so that Huon would fulfil her desire.*

THUS, AS YE have heard before, Huon complained piteously, for he had been three days and three nights without sustenance. The lady Esclaramonde, who caused it, every morning and every evening came to the prison to hear what Huon would say, and ever she would demand Huon if he were any otherwise advised to answer her or not, and ever she found him at one point<sup>1</sup>. And at the last when she saw that, then she demanded of him, if she delivered him out of prison if he would then promise her to lead her with him into France and to take her to his wife when he came there. "If thou wilt promise me this," quod she, "thou shalt have meat and drink sufficient at thy pleasure."

"Dame," quod Huon, "I promise you faithfully, though I should be forever damned in hell, I shall do your pleasure, whatsoever fall to me thereby."

"Then know for truth," quod the lady, "for the love of thee I will

become christened and believe in the law of our Lord Jesu Christ as soon as we come in any place whereas it may be."

Huon thanked her. Then she caused him to have meat and drink, whereof he was joyful. Then she called the jailer and said, "Go thy way in haste to the Admiral my father and show him how the French knight is dead three days past for feebleness and hunger."

"Dame," quod the jailer, "I am ready to do your commandment," and so he went to the Admiral and said, "Sir, the French knight that was in my keeping is dead for famine three days past."

"Ah," quod the Admiral, "I am sorry therefor, but sen it will be none otherwise I must overpass it. But I had rather that he were alive."

And thus, as ye have heard, Huon was respited from the death. It is a common saying, one day of respite is worth a hundred year.

Then the jailer returned to the prison unto the lady and showed her what he had said to the Admiral.

"Well, friend," quod the lady, "if thou wilt be secret I shall make thee rich forever, as to aid me in such things as I would have."

"Dame," quod he, "to die in the quarrel I shall do you service such as ye command me. The fear of death shall not let me to do it."

Now let us leave speaking of Huon, who was often times visited with the jailer and had all things as he desired and was well lodged at his pleasure. Let us now speak of Gerames and of them that were with him in the castle of the giant.

Chapter 40. *How Gerames and his company departed from the tower and the damsel with them and came to Babylon and of the manner that Gerames held to know some news of Huon.*

WE HAVE HEARD here before how Huon departed from the tower of the giant and left there Gerames and all his company, with the damsel his cousin. They tarried there three months and never heard anything of Huon, whereof they were sorrowful, and went forth in

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<sup>1</sup>at one point: at one determination or resolution

a morning and came to the sea's side, to see if they might hear any word of their lord Huon. And as they looked into the sea they spied a ship charged with thirty paynims and great riches. Then Gerames saw how the ship was coming to that port. Then he said to his company, "Sirs, let us go and see if we can know any tidings of Huon by them."

Then they went to the port, and by that time the mariners had cast their anchor. Then Gerames demanded of them whence they were and whither they would go.

"Sir," quod they, "we would go to the Mosque to pay to Angolafer, the great giant, a tribute that we are bound every year to pay. And, sir, we desire you to show us where we might find him."

And when Gerames saw how they were all aland<sup>1</sup> out of the ship he said, "Ah, ye unhappy paynims, ye shall never depart hence, for he that ye demand for is dead, and all ye shall bear him good company."

Then Gerames said to his company, "Sirs, let all these paynims be slain." And then incontinent they set upon them, so that all the paynims were slain, not one that scaped alive. For the Christian men were armed and the paynims without harness or any weapon, for otherwise they durst not come aland for fear of the giant.

Then Gerames entered into the ship and took all that they found there and bare it into the tower, and then they went to dinner and made great of that adventure. And after dinner Gerames said, "Sirs, if we were now in France and King Charlemagne did demand of us what is become of Huon, ye know well there is none of us can tell whether he be alive or dead. For if we should say he is dead and afterward return home, then we should be reputed for false men ever after, both we and our children. A man may be a prisoner fourteen or fifteen year and yet come home again at the last safe and sound. But, sirs, and ye will believe me, we shall do like true men. We have

as now in this port a good ship, well furnished with everything. And we have here gold and silver plenty, and we shall soon victual our ship. And then let us take the sea and never rest sailing till we hear some news of our lord Huon. And if we do thus, then we do as true men ought to do, and I desire you all every man show his advice."

Then, without taking of any longer respite, they answered all with one voice that they were ready to accomplish all that he had devised. Then they took gold and silver and all their riches and bare it into the ship and furnished it with wine, biscuit, salt flesh and artillery. And when their ship was garnished, they put in their horses and their armour, and they all thirteen companions entered into the ship, and the damsel with them. Then they weighed up their anchors and hawsed<sup>2</sup> up their sail and so left the tower of the giant all void and no man therein.

And thus they sailed along the coast till they came into the high sea, and so long they sailed till they came to Damyete, and there they entered into the river of Nile. And so long they sailed therein that they arrived at Babylon and came to the port and took out their horses. Gerames, that knew well the language and the manner of the entering into the four gates, said to his company, "Sirs, let us leap on our horses, and let us enter into the city to see if we may hear any news of our master Huon."

Thus they rode forth and entered into the city. Then Gerames said, "Sirs, we will go to the palace, but when we come there hold you all your peace, and suffer me to speak, wherefore it is convenient that ye all agree to my words and say not the contrary."

They answered and said they were content so to do.

Thus they rode together through the town. "Ah, good Lord," quod Gerames, "I beseech Thee of Thy grace to grant us that we may hear some tidings of our master, Huon of Bordeaux, for whom we be in jeopardy of death."

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<sup>1</sup>aland: come ashore, landed

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<sup>2</sup>hawsed: raised

So they passed all the four bridges and gates, by reason that Gerames showed forth such reasons that the porters were content. Then they came before the great hall, and there they alighted and mounted up all thirteen and the damsel with them. And when they were in the hall they saw the Admiral Gaudys sitting on a rich chair, garnished with gold and precious stones. And Gerames, that could well speak the language Saracen, came before the Admiral and said, "The same Mahound that causeth to grow the wine and the corn save and keep the Admiral Gaudys, whom I see there sitting among his barons."

"Friend," quod the Admiral, "thou art welcome. I pray thee show me what thou art, and whither thou wouldest go."

"Sir," quod Gerames, "I show you plainly, I am come from the good city of Mombraunt and am son to King Yvoryn."

When the Admiral heard that, he rose up on his feet and said, "Thou art welcome, the son of my brother. Fair nephew, I pray you show me how doth my brother Yvoryn."

"Sir," quod Gerames, "when I departed from him I left him in good health, and he saluted you by me and hath sent here to you twelve Frenchmen by me, the which were taken upon the sea as they were going a pilgrimage<sup>1</sup> to the Holy Sepulchre of God in Jerusalem. And he desireth you to put them in prison unto the day of Saint John the Baptist, at which day ye must make the feast of your gods and then to bring them into the meadow here without and to tie and bind them to stakes and let your archers shoot at them, to the intent to know who shooteth best. And this damsel that is here with me, she to be put to your daughter to teach her to speak perfectly the language of French."

"Sir nephew," quod the Admiral, "as ye have devised, it shall be done, and I give you power to command everything in this house at your pleasure, and I pray you show me what is your name."

"Sir," quod he, "I am called Jeracle."

"Well," quod the Admiral, "from henceforth I retain you to be as my chief chamberlain, and I will that ye have the key of the prison in your keeping, and therein to put these caitiffs and to do with them at your pleasure. I will ye love them but a little, but let them have meat and drink sufficient that they die not for famine, as but late died a Frenchman that was sent to me by King Charles of France, who was called Huon of Bordeaux, the which was a right fair young man."

When Gerames heard that, he had before never so great sorrow at his heart. For his displeasure and ire was so great that he had nearhand run upon the Admiral, and he was so angry in his heart that he took up a staff that lay by him and gave each of the Frenchmen such strokes on their heads that the blood ran down. But they suffered it and durst not stir, they were in such fear of the Admiral, but then cursed Gerames for his strokes, who did it for the nones<sup>2</sup>. And when the Admiral saw how he had well beaten the Frenchmen he said, "Fair nephew, it seemeth well by you that ye love but little these Christian men."

"Sir," quod he, "I hate these Christian men more than any men in the world, for sir, all the way that I have come I have thus beaten them three times in every day in the honour of my God Mahound and in the despite of the law of Jesu Christ, on whom they believe."

Thus then Gerames departed from the Admiral and led with them the twelve French prisoners, beating them till he came to the prison, and none of them durst speak one word, but to themselves they cursed Gerames. And as they went to the prisonward they met with the lady Esclaramonde, and she said, "Cousin, I am right joyous of your coming, but if I durst trust in you, I would show you a secret matter, so that ye promise not to discover me."

"Cousin," quod Gerames, "by my faith that I owe to my God

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<sup>1</sup>going a pilgrimage: going on pilgrimage

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<sup>2</sup>for the nonce: for a purpose

Mahound, ye may well show me your will and pleasure. For<sup>1</sup> mine eyen to be drawn out, I shall never discover you.”

And when the damsel heard that promise she said, “Fair cousin, it is a five months past, there came to my father the Admiral a French knight with a message from King Charlemagne, who called himself Huon of Bordeaux, who, when he had done his message, he slew a paynim king as he sat at the table by my father and after came and kissed me four times and after slew many Saracens, wherefore at last he was taken prisoner and set in prison, whereas he is yet, howbeit I made my father believe that he is dead for famine. Howbeit, cousin, he is as yet on live, as well served of meat and drink as my father is.”

When Gerames understood the damsel Esclaramonde, he was both sorrowful and angry, for he thought the damsel did it to deceive him and to cause him to show forth the secretness of his mind. And because of that doubt he passed forth and made no manner of answer to the damsel, but came to the prison and put in the prisoners rudely, and the damsel returned right sorrowful in that she had showed so much of her mind to Gerames, whom she took for her cousin.

When Gerames had set the twelve Frenchmen in prison, he returned right sorrowful, and Huon, being in the prison, had great marvel what prisoners they were that were let down into the prison. He could not see them, the prison was so dark. Then he drew near to them to hear them speak. So at last one of them began to make his complaint and said, “Ah, good Lord Jesu Christ, succour us, for Thou knowest well this that we suffer we have not deserved it, but it is for the love of our young lord, Huon of Bordeaux. We have loved him so well that now we be lost forever. Dear Lord Jesu Christ, have pity on our souls!”

When Huon heard what they said, then he knew well they were christened and Frenchmen. Then he coveted much to know what

they were, and so approached near to them and said, “Sirs, ye that be here, I pray you show me what ye be, and how ye be come hider<sup>2</sup>.”

“Sir,” quod one of them, “true it is a five months past, there departed from us a young knight, with whom we departed out of the realm of France, and he was born in France and son to a noble duke called Duke Sevin of Bordeaux. This knight slew Charlot, son to the King Charlemagne, by a misadventure, wherefore he was banished out of the realm of France and sent by King Charlemagne to do a message to the Admiral Gaudys, who is dead in prison, as it is showed us. And, sir, we went to seek for him and are betrayed by one of our own company.”

And when Huon heard him speak, he knew him well and said, “Sirs, be of good comfort and make good cheer, for I am here, Huon, safe and in good health, thanked be God and the Admiral’s daughter, who is so amorous of me that she hath saved my life. Ye shall see soon how she will come and visit us. But I pray you, sirs, what is become of the old Gerames, whether he be left behind to keep the tower with the damsel my cousin, who I left in your keeping?”

“Sir,” quod they, “a worse creature, more untrue traitor, was never born, for he hath betrayed us and hath beaten and put us in this prison. And as for the damsel, she is with the Admiral’s daughter.”

When Huon perceived that all they were of his company, he went and kissed them and said, “Sirs, know of a surety that all that Gerames hath done is to the intent to deliver us all, I know so well the truth of Gerames. Sirs, make good cheer, for as soon as night cometh we shall be visited with great joy.”

“Sir,” quod they, “surely we believed that Gerames had forsaken the faith of Jesu Christ and become a Saracen, for he hath made the Admiral believe that he is son to his brother, King Yvoryn of Mombraunt.”

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<sup>1</sup>For: Even if

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<sup>2</sup>hider: hither

When Huon heard that, he had great joy at his heart and said, "Ah, good Lord, the truth of Gerames and love that he hath allwheres showed to me shall be to us right profitable in the spite of Oberon, who hath forsaken me for a small offence. By Gerames we shall be delivered out of this poverty and danger."

Now leaveth the history to speak of Huon and his company, being in prison, and speaketh of the old Gerames, who studied for the deliverance of Huon and his company.

Chapter 41. *How Gerames and the fair Esclaramonde went to the prison to comfort Huon and the other prisoners.*

NOW SHOWETH THE history when that Gerames was returned to the Admiral he said, "Sir, the Frenchmen that I brought are fast in prison and well beaten."

"Fair nephew," quod the Admiral, "they have had but an evil neighbour of you."

Then Gerames went into his chamber and studied how he might furnish these prisoners with victual and did so much that he had sufficient, and when night came he went with his victual to the prison, for he might do there what he list, for every man was ready to do him service. When he came to the prison door, he sent every man away and tarried there alone, and he had not been there long but that thither came the Admiral's daughter.

When Gerames saw her he wist not what to think and said, "Fair cousin, I pray you show me, what do ye here at this hour?"

"Dear cousin," quod she, "the great trust that I have in you hath made me to come hither because today I discovered to you all my secrets and that I am in will to do, and that is, that ye would leave the law of Mahound and receive the Christian faith, and I to go into France with these prisoners. And we shall well find the manner how to depart, and we shall have with us all the prisoners that ye have put in prison."

When Gerames understood the lady he was joyful, for then he knew well she went not about to deceive him but that she did it of good courage and good will that she bar to Huon. Howbeit, he thought he would not discover himself to her unto the time he knew the truth of Huon. Then he answered fiercely the damsel and said, "O thou false and untrue wench, how art thou so hardy to speak or think thus? Surely the Admiral thy father shall know it as soon as he cometh out of his chamber, and then shalt thou be brint<sup>1</sup>, and the Frenchmen hanged."

"Ah, sir," quod she, "yet I pray you let me go into the prison with you, to the intent that I may see Huon once yet or I die, for the love of whom I am content to die. If he die I will not live one day after. Therefore let me once take leave of him."

"Dame," quod Gerames, "for this time I am content that ye go with me."

Then Gerames took a torch in his hands and opened the door and entered. He was no sooner entered but Huon knew him and went and embraced him and said, "Ah, my true lover, blessed be the hour that I found you." Then they all cleped and kissed him.

When the lady saw their manner she was joyful, for then she saw well that her deed should the surelier be conveyed. Then she came to Huon and demanded if they were his sertes<sup>2</sup> that made so great cheer together.

"Dame," quod Huon, "surely all these that be here be my men. Surely ye may trust them for there is none of them but that they shall do your commandment."

"Huon," quod the damsel, "their coming pleaseth me right well."

Then Huon said to his company, "Sirs, I pray you make me no more cheer, but to this noble lady, for by her we shall be delivered,

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<sup>1</sup>brint: burnt

<sup>2</sup>sertes: servants (this use predates by many years the earliest use cited in the OED)

for it is she that hath saved my life.”

Then they all together thanked her.

“Sirs,” quod she, “if ye will work by my counsel I shall show you how I may aid you to deliver you hence. I will that ye all believe surely how I do firmly believe in Jesu Christ, and at this day there is no man that I more hate than the Admiral Gaudys my father, because he believeth not in our Lord Jesu Christ, for he hateth so the Christian men, he cannot abide to hear speaking of them, for he believeth but upon Mahound and upon his idols. Therefore my heart cannot love him. If he did otherwise I would purchase to him none ill for all the good in the world.

“But I shall show you what ye must do. When it is the hour of midnight I shall bring you all into my chamber, whereas I shall provide harness for you all, and there ye shall all be armed. Then I shall bring you into the Admiral my father’s chamber, whom ye shall find sleeping, and then ye may slay him. And as for me, I shall be the first that shall strike him, and when he is slain then shall we depart surely.”

When Huon understood her, he said, “Dame, and God will your father shall not so be slain. The day shall come that ye shall otherwise deliver us. We thank you that ye desire so much our deliverance. I think it good that ye and Gerames depart hence for this time, for it is nearhand day, to the intent that our business be not perceived.”

Then the lady and Gerames departed and closed again the prison door and went into the palace. And when it was day, and also every day, Gerames and the lady went to visit the prisoners and bare them everything that was needful for them. Gerames was always with the Admiral and did what he would, for there was no paynim that durst do contrary to his commandment.

Now leave we to speak of the Admiral, of Gerames and of Huon and of all them that were in the prison, unto the time we return to them again.

Chapter 42. *How the great giant Agrapart, eldest brother to Angolafer, whom Huon slew, assembled his people and came to Babylon to have the tribute of the admiral as his brother had and of the battle hand-for-hand that he desired of the Admiral Gaudys, the which was agreed.*

AS YE HAVE heard here before how Huon slew the giant Angolafer, the which giant had seventeen brethren all elder than himself, and anon after that the death of Angolafer was known, then when his elder brother named Agrapart was advertised of the death of his brother, he took thereof great sorrow. He was as great as his brother was. He was seventeen foot of length, and of bigness he was thereafter<sup>1</sup>. He was a foot between the brows, and his eyen more redder and brinning<sup>2</sup> than a brand of fire, and the gristle of his nose as great as the muzzle of an ox, and he had two teeth issuing out of his mouth more than a foot long, each of them. If I should describe his foul figure at length, it should annoy all the hearers thereof, ye may well believe. When he was in displeasure he had a fearful cheer, for then his two eyen seemed two brinning torches.

When he was surely advertised of the death of his brother, he sent over all his country that every man should come to him in harness, and so they did. And when they were come, he declared to them the death of his brother Angolafer and said how it was his mind to go to Babylon to the Admiral Gaudys and to take possession of the lands and seigneuries that were his brother’s and also to have the tribute that was due by the Admiral. Then all his lords said, “Sir, command at your pleasure, and we shall obey it.”

“Well, sirs,” quod he, “then I will that every man leap on their horses to go toward Babylon.”

And so they all obeyed, and leapt on their horses and departed and rode so long that they came into a plain near to the city of

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<sup>1</sup>thereafter: conformably thereto

<sup>2</sup>brinning: burning

Babylon. They were a ten thousand men together. Then Agrapart said, "Sirs, tarry ye all here till I come again, for I will go all alone and speak with the Admiral Gaudys."

Then he armed him and took a great falchion in his hands and departed all alone and so went and entered into the city of Babylon and so past the four gates—there was no paynim that durst say him nay. He rested not till he came to the palace. The same time, the Admiral was sitting at dinner and Gerames before him sitting. Then the giant came to the table and said, "The same god Mahound, under whom we live and causeth the wine and corn to grow, may confound the Admiral Gaudys as an ill caitiff and an untrue traitor."

When the Admiral saw how he was so dispraised, said, "Agrapart, of this that thou hast said thou liest falsely, thus shamefully to rebuke me in mine own court before all my lords. But show me the cause why ye do me this injury."

"Admiral," quod he, "it is because there is come into thy court he that hath slain my brother, whom incontinent thou oughtest to have slain him quick, wherefore if it were not for mine honour, with my fist I would strike thee on the nose. Thou hast set him in prison without any more hurt doing to him. Therefore, thou traitor thief, by Mahound be thou cursed; thou art not worthy to sit in a seat royal. Arise up! It is not meet for thee to sit there." And therewith he drew the Admiral so rudely out of his chair that his hat and crown fell down to the earth. Then the Admiral was sore abashed.

Then Agrapart sat down in his chair and said, "Thou false traitor, my brother is dead. Therefore from henceforth thou shalt be my subject, for it appertaineth to me to have the lands that my brother had and the tribute that thou were wont to pay to my brother, or else I shall strike off thy head. Howbeit, I will not do against right, for if thou wilt prove the contrary, or to find two champions to be so hardy that for thy love will fight with me in plain battle, I shall fight with them, or mo if thou wilt send them to me. And if it be so that I be overcome and discomfited by two of them, I am content from henceforth thou shalt hold thy lands frank and free without any

tribute paying, and if it be so that I conquer them both, then thou to be my subject and to pay me tribute forever and also to pay me for a knowledge every year four drams of gold for thy head money."

"Agrapart," quod the Admiral, "I am content thus to do, and to set two of my men to fight with thee."

Chapter 43. *How the Admiral Gaudys toke Huon out of prison and armed him to fight with the giant Agrapart.*

WHEN THE ADMIRAL had heard the great giant he cried aloud, "Where be the two gentle knights that will be ever my friends? Now is the time come that all the goodness and great gifts that I have given among you be now rewarded. If there be any of you that will fight against this giant, I shall give him my daughter Esclaramonde in marriage, and after my death to have all my heritage. No man shall say nay thereto."

But for any fair words or promise that the Admiral could do, there was no paynim so hardy to do it, wherewith the Admiral made great sorrow and began to weep. And when the giant Agrapart saw him he said, "Thy weeping cannot avail thee, for whether thou wilt or not it must behove thee to pay these four pieces of gold yearly, for I am sure there is no paynim that dare fight against me."

When the fair lady Esclaramonde saw her father weep, it sore grieved her heart, and said, "Oh, my father, if I knew it should not displeas you, I would show you one thing the which should bring you out of this doubt."

"Daughter," quod he, "I swear by Mahound I will not be displeas whatsoever thou sayest."

"Sir," quod she, "I have showed you or this that the Frenchman that brought you the message from King Charlemagne was dead in prison, but, sir, surely he is as yet alive. If it please you I shall fetch him to you, and, sir, without doubt I warrant you he will take on him this battle against the giant, for he showed you how he slew the

other giant Angolafer. I have hope by the aid of Mahound, in like wise he shall slay his brother this giant Agrapart.”

“Daughter,” quod the Admiral, “it is my pleasure that ye shall fetch the prisoner to me, for if he may discomfit this giant, I am content that he and all his company shall depart frank and free at their pleasure.”

Then the lady and Gerames went to the prison and took out Huon and all his company and brought them before the Admiral. Then the Admiral sore beheld Huon and had marvel that he was in so good case. His colour was somewhat pale by reason of lying so long in prison. Then the Admiral said, “Friend, it seemeth by thy cheer that thou hast had a good prison.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I thank your daughter therefor, and I pray you show me for what cause ye have as now sent for me.”

“Friend,” quod the Admiral, “I shall show thee. Behold yonder Saracen that is armed, who hath challenged to fight with me hand to hand or against two of the best men I have, and I can find none so hardy that dare fight against this paynim, and if it be so that thou wilt take on thee this enterprise for me I shall deliver thee and all thy company quite to go into thy country at thy pleasure and surely to conduct thee to the city of Acre. And also to give thee a sumpter charged with gold, the which thou shalt present from me to King Charlemagne, and every year from henceforth to send him like present for my head money, and thereof to make such writing as his council can devise, and if he have any war I shall send him two thousand men of arms paid for a year, and if it be so that he desire mine own person, I shall pass the sea with a hundred thousand paynims to serve him. For I had rather to be into servitude there than to pay four drams to this giant. And, moreover, if thou wilt abide with me I shall give thee my daughter Esclaramonde in marriage, and the half of my realm to maintain thine estate.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I am content this to do, so that I may have mine own harness and my rich horn of ivory and my cup, the which were taken from me when I was taken prisoner.”

“Friend,” quod the Admiral, “all shall be delivered to thee. Thou shalt not lose the value of one penny.”

Then the Admiral sent for the horn and harness and cup and delivered them to Huon, whereof he had great joy.

When Agrapart saw and knew that the Admiral had found a champion to fight with him, he said to the Admiral, “Sir, I will go out and speak with my knights, and in the meantime let thy champion be ready apparelled, for I shall not tarry long, for I shall never have joy at my heart till I have razed his heart out of his body.”

Therewith he departed and went to his men, and Huon did on his coat of mail, and then he took Gerames his horn of ivory and said, “Friend, I pray you keep my horn till I return again.” Then he prayed our Lord to forgive him his sins, to succour and to aid him to discomfit<sup>1</sup> that foul fiend the giant.

When he had made his prayers to God he did on his harness as quickly as though he had never been in prison, whereby he knew well that God was pleased with him. Then he said, “Oh, noble King Oberon, I pray thee since God is pleased with me, put away thy displeasure and pardon me. For the breaking of thy commandment I have been sore punished, and I pray thee be not displeased if I spake any hasty word being in prison. Famine caused me to do it. In the breaking of thy commandment I confess I did ill therein, yet it was but by negligence and forgetting. Ah, sir, what courtesy ye showed me when ye found me in the wood and gave me your rich horn and cup, by the which often times I have been succoured. Therefore, sir, now I required thee to pardon me all my trespasses and help me at my need, for I see well without it be by the grace of God and your help there is nothing can save my life.”

Thus he besought God of pardon and to give him grace to destroy his enemy, who is horrible to behold, and when he had made his orison there came a Saracen to Huon and said, “Sir, here is your own

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<sup>1</sup>discomfit: overthrow



sword that ye lost when ye were taken.”

“Friend,” quod Huon, “ye do to me great courtesy. God give me grace to reward thee.”

Then he did on his helm and girt on his sword. Then the Admiral sent him a good horse, the best in all his court, for he was not so fair, but he was of bounty<sup>1</sup> above all other. When Huon saw him he was right joyful and thanked the Admiral. As for his rich apparel, I make no mention thereof. The saddle, harness and bridle were so rich that the value thereof could not be esteemed.

Then Huon made the sign of the cross and mounted on his horse armed at all pieces and so rode out of the palace into a fair meadow and there made a course<sup>2</sup> to assay his horse, and then he rested him before the Admiral, who leaned in a window in his palace, and he beheld Huon, and said to his lords, “Sirs, these Frenchmen are to be doubted and feared, for Huon is a goodly young man, and great damage it had been if he had been slain.”

The Admiral commanded the field to be kept with a thousand Saracens, to the intent that no treason should be done. And then the Admiral said, “Mahound be thy guide.”

Chapter 44. *How Huon fought with Agrapart the giant and discomfitted him and delivered him to the admiral, who had great joy thereof.*

WHEN HUON HAD made his course he came to the field whereas his enemy was ready. When Agrapart saw Huon he said, “Thou that art of so great courage as to fight against me, how near akin art thou to the Admiral, since for the love of him thou wilt put thyself in adventure of death?”

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<sup>1</sup>bounty: worth, valour

<sup>2</sup>course: gallop

“Paynim,” quod Huon, “know for truth I am nothing akin to the Admiral, but I was born in the realm of France, and if thou desire to know what I am, I say unto thee I am he that slew thy brother.”

“For that,” quod the paynim, “I am the more sorrowful, and yet again joyous when Mahound hath done me that grace to have power to revenge his death. But if thou wilt believe and worship my God Mahound and forsake thy belief and go with me into my country, I shall make thee so great a lord that all thy kin was never none such, and I shall give thee my sister in marriage, which is a foot greater than I am and as black as a coal.”

“Paynim,” quod Huon, “I came nother for thy land, nor for thy sister, but all the devils in hell keep them both. Beware thou of me, for I shall never joy in my heart unto the time I have slain thee, as I have done thy brother. I defy thee in the name of God and of the Virgin Mary.”

“And I thee,” quod the giant, “in the name of Mahound.”

Then they went asunder to take their courses. Then they ran each at other, and met so fiercely that their spears brake in pieces. The encounter was so rude that by force of the horses, both the horses fell to the earth, and the champions quickly relieved and so came each upon other. Agrapart took up his falchion to have stricken Huon, but he stepped a little on the one side, whereby the paynim missed his stroke, and Huon lift up his sword and strake the giant on the helm so marvellous a stroke that he strake off a quarter thereof and wounded him sore, and the stroke descended down and did cut off his ear, so that the clear blood ran down to the ground.

Then Huon said, “Paynim, thou art unhappy. When thou camest hither thou mightest have been content with the death of thy brother and not to come hither to have as much, for thou shalt never see fair day more.”

When the giant saw himself hurt he had great fear and said, “Cursed be he of Mahound that forged thy sword. I had rather I had been bound to have paid a great sum of money to have saved my life than to be slain here. Therefore I yield me to thee. Take here my

sword. I pray thee do me no hurt.”

“Paynim,” quod Huon, “have no doubt sen thou doest yield thee to me there is none so hardy that shall do thee any displeasure.”

Then Huon took the paynim by the arm, and brought him into the city, whereof the Admiral and all his lords had great joy. But the great joy that Esclaramonde had passed all other.

When Gerames saw how the giant was overcome, he came to the Admiral and said, “Sir Admiral, know for truth I am christened, and I am not your nephew. I came hither but alonely to search for my lord Huon, and the better to know the truth I said I was son to Yvoryn of Mount Brake, your brother, thereby to know the certainty what was become of Huon, for I know well he was sent to you from King Charlemagne on message.

*Chapter 45. How Agrapart the giant cried mercy to the admiral, and how Huon desired the Admiral Gaudys to leave his law and to be christened.*

WHEN THE ADMIRAL heard Gerames he had great marvel and said, “It is hard for any man to be ware of the craft and subtlety that is in a Frenchman.”

Then the Admiral saw where Huon was coming up the grece and brought with him the giant. Then the Admiral and all other came and met him, and Gerames and his company with them, who were right joyful when they saw him come.

When Huon saw the Admiral he took Agrapart by the hand and said to the Admiral, “Sir, I deliver him into your hands that this day did you so great injury that he drew you out of your chair. I deliver him to you to do with him at your pleasure.”

When Agrapart saw that, he kneeled down and said, “Sir Admiral, he hath much to do that foolishly thinketh I say this by myself, for today when I came to you I thought myself the most puissant man that reigned on the earth and thought that ye were not sufficient nor

worthy to serve me. But often times believing deceiveth his master, for I thought that for ten men I would not once have turned my cheer to have regarded them, but otherwise is fallen to me, for I am discomfited alonely by one man and am taken and brought into your hands. Therefore ye may do with me at your pleasure. Therefore, sir, I require you have pity of me, and pardon the outrage that I have done to you.”

Then the Admiral answered and said how he would pardon him on the condition that he should never after trespass him nor no man in his country, and beside that, “to become my man and to do me homage before all them that be here present.”

“Sir,” quod Agrapart, “I am ready to fulfil your pleasure.” Then he did homage to the Admiral in the presence of all them that were there.

Then in great joy they sat all down to dinner. The Admiral made great honour to Huon and made him sit by him, then Agrapart and Gerames and all the other Frenchmen. As for their service and many dishes of sundry sorts of meats, I leave speaking of them.

Huon, who had great desire to accomplish his enterprise, drew out his cup, the which Gerames had delivered to him with his horn of ivory, and said to the Admiral, “Sir, ye may see here this rich cup in my hand, the which ye see all empty.”

“Sir,” quod the Admiral, “I see well there is nothing therein.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I shall show you how our law is holy and divine.”

Then Huon made the sign of the cross three times over the cup, the which incontinent was full of wine, whereof the Admiral had great marvel.

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I present you this cup, that ye should drink thereof. Then shall ye see the goodness of the wine.”

The Admiral took it in his hand and incontinent the cup was void and the wine vanished away. Then and Admiral had great marvel and said, “Huon, ye have enchanted me.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I am none enchanter, but it is because ye be

full of sin. For the law that ye hold is of no valure. The great virtue that God hath put in this cup by reason of the sign of the cross that I made, ye may perceive that my saying is true.”

“Huon,” quod the Admiral, “ye need to have no business to speak to me to forsake my belief to take yours, but I would know of you whether ye will abide here with me or else to go into France, for that I have promised you I shall fulfil it.”

“Ah, Sir Admiral,” quod Huon, “I know you will keep covenant with me in that ye have promised me. But, sir, above all other matters I pray you have pity of your own soul, the which shall be damned in hell without ye leave your belief, the which is nother good nor just, for without ye do thus, I swear by my faith that I shall cause<sup>1</sup> so many men of arms that all the houses in your palace and city shall be full.

When the Admiral heard Huon say so he beheld his own men and said, “Sirs, here ye may well hear the pride that is in this Frenchman, who hath been more than half a year in my prison, and now he threateneth to slay me because I will not take on me his law and leave mine own. I have great marvel where he should find men as he hath said or to let me to slay him at my pleasure.

“Sir,” quod Huon, “yet I demand of you if ye will do as I have said.”

“Huon,” quod the Admiral, “beware on pain of your eyen, and as much as ye love your life, that ye speak no more to me of this matter, for by the faith that I owe to Mahound, if all King Charlemagne’s host were here assembled, it should not lie in their power to save your life.”

“Admiral,” quod Huon, “I am in doubt that too late ye shall repent you.”

Chapter 46. *How Huon, seeing that the admiral would not forsake his belief, blew his horn, whereby Oberon came to him, and the admiral slain and all his men, and how Huon and the fair Esclaramonde were in peril of drowning by reason that he brake the commandment of King Oberon.*

WHEN HUON SAW that the Admiral would not leave his law to receive Christendom, he set his horn to his mouth and blew it by such force that the blood brast<sup>2</sup> out of his mouth, so that the Admiral and all other that were there put the tables from them and rose, and all that were in the palace began to sing and dance.

The same time King Oberon was in his wood and heard the horn blow, said,<sup>3</sup> “Ah, good Lord, I know surely that my friend Huon hath great need of me. I pardon him all his trespass, for he hath been sufficiently punished. I wish myself with him with an hundred thousand men well armed. There is not in all the world so noble a man as Huon is. It is pity that his heart is so light and mutable.”

Then incontinent he with all his company were in the city of Babylon, whereas they began to slay all such as would not believe of Jesu Christ.

Then Oberon went to the palace with all his chivalry, and every man with his sword naked in their hands.

When Huon saw Oberon, he embraced him and said, “I ought greatly to thank God and you that ye become so far off to aid me in all my business.”

“Huon,” quod Oberon, “as ye believe me and work by my counsel, I shall not fail you.”

Then on all sides they slew paynims, men and women and children, except such as would become christened. Oberon came to the Admiral and took him and delivered him into the hands of Huon,

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<sup>1</sup>cause: produce

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<sup>2</sup>brast: burst

<sup>3</sup>blow, said,: perhaps a deliberate ellipsis

who had thereof great joy. Then Huon demanded of the Admiral what he was minded to do to leave the law of Mahound and to take Christendom.

“Huon,” quod the Admiral, “I had rather be hewn all to pieces than to take your law and to forsake mine own.”

Oberon then said to Huon, “Why do ye tarry to put him to death?”

Then Huon lift up his sword and strake therewith the Admiral, that his head flew from his shoulders. Then Oberon said to Huon, “Now it lieth well in thy power to be quit with Charlemagne.”

Then Huon took the Admiral’s head and opened his mouth and took out his four great teeth and then cut off his beard and took thereof as much as pleased him. Then Oberon said, “now thou hast in thy hands the Admiral’s teeth and beards. Look, as well as thou lovest thy life, keep them well.”

“Ah, sir,” quod Huon, “I require you put them in such a place that they may be well kept, so that I may have them in time of need, for I feel myself that my heart is so light that other<sup>1</sup> I shall forget them or else lese<sup>2</sup> them.”

“Of this thou sayest,” quod Oberon, “I think thou speakest wisely. I do wish them in Gerames’ side in such manner that they shall do him no hurt.” He had no sooner spoken the word but by the will of God and the power that he had in the fairy they were closed in Gerames’ side in such wise that no man could see them.

Then he said to Huon, “Friend, I must go to my castle of Mommure. I desire you to do well. Ye shall take with you Esclaramonde, daughter to the Admiral. But I charge you on pain of your life, and in as much as ye fear to displeas me, that ye be not so hardy to company with her bodily till ye be married together in the city of Rome, and if thou dost the contrary thou shalt find such poverty and misery that, though thou hadst double the mischief that

thou hast had since thou camest out of France, it should be nothing in regard to that that shall fall to thee hereafter if thou break my commandment.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “by the pleasure of our Lord Jesu Christ I shall be well ware of doing of anything against your pleasure.”

Then Oberon appalled a rich ship, well garnished with chambers and hanged so richly that it was incredible to be heard or seen. There was no cord but<sup>3</sup> it was of gold and silk. If I should show you the beauty and riches of this ship, it should be over long to recite it.

When the ship was furnished with victuals, then he put therein his horses. Then Oberon took leave of Huon and kissed and embraced him, sore weeping. When Huon saw him weep he had great marvel and said, “Dear sir, for what cause do you weep?”

“Huon,” quod he, “the thing that moveth me thus to do is because I have of thee great pity, for if thou knewest the poverty and misery that thou shalt endure, there is no member thou hast but that should tremble for fear, for I know for certain that thou hast so much to suffer that therein is none human tongue can rehearse it.” And then Oberon departed without more speaking.

When Huon saw Oberon depart he was right pensive, but his great youth put him out of his sorrow. Then he made his ordinance in the city and christened the fair lady Esclaramonde and after did marry his cousin Sebylle to an admiral of the country who was newly christened, and Huon gave to them the city of Babylon and all that longed thereto.

Then he made and ordained a little ship to go with his own ship, to the intent to send aland for victuals when need required. Then he and his company went into his great ship and so took leave of his cousin that was newly married, who was right sorrowful for his departing. Then they lift up their sails and had a good fresh wind and so sailed till they were out of the river of Nile and so passed by

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<sup>1</sup>other: either

<sup>2</sup>lese: lose

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<sup>3</sup>but: if . . . not

Damiet and came into the high sea and had wind at will, and on a day they sat at dinner and made good cheer, for by reason of his cup they had wine at their pleasure.

“Ah, good Lord,” quod Huon, “greatly I am bound to thank you that I have such a cup and horn and harness, for whensoever I will blow my horn I can have men enough to come to aid me, and also I have the Admiral’s beard and great teeth and specially the fair lady Esclaramonde, whom I love so perfectly that I am so in amours with her fair body that I can no longer endure it. Howbeit, the dwarf Oberon to mock me hath defended me in any wise that I should not touch her in no wise. But I will well that he know that in this case I will not obey him, for she is mine own. Therefore I will do with her at my pleasure.”

When Gerames heard him he said, “Ah, sir, what will ye do? Ye know well Oberon never as yet made any lie to you, but always ye have found him true, for if he had not been, both you and we all had been lost or this time. And now ye would break his commandment. If ye touch this lady or the time come that he hath set you, great misfortune shall fall thereby.”

“Gerames,” quod Huon, “for you, nor for none other, I shall not leave, but or<sup>1</sup> I depart I will have of her my pleasure. And if any of you be afraid, I am content he shall depart in this little ship and go whereas he list and take victual into it for their provision.”

“Sir,” quod Gerames, “sen ye will do none otherwise, I am right sorrowful, and I will depart, and so will do all our other company.”

Then Gerames departed out of the great ship and entered into the little ship, and twelve in his company, and Huon tarried still with the lady. And when he saw that all his company was departed he went and made ready a bed and said to the lady, “Dame, surely I must have my pleasure of you.”

When she heard Huon she fell down sore weeping and humbly

desired Huon that he would forbear her company unto the time they were married together, according to the promise that he had made to King Oberon.

“Fair lady,” quod Huon, “none excuse can avail, for it must be thus.”

Then he took the lady and made her go to bed, and there they took together their pleasures.

He had no sooner accomplished his will, but there rose such a marvellous tempest that the waves of the sea seemed so great and so high as mountains, and therewith it blew and thundered and lightened that it was fearful to behold the sea, and the ship was so sore tormented that the ship brast all to pieces, so that there abode but one piece of timber whereupon Huon and the lady was, and it happed so well for them that they were near to an isle, and thither the wind drave them. And when they saw they were there arrived and that they were on the land, they both kneeled down and thanked our Lord Jesu Christ that they were scaped the peril of drowning. The other company that were in the little ship drave at adventure in the sea, and they cried to our Lord Jesu Christ to save them from drowning. They had seen well how the ship with Huon and the lady was broken in the sea, wherefore they thought surely that Huon and the lady was perished.

Now let us leave speaking of them and speak of Huon of Bordeaux and of the fair Esclaramonde.

*Chapter 47. How Huon and Esclaramonde arrived in an isle all naked, and how the pirates of the sea took Esclaramonde and left Huon alone and bound his hands and feet and eyen.*

WHEN HUON AND Esclaramonde saw how they were driven a land all naked, piteously weeping they entered into the isle, whereas there dwelt nother man nor woman, but the earth was so fair and green that joy it was to see it. It was happy for them that the weather was

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<sup>1</sup>or: before

so fair and hot, so they hid them in the green herbs, to the intent they should not be perceived. The lady wept piteously. Then Huon said, "Fair lady, be not abashed, for if we die for love we shall not be the first, for Tristram died for the love of the fair Isolde, and she for him."

And so all weeping they clipped<sup>1</sup> and kissed each other. And as they lay wrapped in the green grass, there arrived ten Saracens in a little vessel and entered into the isle and took fresh water and other things that they needed. Then they said each to other, "Let us go forth into this isle and see if we can find any adventure." They were pirates of the sea and had served before the Admiral Gaudys, father to the fair Esclaramonde.

Huon, who was with his lover in the green herbs, heard how near to them was people coming. He thought to go to them to see if he might get any meat. "Dear lover," quod Huon, "I pray you go not hence till I return."

"Sir," quod she, "God be your guide, but I require you return again shortly."

Then he departed as so naked as he was born, and so came to them or they had dined. He saluted them and desired them humbly for the love of God to give him some bread. One of them answered and said, "Friend, thou shalt have enough, but we pray thee show us what adventure hath brought thee hither."

"Sir," quod Huon, "the tempest of the sea hath brought me hither, for the ship that I was in perished and all my company."

When they heard him they had great pity and gave him two loaves of bread. Huon took them and departed and thanked them and went to his lover, and gave her part of the bread, whereof she was glad.

Then the pirates that had given Huon the bread said one to another, "This man that is thus gone from us cannot be but that he hath some company. Therefore let us go privily after him, and

peradventure we shall find out his company, for we think if he were alone he would not have come to us."

"Let us go and see," quod all the other, "and not return till we know the truth."

Then they went all together and followed Huon as privily as they could, and when they came near whereas he was they saw him and the lady near by him eating of the bread that they had given him. Then they stood still and advised them to see if they could have any knowledge of him or of the lady, and among them there was one that said, "Sirs, never believe me, but this lady is the fair Esclaramonde, daughter to the Admiral Gaudys, and he that is with her is the same Frenchman that fought with Agrapart and slew him and also the Admiral. It is happy that we have found them and specially that he is naked without armour, for if that he were armed, our lives were but short."

When they knew surely that it was Esclaramonde, daughter to the Admiral Gaudys, they then approached near to them and cried aloud and said, "Ah, dame Esclaramonde, your flying away availeth you nothing, for by you and your means your father hath been slain by the thief that sitteth there by you. Certainly we shall bring you to your uncle Yvoryn of Mombrant, who shall take of you such correction that ye shall be an ensample to all other, and the lecher that is by you shall be flain all quick<sup>2</sup>."

When the lady saw these paynims she was right sorrowful and sore discomfited. Then she kneeled down and held up her hands and prayed them humbly that they would have pity on the Frenchman, and as for her own life, she did put it to their pleasures other to slay her or to drown her or to bring her to her uncle. "And sirs, I swear by Mahound that if ye will grant my request, if I can be agreed with mine uncle Yvoryn I shall do you all such pleasure that ye and all yours shall be rich forever after. And little shall ye win by

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<sup>1</sup>clipped: hugged, embraced

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<sup>2</sup>flain all quick: flayed alive

the death of one poor man.”

“Dame,” quod they, “we are well content to leave him here, but we shall do him all the shame and rebuke that we can, that he shall remember it ever after.”

Then they took Huon and laid him on the green grass and then did bind his eyen, hands and feet so that the blood brast out at the nails, whereby he was in such distress that he swooned three times and piteously called our Lord God to have pity of him and to forgive his sins. When the sweet Esclaramonde saw her lover Huon so handled and that she should depart from him, to show the pitiful complaints that she made it were impossible. Also Huon made piteous complaints when his lover Esclaramonde departed, the which grieved him more than his own pain that he suffered.

Now we shall leave speaking of him and speak of the fair Esclaramonde.

Chapter 48. *How the fair Esclaramonde was led away with the pirates of the sea, and how the admiral Galafer of Anfalerne delivered her out of their hands.*

NOW SHOWETH THE history when these thieves had taken and bound Huon, hands, feet and eyen, they left him above in the isle and took the fair Esclaramonde and brought her into their ship. Then they gave her a gown and a mantle furred with ermines, for they were robbers of the sea and had much good in their ship. Then they sailed forth night and day.

At last a wind took them whether they would or not. They arrived at the port of Anfalerne, and the same time the Admiral there was newly risen from his dinner and stood leaning out at a window in his palace, and then he perceived the ship that lay at anchor in the haven and saw the banners and streamers waving with the wind, whereby he well perceived that the ship pertained to King Yvoryn of Mombrant.

Then he with his lords went down to the haven. Then he cried out aloud and said, “Sirs, what merchandise have ye brought?”

“Sir,” quod they, “we have brought sendals<sup>1</sup> and clothes of silk, wherefore, sir, if we shall pay any tribute or custom, we are ready to pay it at your pleasure.”

Then Galafer the Admiral said, “I know well enough, if ye should pay any tribute ye should not chose but to do it. But, sirs, I pray you tell me what damsel is that I see in your ship sore weeping?”

“Sir,” quod they, “it is a slave, a Christian woman, whom we bought at Damiet.”

The lady heard well how the Admiral demanded for her and what answer the mariners had made. Then she cried out aloud and said, “Ah, Sir Admiral, for the love and honour of Mahound, I pray you have pity on me, for I am no slave. For I am daughter to the Admiral Gaudys of Babylon, who is dead and slain by a Frenchman. These mariners here hath taken me and would carry me to mine uncle, King Yvoryn of Mombrant, and I know surely if he had me he would burn me in a fire.”

“Fair lady,” quod the Admiral, “dismay you not, for ye shall abide with me whether they will or not.”

Then he commanded the mariners to bring the lady to him, and they answered they would not so do. Then the Admiral commanded to take her from them perforce. Then they of the ship began to make defence, but anon they were all slain and the lady taken and brought to the Admiral, who had great joy thereof, howbeit he was sorry because one of them that were in the ship scaped away and fled to Mombrant. Howbeit, the Admiral cared not greatly for it, sen he had the lady, whom he brought into his palace.

When the Admiral saw her so exceeding fair, he was taken in with love, so that incontinent he would have married her after the Saracens’ law, whereof she was right sorrowful and said, “Sir, reason

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<sup>1</sup>sendals: garments of sendal, a thin silk material

it is that I do your pleasure sen ye have rid me out of the hands of these pirates of the sea. But, sir, I require you for the love that ye bear me that ye will forbear your pleasure at this present time, for, sir, I have made a faithful vow and promise that for a year and a day from henceforth I will not lie nor touch any man bodily, of the which avow, sir, I am now sorry of, for the love of you. For, sir, I am right joyful that ye would me<sup>1</sup> so much honour as to have me to your wife. Our great god Mahound reward you, and, sir, for the love of him I pray you be content till mine avow be accomplished.”

“Fair lady,” quod he, “know for truth, that for the honour of my god Mahound and for the love of you I am content to tarry this year, yea, and if it were twenty year, then to be sure of your love.”

“Sir,” quod she, “Mahound reward you.”

Then she said to herself, “Ah, dear Lord God Jesu Christ, humbly I require thee to guide me that grace to keep my truth to my lover Huon, for or I shall do the contrary I shall suffer as much pain and dolour as ever woman did, nor for fear of death I shall never break my truth.”

Now leave we to speak of her and speak of the thief that scaped out of the ship.

Chapter 49. *How the pirate fled to Mombrant to Yvoryn, and how he sent to defy the Admiral Galafer of Anfalerne and of the answer that he had.*

WE HAVE HEARD here before how the fair Esclaramonde was rescued by the Admiral Galafer and of the manner that she found to keep herself true to Huon, and how one of the mariners scaped away and fled by land and at last came to the city of Mombrant, whereas he found Yvoryn, to whom he showed all the whole matter as ye have

heard, and how his brother the Admiral Gaudys was slain by a young French knight, and how he and his company found the said knight “and your niece the fair Esclaramonde, whom we had thought to have brought to you. But the Admiral Galafer hath taken them from us by force and hath taken our ship and slain all your men that were within, so that none scaped but I alonely.”

When King Yvoryn understood the mariner he said, “Ah, Sir Mahound, how have you suffered that my brother Gaudys hath thus piteously be slain and also my niece his daughter to consent thereto? Certainly the dolour that I feel at my heart constraineth me rather to desire the death than life, and also, moreover, to see him that is mine own subject, and he that holdeth his lands of me, to keep my niece and thus to slay my men! Alas! I cannot well say what I should do therein. A little thing would cause me to slay myself.”

Then in great displeasure he called his lords and caused the mariner to come before them, and there he made him to show again all the matter before them all: how his brother the Admiral Gaudys was slain and also how the Admiral Galafer held by force his niece and how he had slain his men.

When the lords had heard all this, they said to Yvoryn, “Sir, our advice is that ye should send one of your secret messengers to the Admiral Galafer and command him incontinent to send you your niece and to make amends in that he hath slain your men, and that he send you word by writing what cause hath moved him thus to do, and if it be so that pride doth so surmount him that he will not obey your commandments, then by a just quarrel ye may go and make war upon him and take from him all his lands that he holdeth of you.”

When Yvoryn understood his lords he said, “Sirs, I perceive well your opinion is good.”

Then a messenger was appointed and his charge given him and so departed and rode so long that he came to Anfalerne, whereas he found the Admiral Galafer, whom he saluted in the name of Mahound, and then he declared his message at length.

When Galafer heard his message he said, “Friend, go and say to

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<sup>1</sup>would me: would will me, would wish me



King Yvoryn that, as for the deliverance of his niece, I will not so do, and as for his men that be slain, it was their own folly, and as touching that I should come to him, I will not come at him, let him do what he can. If he come and assail me I shall defend as well as I can.”

When the messenger heard that he said, “Sir Admiral, sen ye will do none otherwise, in the name of our god Mahound and in the name of the Admiral Galafer I desire you, and he sendeth you word by me, that he will leave you nother city, town, nor castle, but he will put them all to flame and fire, nor leave you one foot of land, and also if he may take you ye shall die a shameful death.

When the Admiral saw how he was defied, he was more inflamed than a burning firebrand and said to the messenger, “Go and say to thy lord that I set nothing by his threatening, and, if I may know when he cometh, I shall do him that honour that I will not abide till he enter into my country, but I shall meet with him before. And say unto him from me that if I can take him I shall soon rid his soul out of his body.”

So the messenger departed and came to Mombrant. When Yvoryn saw him he said, “Friend, what saith Galafer? Will he send me my niece?”

“Sir,” quod the messenger, “he will not do it. He saith he doubteth you nothing, and if ye be so hardy to come and assail him, he will meet with you before and fight with you, and I heard him swear that if he may take you he will slay you without mercy.”

When Yvoryn heard that, he sweat for anger and was in that case he could speak no word of a long space, and when he had somewhat assuaged his ire, he swear by his god Mahound that he should never have joy nor mirth at his heart till he had destroyed the town of Anfalerne and slain the Admiral Galafer. Then in haste he sent for all his lords and with them concluded to send for all his men of war and gave them day to be with him within fifteen days before Mombrant, the which thing was done, for at that day they were all assembled, as ye shall hear after.

Now leave the history to speak of them and return to speak of King Oberon.

Chapter 50. *How King Oberon, at the request of two knights of the fairy called Gloriente and Malabron, the monster of the sea, went and succoured Huon and carried him out of the Isle Noisaunt.*

NOW SHOWETH THE history that King Oberon, the same time that Huon was in the Isle Noisaunt, was in his wood, whereas he was accustomed mostpart for to be conversant, because the place was much delectable and far from people. He sat him down under a fair oak. Then he began to weep, and complained, when Gloriente, a knight of the fairy, saw him. He had great marvel and demanded of him why he made so great dolour.

“Gloriente,” quod the King Oberon, “the perjured Huon of Bordeaux causeth me thus to do, whom I have perfectly loved, and yet he hath trespassed my commandments. For when I departed from him I caused him to have the Admiral Gaudys at his pleasure, and also I made him to have the fair Esclaramonde, the Admiral’s daughter, and also I have given him my rich horn of ivory and my good cup, the which he hath lost by his pride and folly, and therefore he hath been punished and lieth all naked, bound hands and feet and his eyen stopped, in an isle, in which place I shall suffer him to die miserably.”

“Ah, sir,” quod Gloriente, “for the honour of our Lord Jesu Christ, call to your remembrance how that by God’s own mouth Adam and Eve was defended from the eating of fruit that was in Paradise, the which by their fragility brake God’s commandment. Howbeit, our Lord God had pity of them, and therefore, sir, I pray you have pity of Huon.”

Then Malabron stepped forth and said, “Ah, sir, for the honour and reverence of our Lord God I desire you to grant me this one time that I may go and aid him.”

When Oberon saw how he was sore desired of Gloriant and Malabron, he was sore displeasid. He answered and said, "Malabron, it pleaseth me well that this caitiff Huon, who endureth much pain, be visited by thee, for the which I condemn thee to be twenty-eight years a monster in the sea, beside thirty year that thou art enjoined to already, but I will thou give him none other counsel nor aid, but alonely to bear him out of the isle that he is in and to set him on the mainland. Then let him go whither that he will, for I desire nevermore to see him. Also I will thou bring again to me my rich horn of ivory and my rich cup and my harness. Fetch them there, as he lost them."

"Ah, sir," quod Gloriant, "great pain ye put him unto when for so small offence ye are so sore displeasid with Huon, and as for the harness that ye would have again, ye know well how Huon of Bordeaux did conquer it. He had been lost if it had not been. Great ill ye shall do if ye cause him not to have it again. But, sir, sen I have licence to bring him out of the isle, I pray you show me in what place in the isle whereas he is."

Then Gloriant said, "brother Malabron, this isle is near to hell and is called the Isle Noisaunt."

"Well," quod Malabron, "then I commend you all to our Lord Jesu Christ," and so departed and came to the seaside. When he came there he leapt into the sea and began to swim as fast as the bird flieth in the air and so arrived in the Isle Noisaunt and so came to Huon, whom he found sore weeping, and said, "Sir Huon, I pray our Lord Jesu Christ to succour and aid thee."

"Ah, very God," quod Huon, "who is it that speaketh to me?"

"Huon," quod he, "I am a man who loveth thee and am called Malabron and am a beast of the sea who hath or this time borne thee over the salt water to Babylon."

"Ah, Malabron, dear brother," quod Huon, "I require thee, unbind me and bring me out of this dolorous pain."

"With a right good will," quod Malabron.

Then he did unbind him and opened his eyes. When Huon saw

that, he was right joyful and demanded who sent him thither.

"Huon," quod he, "know for truth, it was King Oberon, and whereas I was condemned before to be a beast of the sea thirty year, now for thy sake I must endure so twenty-eight year more, yet I care not for the pain. For the love that I bear to thee, there is no pain impossible to me to bear. But I must bear again to Oberon the rich horn and cup and harness, for so I have promised King Oberon to do."

"Ah," quod Huon, "I pray to our Lord Jesu Christ to confound the dwarf who hath caused me to endure all these pains for so small an occasion."

"Huon," quod Malabron, "ye do ill to say so, for ye have no sooner spoken it but that King Oberon doth know it."

"Certainly," quod Huon, "I care not what he can do. He hath done me so much ill that I can never love him, but, sir, I pray thee tell me if thou wilt bear me hence, or else whether that I shall bide here forever."

"Friend," quod Malabron, "I shall bear thee out of this isle and set thee on the mainland. Other aid may I not do thee."

Then Malabron took on him again his beast's skin and said, "Sir, leap up upon me."

Then Huon leapt up on his croup<sup>1</sup> as naked as ever he was born. Then Malabron leapt into the sea and began to swim and came to the mainland and said, "Friend Huon, more service can I not do to thee at this time, but I recommend thee to the keeping of our Lord God, who send thee comfort. I must go and seek for the horn, cup and harness, the which thou wert wont to have and enjoy, and I to bear them to King Oberon. Thus have I promised to do."

And Huon was there all alone and naked and piteously complained and said, "Ah, good Lord, I require thee to aid me. I know not where I am, nor whither I may go, yet if I had clothes to

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<sup>1</sup>croup: rump

cover my naked skin I should have some comfort, and to go and seek some adventure. Greatly I ought to hate the crooked dwarf Oberon, who hath brought me in all this pain, but by the faith that I owe to God, sen he hath left me thus, from henceforth to do him the more spite I shall make lies enough. I shall not leave, for him, that I recommend him<sup>1</sup> to a hundred thousand devils.”

When he had been there a certain pace all alone, he arose and looked all about him to see if he might perceive any man pass by, by whom he might have any succour. He was near famished for lack of sustenance. Howbeit, he thought to depart thence to seek some adventure. He went on his way. He went so far that he found an adventure such as ye shall hear, for our Lord Jesu Christ never forgetteth His friends.

Chapter 51. *How Huon found a minstrel, who gave him clothing and meat, and took Huon with him as his valet and went to Mombrant.*

WHEN HUON HAD gone a great way he beheld on his right hand and saw near him a little wood by a fair meadow side, and therein was standing a great oak full of leaves, and there beside was a clear fountain. And there he saw an ancient man with white hairs sitting under the oak, and before him he had a little cloth spread abroad on the grass and thereon flesh and bread and wine in a bottle. When Huon saw the old man he came to him, and the ancient man said, “Ah, thou wild man, I pray thee for the love of Mahound do me no hurt, but take meat and drink at thy pleasure.”

When Huon saw him he spied lying beside him an harp and a viol whereon he could well play, for in all pagany there was no minstrel like him.

“Friend,” quod Huon, “thou hast named me right, for a more unhappy than I am there is none living.”

“Friend,” quod the minstrel, “go to yonder mail<sup>2</sup> and open it, and take what thou likest best to cover thy naked skin. Then come to me and eat at thy pleasure.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “good adventure is come to me thus to find you. Mahound reward you.”

“Sir,” quod the minstrel, “I pray thee come and eat with me and keep me company, for thou shalt not find a more sorrowful than I am.”

“By my faith,” quod Huon, “a companion of your own sort have ye found, for there was never man that hath suffered so much poverty as I (laud be to him that formed me), but sen I have found meat to eat, blessed be the hour that I have found you, for ye seem to be a good man.”

Then Huon went to the mail and took clothes and then came to the minstrel and sat down and did eat and drink as much as pleased him.

The minstrel beheld Huon and saw how he was a fair young man and courteous, and then he demanded of him where he was born and by what adventure he was arrived there in that case that he was in.

When Huon heard how the minstrel demanded of his estate, he began to study in himself whether he should show the truth or else to lie. Then he called on our Lord God and said, “Ah, good Lord, if I show this man the truth of mine adventure I am but dead. Ah, Oberon, for a small offence thou hast left me in this case, for if I show the truth of my life to this man I am but dead. I shall never trust thee more, but I will put all my deeds in God<sup>3</sup>. For the love that I have to my lover, thou hast me in hate, but sen it is so, as often as

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<sup>1</sup>leave, for him, that I recommend him: put an end, for his sake, to committing him

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<sup>2</sup>mail: pack or travelling bag

<sup>3</sup>put all my deeds in God: entrust all my doings to God

I have need I shall lie, nor I shall not leave it for fear of thee but rather do it in despite of thee.”

Then Huon said to the minstrel, “Sir, ye have demanded of mine estate, and as yet I have made you none answer. The truth is, I find myself so well at mine ease that I forgot to answer you, but I shall show you, sen ye would know it. Sir, of certain I am born of the country of Africa and fell in company with divers merchants by the sea in a ship, thinking to have sailed to Damiet. But a great misfortune fell upon us. There rose such an horrible tempest that our ship perished and all that within it. None scaped but I, and I thank Mahound that I am scaped alive. Therefore I desire you now to show me your adventure as I have showed you mine.”

“Friend,” quod the minstrel, “sen ye will know it, know for truth I am named Mouflet. I am a minstrel, as thou seest here by mine instruments, and I say to thee that from hence to the Red Sea there is none so cunning in all instruments as I am, and I can do many other things, and the dolour that thou seest me make is because of late I have lost my good lord and master, the Admiral Gaudys, who was slain miserably by a vagabond of France called Huon, that Mahound shame him and bring him to an ill death, for by him I am fallen into poverty and misery. I pray thee tell me thy name.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “my name is Salater.”

“Well, quod the minstrel, “Salater, dismay thee not for the great poverties that thou hast suffered. Thou seest what adventure Mahound hath sent thee. Thou art now better arrayed than thou wert. If thou wilt follow my counsel thou shalt have no need. Thou art fair and young. Thou oughtest not to be dismayed, but I that am old and ancient have cause to be discomfited, sen in mine old days I have lost my lord and master, the Admiral Gaudys, who did me so much good and profit. I would it pleased Mahound that he that slew him were in my power.”

When Huon heard that he spake no word, but cast down his head.

“Salater,” quod the minstrel, “sen my lord is dead, I will go to Mombrant to King Yvoryn to show him the death of his brother, the

Admiral Gaudys, and if thou wilt abide with me so that thou wilt bear my fardel and harp afoot, or it be half a year past I warrant thou shalt have a horse, for whensoever thou shalt hear me play upon my instruments, all the hearers shall take therein such pleasure that they shall give me both gowns and mantles, so that thou shalt have much ado to truss them in my mail.”

“Ah,” after quod Huon, “I am content to serve you and to do all your commandments.” Then Huon took the mail in his neck and the harp in his hand, and Mouflet, his master, bore the viol, and thus the master and the servant went on their way to go to Mombrant.

“Ah, good Lord,” quod Huon, “my heart ought to be sorrowful when I see myself in this case, that now I must become a minstrel’s varlet<sup>1</sup>. God’s curse have Oberon the dwarf, who hath done me all this annoyance. Alas, if I had now my good harness, my horn and my cup, I would reckon all the sorrow that I have endured at nothing. Ah, when I had twelve knights to serve me, how is the chance now turned that I must serve a poor minstrel.”

When Mouflet heard Huon make such sorrow within himself he said, “Dear brother Salater, take good comfort, for or it be tomorrow at night, thou shalt see the good cheer that shall be made to me, whereof thou shalt have part and of all the goods that I can get.”

“Master,” quod Huon, “Mahound reward you for the goodness that ye have showed me and shall do.”

Thus the master and the servant went forth together devising. At last Huon spied behind them coming certain men of arms holding the way to Mombrant.

“Master,” quod Huon, “here behind us are coming men in armour. I know not if they will do us any hurt or not.”

“Salater,” quod Mouflet, “be not abashed. We will abide here and know whither they will go.”

And within a while the men of war came to them, who were in

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<sup>1</sup>varlet: servant

number a five hundred persons. The minstrel saluted them and said, "Sirs, I pray you show me whither ye will go."

"Friend," quod one of them, "because we see that ye be a gentle minstrel I shall show you. We are going to King Yvoryn of Mombrant, who will go and make war upon the Admiral Galafer, because that now of late, the damsel Esclaramonde, daughter to the Admiral Gaudys, passed by Anfalarne, who should have been brought to her uncle, King Yvoryn of Mombrant, but the Admiral Galafer took her by force and slew all them that led her and hath married the fair Esclaramonde, whereof King Yvoryn is as sorrowful as may be, and for that cause we be sent for by King Yvoryn, who is in mind to assemble all this power, to go and destroy the Admiral Galafer. Now I have showed you the cause of our going to the city of Mombrant."

Chapter 52. *How Huon and his master Mouflet arrived at mombrant, and how Huon spake with King Yvoryn.*

WHEN HUON OF BORDEAUX understood the paynims how they were going whereas the lady Esclaramonde was, he was surprised and said to his master, "Sir, I require you, let us go to the war with them."

"Salater," quod Mouflet, "beware what thou sayest, for thereas war is, I would not come there for anything."

Thus they went forth till they came to Mombrant and went straight to the palace whereas he found King Yvoryn and all his barons. When the minstrel saw him, he saluted him in the name of Mahound and said, "Sir, I am right dolorous for the news that I bring you, for, sir, your brother, my lord and master, the Admiral Gaudys, is piteously slain."

"Mouflet," quod Yvoryn, "these news hath been brought to me before this time, whereof I am sorry, and also I am sorry for my niece, the fair Esclaramonde, who is kept from me by the Admiral Galafer, and for any message that I can send to him, he will not send her to me. But by the faith that I owe to my god Mahound, I shall

make him such war that the memory thereof shall be had a hundred year hereafter, for I shall leave him never a foot of land, but I shall bring all into fire and flame, and clean destroy him, and in the despite of his teeth I will see my niece Esclaramonde. And if I may get her I shall cause her to be stricken all to pieces and burn her into ashes, for my brother is dead by a villain of France on whom she was amorous."

When Huon heard him speak of his lady, his heart rose, and made promise in himself that or the month were past he would go and see her or find the manner to speak with her. Then King Yvoryn called Mouflet the minstrel and said, "Friend, I pray thee do something to make me merry, for by reason of the displeasure that I have had my joy is lost. Therefore it were better for me to take some mirth than to be long in sorrow."

"Sir," quod Mouflet, "I am ready to do your pleasure."

Then he took his viol and played thereof in such wise that it was great melody to hear it, for all the paynims that were there had great joy and mirth and made great feast.

When Huon heard it he said, "Good Lord, I require thee that his great joy may turn to me, as to hear some good news of her whom I desire sore to see."

When the minstrel had finished his song, the paynims did off their clothes, and some gave him their gowns and some their mantles. He thought himself right well happy that could give the minstrel anything. Huon had enough to do to gather together the clothes that were given him, and he put them into his mail, whereof Huon was joyful because he should have the one half. King Yvoryn beheld Huon and said to them that were about him, "Great damage<sup>1</sup> it is that so fair a young man should serve a minstrel."

"Sir King," quod Mouflet, "be not abashed. Though this young man do serve me, he hath cause so to do, for when your brother was dead

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<sup>1</sup>damage: pity

I departed from thence to come hither, and by the way I found a great oak, under the which I sat down to rest me, and thereby was a fair fountain, fair and clear. There I spread abroad a towel on the green grass and set thereon bread and such meat as I had and drink, and the same time this young man arrived and came to me all naked and prayed me for the love of Mahound to give him some of my bread, and so I did and clothed him as ye see, and I did so much for him that he promised to serve me and to bear my fardel<sup>1</sup> and my harp, and moreover when I came to any passage of water he would cast me in his neck<sup>2</sup> as light as though I had been nothing. He is so strong and bare me over.”

“Ah, poor caitiff,” quod King Yvoryn, “hast thou lived so long and cannot perceive why he doth it? He abideth till thou hast gotten some riches, and then he will cut thy throat and cast thee in the river and then go away with all thy riches. Cause him to come and speak with me.”

“Sir,” quod Mouflet, “he shall come to you,” and so called Huon and brought him to King Yvoryn.

“Ah, friend,” quod the King, “I pray thee show me where thou were born, for I have pity of thee to see thee in so low estate as to be varlet to a minstrel. It were better for thee to serve some prince or help to keep a town or a castle, rather than thus to lose thy time. I wot not what I should think therein, but that it seemeth to be for that thou art of a faint courage. What hath moved thee thus to do? Thou seest thy master hath nothing but that he getteth with his viol. Canst thou find none other craft to live by more honestly?”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I can<sup>3</sup> crafts enough, the which I shall name to you if ye will hear me.”

“Say on,” quod Yvoryn, “for I have great desire to know what thou

canst do. But of one thing I advise thee. Make no vaunt of anything without thou canst do it indeed, for in everything I will prove thee.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I can mew a sparhawk,<sup>4</sup> and I can chase the hart and the wild boar and blow the prize<sup>5</sup> and serve the hounds of their rights, and I can serve at the table before a great prince, and I can play at chess and tables<sup>6</sup> as well as any other can do, nor I never found man could win of me if I list.”

Chapter 53. *How King Yvoryn caused his daughter play at the chess with Huon on the condition that if he were mated he should lese his head and if she were mated Huon should lie with her all night, and how Huon won the game.*

WHEN KING YVORYN heard Huon he said, “Hold thee to this, for I shall prove whether it be true that thou sayest or not.”

“Yet, sir, I pray you let me show further what I can do, and then assay me at your pleasure.”

“By Mahound,” quod the King, “I am content thou showest all that thou canst do.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “I can right well arm me and set the helm on my head and bear a shield and spear and run and gallop a horse, and when it cometh to the point thereas strokes should be given, ye may well send forth a worse then I. Also, sir, I can right well enter into ladies’ chambers to embrace and to kiss them and to do the rest if need were.”

“Friend,” quod Yvoryn, “by that I hear by thee thou canst do mo things than should turn to good, but to prove thee I shall cause thee

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<sup>1</sup>fardel: pack

<sup>2</sup>cast me in his neck: throw me up on his shoulders

<sup>3</sup>can: know

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<sup>4</sup>mew a sparhawk: cage a sparrowhawk

<sup>5</sup>blow the prize: (presumably) blow the hunting horn to call all the hunt to the kill

<sup>6</sup>tables: backgammon

to be assayed at the play of the chess. I have a fair daughter with whom I will thou shalt play, on the condition that if she win thou shalt lose thy head, and if thou canst mate her I promise that thou shalt have her one night in thy bed, to do with her at thy pleasure and a hundred mark of money therewith.”

“Sir,” quod Huon, “if it were your pleasure I would be glad to forbear that enterprise.”

“By Mahound,” quod the King, “it shall be none otherwise, come thereof what will.”

In the mean season that this bargain was making, a paynim went into the lady’s chamber and showed her how there was with the King her father a young man, and had made promise how he should play at the chess with her, on the condition that if he lose the game he shall lose his head, and if he win then to have her all night in his bed to do his pleasure and a thousand mark of money.

“And dame,” quod he, “I ensure you that he that shall play against you is the most fairest man that ever I saw. Pity it is that he should be a varlet to a minstrel as he is.”

“By Mahound,” quod the lady, “I hold my father a fool when he thinketh that I should suffer a man to die for winning of a game at chess.”

Then Yvoryn sent for his daughter by two kings, who brought her to the King her father. Then Yvoryn said, “Daughter, thou must play at chess with this young varlet that thou seest here, so that if thou win he shall lose his head, and if he win I will that he shall lie with thee one night to do with thee at his pleasure.”

“Father,” quod the lady, “sen this is your pleasure, it is reason that I do it whether I will or not.”

Then she beheld Huon, whom she saw right fair, and said to herself, “By Mahound, for the great beauty that I see in this young man, I would this game were at an end, so that I were abed with him all night.”

When the lady was come, their places were made ready. Then she and Huon sat down, and the King Yvoryn and all the barons sat

down about them to see them play. Then Huon said to the King, “Sir, I require you, that you nor none other do speak in our game, nother for the one party nor the other.”

“Friend,” quod the King, “have no doubt thereof.” And for more surety the King caused to be cried thorough all the palace that none should be so hardy to speak one word on pain of death.

Then the chess were made ready.

Then Huon said, “Lady, what game will ye play at?”

“Friend,” quod she, “at the game accustomed, that is, to be mated in the corner.”

Then they both began to study for the first draught. There were paynims that beheld Huon, but he cared not for any of them but studied on his game, the which they had begun so that<sup>1</sup> Huon had lost part of his pawns, wherewith he changed colour and blushed as red as a rose.

The damsel perceived him and said, “Friend, whereon do ye think? Do you think ye are nigh mated? Anon my father will strike off your head.”

“Dame,” quod he, “as yet the game is not done. Great shame shall your father have when ye shall lie all night in mine arms, and I being but a varlet to a poor minstrel.”

When the barons heard Huon say so they began all to laugh.

And the lady was surprised with the love of Huon for the great beauty that she saw in him, so that she nigh forgot all her play to think of Huon, so that she lost the game, whereof Huon was joyful and called the King and said, “Sir, now may ye see how I can play, for if I will<sup>2</sup> a little more study, I would mate your daughter whereas I list.”

When the King saw that, he said to his daughter, “Arise. Cursed be the hour that ever I got thee, for great dishonour thou hast done to

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<sup>1</sup>so that: in such a way that

<sup>2</sup>will: have a mind to

me, when so many great men thou hast mated, and now I see here before me that a minstrel's varlet hath mated thee."

"Sir," quod Huon, "trouble not yourself for that cause. As for the wager that I should win thereby, I am content to release it quite. Let your daughter go into her chamber and sport her with her damsels at her pleasure, and I shall go and serve my master the minstrel."

"Friend," quod the King, "if thou wilt show me this courtesy, I shall give thee a hundred mark<sup>1</sup> in money."

"Sir," quod Huon, "I am content with your pleasure."

And the lady went her way sorrowful and said to herself, "Ah, false fainted heart, Mahound confound thee, for if I had known that thou wouldest thus have refused my company I would have mated thee, and then thou hadst lost thy head."

Thus the matter passed till the next day. Then King Yvoryn made a cry thorough all the city that every man should be armed and mounted on their horses and that it was his mind to set forward toward his enemies. Then every man armed them and mounted on their horses. Many helms glittered against the sun, and many trumpets and tabors began to sound. Such bruit was made in the city that it was marvel to hear it.

Chapter 54. *How that Huon was arrived and mounted on a poor horse and went after the army to Anfalerne.*

WHEN HUON SAW how he had not wherewith to arm him, his heart mourned right sore, for gladly he would a gone forth with other if he might have any horse to ride on. He came to King Yvoryn and said, "Sir, I require you let me have a horse and harness, that I may go with you to the battle, and then shall ye see how I can aid you."

"Friend," quod Yvoryn, "I am content ye come with me."

Then the King commanded one of his chamberlains to deliver him horse and harness, and the chamberlain said, "Sir, beware what ye do, for oftentimes such fleeing vagabonds are of light courage. If he have horse and harness, he may as soon go to your enemies' part as to keep with you. Sir, never trust me but he is some counterfeit varlet."

When the King heard him he said, "It may well be, yet let him have a good harness and helm and shield and let his horse be of a small value, to the intent he shall not go far off though he would."

The same time there was a paynim that heard the King grant how Huon should have harness. He went to his house and took out of his coffer an old rusty sword and brought it to Huon and said, "Friend, I see well ye have no sword to aid yourself withal, and therefore I give you this sword, the which I have long kept in my coffer." The paynim did give it to Huon in a mockery, for he thought the sword but of a small value.

Huon took the sword and drew it out of the sheath and saw letters written thereon in French, saying how this sword was forged by Galans, who in his days forged three swords, and the same sword was one of the three. One was Durandell, the which Roland had, the second was Courtain.

When Huon had read the letters he was right joyful and said to the paynim, "Friend, for this good sword that ye have given me I thank you, and I promise you if I may live long I shall reward you with the double value thereof."

After Huon had this sword there was brought him a good harness, helm, shield, and spear with a rusty head. Huon cared little for it by reason of the great desire that he had to come to the place whereas he might show his strength and virtue.

Then there was brought to him a lean horse, pilled<sup>2</sup>, with a long neck and a great head. When Huon saw that horse he took him by

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<sup>1</sup>mark: marks

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<sup>2</sup>pilled: half bald



the bridle and leapt upon him without any foot in the stirrup in the sight of a thousand paynims that were present, and some said it was not well done to give him a horse the which could not serve or aid him in time of need.

When Huon was mounted on his lean feeble horse, he was sorrowful, for well he perceived how they mocked him, and said softly to himself, "Ah, ye false paynims, if I may live a year I shall quit<sup>1</sup> your mocks."

Then Huon rode forth with other, but for all that he could do with his spurs the horse would go but his own soft pace, whereof divers paynims mocked him.

Thus King Yvoryn departed from Mombrant with his great army and tarried in the fields for his men, and when they were all assembled together, then he departed and took the way to Anfalerne, the which was of but four leagues off. And when they came there they ran before the city and drave away all the beasts, beefs and moutons and sent them to Mombrant.

Then when the Admiral Galafer saw King Yvoryn before his city and had driven away all the pray about the town, he was so sorrowful that he was nearhand out of his wit. And then he saw the fair Esclaramonde before him and said, "Dame, the great love that I have set on you is this day dearly bought, for by your occasion I see my country destroyed and my men slain and led in servitude."

"Sir," quod she, "I am sorry thereof. It lieth in you to amend it, sen this ill is come to you by me. Then it is in you to render me to King Yvoryn, and thereby ye and your country shall be in rest and peace."

"Fair lady," quod Galafer, "by the grace of Mahound, for any fear that I have of Yvoryn your uncle I will not render you into his hands till I have had of you my pleasure."

"Sir," quod she, "ye may do with me as it shall please you after that the two years be past for the accomplishing of mine avow."

"Dame," quod Galafer, "or I render you to your uncle Yvoryn I shall have never a foot of land, first it shall be clean destroyed."

Chapter 55. *How Huon fought with Sorbryn and slew him and won the good horse Blanchardin, whereon he mounted and won the battle and was brought with great triumph to Mombrant.*

WHEN SORBRYN, NEPHEW to the Admiral Galafer, heard his uncle make such sorrow, he said to him, "fair Uncle, be not dismayed, though Yvoryn hath taken and slain some of your men and driven away your beasts. For each of yours, if I live, I shall render again to you four. I shall tell you how I shall go and arm me and issue out and show to Yvoryn, that he set one<sup>2</sup> or two of the most hardiest of all his host to fight with me. And if it be so that I be overcome, then render his niece Esclaramonde to him to do with her at his pleasure. And if that I discomfit his men, then let him depart, so that all the damage that he hath to you in this war be to render again to you the double thereof. For better it were that this war should end by two men rather than so much people should be destroyed."

"Fair nephew," quod Galafer, "I heard never a better word. I am well content if ye will have it thus."

Then Sorbryn went and armed him. He was a goodly knight, for in all the paynims' lands there was not his peer, nor none that approached near to his valiantness.

When he was armed, then Blanchardin, his good horse, was brought to him. The bounty of this horse exceeded all other, and of beauty there was none like him. He was as white as snow. The freshness of his apparel, it was so rich and goodly that I cannot make no mention thereof, but no man could esteem the value of the riches

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<sup>1</sup>quit: requite, avenge

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<sup>2</sup>show to Yvoryn, that he set one or two: make an appearance before Yvoryn so that he might direct one or two

of the bridle, saddle and harness.

Then Sorbryn leapt upon his horse without any stirrup. Then he took and great spear and so rode out of the city.

And when he saw King Yvoryn afar off, he cried aloud and said, "Ah, thou Yvoryn of Mombrant, the Admiral Galafer hath sent me to thee and will that thou do arm one of the most valiantest men of thy court and let him come against me, and if he can vanquish me, then he shall deliver to thee thy niece Esclaramonde, and if I overcome thy man, then thou to return to thy city and suffer thy niece still with him, and also thou to restore all the damages<sup>1</sup> that thou hast done him and his in this war." When Yvoryn heard the paynim, he looked about him to see if any of his men would take on him this enterprise to fight with Sorbryn, but there was no paynim that durst speak one word, for they feared Sorbryn for the fierceness that was in him, and they said among themselves that whosoever did fight against him were like miserably to finish his days.

The same time that Yvoryn spake with Sorbryn, Huon was among the other paynims and heard what Sorbryn had said, and also he saw no man durst go against Sorbryn.

Then as well as he might he got himself out of the press upon his lean horse. He strake him with his spurs, but for all that he could do, the horse would nother trot nor gallop, but go still his own pace. The old minstrel beheld Huon his varlet, who made him ready to fight against the paynim, and saw that he was so ill horsed, he ascried ahigh<sup>2</sup> and said, "Sir King Yvoryn, it shall be to you great villainy when such a horse that is nothing worth ye have delivered to my varlet, who goeth for your sake to fight with Sorbryn, with whom none of your men dare fight. Great sin it is that he hath not a better horse."

Then Huon said to Sorbryn, "Saracen, I pray thee speak with me."

"Friend," quod Sorbryn, "what wilt thou with me?"

"Paynim," quod Huon, "I require thee prove thy virtue against me."

"Then," quod Sorbryn, "tell me, art thou a paynim or a Saracen<sup>3</sup>?"

"Friend," quod Huon, "I am nother paynim nor Saracen, but I am christened, believing in the law of Jesu Christ, and though thou seest me but poorly apparelled, despise me not, for I am come of a noble extraction, wherefore I require thee, on thy law that thou believest on, let me not go without battle."

"Friend," quod Sorbryn, "in this request thou doest great folly, for thou desirest thy death. I have pity of thee, and therefore I counsel thee to return back."

"Paynim," quod Huon, "I had rather die then to return or I have jousted with thee."

Then they went each from other to take their course, but for all that ever Huon could do, his horse would not advance forth. Whereof Huon was sore displeased and said, "Ah, very God and man, I desire thee to give me the grace that I might win this horse that this paynim doth ride on."

When Huon saw that this horse would nother forward nor backward, he set his shield against his enemy, and Sorbryn came running like the tempest and with his spear strake in Huon's shield such a stroke that the buckles nor anything else could resist the stroke, but the shield was pierced throughout. But the good harness saved Huon from all hurts, and he removed no more for the stroke then it had been a strong wall, whereof Yvoryn and all other had great marvel and said one to another how they had never seen before

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<sup>1</sup>damages: hurts

<sup>2</sup>ascried ahigh: shouted at the top of his voice

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<sup>3</sup>paynim or Saracen: a brand new loonie is offered to the person who can establish the distinction that Sorbryn is making here. On the surface of it, it's hard to distinguish Saracen from paynim, because both are often used to mean the same thing. Arguing that one means heathen and the other Muslim is too easy, because both are often used to mean Muslim.

so great a stroke nor a goodlier receipt thereof without falling to the earth. Every man praised greatly Huon that he held himself so firmly. "By Mahound," quod Yvoryn, "our man is fierce and of great hardiness. I would he were mounted now on my horse."

And Huon, who had received the great stroke, in great ire cast down his spear and took his sword with both his hands and gave therewith the paynim a great stroke as he passed by him ahigh on his helm. The stroke was so puissant that nother the helm nor coif of steel could not resist the stroke but that his head was cloven to the shoulders, and so he fell down dead in the field.

Then Huon, who was quick and light, took the good horse Blanchardin by the rein and alighted from his own horse, without feet in the stirrup leapt up upon the paynim's horse, and left his own in the field. And when he saw himself on Blanchardin, he dashed to him his spurs to prove him. When the horse felt the spurs, he began to leap and gambol and gallop as it had been the thunder. The paynims had marvel that he had not fallen to the earth.

When he had well proved him and turned him in and out, he thought he would not give him for the value of a realm. Then he came to King Yvoryn with twenty gambols. "By Mahound," quod Yvoryn, "this varlet seemeth rather son to a king or prince than to be a varlet to a minstrel." Then he came to Huon and embraced him and made him great feast.

And the paynims that were within Anfalerne with the Admiral Galafer issued out of the city, and when Galafer saw his nephew slain, he rode about him three times and made a piteous complaint and said, "Ah, right dear nephew, I may well complain your youth, when I see you this piteously slain. Certainly if I live long your death shall dearly be bought." He caused the dead body to be carried into the city with great lamentations.

Then he and his men entered into the battle. There was great slaughter made on both parts, but among all other Huon did

marvellous. He slew and bet<sup>1</sup> down and tore off helms and strake out brains with the pommel of his sword. He slew and bet down all that came within his stroke. His high prowess was such that no paynim durst abide him, but fled as the sheep doth from the wolves. He did so much by virtue of his arms that within short space he brought all the enemies to plain discomfiture, so that the Admiral Galafer with much pain fled and entered into the city, right sorrowful for the loss that he had received that day, for the third part of his men were slain in the battle, and all by the valiantness of Huon, the which was so great that King Yvoryn and his barons stood still to behold his valiant deeds.

And as Huon fought he spied out the paynim that had given him his sword. Then he remembered the promise that he had made him. Then he lift up his sword and strake a paynim therewith so that he clave his head to the breast and so fell down dead. And Huon took the paynim's horse and gave the horse to him that had given him the good sword and said, "Friend, take it in worth the gift of this horse for a reward for the good sword ye gave me."

"Sir," quod the paynim, "I thank you."

Finally, Huon did so much that there was no paynim that durst abide him, but fled and entered into the city of Anfalerne. Then they closed their gates and lift up their bridges, and King Yvoryn's men departed with the booty they had won. Then with great triumph Huon was conveyed riding cheek by cheek by King Yvoryn, and so brought to Mombrant, whereas they were received with great joy.

And the Admiral Galafer was entered into Anfalerne in great sorrow for Sorbryn his nephew, who was dead, and also for his men that he had lost in battle. And when he was unarmed he caused his nephew to be buried with sore weeping and lamentations.

Now let us leave speaking of them till we return thereto again.

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<sup>1</sup>bet: beat

Chapter 56. *How Huon was set in great honour and set at the table with King Yvoryn of Mombrant.*

WHEN YVORYN WAS entered into Mombrant he went and unarmed him. His daughter came to him to make him feast, and when he saw his daughter, he kissed her and said, "Dear daughter, thou wert mated in a good hour by the minstrel's varlet, for at the day of battle that we have had against the Admiral Galafer, who was discomfited by the only prowess of this varlet by whom thou wert mated. Thanked be my god Mahound, for by him I have overcome mine enemies, and beside that, he fought hand to hand against Sorbryn, nephew to the Admiral Galafer, and he slew him. But if I may live one year, the great service that he hath done to me shall be even right well rewarded."

"Father," quod the lady, "ye are bound so to do."

Then King Yvoryn went up into his palace and his daughter with him, and Huon went to the lodging whereas the minstrel was lodged. Then he unarmed him and went with his master to the palace.

When King Yvoryn saw them, the King advanced forth and took Huon by the hand and said, "Friend, ye shall go with me and sit at my table, for I cannot do too much honour for the good service that ye have done me. I abandon to you all my house, to do therein at your pleasure. Take all my gold and silver and jewels, and give thereof at your pleasure. I ordain and will that all that ye command shall be done. All that is here, I abandon to you. Yea, in the ladies' chambers take there your pleasure as ye list, and when I go out ye shall go with me."

"Sir," quod Huon, "of the great honour that ye have done to me I thank you."

Then they sat down at the table, and when they had dined, the King and Huon sat together on the rich carpets. Then Mouflet the minstrel appointed his viol and played so melodiously that the paynims that heard him had great marvel thereof, for the viol made so sweet a sound that it seemed to be the mermaids of the sea. King

Yvoryn and all his lords had so great joy that it seemed to them that they were in the glory of Paradise, so that there was no paynim but that gave him gowns and mantles and other jewels.

The minstrel saw Huon sit by the King, and said, "Friend, yesterday I was your master, and now I am your minstrel. I think now ye have little care for me, yet I pray you come to me and gather together these clothes and put them in my male, as ye have done or this."

When the King and his lords heard that, they began to laugh. Now let us leave speaking of them, and speak of the old Gerames.