



Romance of the French (Alfred) | Le Roman des Franceis (Arflet)

Text Information

Author | André de Coutances

Language | Old French

Period | 12th Century

Genre | Satirical literature

Source | London, British Library, MS Add. 10289, fols. 129v-132v.

Collection | Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Premodern World; Prank or Be Pranked: Comedy, Wit and Satire

URL | sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/andre_romance_of_the_french/

Transcription, translation and introduction by Johannes Junge Ruhland.

Introduction to the Text

The *Roman des Franceis*, also known as "Arflet," is a short satirical piece in octosyllabic verses, arranged in four-line strophes. Its author, who names himself André (361, 371, 385, 395), has been confirmed by Gaston Paris to be André de Coutances, the Norman who is known as the author of an *Évangile de Nicodème* (Paris and Bos 1885, xvi–xix, xxiv–xxvii). It should be noted, however, that the attribution is hypothetical. Given its subject matter and the views expressed therein, it has been suggested that the *Roman des Franceis* could not have been written after 1204, when Philippe-Auguste invaded Normandy.

The *Roman des Franceis* is presented as a charter issued by Alfred, king of Northumberland. It takes a biting stance towards the French, who are depicted as cowardly, stingy, and poor garlic-eating wretches. First, it stages the invasion of France by King Arthur (41-224), during which Arthur defeats Frollo, king of the French, in a duel (173-192) and throws the French into serfdom after the latter's defeat (193-208). André then goes on to describe the stinginess of the French: to avoid petty fighting over food, they developed the tradition of tying pieces of bread to strings, allowing them to retrieve their share of soup (237-312; this motif has been studied by Félix Lecoy [1970]), and they have their guests pay for their share of food (345-360). The *Roman des Franceis* also includes a series of burlesque commandments proffered by Frollo (137-156). While the text chiefly targets the French, the English get their share of satirical observations too, heavy drinkers as they are (5-15). It should be noted that when the text refers to "the French," it might be referring to the inhabitants of the small royal domain surrounding Paris (see 62-64). At the time it was likely written, half of what we know as France was under Plantagenet rule, while the other half was only nominally subject to the king of France. The list of names at the end of the poem (386-396), as well as the list of peers of France, copied in Latin after the *Roman* and transcribed here, attests to this.

Introduction to the Source

The *Roman des Franceis* appears in London, British Library, MS Add. 10289, fols. 129v-132v. The manuscript was likely made in Mont-Saint-Michel in the late 13th century (Paris and Bos 1885, xix–xxiv; see also the BL manuscript notice), and besides the *Roman des Franceis*, it contains a number of other texts, listed by Paris and Bos. Some texts have a connection to the manuscript's place of production, such as ours and Guillaume de Saint-Pair's *Roman du Mont-Saint-Michel*, while others are less place-specific. The text of the *Roman des Franceis* is at times rather obscure, in all likelihood due to the vagaries of transmission. It has been edited by Achille Jubinal (1842, vol 2, 1–17), and more recently and with substantial improvements by Anthony Holden (1973). The GMS translation is based on an interpretive transcription of the *Roman des Franceis*, and occasionally draws on Holden's edition, commentary or glossary to establish a legible text, where necessary.

Further Reading

Catalog notice for Add. MS 10289. n.d. British Library. http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_10289.

Holden, Anthony J. "Le Roman des Franceis." *Études de langue et de littérature du Moyen Âge offertes à Félix Lecoy par ses collègues, ses élèves et ses amis*. Champion, 1973, pp. 213-33.



Jubinal, Achille, ed. *Nouveau Recueil de contes, dits, fabliaux et autres pièces inédites des XIIIe, XIVe et XVe siècles pour faire suite aux collections de Legrand d'Aussy, Barbazan et Méon*. Challamel, 1842.

Lecoy, Félix. "A propos du Roman des Franceis d'André de Coutances." *Revue de linguistique romane*, vol. 34, 1970, pp. 123-25. <http://eliphi.fr/list/#>.

Paris, Gaston, and Alphonse Bos, editors. *Trois Versions rimées de l'Évangile de Nicodème Par Chrétien, André de Coutances, et un anonyme*. Didot, 1885.



Romance of the French (Alfred) | Le Roman des Franceis (Arflet)

Ici se comence le Romanz des Franceis

Here begins the romance of the French

Reis Arflet de Nohundrelande
As boens beveors saluz mande,
Les autres a maufez commande,
Quer il nes prise une alemande.

King Alfred of Northumberland
Sends greetings to the good drinkers,
The others he commends to demons,
Because he does not value them much*.

Le viel Arflet fu son ancesstre
Qui des guides fu sire et mestre.
Cil si enbat destre et senestre
Tant qu'il en set quanqu'en puet estre.

5 Old Alfred was his ancestor,
He was the lord and master of banquets.
The other one throws himself from one side to the other
So much that he knows all about it.

Mestre est des cerveises estales,
Bien les conoist bones et males;
Bien est sire des escales*,
Des gestinges et des ervaies.

He is the master of settled beer,
10 He knows it good and bad;
He is the lord of drinking bowls,
Of banquets and of feasts.

De lui vos di en dreite fei
Que sevent a beü sanz sei,
Et bien est veir que endreit sei
Ne veut que dechie guerseï.

I tell you truthfully
That he has often drank without thirst,
15 And it is true that he does not want
Wassail to fall into disuse.

Rimé ont de lui li Franceis
Lez le pot ou bollent VI peis;
Par icestes meismes leis
S'en volent vengier li Engleis.

The French have made some rhymes about him,
Next to a pot where six peas were boiling;
By the same token, the English
20 Want to take revenge.

Il ont dit que riens n'a valu,
Et donc à Arflet n'a chalu
Que boté fu par Capalu
Li reis Artur en la palu;

The English said that it has not worked out,
And so Alfred did not care
That king Arthur was thrown
Into the marsh by the cat Capalu;

25 Et que le chat l'ocist de guerre,
Puis passa outre en Engleterre,
Et ne fu pas lenz de conquerre;
Ainz porta corone en la terre,

25 And that the cat killed him at war,
And crossed the Channel into England,
And was quick to make conquests,
So that he even wore a crown in those lands,



Et fu sire de la contree. Ou ont itel fable trovee? Mençonge est, Dex le set, provee: Onc greignor ne fu encontree.	And became the lord of the region. 30 Where did they find such a tale? It's a proven lie, God knows it: Never has one found a bigger one.
Mes li chaitif, li espové, Li mal peü, li tart cové, Li patarin, li endové, Où ont-il d'autre contrové?	But the miserable, the overwhelmed, The malnourished, the misbred, 35 The naughty, the possessed, Where have they found these imaginary things?
Trop ont dit d'Artur grant enfance, Quer Artu fu de tel puissance Que Franceis conquist o sa lance: Mau eritage mist en France.	They told enough silly tales about Arthur, Because Arthur was of such power That he conquered the French with his lance: 40 He placed a wicked lineage in France.
Bien savon que Bien et Belin, Maximien et Costentin Furent a Franceis mal veisin, Et France orent, ce est* la fin.	We know well that Brenne and Belin, Maximien and Constantin Were bad neighbours to the French, And they had France in their power, that's how it ends.
D'Engleterre furent tuit rei, Chescun conquist France endroit sei, Chescun en pleis a le bofei, Le gorgeir et le desrei.	45 They were all kings of England, Each one of them conquered France, Each one was full of pride when he pleaded, Full of garrulousness and of reckless conduct.
Au rei Artur le deraain, De celui sommes nos certain, Voudrent* fere plet, mes en vain, Quer il les out bien sor* sa main.	To Arthur, the last king, 50 —of him we are assured— They wanted to contest his power, but that was in vain, Because he had them firmly in his command.
Quant de lor orguil s'averti, Maugré eus toz les converti, Et le païs acuverti: Dites se ce est veir parti?	When he noticed their arrogance, He turned them despite themselves, 55 And he subjected the land: Tell me if that is a truthful distribution!
Jamés n'iert jor que il n'i pere; Douce esteit* France, or est amere; Mout ourent en Artur dur pere, Sa sorvenue mout compere.	There was not a day that he would not be seen; France used to be sweet, now it is bitter; They had a very harsh father in Arthur, 60 His arrival made a notable difference.



Mout fu Artur proz et corteis;
Quant out conquis Chartres et Bleis,
Et Orliens et tot Estampeis,
A Paris vint o ses Engleis.

Arthur was very worthy and courtly;
Once he conquered Chartres and Blois,
And Orléans and all of Étampes,
He went to Paris with his Englishmen.

La vile asist, n'en dotez mie;
Mout out bone chevalerie
Et bien estruite et bien garnie,
Si l'a fierement asallie.

65 He besieged the city, let there be no doubt about it;
He had very good knights,
Well trained and well-armed,
So he bravely assailed it.

Engleis fierement asallirent,
Franceis merdement defendirent:
Au premier assaut se rendirent,
Et hontosement s'en partirent.

The English bravely assailed,
70 The French shittily defended:
With the first assault they surrendered,
And they went off full of shame.

A cel partir fu apelee
Paris, ci n'a nul celee,
Qui primes fu Termes nommee,
Et mout ert de grant renommee.

From this departure came the name
Paris, there's nothing to hide about it,
75 Which was initially called Termes,
And which had a great renown.

Frolles ert apelé le reis,
Qu'Artur conquist o ses Engleis;
Et de Frolles sont dit Franceis:
Qui primes eurent non Bailleis.

Frollo was the name of the king
Whom Arthur vanquished with his English;
And the French are named after Frollo:
80 Initially, they were called Bailleis*.

Frolles, qui de France fu sire,
Ne sout que faire ne que dire;
Grant mautalent out et grant ire:
Franceis manda a un concire.

Frollo, who was the lord of France,
Did not know what to do or to say;
He was very angry and upset:
He convoked the French to a council.

Li baron l'ont a ce amis
Qui ses messages a tramis
A Artur; si li a pramis
Qu'encor porroient estre amis,

85 The barons persuaded him
To send a messenger
To Arthur; and so he promised him
That they could still be in good terms,

Se de sa terre s'en issist
Que a mout grant tort saisseïst;
Et s'il ne la guerpisseïst
De bataille le aasteïst

If he emptied the lands
90 Which he had been ill advised to seize;
But if he did not vacate the premises,
He would provoke him to combat,



Par eus dous, que plus n'i eüst:
Eissi le voleit, ce seüst.
Cous rendist qui cous receüst,
Et plus feüst qui plus peüst.

Artur respondi: 'Dex i valle;
Defendré mei, s'est qui m'asalle;
Seit a demein ceste bataille,
A Paris, en l'Isle, sanz falle.'

De ça et de la sunt certain
De la bataille a l'endemain:
Qui veintra tot, eit en sa main
Les bois, les viles et le plain.

Frolles durement menaça,
De jurer ne s'apereça,
Dex tot par menbres depeça,
Que Artur mal s'i aproça.

Artur, qui n'out pas cuer de glace,
Preisa mout petit sa menace;
Mieuz l'amast a tenir en place
Que voer Dieu en mi la face.

Artur, qui out grant desierrer,
Se fist matin aparellier,
Lui et Labagu son destrier,
Et se fist en l'Isle nagier.

Frolles jusqu'a tierce dormi,
Et lors quant il se desdormi
Endeseetes s'estormi
Com se l'eüssent point formi.

Franceis, qui moroient d'ennui,
Li distrent: 'Leverez-vous hui?'
Il dist 'aol!*, et de nullui
N'ont Franceis aol fors de lui.

One on one, and he wouldn't add anything to it:
He made it known to him that those were his terms.
95 A blow was worth a blow,
And who could do more should do more.

Arthur replied: 'God help me;
I will defend myself, if there's someone to attack me;
Let the combat be scheduled for tomorrow,
100 In Paris, on the Île de la Cité, without fail.'

On this and on that side, they are assured
That they will fight the next day:
The winner would have possession
Of the forests, the towns and the clear lands.

105 Frollo proffered strong menaces,
He did not tire of swearing,
He completely dismembered the body of God,
Because Arthur came to do ill.

Arthur, who did not have a cold heart,
110 Cared very little about his threats;
He would have preferred him to stay in place
Rather than seeing God face to face.

Arthur, who felt a great urge,
Had himself prepared early morning,
115 Himself and his horse Labagu,
And he had himself transported to the Île.

Frollo slept until way after daybreak,
And when he finished sleeping,
He abruptly rose,
120 As if ants had bitten him.

The French, who were bored to death,
Asked him: 'Will you get up today?'
He said 'yeah', and the French
Use garlic because of no one else than him.



Tot en gesant, sans sei drecier,
Se fist Frolles aparellier;
D'ilonc sunt Franceis costumier,
Que en gesant se font chaucier.

Ainz que Frolles se fust armez
S'est tierce fiee pasmez;
Lors fu des Franceis mout blasmez*,
Mes il lor dist: 'Ne vos tamez;

Ce me vient de grant hardement:
Mort est Artu veraement.'
Lors les prist toz par serement,
Qu'il tendront son commandement.

'Coment, dist-il, que il m'avienge,
De mes bones mors vos sovienge;
Mar i aura cil qui Diu crienge
Se leauté a homme tienge.

Cruel seiez à desmesure,
Avel, fei mentie, perjure;
El vostre garder metez cure,
De l'autrui prenez a dreiture.

Artur vos voudra del suen tendre,
Prenez-le sanz guerredon rendre;
Ainz vos lessiez ardeir ou pendre
Que le vostre veiez despendre.

De dez seiez boens joeors
Et de Deu bons perjureors,
En autrui cort richeeors,
Poi fesanz et boens vanteors.

Acreez, si ne rendez rien;
Haez ceus qui vos ferunt bien;
Plus ordement vivez que chien,
Et seiez tuit armeneisien.'

125 Lying in bed, without getting up,
Frollo had himself prepared;
That is where the custom of the French comes from
To get dressed lying.

Before Frollo even got armed,
130 He fainted three times;
The French blamed him strongly,
But he told them: 'Don't be afraid;

This is due to my great courage:
Arthur is a dead man, to be sure.'
135 He then took everyone's oath
That they would follow his lead.

He said, 'Whatever happens to me,
Remember my good mores;
Ills will befall whoever fears God
140 If he remains loyal to another man.

Be excessively cruel,
Stingy lying perjurers;
Dedicate yourselves to hoard your riches,
And feel entitled to take the riches of others.

145 Arthur will want to give you some of his wealth,
Take it without returning the favor;
Go let yourselves be burned or hanged
Rather than seeing your riches being distributed.

Be good at playing dice,
150 And be good perjurers toward God,
Be braggarts at other people's courts,
Do little and boast well.

Take up credit, don't return anything;
Hate those who act well towards you;
155 Live more filthily than dogs,
And be a bunch of miscreants!'



Frolles en France mist ces leis;
Bien le retindrent li Franceis,
Et encor i out il sordeis;
Mes je n'en diré or ampleis.

Quant armé fu a quelque paine,
Son mestre chambellenc aceine:
'Va tost, dist-il, et si te paine
Que aie pullente aleine.'

Cil conut bien sa volenté,
Que d'allie s'ert dementé,
Plain vessel l'en a presenté
Et il en menja a plenté.

Ne se pout Frolles aténir
Que des auz ne feïst venir,
Tant por usage maintenir,
Tant por Artur en sus tenir.

Franceis qui devant lui esterent
D'aler en l'Isle se hasterent.
A quelque paine l'i menerent;
Laissierent le, si retornerent.

Frolles remest sor son destrier,
Artur vit venir fort et fier;
Lors n'out en lui que corrocier
Quant vers lui le vit aprochier.

Andui es estruis s'afichierent,
Si que, quant il s'entr'aprocherent,
Amedous lor lances bruiserent
Et lor chevaus s'agenoillerent.

Frolles acuit a menecier
Et Artur trait le brant d'acier;
Quant Frolles vit le cop haucier,
A terre se lessa cachier

Frollo established these laws in France;
The French kept them well,
And there was even worse than that,
160 But I won't say more about it now.

Once he was armed, not without difficulty,
He called his chief servant and said:
'Hurry up and do what you can
To make me have a bad breath.'

165 The servant fully understood what he wanted,
Because he was whining to get garlic,
So he offered him a full plate of it,
And the king ate plenty.

Frollo could not restrain himself
170 From letting go a wind caused by the garlic,
In order as much to upkeep the tradition
As to keep Arthur at a distance.

The French who were in front of him
Made him hasten to the Île.
175 They brought him there not without effort;
They left him and went back.

Frollo remained on his horse,
He saw Arthur coming up towards him, strong and imposing;
He felt nothing but anger
180 When he saw him getting close.

They both settled firmly in their stirrup,
So much so that, when they reached one another,
The two of them had their spears broken,
And their horses were forced onto their knees.

185 Frollo started proffering menaces
And Arthur brandished his steel sword;
When Frollo saw the blow coming,
He let himself fall on the ground



Et dist: 'Merci, Artur, beau sire;
Je suis recreant, ne m'ocire.'
Artur ne pout atremper s'ire,
Frolles ocist, n'en puis el dire.

Franceis furent espoenté
Quant lor rei virent graventé.
A Artur se sont presenté
Que d'eus face sa volenté.

Et il qui toz les voleit pendre,
Quant si humblement les vit rendre,
Ne vout envers Deu tant mesprendre;
Par tote France fist defendre

Que nul ne n'i eüst pendu.
Vie et membre lor a rendu.
En autre sens lor a vendu
Que vers lui se sont defendu.

Quer il les mist toz en servage
Ou encore est tot lor lignage;
Illoc donna en eritage
Artur, as Franceis, cuvertage.

Franceis en l'Isle s'en passerent,
Lor rei qui mort ert enporterent.
En un grant feu le cors boterent
Que por lui ardre alumerent.

Deables furent en agait
Qui d'Enfer ourent le feu trait
Dont il alumerent l'atraite
Qui por Frolles ardeir fut fait.

Mout out cel feu male ensuiance,
Que d'illoc avient sanz dotance
Qu'encor en art en remembrance
Del feu d'Enfer la gent de France.

And said: 'Please, Arthur, dear Sir;
190 I'm a coward, don't kill me!'
Arthur could not restrain his anger,
And he killed Frollo, there's nothing else to be said.

The French were frightened
When they saw their king knocked down.
195 They turned themselves in to Arthur,
So that he may do as he pleased with them.

And when Arthur, who wanted to have them all hanged,
Saw them surrender so humbly,
Did not want to act reprehensibly towards God;
200 Across France, he forbad

That anyone should be hanged.
He returned life and limbs to them.
And he dealt differently with them
For having resisted him.

205 Indeed, he enslaved them all,
And their descendants are still there;
There, Arthur bequeathed the legacy
Of serfdom upon the French.

The French went over to the Île,
210 And they carried their dead king away.
They threw him into a great fire
That they had lit to burn him.

Devils were on the look-out,
They brought fire from Hell
215 To light the stake
Which was made to burn Frollo.

This fire had very bad consequences,
Because there's no doubt that it is the reason
Why, in remembrance, the inhabitants of France
220 Still burn in the fires of Hell.



De Franceis prist Artur homage,
Et il establi par vitage
IIII deniers de cuvertage
Por raaindre lor chevelage.

Arthur took homage from the French,
And he established that
They should pay four deniers in annual dues
As part of their condition of serfs.

Assez trovent qui lor recontre
Cest hontage, mes rien ne monte,
De ce ne tienent plé ne conte,
Car il ne sevent avoir honte.

225 Numerous people remind them
Of that shameful subjection, but to no avail,
They do not worry too much about it,
Because they are unable to feel shame.

Ja Franceis celui n'amera
Qui bien et ennor li fera;
Mes com il plus honi sera
Et il tanz gorgeiera.

A Frenchman will not hold dear
230 Someone who acts to their benefit;
But the more he is shamed,
The more he will pride himself.

Quer savez que liu* u esrez,
Ja mar Franceis de rien crerez:
Sel querez, ja nel troverez;
Sel trovez, ja prou n'i aurez.

Because you know that, in time and place,
It will amount to no good to trust a Frenchman;
235 Seek him, you won't find him;
Find him, you will run into trouble.

Quant li Franceis veut cort tenir,
Et il se veut bel* contenir,
Deu pain de segle fet venir
Por sei richement contenir.

When the Frenchman wants to gather his court
And wants to make a nice impression,
He orders two loaves of rye bread*
240 To give himself a worthy countenance.

Et chescun en est par partie
Sa dreite livraison partie.
La croste seivrent de la mie,
Puis font entre els une aramie,

Everyone individually gets
His rightfully due amount.
They remove the crust from the soft part,
And they solemnly gather all together

De sopes faire en la paele;
Qu'il n'i covent* autre escuele.
A trere les y a berele,
Tel ore est qui n'est mie bele.

245 In order to make a soup in a pot;
There's no better dish for it.
A big turmoil arouses when they try to retrieve the bread,
It sometimes becomes very ugly.

Mes il font une autre veisdie,
Ne m'est or lai que nel vos die:
Qu'a traire les n'i ait boisdie*,
Chescun d'un fil sa sope lie.

But they also do another kind of trick,
250 I don't recoil from telling it to you:
So that they can retrieve the bread without there being mischief,
Everyone attaches his share of soup to a string.



Un fil tient chescun en sa main
Tant que il a trempé son pain;
Si est de sa sope certain
Tant commē il veit son fil sain.

Mes quant il ront ou il desnoe*,
Que la soupe deu fil descroe,
Donc va a chose à male voe,
Quer chescun dit que ele est soe.

Dont orriez Dex desmembrer,
Ventre, langue, gorge, amenbrer;
Dieu ne porreit longues durer,
S'il en perout por son jurer.

Sovent i a meinte aatie
Et mainte colee partie;
Mes il font une autre establie
Qui fet remaindre la folie:

Et il jugent que cil qui a
Icel fil greignor dreit i a;
Sor sainz jure qui enlia
Cele sope qui deslia.

L'estrif remaint et la meslee
Quant il l'a a soe provee;
Mes mout est sovent esgardee
Et enviree et golosee.

Et quant il metent pot a feu,
Lez le pot asieent un queu;
Lors n'i aureit ne ris ne geu
Se il se parteit de cel leu.

Trop i porroit mesavenir,
Sagement l'estuet contenir,
Que por le bollon retenir
Li estuet la cullier tenir.

Everyone holds a string in his hand
So as to dip his piece of bread;
255 And he is guaranteed to get soup
As long as the string is intact.

But when it snaps or gets untied,
So that the soup falls off the string,
Things get tense,
260 Because everyone claims it is his.

You would hear God being dismembered,
His belly, tongue, and throat would all be mentioned;
God couldn't last very long
If he were to endure all that swearing.

265 There often is a lot of rivalry
And of blows handed out;
But they have a different ordinance
That maintains the level of craziness.

And they decide that
270 Whoever has the string has the greater right;
Whoever tied the soup
Claims he rightfully owns it.

The dispute and the commotion do not settle
Once he has proven it is his;
275 But rather his piece of bread is glared at,
Desired and coveted.

And when they put the pot on the hearth,
They sit down a cook next to it;
He would not have a good time
280 If he were to leave from there.

Great ills could befall him,
And he must behave and sit still,
Because he must hold the spoon
To keep the broth from boiling over.



Se li bollon n'alout a droit,
A la char qui cuit mescharroit,
Quer tost fors del pot s'en saudroit
Des que li bollon l'asaudroit.

Si l'avreient* perdue enfin,
Quer le chat entrereit a fin,
Ou la sori ou* le poucin
Enportereit tot le bocin.

A traire la deu pot s'esmaient;
Et quant ce est qu'il s'i essaient,
Ce ne puet estre que il l'aient
Se tote l'eue anceis ne traient.

Et quant l'eue en est puree,
Chescun aguete, chescun bee,
Chescun fait oreison privee
Que Deux dont qu'ele seit trouvee.

Et quant il trovent cel merel,
Lors sachiez que mout lor est bel;
Gragnor joie en a eu hamel
Que outre mer deu feut novel.

Donc est aporte li coteaus,
Si est detrenchié par morseaus
Petit, mes de tel granz seviaus
Com cels dont* l'en guie as meriaus.

S'il avient que non per i ait,
Iloc n'a mie grant dehait,
Quer donc sont li dé avant tret:
Qui Dieu donra plus poinz, si l'ait.

Lor doblers volent nez tenir,
Et c'est legier a avenir,
Quer qui lor mengier veit fenir
De lasté li puet sovenir.

285 If the broth was not cooking right,
It would be bad for the meat,
Because it would fall outside the pot
As soon as the broth would assail it.

They would really have lost the meat in the end
290 Because the cat would come in,
Or because either the mouse or the chick
Would take the whole piece.

They try hard to pull it out of the pot;
And when they actually do give it a try,
295 It's impossible for them to get it
Unless they remove all the liquid first.

And when the liquid is removed,
Everyone watches with their mouth agape,
Everyone prays individually
300 That God may please help that the meat be found.

And when they find the little piece,
Be sure that they are really glad;
A whole hamlet has felt greater joy for it
Than if they witnessed the fire light up again overseas*.

305 They bring forth a knife,
And the meat is cut into small pieces,
Of a size similar
To what one uses for playing hopscotch.

If it so happens that the number of pieces is not right,
310 Dismay is limited,
Because they take out the dice:
He to whom God grants the highest number will get it.

They don't even want to hold their napkins,
And that's easily explainable,
315 Because whoever intends to eat up his meal
Can be overcome by fatigue.



Arflet tesmoigné en son brief
Qu'il menjuent tot lor relief;
Ce est as povres grant meschief,
Et si apelent de cest grief.

Li chien se plaignent d'autre part
Que quant l'os de la table part,
Tant lor vient megre et tant a tart
Que de tot le trovent bastart;

Ou li Franceis l'a tot mengié,
Ou il l'aura si pres rungié
Que quant il li done congié
De neent a le chien païé.

D'iluec vient, nient d'autre nature,
Quë il ont blanche endenteüre,
Quer le rore de l'os lor cure
Les denz et blanchist et escure.

Quant li Franceis se fet seignier,
Si fet atorner mengier
Dont* nus hom ne doit ja pleidier:
Ne s'en sareit fors els aidier,

S'il ne la vet de lor doutrine.
Vinee en gorge de geline,
Si n'est pas deu tot orfeline,
Quer sel i metent et ferine,

Et porreiz et oignons et alz,
Et de lorer fere granz salz,
Et de l'escost estorcer chaux

Qui o les Franceis mengera,
A quei que seit, escotera;
Quer ou as* noiz entenciera
Ou des escaloignes fera

Alfred says in his letter
That they eat everything that's left over;
That's a great pity for the poor,
320 And they call out this injustice.

On another side, the dogs complain
That when the bone leaves the table,
It reaches them so thin and so belatedly
That they deem it a fraud in any respect;

325 Either the Frenchman has eaten it entirely,
Or he will have chewed it so closely
That when he gets rid of it,
He will have given the dog nothing for its wait.

From there and for no other reason comes
330 That they have white teeth,
Because chewing bones makes their teeth
Healthy, and whitens them and cleans them.

When the Frenchman undergoes bloodletting,
He has a meal prepared
335 That no one should mention:
Except for Frenchmen, no one would know how to go about it,

Unless he is one of their sort.
Chicken throat stuffed with sorrel,
And it doesn't come alone,
340 Because they add salt and flour,

And leach and onion and garlic,
And they make a thick laurel sauce,
And [???]

345 Whoever eats with the French,
No matter the circumstances, will chip in;
Because a Frenchman will be content with walnuts
Or will have shallots



Franceis* a tot le mains venir
Por sei richement contenir;
Quer icel ne puet avenir
Que d'escot se sachent tenir

Tant com en lor contrees seient;
Tant com en lor contrees seient;
Et a autrui table richeent
Et blasment quanque il i veent.

Et quant il sont en lors ostex,
Si conoisson Franceis a tex,
A tant merdes, à tant avex,
Qu'en les devreit tuer o pex.

André sa chartre fine a tant,
A Paris l'envoie batant;
Qui la lira seit en estant,
Quer Franceis s'iront mout crestant*;

S'ele est sus Petit Pont retraite,
Ou de colee ou de retraite
Ara celui la teste fraite
Qui la lira, s'il ne se gaite.

Mout sera isnel de prinsaut
Se en Siene ne fet saut.
André prent congié, Dex vos saut!
Mes savez qu'en sa chartre faut?

Et qu'il a oblié a dire,
Por ce que il n'en veut mesdire
Ne Franceis del tot desconfire.

Tirenlire est pain enallié
Et o la douse d'al freié;
Ja Franceis ne sera hetié
Le jor qu'il n'en seit comencié.

Brought to him
350 To give himself a real treat;
Because it can't be the case
That they refrain from splitting up the bill

As long as they are at home;
But when they are not, they go about humming,
355 And fill themselves up at other people's tables,
And blame them whenever they don't let them.

And when they are in their homes,
The French are recognisable as such,
As stingy pieces of shit,
360 So much so that one should kill them or do worse.

André finishes his charter at this point,
And he sends it to Paris in haste;
Whoever reads it should stand firmly on their feet,
Because the French will strut like proud cocks.

365 And the charter was made in Petit Pont,
Where whoever reads it will get blows, stitches,
And have their head smashed
Unless they beware.

He will be quick and prompt
370 If he doesn't jump into the Seine.
André takes leave, God bless!
But do you know what's missing from his charter?

And he forgot to say,
375 Because he doesn't want to speak ill
Or completely defeat the French.

'Tirenlire' is bread rubbed with garlic,
And with a fried garlic clove;
A Frenchman will not rejoice
380 Unless he gets some for breakfast.



Ce est un legier companage
Qui tot le cors lor asoage;
Mes ja o Dieu n'ert heritage
Qui primes fist tel mariage!

Andreu a sa chartre finee;
Bien l'ont li Engleis graantee,
Que rien nule n'i ont trovee
Qui ne seit verité provee.

Bien l'ont graanté li Flamenc,
Et Borgueignon et Loherenc,
Que prendrei ge tot à renc.
Mes en verité vos aprenc

Que Engleis, Breton, Angevin,
Mansel, Gascoign, et Peitevin,
Tienent Andreu a bon devin,
Quer partot dit veir. C'est la fin.

Explicit Arflet.

Hii sunt duodecim pares Francie.
Dux Burgondie.
Dux Normannie.
Dux Aquitanie.
Comes Flandrie.
Comes Campanie.
Comes Sancti Egidii.
Archiepiscopus Remensis.
Archiepiscopus Lingolnensis.
Episcopus Beluacensis.
Archiepiscopus Lugdunensis.
Episcopus Novioniensis.
Episcopus Cathalaunensis.

It's a light spread
That restores their whole body;
But cursed by God be the one
Who first invented this pairing!

385 André has finished his charter;
The English have guaranteed
That they found nothing in it
That isn't the proven truth.

The Flemish have guaranteed it,
390 The Burgundians, the Lotharingians,
Which I would all enlist.
But let me tell you in truth

That the English, the Bretons, the Angevins,
Those from the Mans, the Gascons, the Poitevins,
395 Believe André is a good fortune teller,
Because he tells the truth all the time. This is the end.

Here ends 'Alfred.'

These are the twelve peers of France.
The Duke of Burgundy.
400 The Duke of Normandy.
The Duke of Aquitaine.
The Count of Flanders.
The Count of Champagne.
The Count of Saint Giles.
405 The Archbishop of Reims.
The Archbishop of Langres.
The Bishop of Beauvais.
The Archbishop of Laon.
The Bishop of Noyon.
410 The Bishop of Châlons.



Critical Notes

Transcription

Line 11	<i>escoles</i>
Line 44	<i>c'est</i>
Line 51	<i>voudreit</i>
Line 52	<i>sor sor</i>
Line 58	<i>este</i>
Line 123	'Aol' stands for 'oil' (pronounced well), meaning yes. 'Aol' also means garlic; these lines contain an untranslatable pun that alludes to the French's penchant for garlic expressed below.
Line 233	<i>blasmet</i>
Line 238	<i>bieli</i>
Line 246	<i>corent</i>
Line 251	<i>bo...die</i>
Line 257	<i>desnooe</i>
Line 289	<i>l'aveient</i>
Line 291	<i>et ou</i>
Line 308	<i>donc</i>
Line 335	<i>donc</i>
Line 347	<i>al</i>
Line 349	<i>Fanee</i>
Line 364	<i>cresçant</i> (Holden)

Translation

Line 4	Literally: 'he does not value them the price of an almond'.
Line 80	Probably 'Galleis', Gauls. Holden 1973, n. in v. 80.
Line 239	Alternatively: 'he orders some rye bread'.
Line 304	Allusion to the fire known to light up every Holy Saturday at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.
Line 344	A line is missing in the original text.