

**THE LAY OF THE
PURPLE FALCON; A
METRICAL ROMANCE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649240067

The lay of the purple falcon; a metrical romance by Robert Curzon

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ROBERT CURZON

**THE LAY OF THE
PURPLE FALCON; A
METRICAL ROMANCE**

THE LAY
OF
The Purple Falcon;

A METRICAL ROMANCE,

NOW FIRST PRINTED

FROM

THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT,

IN THE POSSESSION OF THE HON. ROBERT CURZON.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM NICOL, SHAKSPEARE PRESS, PALL MALL,

1847.



PREFACE.



THE original manuscript from which the following legend has been printed, is a folio volume, written not very legibly, on vellum, or rather parchment, not of the best kind; it is illustrated with several drawings in outline, with a pen, and various illuminations, or ornaments, on the margins of the pages, in different coloured inks; the four wood cuts at the beginnings of the four Cantos, are copied from those in the MS., but they have not succeeded in preserving either the boldness, or the character of the originals; the ancient spelling has not been completely followed, as that has been considerably altered, and modernised, in the copy from which the legend has been printed; a note at the end of the MS., relates, that it was the work of two persons; the first Canto, and I imagine the beginning of the second, were originally written, by Reginaldus Episcopus C—, in partibus infidelium. The rest was composed by one Robert the rhymmer, a “conynge clerke,” of whom no further account is given. It would be difficult to assign any exact date to this curious production, which seems to bear the same affinity to an early metrical romance, as Don Quixote does, to the voluminous histories and romances of chivalry, in prose; both contain references to early manners, and customs, and equally throw considerable

light on the simple notions of our ancestors, who read with profound gravity, and firm belief, volume after volume of marvellous nonsense, full of incredible stories, which are written all the while in such a way, as to shew that the authors of these curious specimens of antient literature, felt no doubt whatever in the truth and edifying qualities, of every history which they related; many of the adventures of knights errant in the romances of chivalry, are quite as absurd as those in the present poem, but they are altogether surpassed, by the monkish legends of the saints, in which miracles and wonders of so extraordinary a nature are so continually met with, that the modern reader does not know whether the invention of the author, or the gullibility of the British public of those days, was most to be admired. At the latter end of the 15th century, the English appear to have been very much behind the rest of Europe, in literary attainments; for while in Italy, and Germany, the Classic authors, and the Holy scriptures, were printed in every city, with a perfection of text, and a beauty of type, and execution, which we cannot surpass even now, with all the mechanical appliances of modern science; the works produced by the first English printers, are foolish, and puerile in the extreme; almost all the works of Caxton, are legends, nursery stories or romances; all are horridly printed, full of imperfections, and of uncouth appearance; while no part of the Bible was printed for fifty years after the introduction of printing into this country, though thousands of copies were issued from the presses of the other European nations, in Latin, and other languages, while we were reading the histories of

Reynard the fox, the Recuyell of the Histories of Troy, and Dame Julyans Barnes's nobull werke, of Hunting, hawking and cote armuris. In this famous book though all sorts of falcons are mentioned, I find no account of a Purple falcon; the fair Prioress of Sopwell says, "for a Lady. Ther is a merlyon, and that hawke is for a lady, and yit ther be moo kyndis of hawkes.

Ther is a Goshawke, and that hawke is for a yeman.

Ther is a Tercett, and that is for a powre man.

Ther is a spare hawke, and he is a hawke for a preste.

Ther is a muskyte, and he is for a holiwater clerke."

In this book, as well as in some other early English printed books, lines of French are introduced, every now and then, most of the terms of venery, and blasynge being in that language.

It was the custom in days of Chivalry, to christen the sword, shield, and helmet of a knight; the Helmet of Pantagruel is ycleped Alphabette, the spear of king Arthur was called Ron, and his sword Excalibar; Joyeuse the sword of Charlemagne is still to be seen at Vienna, and Durandana the sword of Orlando, is preserved in the Royal Armory at Madrid.

The second canto of Pantagruel opens with an account of his travels, wherein he makes no more confusion in his geography, than doth the great St. Brandon, as any one may see if he looks into that antient book of travels. St. Brandon came at last to a place where he saw the "fysche Jascone, which continually striveth to put his tail into his mouth, but by reason of his vastness he cannot." Pantagruel falls in with a snake, who seems either to have a greater degree of agility, or perhaps a

less degree of vastness ; as it appears that this serpent does succeed in putting his tail into his ear, and by this clever proceeding he is prevented from hearing the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.

In Caxton's *Myrrour of the World*, some account of the deaf adder is given, which is very similar to the description of that animal, in the text of this poem. Caxton says,

"Ther groweth a beest named aspis, that may not be deceyvyd ne taken but by charmyng for he heereth gladlye sowne. But assone as he heereth the charme he putteth his tayll in his one eere, and that other leyeth to the grounde doubtyng to be deceyveyd by the charme. This worme lyveth ryght longe, and whan he is olde and feleth him feble, he consumeth hym self by fastyng, and suffreth to be enfamyned so over moche that lytyl abydeh of his body. Thenne he goeth in to a lytyll hool of some stone whiche is wel strayt and thenne he putteth hym selfe out with so right grete distresse, that his skynne remaineth all hool. ¶ And ther groweth and cometh on hym another skynne, and thus reneweth his age as a wyse beeste that he is."

The history of the stone which becomes soft for the comfort of Pantagruel, seems to be taken in some measure from the *Legende of St. Fiacre*, which is to be found in Caxton's golden *Legend*, folio, on the reverse of page 415.

"And when he had made his prayers, he drew his staffe over the earth, now may y^e understand thing much marvellous and of great miracle, for by the will of our Lord wheresoever the holy hermit Fiacre drew his staff the trees fell down both on one side and on the other

and round about, where he drew hys staf was a dyche sodeynly made, and in the mene whyle that he drewe so hys staf there cam a woman whyche merveyllled moche how therthe clave and dyched by hyt self onely by the touchinge of the holy mannes staff, and wyth grete haste she ranne toward Meaulx & denounced thys thing to y^r bysshop Pharon, testefyng & ensuring y^t the holy man Fyacre was full of wyked & evyll arte & not servaite of ye souverayn god, & whan she thus had sayd returned forthwith toward ye holy man, & wyth an evyll presumption gede and sayd many iniuryes & vylonyes to Fyacre contumeleyng and blasphemynge him & cōmatded him by ye bysshop that he shold cesse of hys werke : & y^t he were not so hardy to be ony more about it. And that for the same cause ye bishop sholde come there, whan ye holy man sawe that he was thus accused to the bysshop by a woman he cessyd his werke that he had begon & made nomore of it, & satte on a stone moche thoughtfull and wroth, wherfore yf our lorde had before shewed grete myracles bi hym yet greter & more merveyllous myracle was made for hym, for the stone wherō he sat, by the wylle of god wexyd & became softe as a pylowe to the ende that hyt sholde be more able and ease for him to sytte on : and it was caved somewhat as a pyt there as he sat on, and for testyfycacyon & preef of thys myracle, the sayd stone is as yet kepte wythin hys chyrche : & many seek folke haveben & are dayly heyld there of divers seknesses onely to touche & to haue touched the sayd stone."

In the third Canto follows the narration of the marvellous adventure of the good king Pantagruel, with the