

**THE STORY OF FLAMENCA: THE
FIRST MODERN NOVEL,
ARRANGED FROM THE
PROVENÇAL ORIGINAL OF THE
THIRTEENTH CENTURY**

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WILLIAM ASPENWALL BRADLEY

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WILLIAM ASPENWALL BRADLEY

With Woodcuts by FLORENCE WYMAN IVINS



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TO J. E. SPINGARN

P R E F A C E

THE *Roman de Flamenca* occupies a unique place in Provençal literature. "It has," says Meyer, "nothing in common with the old Carolingian and Breton traditions; its subject is not borrowed from the legends transmitted by antiquity to the middle ages; nor would it be possible to see in it one of those popular narratives which are to be found in practically every literature, and whose impersonal character renders it impossible to determine their origin. *Flamenca* is the creation of a man of talent who wished to write an agreeable work representing the most brilliant aspects of courtly life in the twelfth century. It is a novel of manners."¹ As such it has affinities with certain *romans d'aventure*, in the northern idiom, which sim-

¹ *Le Roman de Flamenca*, publié d'après le manuscrit unique de Carcassonne, traduit et accompagné d'un glossaire, par Paul Meyer. Paris, 1865.

ilarly combine a sentimental intrigue with the representation of a particular milieu. *Flamenca*, however, is far superior to any of these in its delicacy, in its verve, in its richness, in the truthful delineation of its characters, and in the bold originality of its conception. Thus it stands alone, not only in Provençal literature, but in medieval literature generally, and may be called, without exaggeration, the first modern novel.

The unique manuscript of *Flamenca* is incomplete. Among the pages missing are the first and last. Hence we have no knowledge of the author or of the date of composition. The latter has been placed approximately in the first half of the thirteenth century. At that time the splendour of the little courts south of the Loire had waned; but the poet shows us the largeness and liberality that had reigned there, while his lightness of tone reflects that relaxing of the old restraints in a sophisticated and pleasure-loving society, which stern moralists would, no doubt, hold