

# Aucassin and Nicolete



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## Introduction

here is nothing in artistic poetry quite akin to "Aucassin and Nicolete."

By a rare piece of good fortune the one manuscript of the Song-Story has escaped those waves of time, which have wrecked the bark of Menander, and left of Sappho but a few floating fragments. The very form of the tale is peculiar; we have nothing else from the twelfth or thirteenth century in the alternate prose and verse of the cante-fable. {1} We have fabliaux in verse, and prose Arthurian romances. We have Chansons de Geste, heroic poems like "Roland," unrhymed assonant laisses, but we have not the alternations of prose with laisses in seven-syllabled lines. It cannot be certainly known whether the form of "Aucassin and Nicolete" was a familiar form--used by many jogleors, or wandering minstrels and story-tellers such as Nicolete, in the tale, feigned herself to be,--or whether this is a solitary experiment by "the old captive" its author, a contemporary, as M. Gaston Paris thinks him, of Louis VII (1130). He was original enough to have invented, or adopted from popular tradition, a form for himself; his originality declares itself everywhere in his one surviving masterpiece. True, he uses certain traditional formulae, that have survived in his time, as they survived in

Homer's, from the manner of purely popular poetry, of Volkslieder. Thus he repeats snatches of conversation always in the same, or very nearly the same words. He has a stereotyped form, like Homer, for saying that one person addressed another, "ains traist au visconte de la vile si l'apela" [Greek text which cannot be reproduced] . . . Like Homer, and like popular song, he deals in recurrent epithets, and changeless courtesies. To Aucassin the hideous plough-man is "Biax frere," "fair brother," just as the treacherous Aegisthus is [Greek text] in Homer; these are complimentary terms, with no moral sense in particular. The jogleor is not more curious than Homer, or than the poets of the old ballads, about giving novel descriptions of his characters. As Homer's ladies are "fair-tressed," so Nicolete and Aucassin have, each of them, close yellow curls, eyes of vair (whatever that may mean), and red lips. War cannot be mentioned except as war "where knights do smite and are smitten," and so forth. The author is absolutely conventional in such matters, according to the convention of his age and profession.

作者介绍:

欧·亨利 (O·Henry, 1862~1910), 原名威廉·西德尼·波特 (William Sydney Porter), 是美国最著名的短篇小说家之一, 曾被评论界誉为曼哈顿桂冠散文作家和美国现代短篇小说之父。他出身于美国北卡罗来纳州格林斯波罗镇一个医师家庭。他的一生富于传奇性, 当过药房学徒、牧牛人、会计员、土地局办事员、新闻记者、银行出纳员。当银行出纳员时, 因银行短缺了一笔现金, 为避免审讯, 离家流亡中美的洪都拉斯。后因回家探视病危的妻子被捕入狱, 并在监狱医务室任药剂师。他在银行工作时, 曾有过写作的经历, 担任监狱医务室的药剂师后开始认真写作。1901年提前获释后, 迁居纽约, 专门从事写作。

欧·亨利善于描写美国社会尤其是纽约百姓的生活。他的作品构思新颖, 语言诙谐, 结局常常出人意外; 又因描写了众多的人物, 富于生活情趣, 被誉为“美国生活的幽默百科全书”。代表作有小说集《白菜与国王》、《四百万》、《命运之路》等。其中一些名篇如《爱的牺牲》、《警察与赞美诗》、《带家具出租的房间》、《麦琪的礼物》、《最后一片藤叶》等使他获得了世界声誉。

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