

## Translations from Old French

Members of the Société Rencesvals will be interested to know that two Old French epics, *Ami et Amile* and *Raoul de Cambrai*, have recently been translated into English in preparation for publication. We are happy to be able to present the following extracts in advance of their appearance elsewhere.

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### *Ami and Amile*

#### Laisse 151

"Ami, my dear companion, can it be true, what you have told me? Will you be made well by my sons when you are bathed in their blood? Your wish will not be denied."

With that, Amile rushed out of the room and into the great hall. He ordered out all those who were there, guards and pages and knights, and the hall was deserted. He shut and barred the doors, and ran all around from room to room to make sure that no one was left. When he saw that he was all alone in the place and could act without being seen, he took his sword and a golden bowl and went straight to the room where the two boys were lying side by side.

He found them asleep in each other's arms: their beauty had no match even as far as Flanders. He gave them a long and tender glance. His distress was so great that he fell to the floor in a faint, and with him fell the sword and the golden bowl.

When he came to himself, the good knight sighed: "Wretch that I am, what can I do?"

#### Laisse 152

Count Amile was distraught and bewildered. He dropped to the floor in a faint, and with him dropped the bowl and the bare steel sword.

When he recovered his senses, he said: "Amile, wretch that you are, born to behead your own children! Yet what does it matter, if my deed will rescue a man who is scorned by the world and regarded as dead? Now he will be brought back to life!"

#### Laisse 153

Count Amile faltered for a moment. He stepped slowly up to the children; he found them asleep and gazed at them for some time.

He raised his sword and was about to kill them, but could not yet strike. The older boy had awakened in fright when the count had come into the room. The child turned and saw his father; his glance fell on the sword, and he was seized with fear. He called to his father and said: "Dear father, in the name of God who created the world, what are you going to do? Don't keep it from me. No father has ever done what I fear you are thinking."

"Dear son, I am going to kill you and your brother sleeping beside you, for the blood of your bodies can heal my generous companion Ami, who is an outcast in this world."

Laisse 154

"Dear sweet father," said the boy right away, "if your companion can be healed with the blood of our bodies, do with us as you will; you gave us life, and we are your flesh. Cut off our heads quickly and let us stand before God. We will go singing up to heaven and pray to all-loving Jesus that He protect you from sin, you and your noble companion Ami. Remember us, in the name of almighty God, to our mother, fair Belissant."

At this, the count was moved to the depths of his being and again fell to the floor in a faint. When he came to himself, his courage returned.

Now, good listeners, you're going to hear such a marvel that you could never have imagined its like in your life.

Count Amile stepped up to the bed and, as he raised the sword, his son stretch forth his neck. It's a wonder his heart didn't fail him—but the father brought the blade down on his child and collected the blood in the shining silver bowl. He could hardly keep from fainting away.

Laisse 155

When the count had slain his first son and let his blood run into the precious bowl, he laid the head beside its neck and stepped over to the other child. He lifted the steel sword and brought it down on the neck, collected the blood in the gleaming bowl of pure gold and then put the head back. The count covered the two boys with a rare and costly carpet and hurried out of the room, bolting the door behind him.

Amile went back to count Ami, who lay leprous in his bed.

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