

MISCELLANEOUS

ROLAND 2165: TENDENT DE L'ESPLEITIER

THE reading of verse 2165 of the Oxford text of the *Chanson de Roland* appears never to have given occasion to the slightest question or discussion; yet I believe that under the *sainte-nitouche* simplicity of its external aspect there lurks the compelling necessity of an emendation.

MS. Digby 23, fol. 39 verso, ll. 6 and 7 (vv. 2164-65 of the printed text) reads—as the Stengel photographic facsimile clearly shows:

Païen fen fuint curucuf 7 irez.
P enverf espaigne ten dēt del espleiter.

My scrutiny was first directed to this passage by what seemed to me the difficulty of the phrase *tendent de l'espleitier*. Gaston Paris, in the vocabulary to his *Extraits*, defines *tendre* (with a reference to this passage) as "s'efforcer"; Gautier, in the vocabulary to his *édition classique*, gives "avoir hâte de"; Clédat, in his edition, suggests, "*tendre de . . . = tendre à, chercher à*"; Bartsch, *Chrestomathie*, defines *tendre* in this passage as "trachten, sich begeben." Professor Stengel, in his *Kritische Ausgabe*, 1901, adopts the reading of all the previous editors. As a matter of fact, the construction *tendre de* appears never to have been used at any period of the French language, the present passage being, so far as I can discover, the only one that even seems to lend color to the idea of such a use. The facsimile shows that, after the letters "ten," a blank space sufficient for the insertion of three or four letters was left by the original scribe of the manuscript (presumably because he could not decipher the remainder of the word or because he found himself dissatisfied with the word he was tracing), and that the letters "dēt" have been introduced by a later hand in the blank space thus provided, but above the line, as if in doubt of the correctness of the insertion.

This being the situation, what light can be thrown on the true

reading of the text? The testimony of Venice-4 and the other manuscripts is here without significance; but, fortunately for the text-critic, Old French literature abounds with examples of a locution which can leave little or no doubt as to the turn of expression actually employed in this verse by the author of the *Roland*. As originally composed, the verse must have read:

Envers Espagne *pensent* de l'espleitier.

Compare the following:

Mès li François *pensent* de l'exploitier,
 Outre s'en vont, n'i vellent delaier,
 Le chemin vers Pavie.
Aymeri de Narbonne, 1976-8.

Dient si home: "Pansez de l'exploitier."
Ibid., 1487.

Pensez, cumpaing, de l'espleiter
 E de tost a moi repeirer.
Tristan de Thomas, 2549-50.

Que fais, paiens? panse de l'exploiter.
Prise de Cordres, 226.

Alixandres li prie que pense d'exploitier
Roman d'Alexandre, Bartsch. *Chrest.* 194,12.

Mult pense tost de l'espleitier.
 Bartsch and Horning, 96, 9.

Pensez huimes de vostre erre exploitier.
Aubery, Tarbé, p. 100 (cited by Godefroy).

Many more examples are available (and they could be multiplied almost indefinitely) of the locution *penser de l'espleitier*. Naturally, *penser* in this sense is not followed exclusively by *espleitier* (cf. *pense del retorner*, *Raoul de Cambrai*, 2158; *pensez de moi aidier*, *ibid.*, 2596); but the special frequency of *penser de l'espleitier* points decisively to the conclusion that the scribe of Digby 23 copied from a manuscript in which, in line 2165, stood

the word *pensent*, which was either itself partially illegible or had perhaps been legibly miscopied, in the form *tensent* or *tendent*, from a manuscript that was in its turn partially illegible,—either of which forms may be supposed to have given pause even to the ignorance of the much-abused scribe of Digby 23.

It may be of interest to point out that a similar use of *pensar* occurs a number of times in the *Poema del Cid*; cf., e. g., verses 2609, 2644:

Myo Cid y los otros de cavalgar pensavan;

Piennsan se de yr los yfantes de Carrion;

and is to be found also in Old Provençal; cf. Appel, *Chrest.*, 9, 20:

Tantost pessem del retornar.

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THE MEANING OF *VITA NUOVA*

IN a brief note under the heading *The Meaning of Vita Nuova* (*Mod. Lang. Notes*, 1909, pp. 227-8), Professor F. J. A. Davidson returns to the subjective methods of the elder Rossetti, which, while of little scientific value, are not without stimulating interest. He suggests that *nova* may mean "strange," "mystic." *Mystic* as a synonym for *strange* is unfortunate: for the critics who adopt the regenerative idea of "new" normally incline to "mystic" as the descriptive adjective for the new life led. The exactest interpreter of this point of view is Giuliani (for whom *vita nova* is *vita d'amore*, purely and simply), just as D. G. Rossetti is the vaguest and most "mystic." It requires some *aplomb* to consider the theory of *youthful* "effectually disposed of" by Witte in 1852, after that idea has been defended at such length by Prudenziario (1856),² by Cossio (1907),³ and by such a distinguished critic as Casini in repeated editions. Professor Davidson adduces in favor of his suggestion three points: a nine-year-old boy is incapable of spiritual regeneration; "new" does not connote regeneration; then, positively, Dante uses *nuovo* for

¹ Curcio, *Studi sulla V. N.*, Venezia, Olschki, 1892, p. 10.

² *La V. N. di D. A.*, Napoli, Guerrero, 1856, pp. 3-6.

³ *Sulla V. N. di D.*, Firenze, Olschki, 1907, pp. 18-9.