

rable in epic poetry as the hero of the celebrated "Orlando Furioso" of Ariosto, and the less notable "Orlando Innamorato" of Boiardo.

All these stories are based upon a very slender fabric of history, which would have been long since forgotten had not legend clung to it with so loving a hand, and credited its hero with such a multitude of marvellous deeds. The history of the event is preserved for us by Eginhard, the secretary and annalist of Charlemagne. He takes few words to tell what has given rise to innumerable strophes.

In the year 778, Charlemagne invaded Spain, then almost wholly in the hands of the Saracens. His march was a victorious one until Saragossa was reached. Here he found himself before a well-supplied, strongly-fortified, and fully-garrisoned city, while his own army was none too well provided with food. In the end he found it expedient to retreat, leaving Saragossa still in Saracen hands.

The retreat was conducted without loss until the Pyrenees were reached. These were crossed by the main body of the army without hostile disturbance, leaving to follow the baggage-train and a rear-guard under the king's nephew Roland, prefect of the Marches of Brittany, with whom were Eginhard, master of the household, and Anselm, count of the palace; while legend adds the names of Oliver, Roland's bosom friend, the warlike Archbishop Turpin, and other warriors of renown.

Their route lay through the pass of Roncesvalles so narrow at points that only two, or at most three, men could move abreast, while the rugged bordering