

**UNCLE AND NEPHEW IN THE  
OLD FRENCH CHANSONS  
DE GESTE: A STUDY IN THE  
SURVIVAL OF MATRIARCHY**

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Uncle and Nephew in the Old French Chansons De Geste: A Study in the Survival of Matriarchy  
by William Oliver Farnsworth

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**WILLIAM OLIVER FARNSWORTH**

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**Columbia University**

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BY  
WILLIAM OLIVER FARNSWORTH, Ph.D.



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NOTE

The following dissertation has been accepted by the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures of Columbia University as a valuable contribution to the history of the subject of which it treats.

HENRY ALFRED TODD.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

November, 1912



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## PREFACE

The study which follows represents the gleanings from some three hundred thousand verses of Old French poetry, comprising nearly all the published epics down through the thirteenth century. A marked feature of this reading is its corroborative nature; each poem strengthens the impression produced by the others, and the characteristics of the relations between the uncle of the epic and his nephew are so consistently depicted that one can scarcely fail to receive the impression of some elemental force at work influencing the poets' treatment of the subject. The idea that imitation alone is responsible for this remarkable consistency is speedily dispelled as one finds oneself initiated into the mysteries of early family life which have been disclosed by the researches of the sociologists and as the connection of our subject with man's primitive nature becomes apparent.

In general, where several editions of a text have been published, reference is made to the one accepted by scholars as the best, but occasional references have been made to early editions when the later one was not at hand; this does not require an apology, inasmuch as the sentiment, rather than the exact dialectical wording, is the essential consideration for our purpose. It was not easy to decide how far the citations should be standardized; the printed texts vary in many details of spelling, punctuation, and so forth, but it was thought best to retain the peculiarities of each editor, with a few exceptions calculated to render easier the part of the reader: each verse has been made to begin with a capital letter, portions spoken by the various characters have been set off by quotation marks, the useless hyphens and grave accents of the early editions have been discarded, initials standing for proper names have been replaced by the names in full, parentheses enclosing