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[See p. 232

“SCANT HEED HAD WE OF THE FLEET, SWEET HOURS”

The Line Of Love

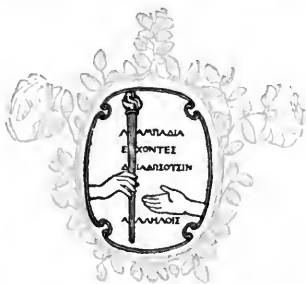
BY

James Branch Cabell

ILLUSTRATED IN COLOR BY

HOWARD PYLE

*"Ludit amor sensus, oculos perstringit, et auferit
Libertatem animi, mira nos fascinat arte.
Credo aliquis dæmon subiens præcordia flammam
Concutat, et raptam tollit de cardine mentem"*



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A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and various leaf shapes, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

3-24-42

TO

Robert Gamble Cabell

(1809-1889)

*“ He loved chivalry,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.
And of his port as meek as is a mayde,
He never yet no vileinye ne sayde
In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
He was a verray parfit gentil knyght ”*



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Epistle Dedicatory

MY DEAR MRS. GRUNDY,—You may have observed that nowadays we rank the love-story among the comfits of literature; and we do this for the very excellent reason that man is a thinking animal by courtesy rather than usage.

Rightly considered, the most trivial love-affair is of staggering import. Who are we to question this, when nine-tenths of us owe our existence to a Summer flirtation? And while the workings of a department-store, or the garnering of the world's wheat-crop, or the lamentable inconsistencies of Christianity, are doubtless worthy of our most serious consideration, you will find, my dear madam, that love-affairs, little and big, were shaping history and playing spillikins with sceptres long before any of these delectable matters were thought of.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of a repeating pattern of five-petaled flowers with prominent centers, connected by a vine with small leaves. The flowers are arranged in a slightly overlapping, horizontal line.

Epistle Dedicatory

Yes, they are worthy of consideration; but were it not for the kisses of remote years and the high gropings of hearts no longer animate, there would be none to accord them this same consideration, and a void world would teeter about the sun, silent and naked as an orange. Love is an illusion, if you will; but always through this illusion, alone, has the next generation been rendered possible.

Love, then, is no trifle. And literature, mimicking life at a respectful distance, may very reasonably be permitted an occasional reference to the corner-stone of all that exists. "A sweet little love-story!" My dear lady, there can be no such thing. Viewed in the light of its consequences, any love-story is of gigantic signification, inasmuch as the most trivial mirrors Nature's unending labor—the peopling of the worlds.

She is uninventive, if you will, this Nature, but she is tireless. Generation by generation she brings it about that for a period weak men may stalk as demi-gods,

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Epistle Dedicatory

while to every woman she grants her hour wherein to spurn the earth, a warm, breathing angel. Generation by generation she tricks humanity that humanity may endure.

Here for a little I have followed her, the arch-trickster. Through her monstrous tapestry I have traced out for you the windings of a single thread. It is parti-colored, this thread — now black for a mourning sign, and now scarlet where blood has stained it, and now brilliancy itself,—for the tinsel of young love (if, as wise men tell us, it be but tinsel), at least makes a prodigiously fine appearance until time tarnish it. I entreat you, dear lady, to accept it with assurances of my most distinguished regard.

The gift is not a great one. They are only love-stories, and nowadays nobody takes love very seriously.

And truly, my dear madam, I dare say the Pompeiians did not take Vesuvius very seriously; it was merely an eligible spot for a *fête champêtre*. And when gaunt fishermen

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and scrolling vines with leaves, creating a frame around the central text.

Epistle Dedicatory

first preached Christ about the highways, depend upon it, that was not taken very seriously, either. *Credat Judæus*; but all sensible folk—such as you and I, my dear madam—passed on with a tolerant shrug, knowing

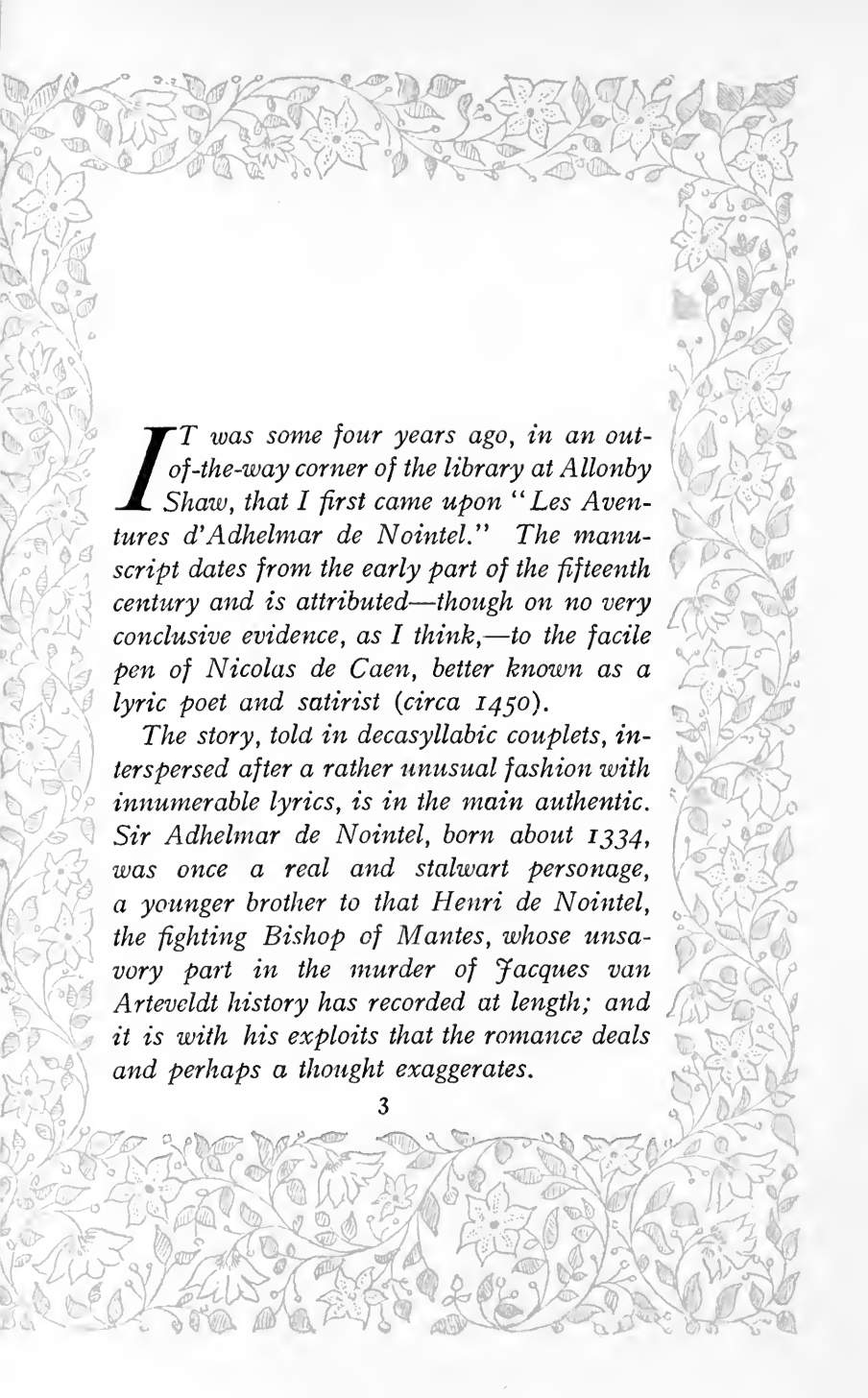
Their doctrine could be held of no sane man.



I

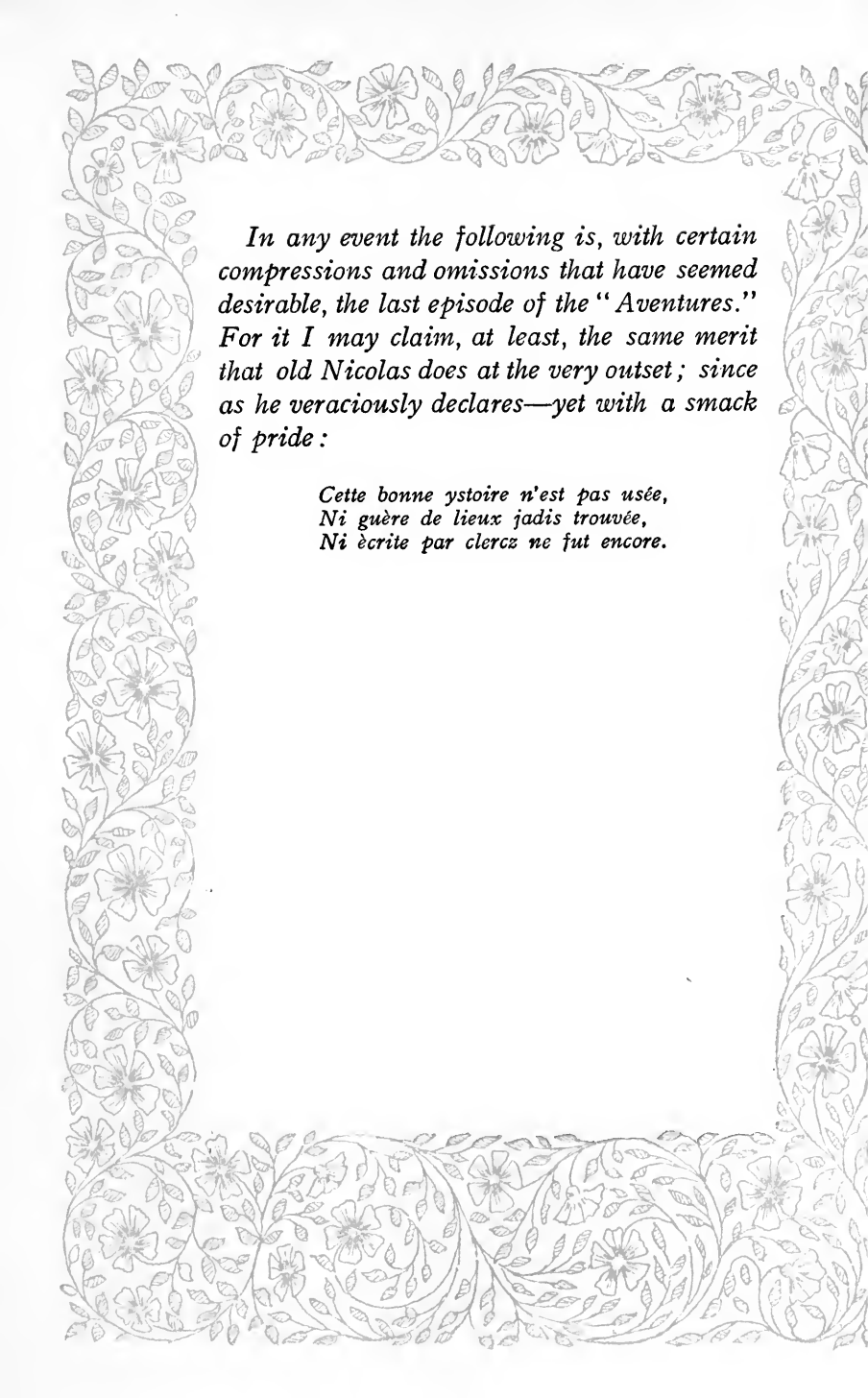
APRIL 14, 1355—OCTOBER 23, 1356

*“D'aquest segle flac, plen de marrimen,
S'amor s'en vai, son joi teinh mensongier”*



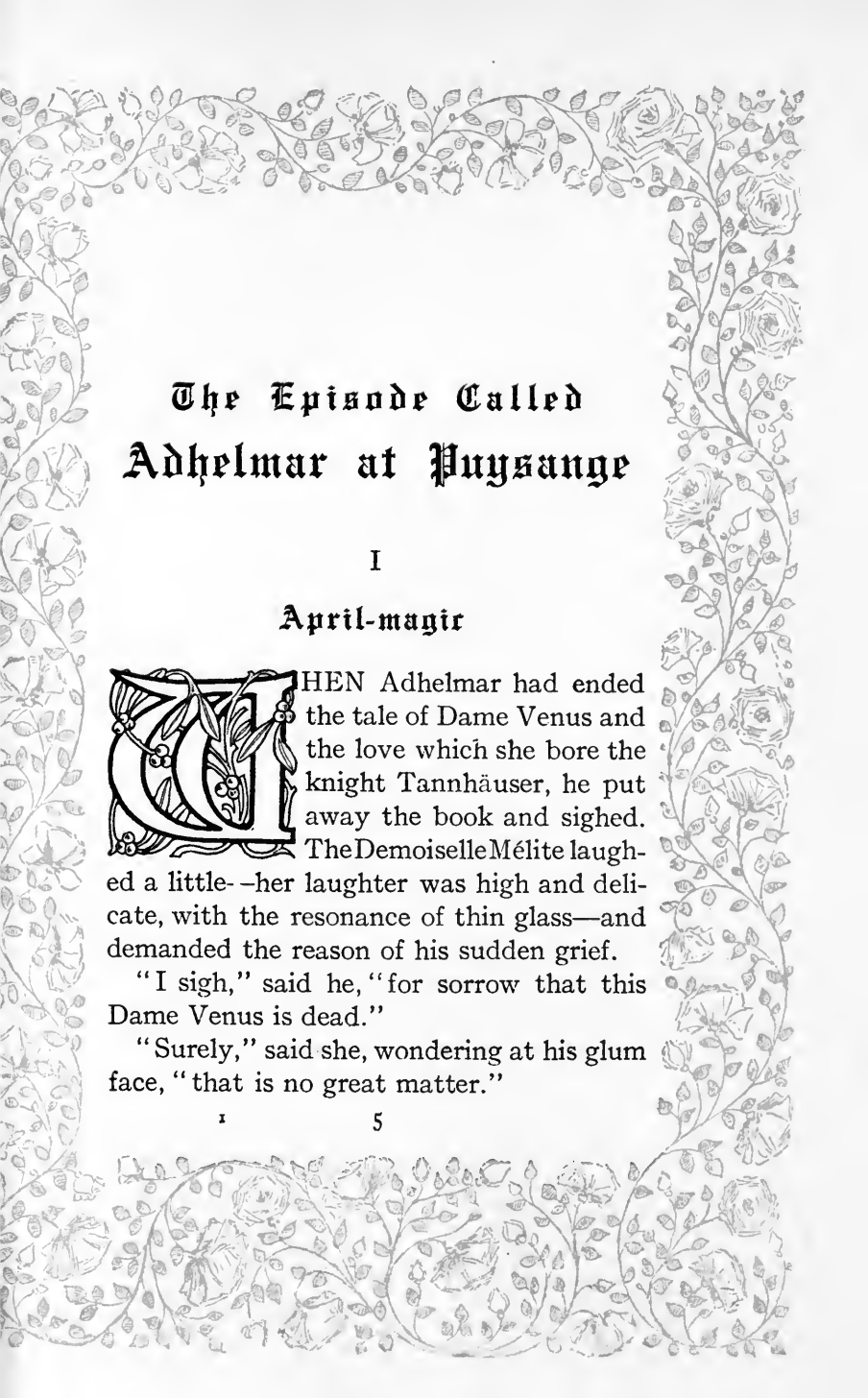
IT was some four years ago, in an out-of-the-way corner of the library at Allonby Shaw, that I first came upon "*Les Aventures d'Adhelmar de Nointel*." The manuscript dates from the early part of the fifteenth century and is attributed—though on no very conclusive evidence, as I think,—to the facile pen of Nicolas de Caen, better known as a lyric poet and satirist (circa 1450).

The story, told in decasyllabic couplets, interspersed after a rather unusual fashion with innumerable lyrics, is in the main authentic. Sir Adhelmar de Nointel, born about 1334, was once a real and stalwart personage, a younger brother to that Henri de Nointel, the fighting Bishop of Mantes, whose unsavory part in the murder of Jacques van Arteveldt history has recorded at length; and it is with his exploits that the romance deals and perhaps a thought exaggerates.



In any event the following is, with certain compressions and omissions that have seemed desirable, the last episode of the "Aventures." For it I may claim, at least, the same merit that old Nicolas does at the very outset; since as he veraciously declares—yet with a smack of pride:

*Cette bonne ystoire n'est pas usée,
Ni guère de lieux jadis trouvée,
Ni écrite par clercez ne fut encore.*



The Episode Called Adhelmar at Huysange

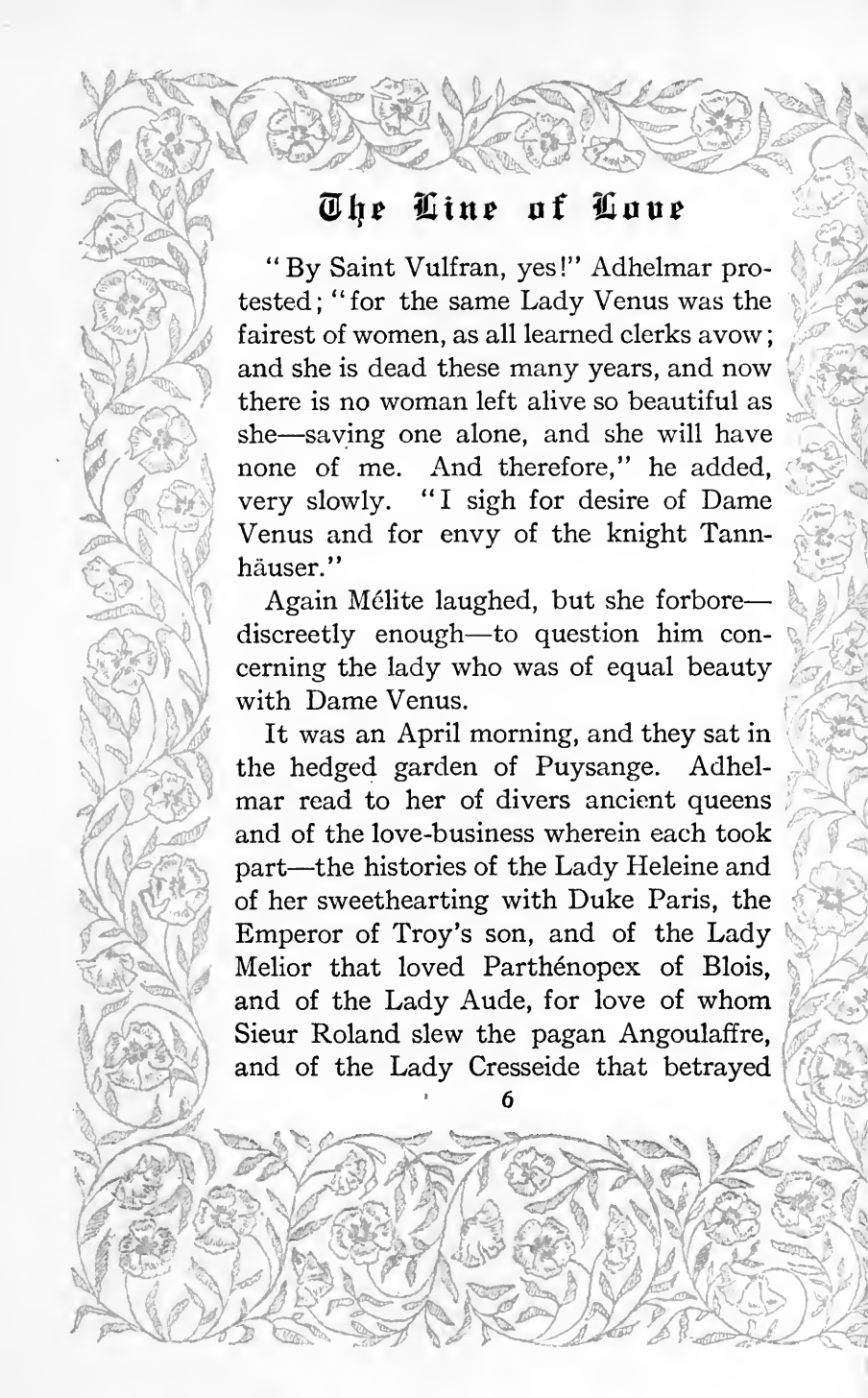
I

April-magic

WHEN Adhelmar had ended the tale of Dame Venus and the love which she bore the knight Tannhäuser, he put away the book and sighed. The Demoiselle Méлите laughed a little—her laughter was high and delicate, with the resonance of thin glass—and demanded the reason of his sudden grief.

“I sigh,” said he, “for sorrow that this Dame Venus is dead.”

“Surely,” said she, wondering at his glum face, “that is no great matter.”



The Line of Love

“By Saint Vulfran, yes!” Adhelmar protested; “for the same Lady Venus was the fairest of women, as all learned clerks avow; and she is dead these many years, and now there is no woman left alive so beautiful as she—saving one alone, and she will have none of me. And therefore,” he added, very slowly. “I sigh for desire of Dame Venus and for envy of the knight Tannhäuser.”

Again Mélite laughed, but she forbore—discreetly enough—to question him concerning the lady who was of equal beauty with Dame Venus.

It was an April morning, and they sat in the hedged garden of Puitsange. Adhelmar read to her of divers ancient queens and of the love-business wherein each took part—the histories of the Lady Heleine and of her sweethearting with Duke Paris, the Emperor of Troy’s son, and of the Lady Melior that loved Parthénopex of Blois, and of the Lady Aude, for love of whom Sieur Roland slew the pagan Angoulaffre, and of the Lady Cresseide that betrayed

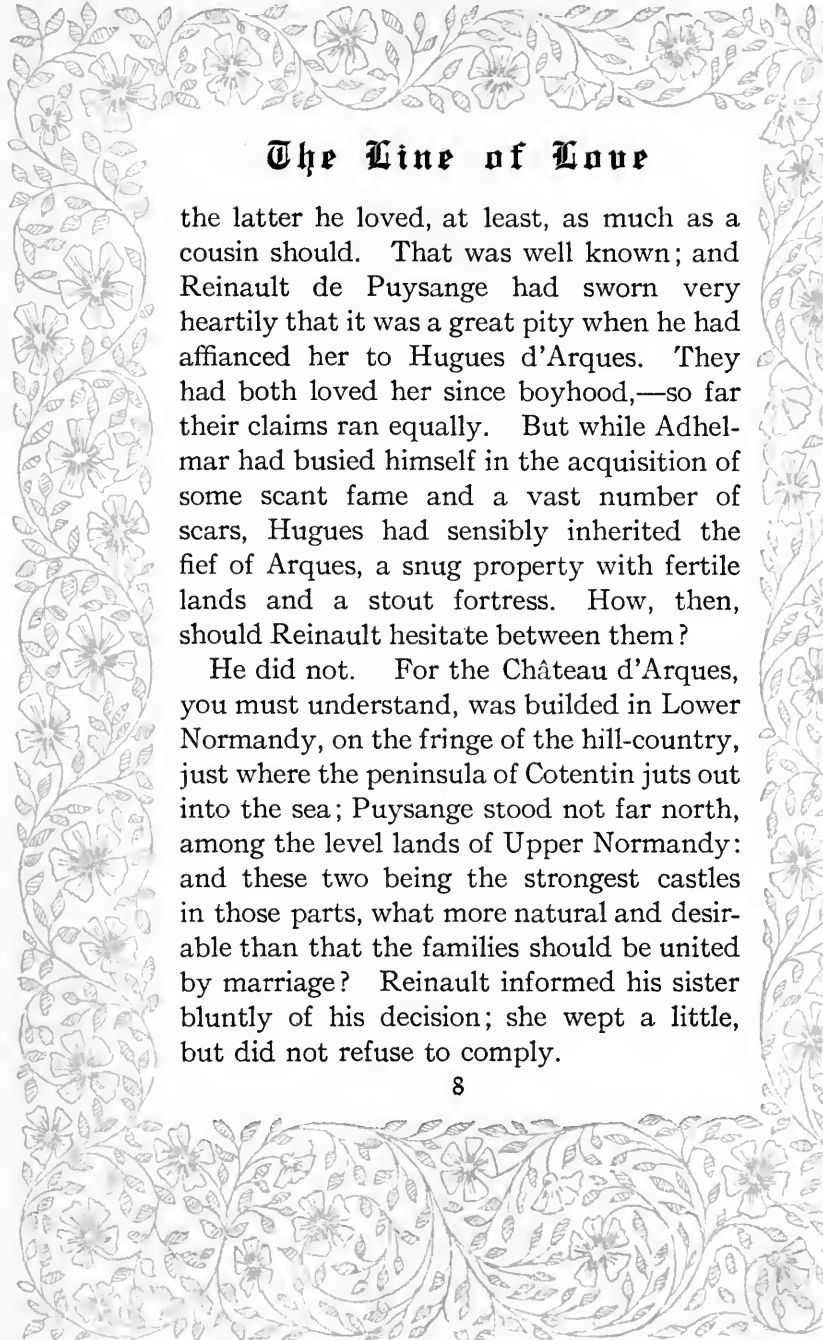


Adhelmar at Puyssange

love, and of the Lady Morgaine la Fée, whose Danish lover should yet come from Avalon to save France in her black hour of need. All these he read aloud, suavely, with bland modulations, for he was a man of letters, as letters went in those days. Originally, he had been bred for the Church; but this avocation he had happily forsaken long since, protesting with some show of reason that France at this particular time had a greater need of spears than of aves.

For the rest, Sir Adhelmar de Nointel was known as a valiant knight, who had won glory in the wars with the English. He had lodged for a fortnight at Puyssange, of which castle the master, Reinault, the Vicomte de Puyssange, was his cousin; and on the next day he proposed to set forth for Paris, where the French King—Jehan the Luckless—was gathering his lieges about him to withstand his kinsman, Edward of England.

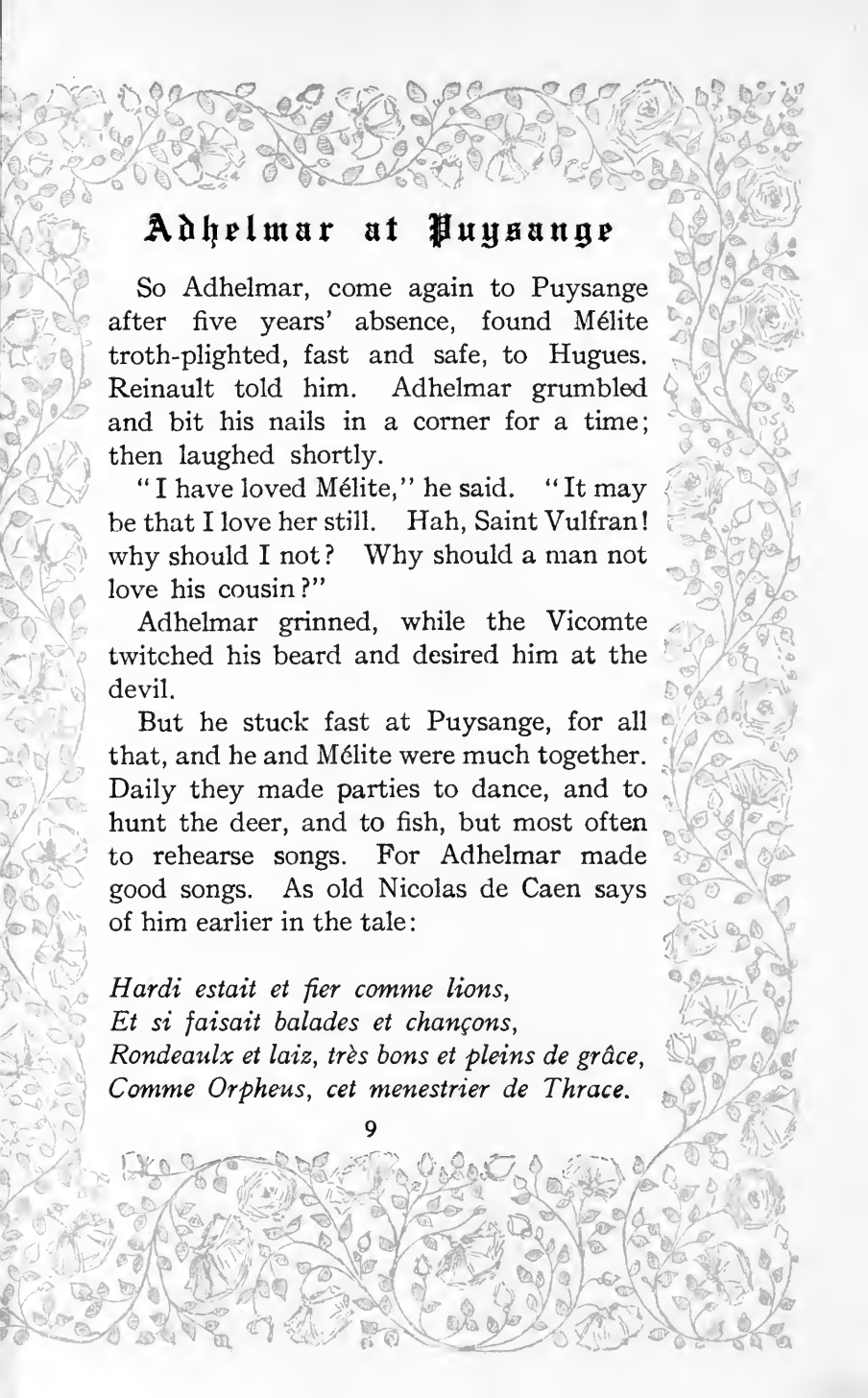
Now, as I have said, Adhelmar was cousin to Reinault, and, in consequence, to Reinault's sister, the Demoiselle Mélite; and

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The Line of Love

the latter he loved, at least, as much as a cousin should. That was well known; and Reinault de Puitsange had sworn very heartily that it was a great pity when he had affianced her to Hugues d'Arques. They had both loved her since boyhood,—so far their claims ran equally. But while Adhelmar had busied himself in the acquisition of some scant fame and a vast number of scars, Hugues had sensibly inherited the fief of Arques, a snug property with fertile lands and a stout fortress. How, then, should Reinault hesitate between them?

He did not. For the Château d'Arques, you must understand, was builded in Lower Normandy, on the fringe of the hill-country, just where the peninsula of Cotentin juts out into the sea; Puitsange stood not far north, among the level lands of Upper Normandy: and these two being the strongest castles in those parts, what more natural and desirable than that the families should be united by marriage? Reinault informed his sister bluntly of his decision; she wept a little, but did not refuse to comply.



Adhelmar at Puyssange

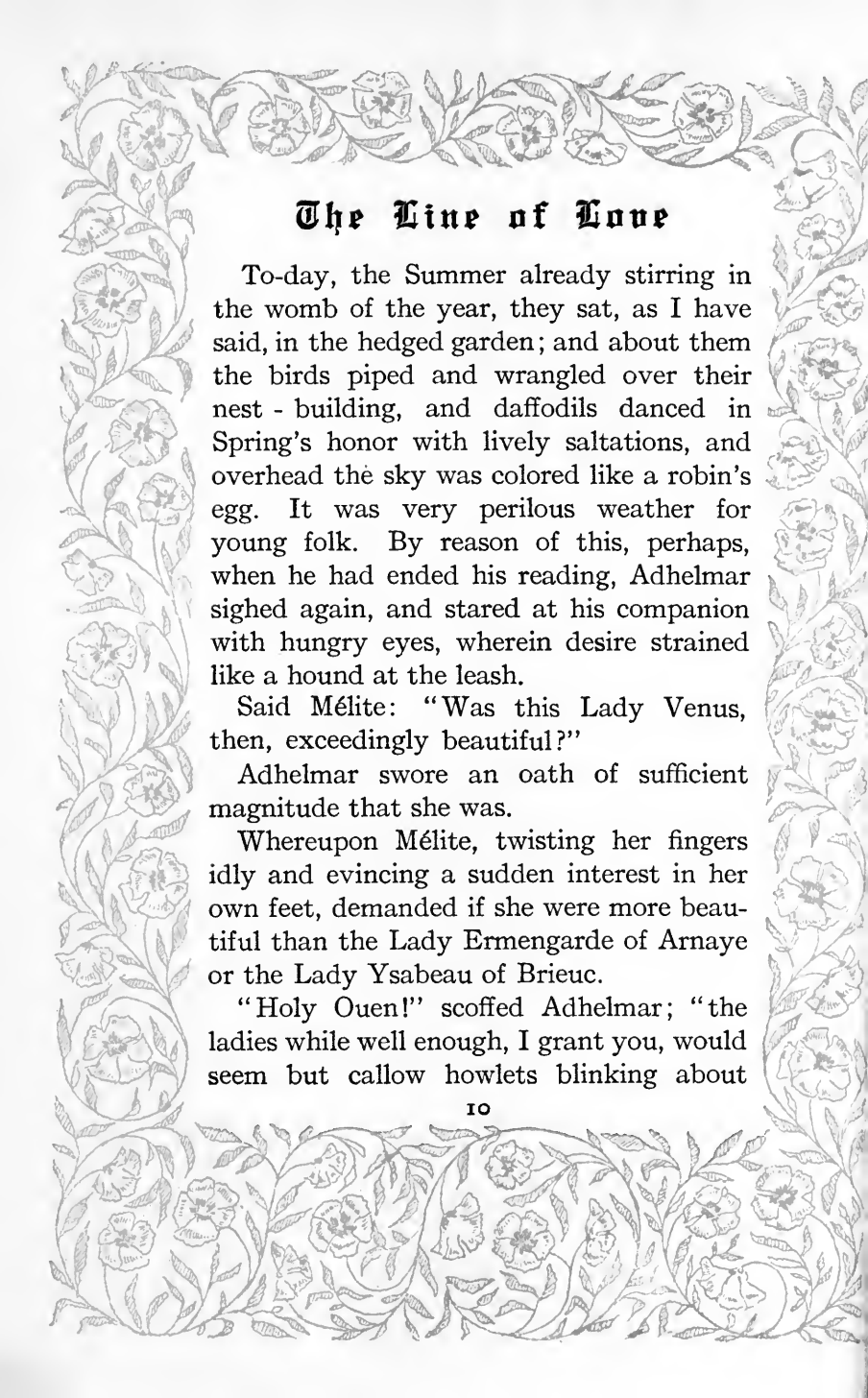
So Adhelmar, come again to Puyssange after five years' absence, found Mélite troth-plighted, fast and safe, to Hugues. Reinault told him. Adhelmar grumbled and bit his nails in a corner for a time; then laughed shortly.

"I have loved Mélite," he said. "It may be that I love her still. Hah, Saint Vulfran! why should I not? Why should a man not love his cousin?"

Adhelmar grinned, while the Vicomte twitched his beard and desired him at the devil.

But he stuck fast at Puyssange, for all that, and he and Mélite were much together. Daily they made parties to dance, and to hunt the deer, and to fish, but most often to rehearse songs. For Adhelmar made good songs. As old Nicolas de Caen says of him earlier in the tale:

*Hardi estait et fier comme lions,
Et si faisait balades et chançons,
Rondeaulx et laiz, très bons et pleins de grâce,
Comme Orpheus, cet menestrier de Thrace.*

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The Line of Love

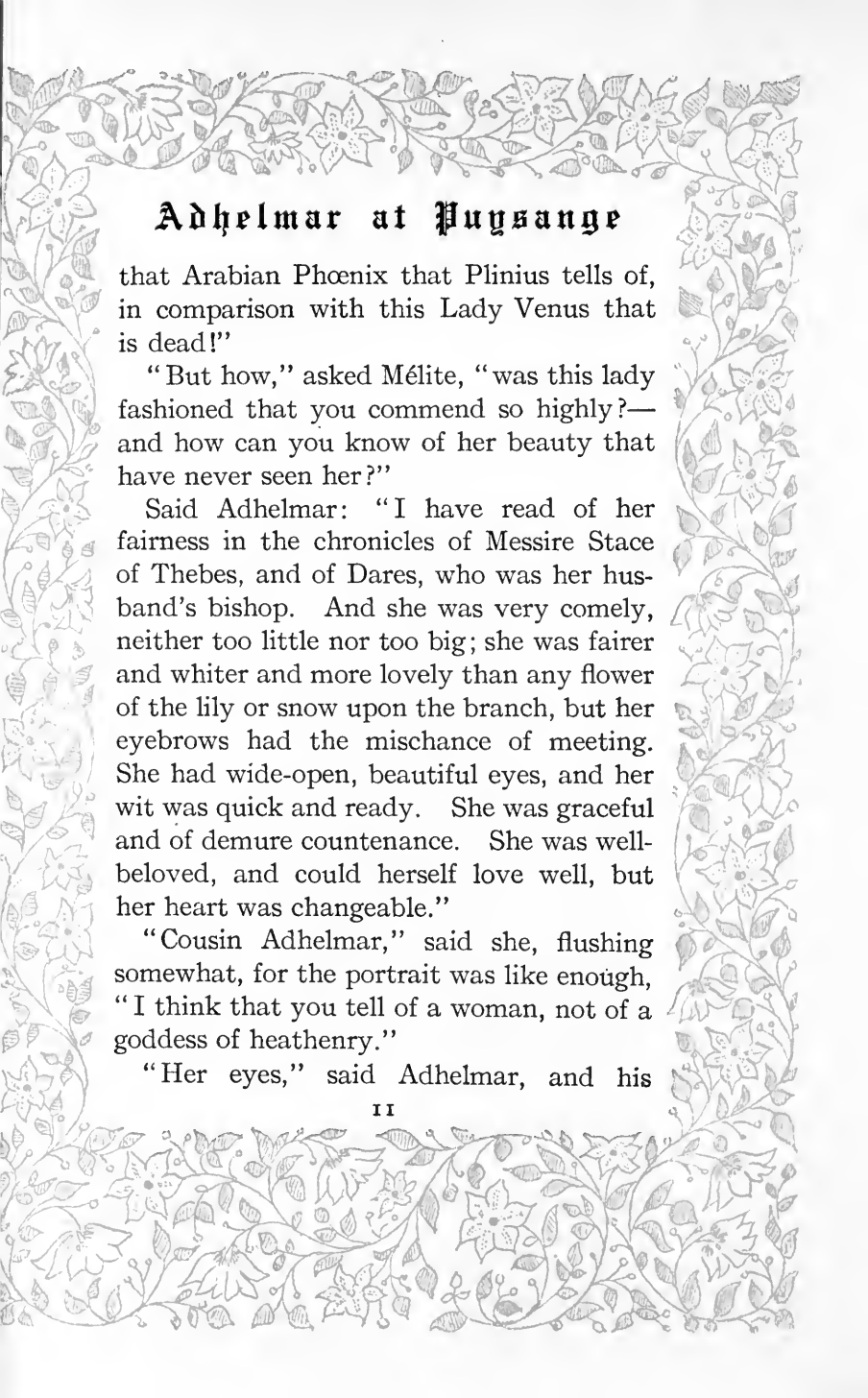
To-day, the Summer already stirring in the womb of the year, they sat, as I have said, in the hedged garden; and about them the birds piped and wrangled over their nest - building, and daffodils danced in Spring's honor with lively saltations, and overhead the sky was colored like a robin's egg. It was very perilous weather for young folk. By reason of this, perhaps, when he had ended his reading, Adhelmar sighed again, and stared at his companion with hungry eyes, wherein desire strained like a hound at the leash.

Said Mélite: "Was this Lady Venus, then, exceedingly beautiful?"

Adhelmar swore an oath of sufficient magnitude that she was.

Whereupon Mélite, twisting her fingers idly and evincing a sudden interest in her own feet, demanded if she were more beautiful than the Lady Ermengarde of Arnaye or the Lady Ysabeau of Brieuç.

"Holy Ouen!" scoffed Adhelmar; "the ladies while well enough, I grant you, would seem but callow howlets blinking about

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is composed of several parallel lines of these elements, creating a frame for the page.

Adhelmar at Hugsange

that Arabian Phoenix that Plinius tells of, in comparison with this Lady Venus that is dead!"

"But how," asked Méлите, "was this lady fashioned that you commend so highly?—and how can you know of her beauty that have never seen her?"

Said Adhelmar: "I have read of her fairness in the chronicles of Messire Stace of Thebes, and of Dares, who was her husband's bishop. And she was very comely, neither too little nor too big; she was fairer and whiter and more lovely than any flower of the lily or snow upon the branch, but her eyebrows had the mischance of meeting. She had wide-open, beautiful eyes, and her wit was quick and ready. She was graceful and of demure countenance. She was well-beloved, and could herself love well, but her heart was changeable."

"Cousin Adhelmar," said she, flushing somewhat, for the portrait was like enough, "I think that you tell of a woman, not of a goddess of heathenry."

"Her eyes," said Adhelmar, and his

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The Line of Love

voice shook, and his hands, lifting a little, trembled with longing to take her in his arms,—“her eyes were large and very bright and of a color like that of the June sunlight falling upon deep waters; and her hair was of a curious gold color like the Fleece that the knight Jason sought, and curled marvellously about her temples. For mouth she had but a small red wound; and her throat was a tower builded of ivory.”

But now, still staring at her feet and glowing with the even complexion of a rose, (though not ill-pleased), the Demoiselle Mélite bade him desist and make her a song. Moreover, she added, untruthfully, beauty was but a fleeting thing, and she considered it of little importance; and then she laughed again.

Adhelmar took up the lute that lay beside them and fingered it for a moment, as though wondering of what he would sing. Afterward he sang for her as they sat in the gardens.

Sang Adhelmar:



"HE SANG FOR HER AS THEY SAT IN THE GARDENS"

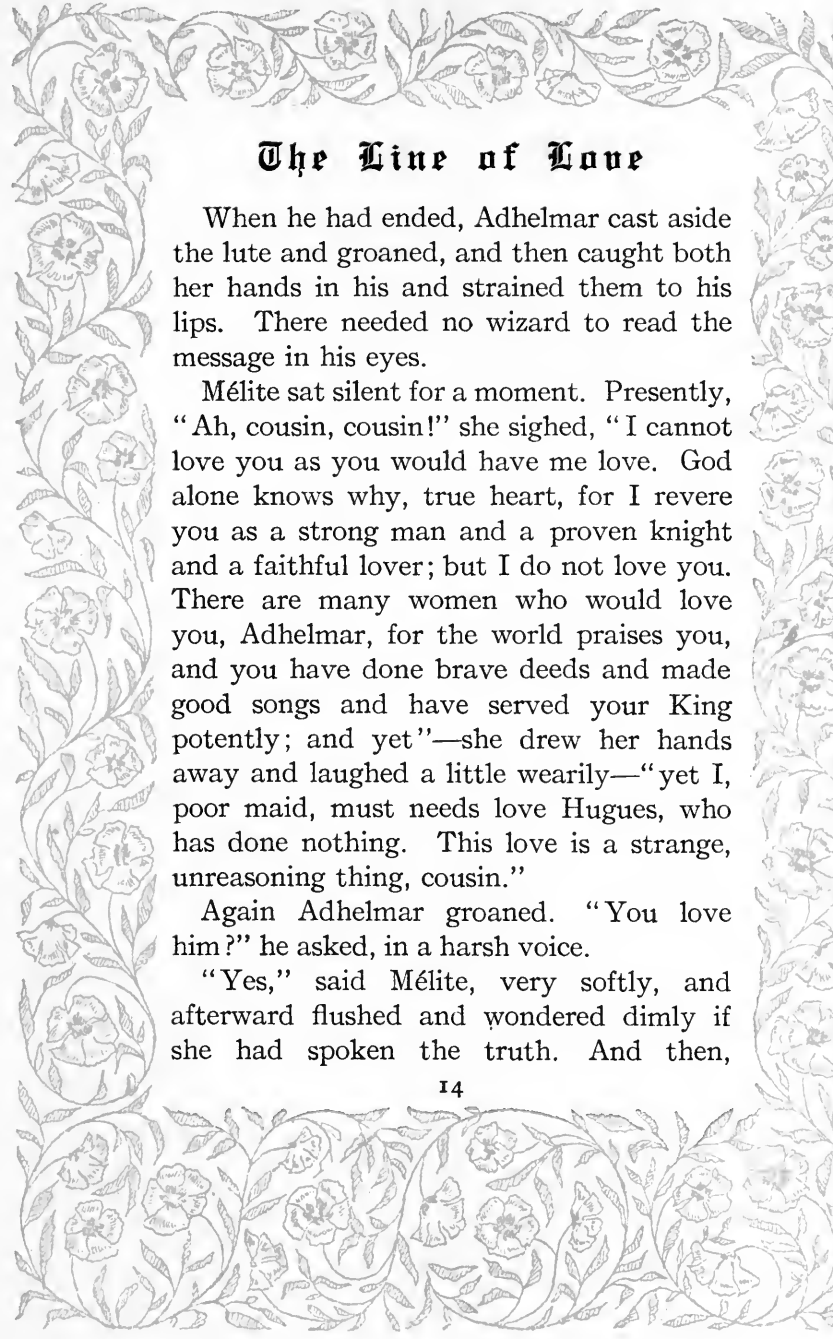


Adhelmar at Hugsange

*"It is vain I mirror forth the praise
In pondered virelais
Of her that is the lady of my love;
No apt nor curious phrases e'er may tell
The tender miracle
Of her white body or the grace thereof.*

*"The vext Italian artful-artless strain
Is fashioned all in vain:
Sound is but sound; and even her name,
that is
To me more glorious than the glow of fire
Or dawn or love's desire
Or song or scarlet or dim ambergris,
Mocks utterance.*

*"I have no heart to praise
The perfect carnal beauty that is hers,
But as those worshippers
That bore rude offerings of honey and maize,
Of old, toward the stately ministers
Of fabled deities, I have given her these,
My faltering melodies,
That are Love's lean and ragged mes-
sengers."*

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The Line of Love

When he had ended, Adhelmar cast aside the lute and groaned, and then caught both her hands in his and strained them to his lips. There needed no wizard to read the message in his eyes.

Mélite sat silent for a moment. Presently, "Ah, cousin, cousin!" she sighed, "I cannot love you as you would have me love. God alone knows why, true heart, for I revere you as a strong man and a proven knight and a faithful lover; but I do not love you. There are many women who would love you, Adhelmar, for the world praises you, and you have done brave deeds and made good songs and have served your King potently; and yet"—she drew her hands away and laughed a little wearily—"yet I, poor maid, must needs love Hugues, who has done nothing. This love is a strange, unreasoning thing, cousin."

Again Adhelmar groaned. "You love him?" he asked, in a harsh voice.

"Yes," said Mélite, very softly, and afterward flushed and wondered dimly if she had spoken the truth. And then,

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Adhelmar at Puyssange

somehow, her arms clasped about Adhelmar's neck, and she kissed him, from pure pity, as she told herself; for Mélite's heart was tender, and she could not endure the anguish in his face.

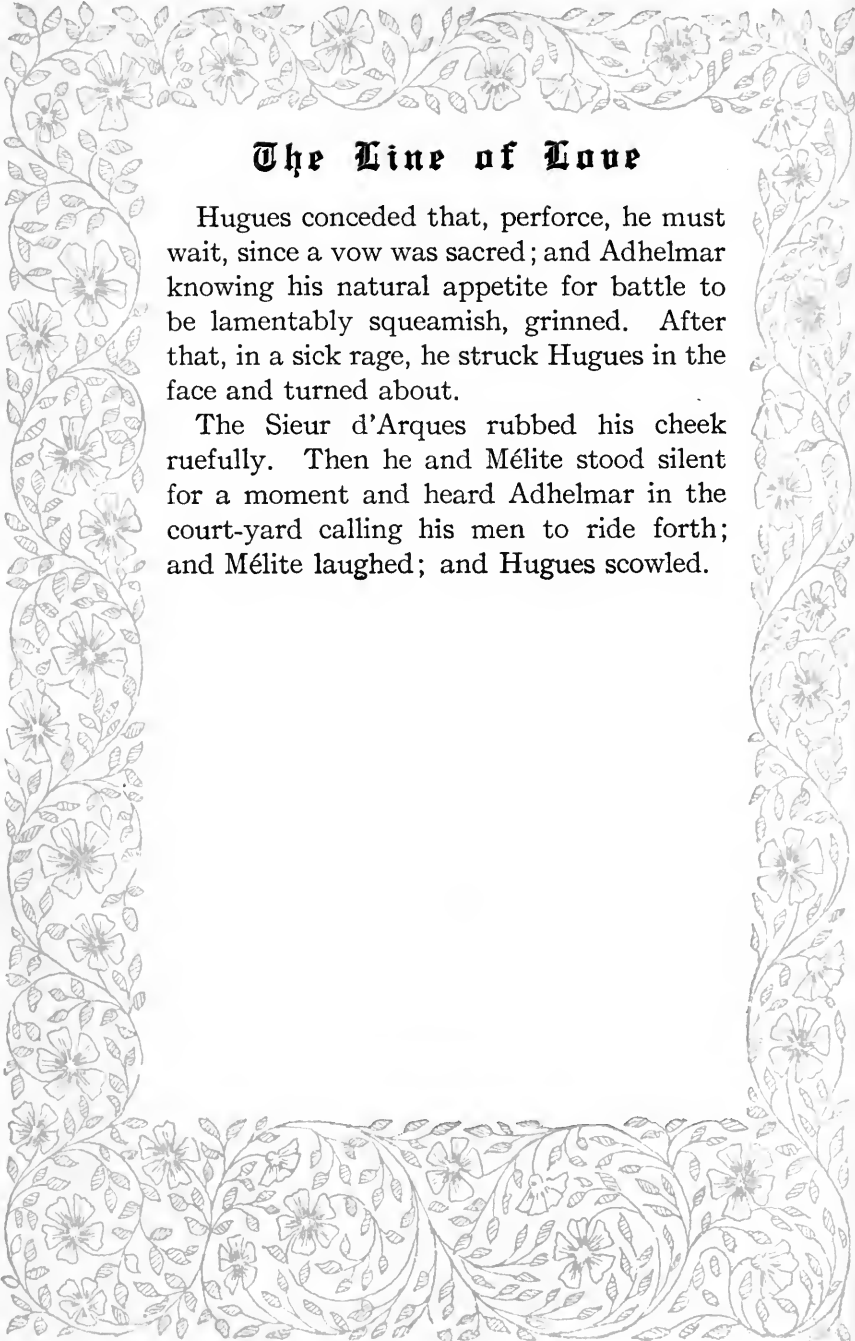
This was all very well. But Hugues d'Arques, coming suddenly out of a pleached walk, at this juncture, stumbled upon them and found their postures distasteful. He bent black brows upon the two.

"Adhelmar," said he, at length, "this world is a small place."

Adhelmar rose quickly to his feet. "Indeed," he assented, with a wried smile, "I think there is scarce room in it for both of us, Hugues."

"That was my meaning," said the Sieur d'Arques.

"Only," Adhelmar pursued, somewhat wistfully, "my sword just now, Hugues, is vowed to my King's quarrel. There are some of us who hope to save France yet, if our blood may avail. In a year, God willing, I shall come again to Puyssange; and till then you must wait."

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The Line of Love

Hugues conceded that, perforce, he must wait, since a vow was sacred; and Adhelmar knowing his natural appetite for battle to be lamentably squeamish, grinned. After that, in a sick rage, he struck Hugues in the face and turned about.

The Sieur d'Arques rubbed his cheek ruefully. Then he and Mélite stood silent for a moment and heard Adhelmar in the court-yard calling his men to ride forth; and Mélite laughed; and Hugues scowled.

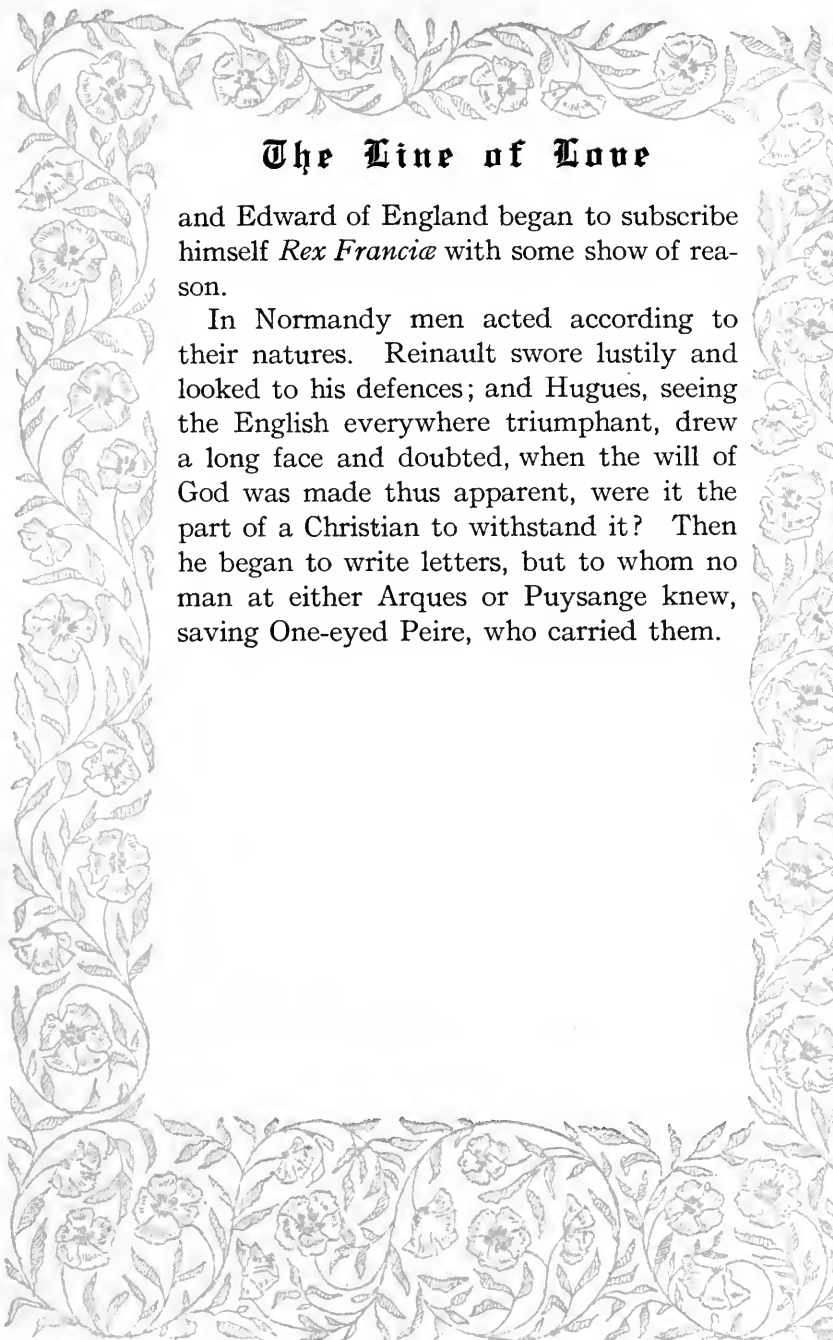


II

Nicolas as Chorus

THE year passed, and Adhelmar did not return; and there was much fighting during that interval, and Hugues began to think that the knight was slain and would trouble him no more. The reflection was borne with equanimity.

So Adhelmar was half-forgot, and the Sieur d'Arques turned his mind to other matters. He was still a bachelor, for Reinault considered the burden of the times in ill-accord with the chinking of marriage-bells. They were grim times for Frenchmen; right and left the English pillaged and killed and sacked and guzzled and drank, as if they would never have done;

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The Line of Love

and Edward of England began to subscribe himself *Rex Franciæ* with some show of reason.

In Normandy men acted according to their natures. Reinault swore lustily and looked to his defences; and Hugues, seeing the English everywhere triumphant, drew a long face and doubted, when the will of God was made thus apparent, were it the part of a Christian to withstand it? Then he began to write letters, but to whom no man at either Arques or Puyssange knew, saving One-eyed Peire, who carried them.

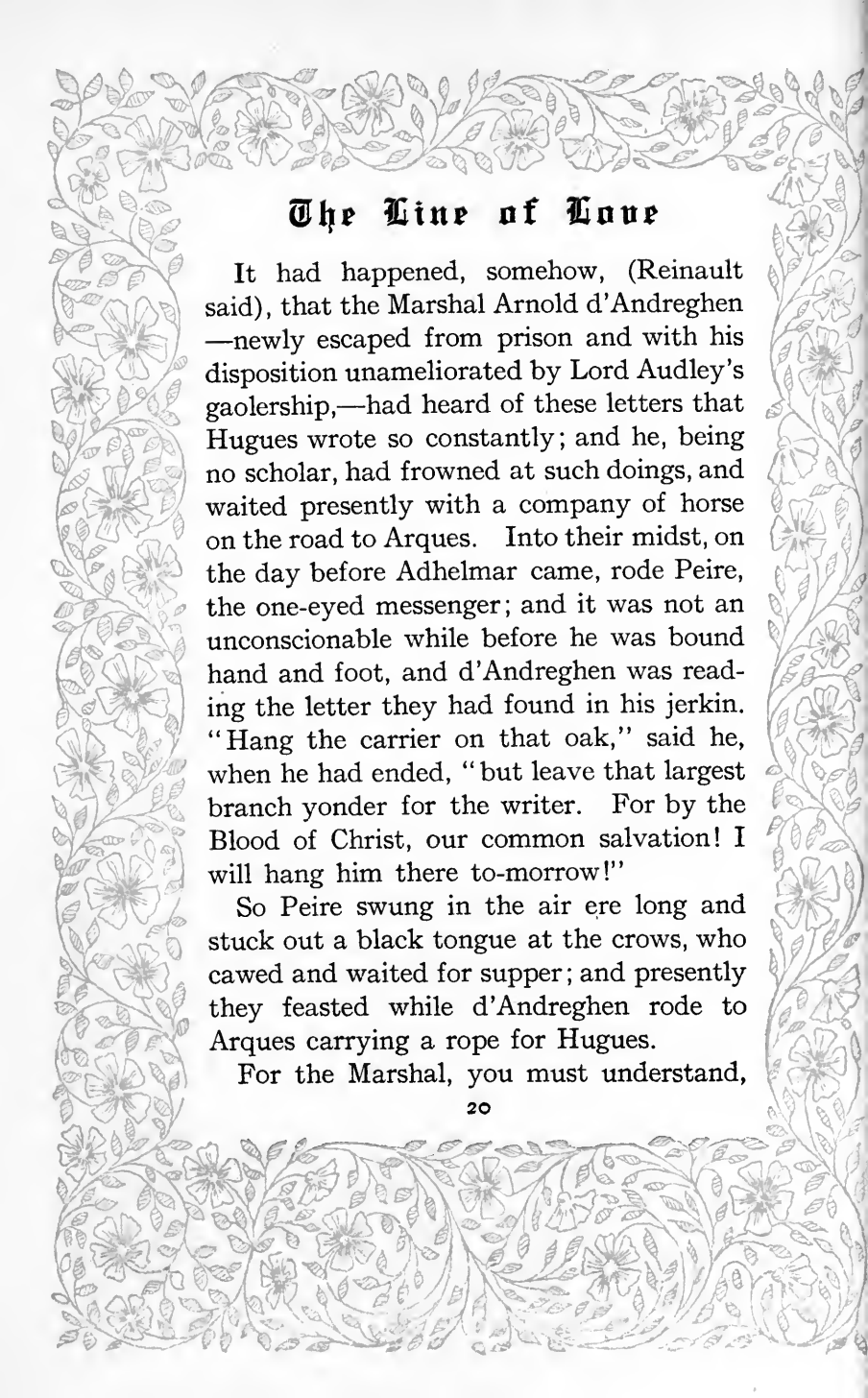
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III

Treats of Huckstering

IT was in the dusk of a rain-sodden October day that Adhelmar rode to the gates of Puy-sange, with some score men-at-arms behind him. They came from Poitiers, where again the English had conquered, and Adhelmar rode with difficulty, for in that disastrous business in the field of Maupertuis he had been run through the chest, and his wound was scarce healed. Nevertheless, he came to finish his debate with the Sieur d'Arques, wound or no wound.

But at Puy-sange he heard a strange tale of Hugues. Reinault, whom he found in a fine rage, told him the story as they sat over their supper.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and arranged in a repeating pattern along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

The Line of Love

It had happened, somehow, (Reinault said), that the Marshal Arnold d'Andreghen—newly escaped from prison and with his disposition unameliorated by Lord Audley's gaolership,—had heard of these letters that Hugues wrote so constantly; and he, being no scholar, had frowned at such doings, and waited presently with a company of horse on the road to Arques. Into their midst, on the day before Adhelmar came, rode Peire, the one-eyed messenger; and it was not an unconsionable while before he was bound hand and foot, and d'Andreghen was reading the letter they had found in his jerkin. "Hang the carrier on that oak," said he, when he had ended, "but leave that largest branch yonder for the writer. For by the Blood of Christ, our common salvation! I will hang him there to-morrow!"

So Peire swung in the air ere long and stuck out a black tongue at the crows, who cawed and waited for supper; and presently they feasted while d'Andreghen rode to Arques carrying a rope for Hugues.

For the Marshal, you must understand,



Adhelmar at Puyssange

was a man of sudden action. It was but two months before that he had taken the Comte de Harcourt with other gentlemen from the Dauphin's own table to behead them that afternoon in a field back of Rouen. It was true they had planned to resist the *gabelle*, the King's immemorial right to impose a tax on salt; but Harcourt was Hugues's cousin, and the Sieur d'Arques, being somewhat of an epicurean disposition, found the dessert accorded his kinsman unpalatable.

It was no great surprise to d'Andreghen, then, to find that the letter Hugues had written was meant for Edward, the Black Prince of England, now at Bordeaux, where he held the French King, whom he had captured at Poitiers, as a prisoner; for this prince, though he had no particular love for a rogue, yet knew how to make use of one when kingcraft demanded it,—and, as he afterward made use of Pedro the Castilian, he was now prepared to make use of Hugues, who hung like a ripe pear ready to drop into his mouth. "For," as the

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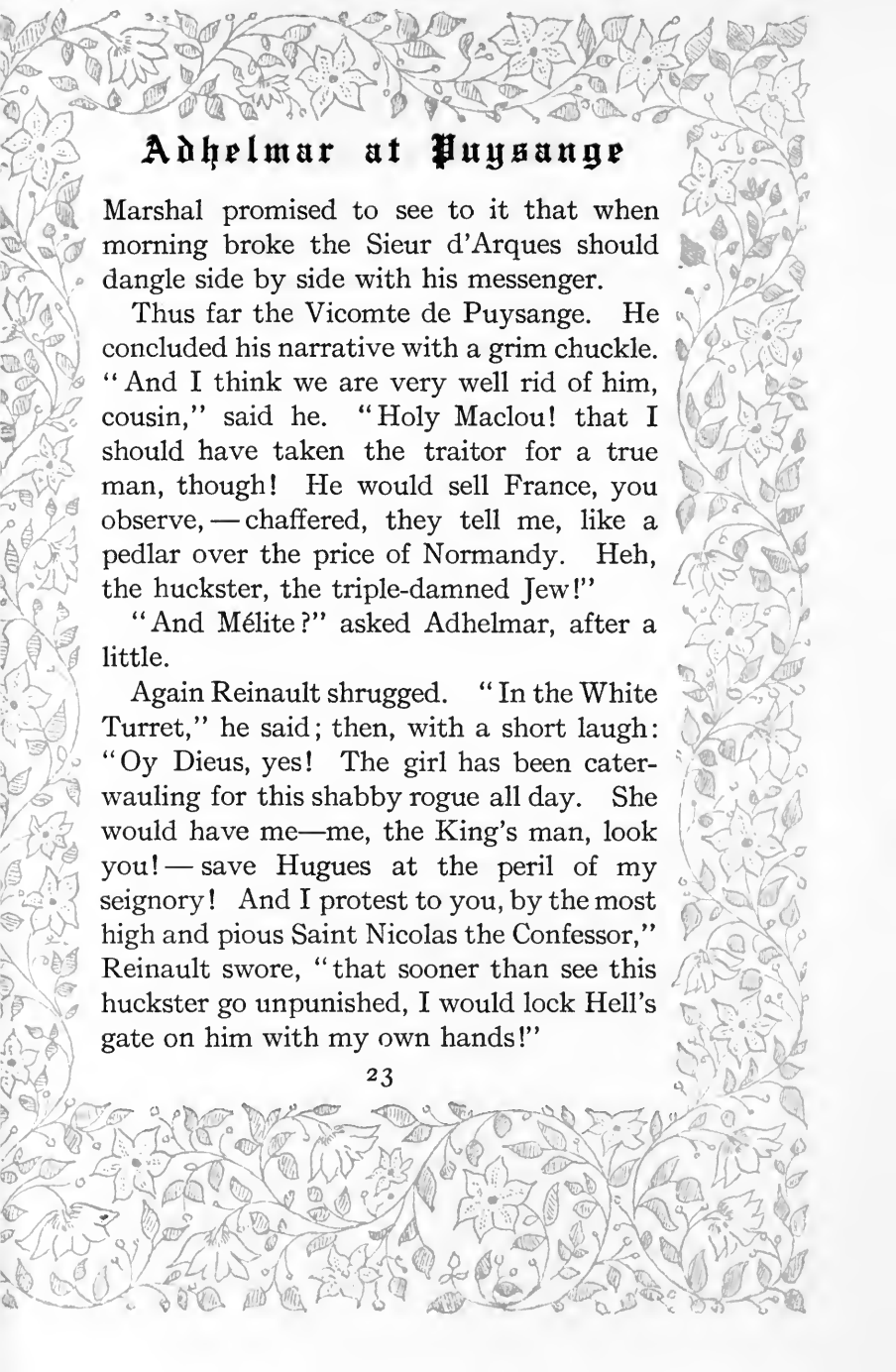
The Line of Love

Sieur d'Arques pointed out in his letter, "I am by nature inclined to favor you brave English, and so, beyond doubt, is the good God. And I will deliver Arques to you; and thus and thus you may take Normandy and the major portion of France; and thus and thus will I do, and thus and thus must you reward me."

Said d'Andreghen: "I will hang him at dawn; and thus and thus may the devil do with his soul!"

Then with his company he rode to Arques. A herald declared to the men of that place how the matter stood, and bade Hugues come forth and dance upon nothing. The Sieur d'Arques spat curses, like a cat driven into a corner, and wished to fight, but the greater part of his garrison were not willing to do so in such a cause; and so d'Andreghen took him shortly and carried him off.

In his anger having sworn by the Blood of Christ to hang him to a certain tree, d'Andreghen had no choice in his calm but to abide by his oath. This day being the Sabbath, he deferred the matter; but the

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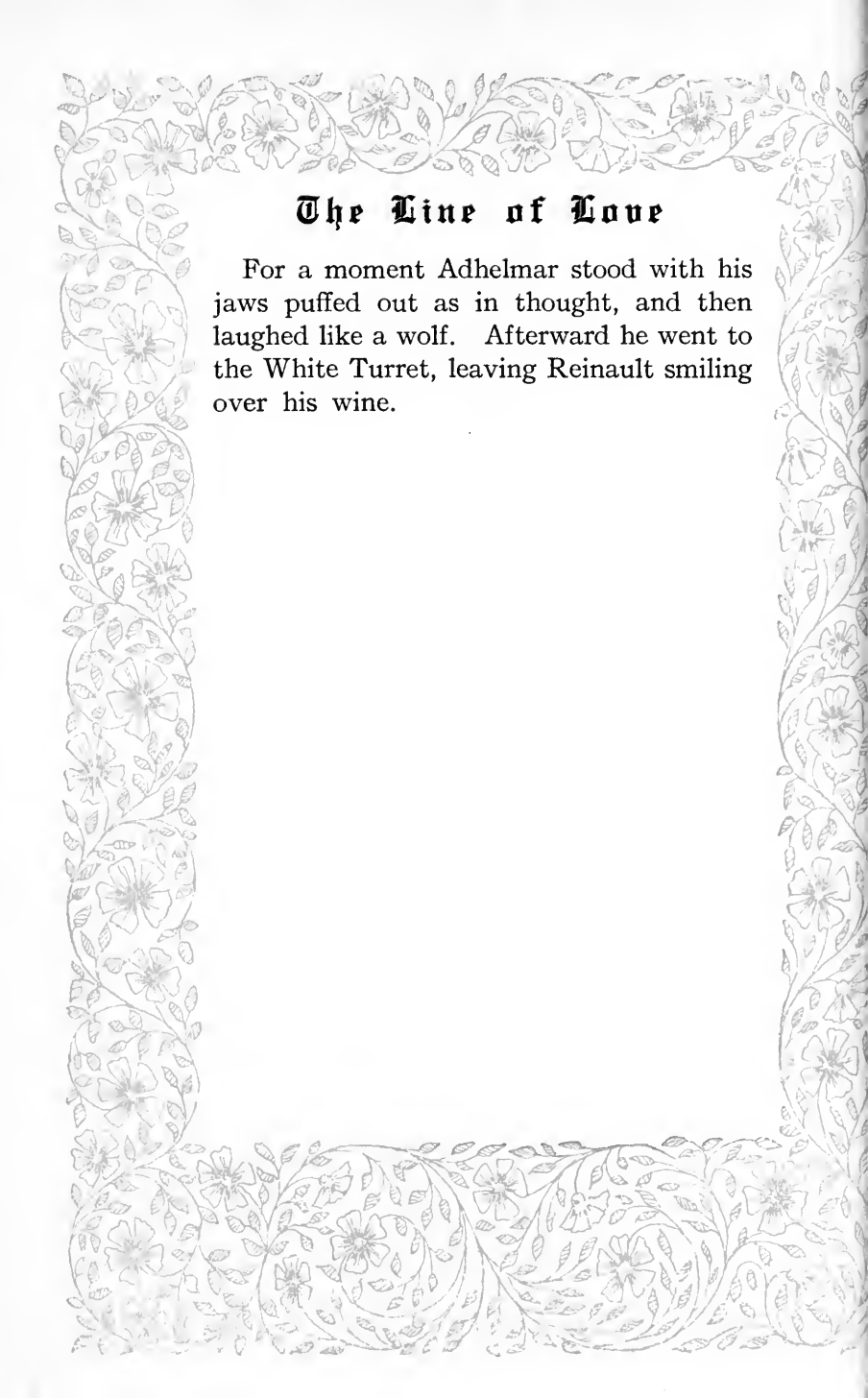
Adhelmar at Puyssange

Marshal promised to see to it that when morning broke the Sieur d'Arques should dangle side by side with his messenger.

Thus far the Vicomte de Puyssange. He concluded his narrative with a grim chuckle. "And I think we are very well rid of him, cousin," said he. "Holy Maclou! that I should have taken the traitor for a true man, though! He would sell France, you observe,—chafferred, they tell me, like a pedlar over the price of Normandy. Heh, the huckster, the triple-damned Jew!"

"And Mélite?" asked Adhelmar, after a little.

Again Reinault shrugged. "In the White Turret," he said; then, with a short laugh: "Oy Dieu, yes! The girl has been caterwauling for this shabby rogue all day. She would have me—me, the King's man, look you!—save Hugues at the peril of my seignory! And I protest to you, by the most high and pious Saint Nicolas the Confessor," Reinault swore, "that sooner than see this huckster go unpunished, I would lock Hell's gate on him with my own hands!"

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including large five-petaled flowers and smaller leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

The Line of Love

For a moment Adhelmar stood with his jaws puffed out as in thought, and then laughed like a wolf. Afterward he went to the White Turret, leaving Reinault smiling over his wine.

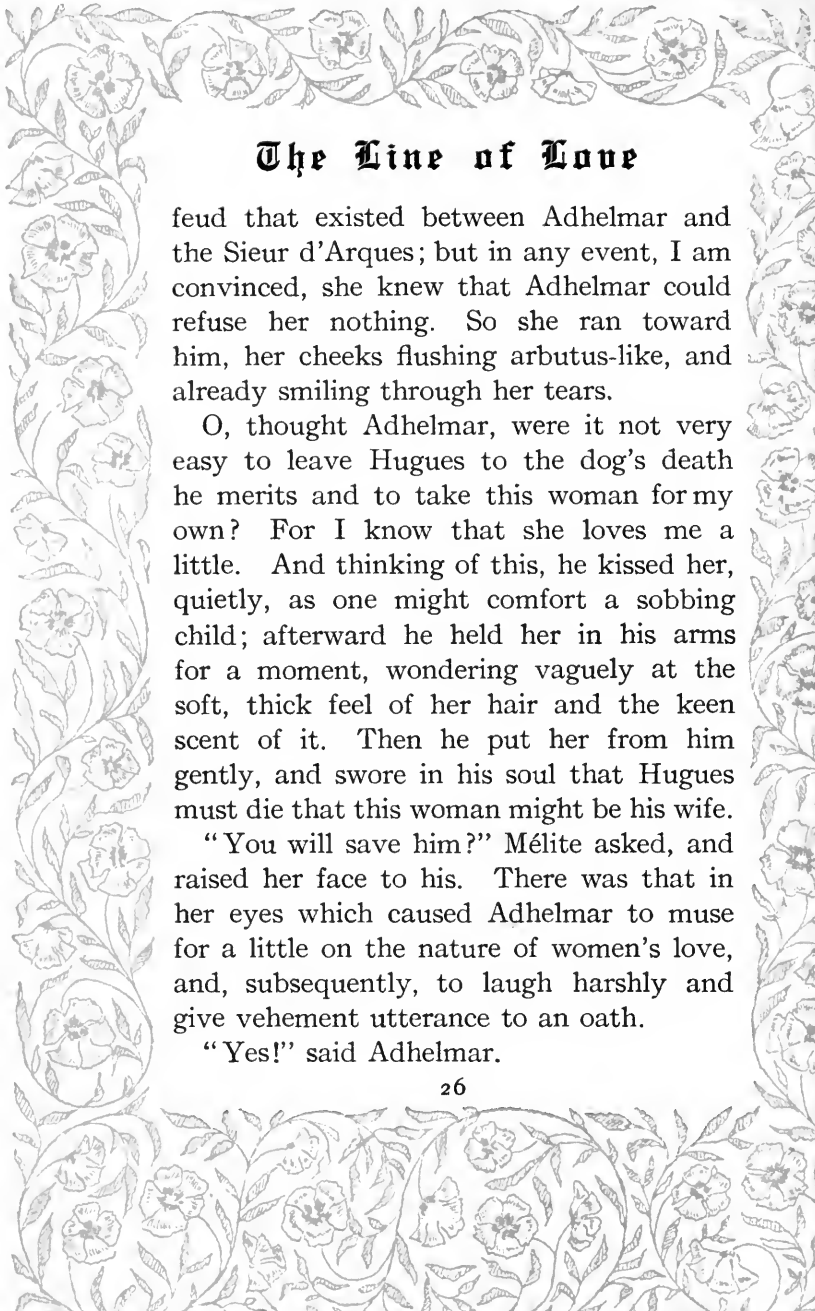


IV

Folly Diversely Attested

SHE found Mélite alone. She had robed herself in black, and had gathered her gold hair about her face like a heavy veil, and sat weeping into it for the plight of Hugues d'Arques.

"Mélite!" cried Adhelmar; "Mélite!" The Demoiselle de Puitsange rose with a start and, seeing him standing in the doorway, ran to him, incompetent little hands fluttering before her like frightened doves. She was very tired, and the man was strength incarnate; surely he, if any one, could aid Hugues and bring him safe out of the grim Marshal's claws. For the moment, perhaps, she had forgotten the

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The Line of Love

feud that existed between Adhelmar and the Sieur d'Arques; but in any event, I am convinced, she knew that Adhelmar could refuse her nothing. So she ran toward him, her cheeks flushing arbutus-like, and already smiling through her tears.

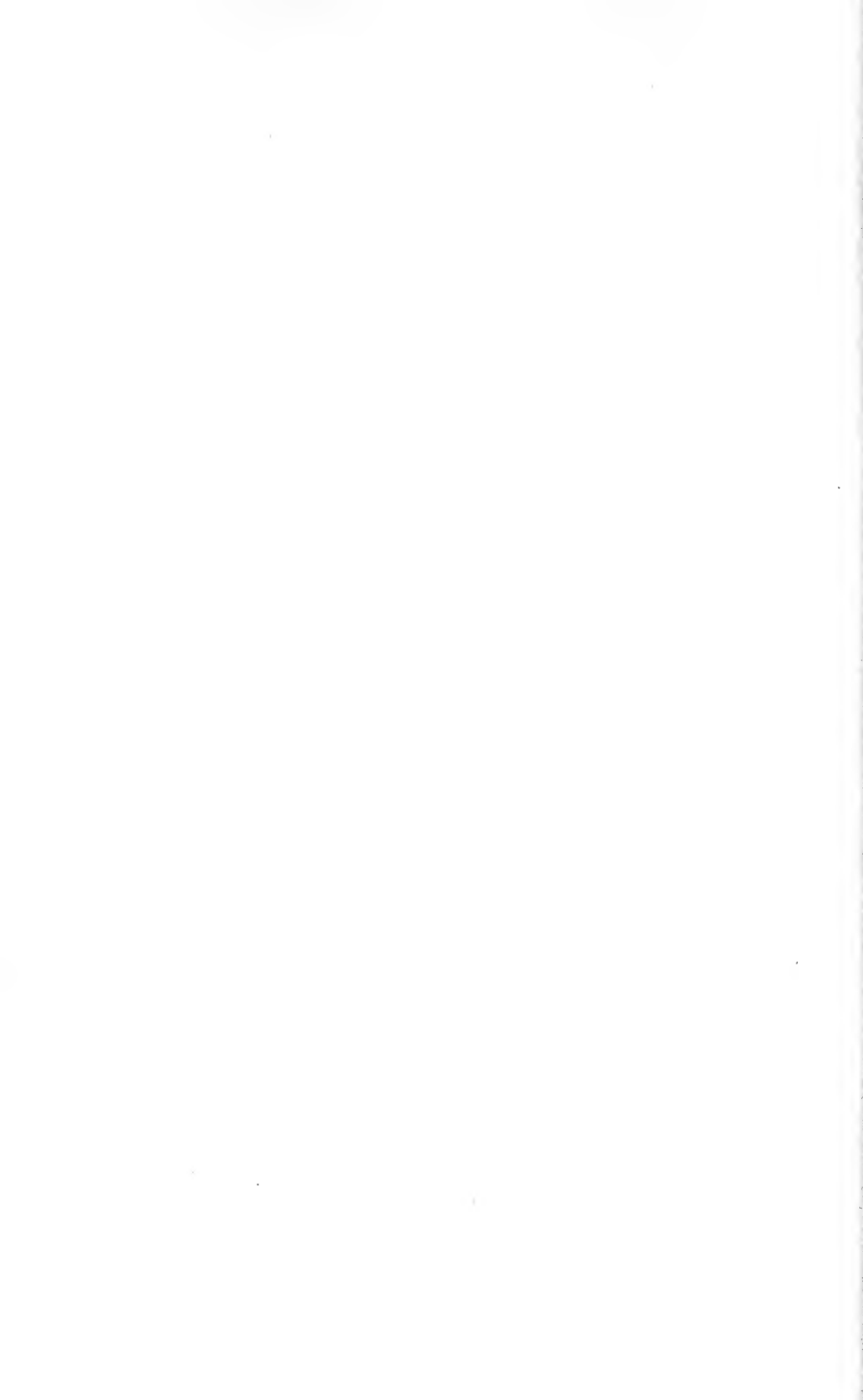
O, thought Adhelmar, were it not very easy to leave Hugues to the dog's death he merits and to take this woman for my own? For I know that she loves me a little. And thinking of this, he kissed her, quietly, as one might comfort a sobbing child; afterward he held her in his arms for a moment, wondering vaguely at the soft, thick feel of her hair and the keen scent of it. Then he put her from him gently, and swore in his soul that Hugues must die that this woman might be his wife.

"You will save him?" Mélite asked, and raised her face to his. There was that in her eyes which caused Adhelmar to muse for a little on the nature of women's love, and, subsequently, to laugh harshly and give vehement utterance to an oath.

"Yes!" said Adhelmar.



"HE FOUND MÉLITE ALONE"





Adhelmar at Puyssange

He demanded how many of Hugues's men were about. Some twenty of them had come to Puyssange, Mélite said, in the hope that Reinault might aid them to save their master. She protested that her brother was a coward for not doing so; but Adhelmar, having his own opinion on this subject, and thinking in his heart that Hugues's skin might easily be ripped off him without spilling a pint of honest blood, said, simply: "Twenty and twenty is two-score. It is not a large armament, but it will serve."

He told her that his plan was to fall suddenly upon d'Andreghen and his men that night, and in the tumult to steal Hugues away; after that, as Adhelmar pointed out, he might readily take ship for England, and leave the Marshal to blaspheme Fortune in Normandy, and the French King to gnaw at his chains in Bordeaux, while Hugues toasts his shins in comfort at London. Adhelmar admitted that the plan was a mad one, but added, reasonably enough, that needs must when the devil



The Line of Love

drives. And so firm was his confidence, so cheery his laugh—he managed to laugh somehow, though it was a stiff piece of work—that Mélite began to be comforted somewhat, and bade him go and God-speed.

So then Adhelmar left her. In the main hall he found the Vicomte still sitting over his wine.

“Cousin,” said Adhelmar, “I must ride hence to-night.”

Reinault stared at him for a moment; a mastering wonder woke in his face. “Ta, ta, ta!” he clicked his tongue, very softly. Afterward he sprang to his feet and clutched Adhelmar by both arms. “No, no!” Reinault cried. “No, Adhelmar, not that! It is death, lad,—sure death! It means hanging, boy!” the Vicomte pleaded, tremulously, for, grim man that he was, he loved Adhelmar.

“That is likely enough,” Adhelmar conceded.

“They will hang you,” Reinault whispered, in a shaking voice; “d’Andreghen



Adhelmar at Puyssange

and the Count Dauphin of Vienne will hang you as blithely as they would Iscariot."

"That, too," said Adhelmar, "is likely enough, if I remain in France."

"Oy Dieu! will you flee to England, then?" the Vicomte scoffed, bitterly. "Has King Edward not sworn to hang you these eight years past? Was it not you, then, cousin, who took Almerigo di Pavia, that Lombard knave whom he made governor of Calais,—was it not you, then, who delivered him to Geoffrey de Chargny, who had him broken on the wheel? Eh, holy Maclou! you will get small comfort of Edward!"

Adhelmar admitted that this was true. "Still," said he, "I must ride hence to-night."

"For her?" Reinault asked, and jerked his thumb upward.

"Yes," said Adhelmar,—“for her.”

Reinault stared in his face for a while. "You are a fool, Adhelmar," said he, at last, "but you are a brave man. It is a great pity that a good-for-nothing wench with a




The Line of Love

tow-head should be the death of you. For my part, I am the King's vassal; I shall not break faith with him; but you are my guest and my kinsman. For that reason I am going to bed, and I shall sleep very soundly. It is likely I shall hear nothing of the night's doings,—ohimé, no! not if you murder d'Andreghen in the court-yard!" Reinault ended, and smiled, somewhat sadly.

Afterward he took Adhelmar's hand and said: "Farewell, lord Adhelmar! O true knight, sturdy and bold! terrible and merciless toward your enemies, gentle and simple toward your friends, farewell!" He kissed Adhelmar on either cheek and left him. Men encountered death with very little ado in those days.

Then Adhelmar rode off in the rain with his men. He reflected as he went upon the nature of women and upon his love for the Demoiselle de Puyange; and, to himself, he swore gloomily that if she had a mind to Hugues she must have him, come what might. Having reached this conclusion, he



Adhelmar at Hugsange

wheeled upon his men and cursed them for tavern-idlers and laggards and flea-hearted snails, and bade them spur.

Mélite, at her window, heard them depart, and stared after them for a while with hand-shadowed eyes; presently the beating of the hoofs died away, and she turned back into the room. Adhelmar's glove, which he had forgotten in his haste, lay upon the floor, and Mélite lifted it and twisted it idly in her hands.

"I wonder—?" said she.

Then she lighted four wax candles and set them before a mirror that was in the room. Mélite stood among them and looked into the mirror. She seemed very tall and very slender, and her loosened hair hung heavily about her beautiful shallow face and fell like a cloak around her black-robed body, showing against the black gown like melting gold; and about her were the tall, white candles tipped with still flames of gold. Mélite laughed—her laughter was high and delicate, with the resonance of thin glass,—and raised her arms above her head,

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and arranged in a repeating pattern along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

The Line of Love

stretching tensely like a cat before a fire,
and laughed yet again.

"After all," said she, "I do not wonder."

Mélite sat before the mirror and braided her hair, and sang to herself in a sweet, low voice, brooding with unfathomable eyes upon her image in the glass, while the rain beat about Puyssange, and Adhelmar rode forth to save Hugues that must else be hanged.

Sang Mélite:

*"Rustling leaves of the willow-tree
Peering downward at you and me,
And no man else in the world to see,*

*"Only the birds, whose dusty coats
Show dark i' the green,—whose throbbing
throats
Turn joy to music and love to notes.*

*"Lean your body against the tree,
Lifting your red lips up to me,
Mélite, and kiss, with no man to see!*



Adhelmar at Puyssange

*“And let us laugh for a little:—Yea,
Let love and laughter herald the day
When laughter and love will be put away,*

*“And you will remember the willow-tree
And this very hour, and remember me,
Mélite,—whose face you will no more see!*

*“So swift, so swift the glad time goes,
And Death and Eld with their countless woes
Draw near, and the end thereof no man
knows.*

*“Lean your body against the tree,
Lifting your red lips up to me,
Mélite, and kiss, with no man to see!”*

Mélite smiled as she sang; for this was a song that Adhelmar had made for her at Nointel, before he was a knight, when both were very young.

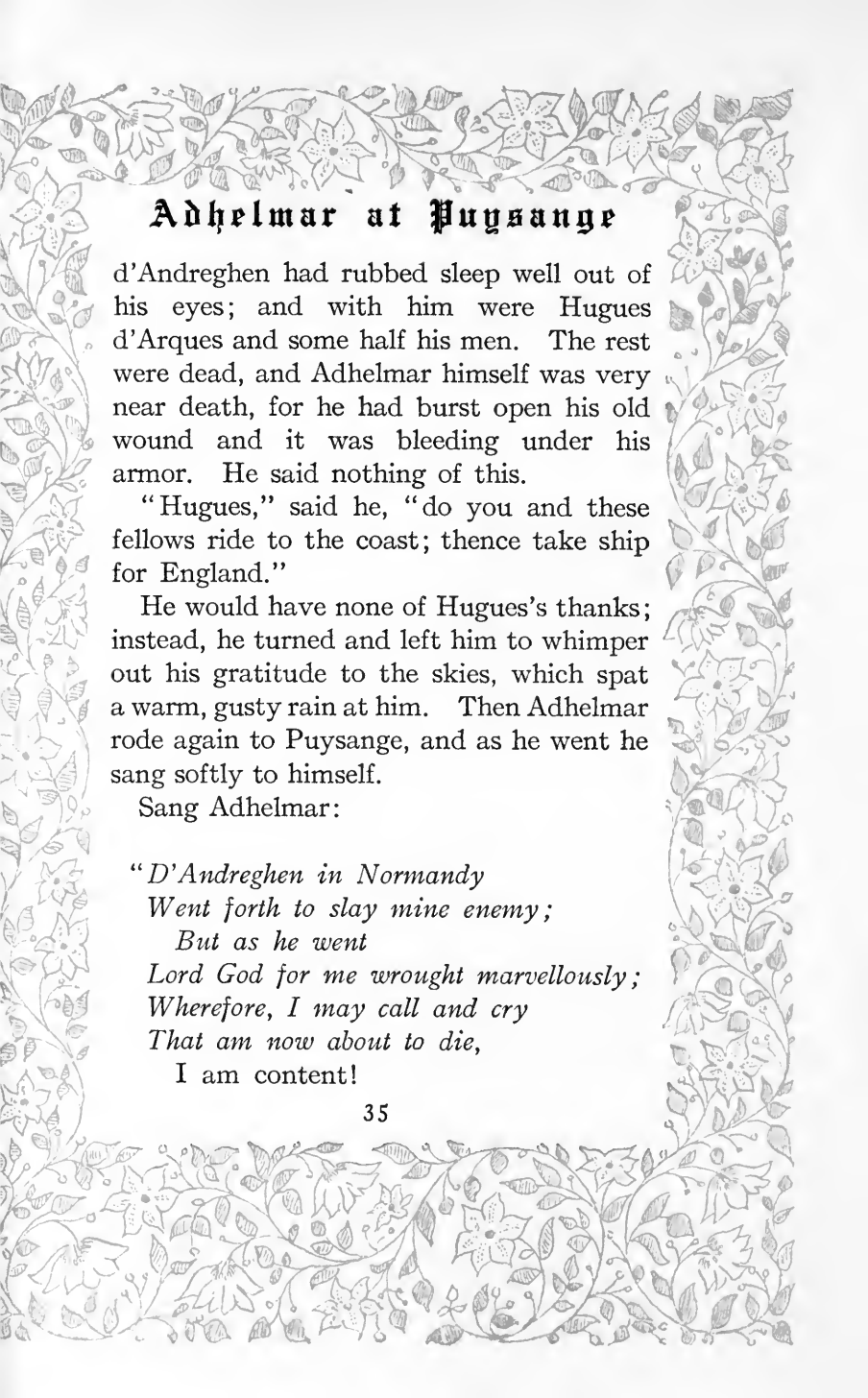
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V

Night-work

IT was not long before they came upon d'Andreghen and his men camped about a great oak, with One-eyed Peire swinging over their heads like a pennon. A shrill sentinel, somewhere in the dark, demanded their business, but without receiving any adequate answer, for at that moment Adhelmar gave the word to charge.

Then it was as if all the devils in Pandemonium had chosen Normandy for their playground; and what took place in the night no man saw for the darkness, so that I cannot tell you of it. Let it suffice that in the end Adhelmar rode away before

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is composed of a repeating pattern of these elements, creating a frame for the page.

Adhelmar at Puyssange

d'Andreghen had rubbed sleep well out of his eyes; and with him were Hugues d'Arques and some half his men. The rest were dead, and Adhelmar himself was very near death, for he had burst open his old wound and it was bleeding under his armor. He said nothing of this.

"Hugues," said he, "do you and these fellows ride to the coast; thence take ship for England."

He would have none of Hugues's thanks; instead, he turned and left him to whimper out his gratitude to the skies, which spat a warm, gusty rain at him. Then Adhelmar rode again to Puyssange, and as he went he sang softly to himself.

Sang Adhelmar:

*"D'Andreghen in Normandy
Went forth to slay mine enemy;
But as he went
Lord God for me wrought marvellously;
Wherefore, I may call and cry
That am now about to die,
I am content!"*



The Line of Love

Domine! Domine!
Gratias accipe!
Et meum animum
Recipe in Cœlum!"



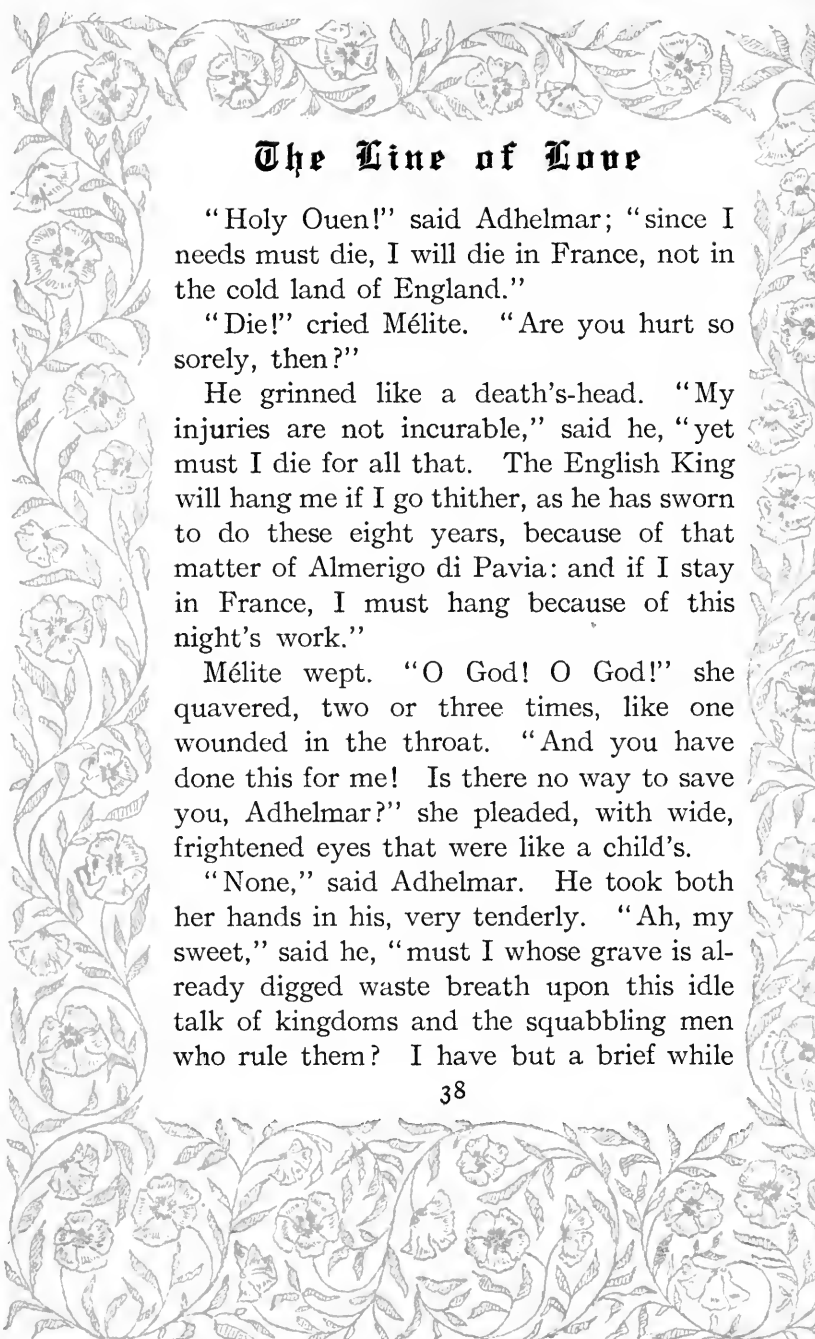
VI

They Kiss at Parting

WHEN he had come to Puy-sange, Adhelmar climbed the stairs of the White Turret,—slowly, for he was growing very feeble now, — and so came again to Mélite crouching among the burned-out candles in the slaty twilight of dawn.

“He is safe,” said Adhelmar, somewhat shortly. He told Mélite how Hugues was rescued and shipped to England, and how, if she would, she might follow him at dawn in a fishing-boat. “For there is likely to be warm work at Puy-sange,” Adhelmar said, grimly, “when the Marshal comes. And he will come.”

“And you, cousin?” asked Mélite.



The Line of Love

“Holy Ouen!” said Adhelmar; “since I needs must die, I will die in France, not in the cold land of England.”

“Die!” cried Mélite. “Are you hurt so sorely, then?”

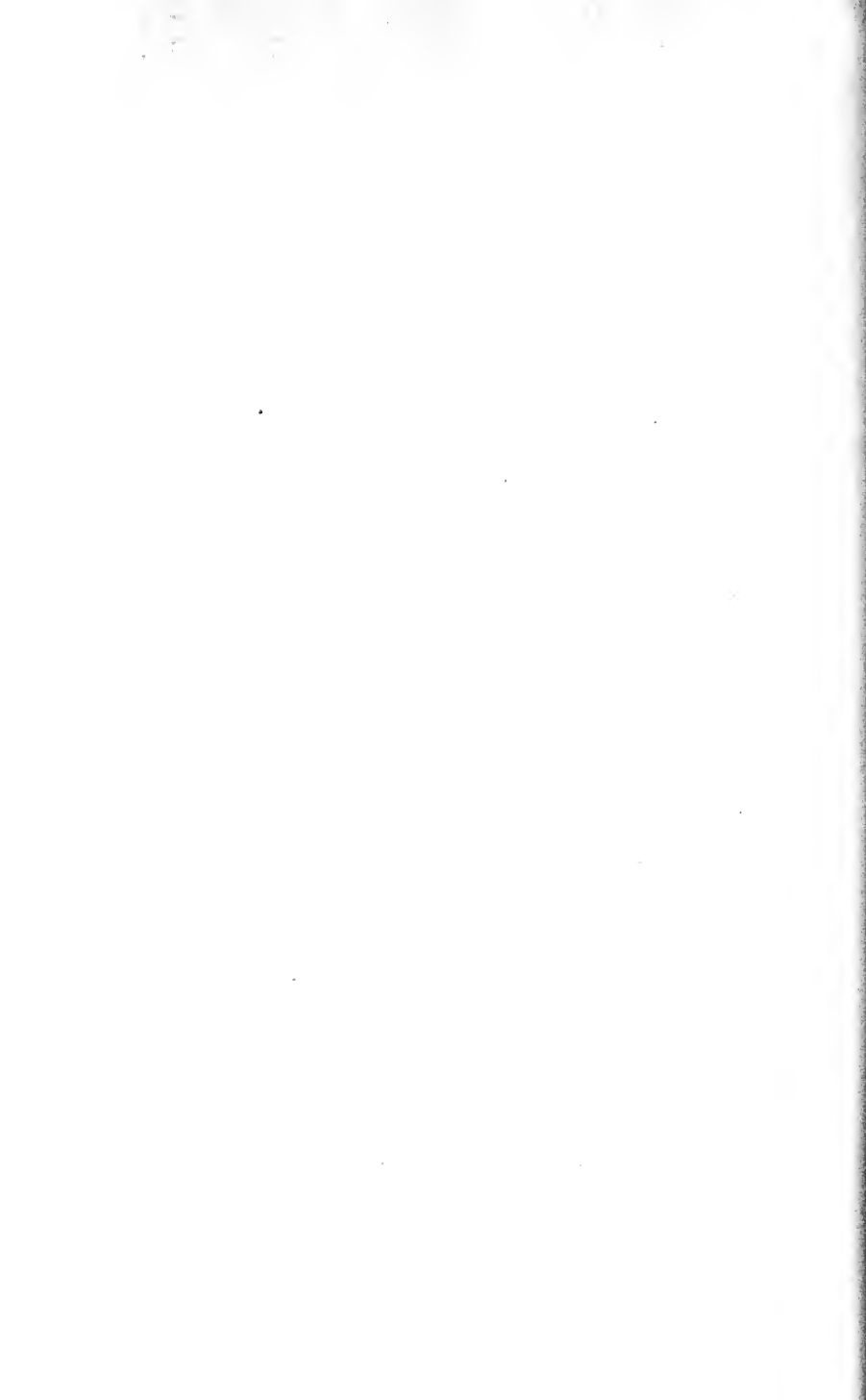
He grinned like a death’s-head. “My injuries are not incurable,” said he, “yet must I die for all that. The English King will hang me if I go thither, as he has sworn to do these eight years, because of that matter of Almerigo di Pavia: and if I stay in France, I must hang because of this night’s work.”

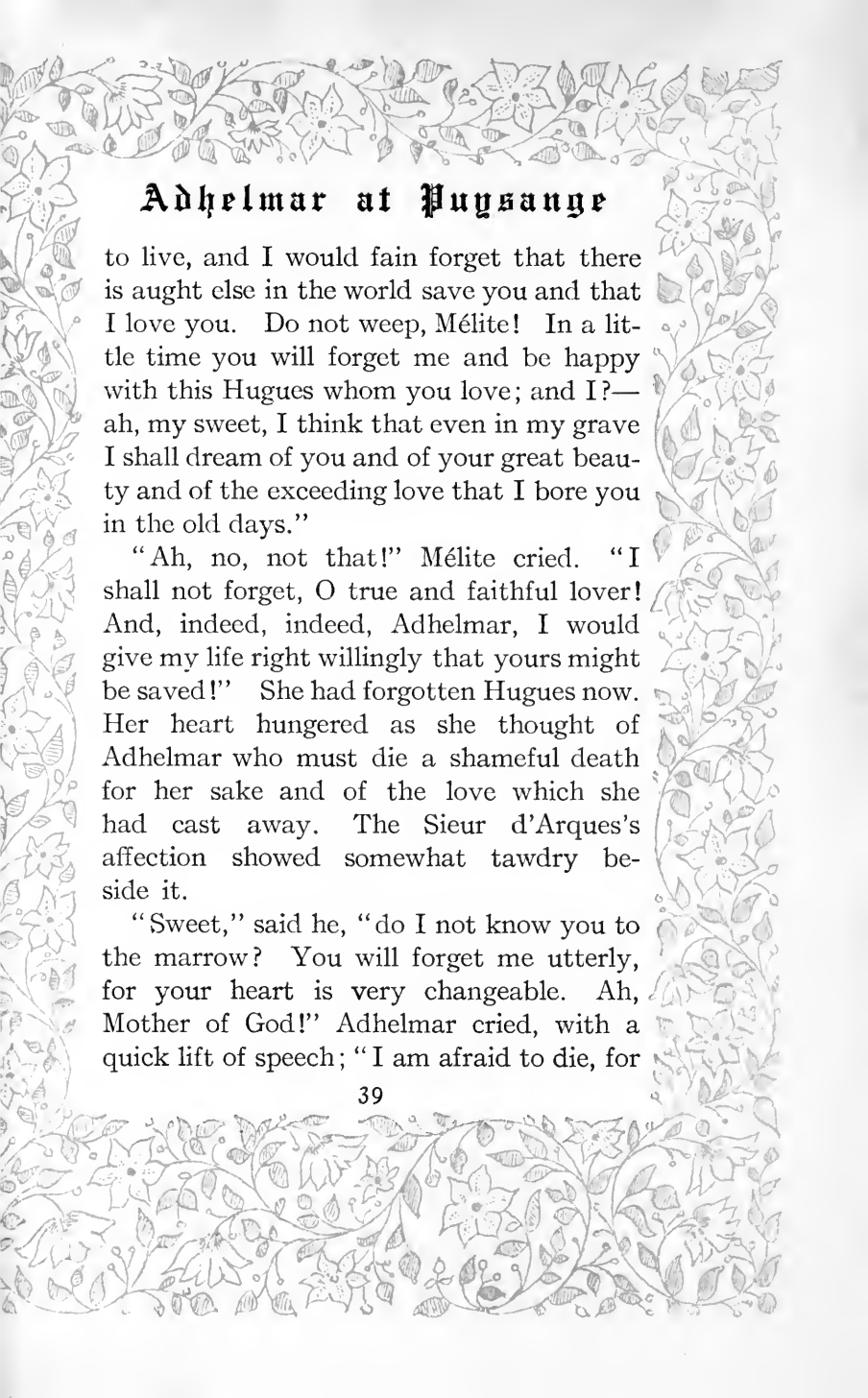
Mélite wept. “O God! O God!” she quavered, two or three times, like one wounded in the throat. “And you have done this for me! Is there no way to save you, Adhelmar?” she pleaded, with wide, frightened eyes that were like a child’s.

“None,” said Adhelmar. He took both her hands in his, very tenderly. “Ah, my sweet,” said he, “must I whose grave is already digged waste breath upon this idle talk of kingdoms and the squabbling men who rule them? I have but a brief while



"ADHELMAR CLIMBED THE STAIRS SLOWLY, FOR HE WAS GROWING VERY FEEBLE NOW"



A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is composed of several parallel lines of these elements, creating a frame for the page.

Adhelmar at Hugsange

to live, and I would fain forget that there is aught else in the world save you and that I love you. Do not weep, Méлите! In a little time you will forget me and be happy with this Hugues whom you love; and I?—ah, my sweet, I think that even in my grave I shall dream of you and of your great beauty and of the exceeding love that I bore you in the old days.”

“Ah, no, not that!” Méлите cried. “I shall not forget, O true and faithful lover! And, indeed, indeed, Adhelmar, I would give my life right willingly that yours might be saved!” She had forgotten Hugues now. Her heart hungered as she thought of Adhelmar who must die a shameful death for her sake and of the love which she had cast away. The Sieur d’Arques’s affection showed somewhat tawdry beside it.

“Sweet,” said he, “do I not know you to the marrow? You will forget me utterly, for your heart is very changeable. Ah, Mother of God!” Adhelmar cried, with a quick lift of speech; “I am afraid to die, for



The Line of Love

the harsh dust will shut out the glory of your face, and you will forget!"

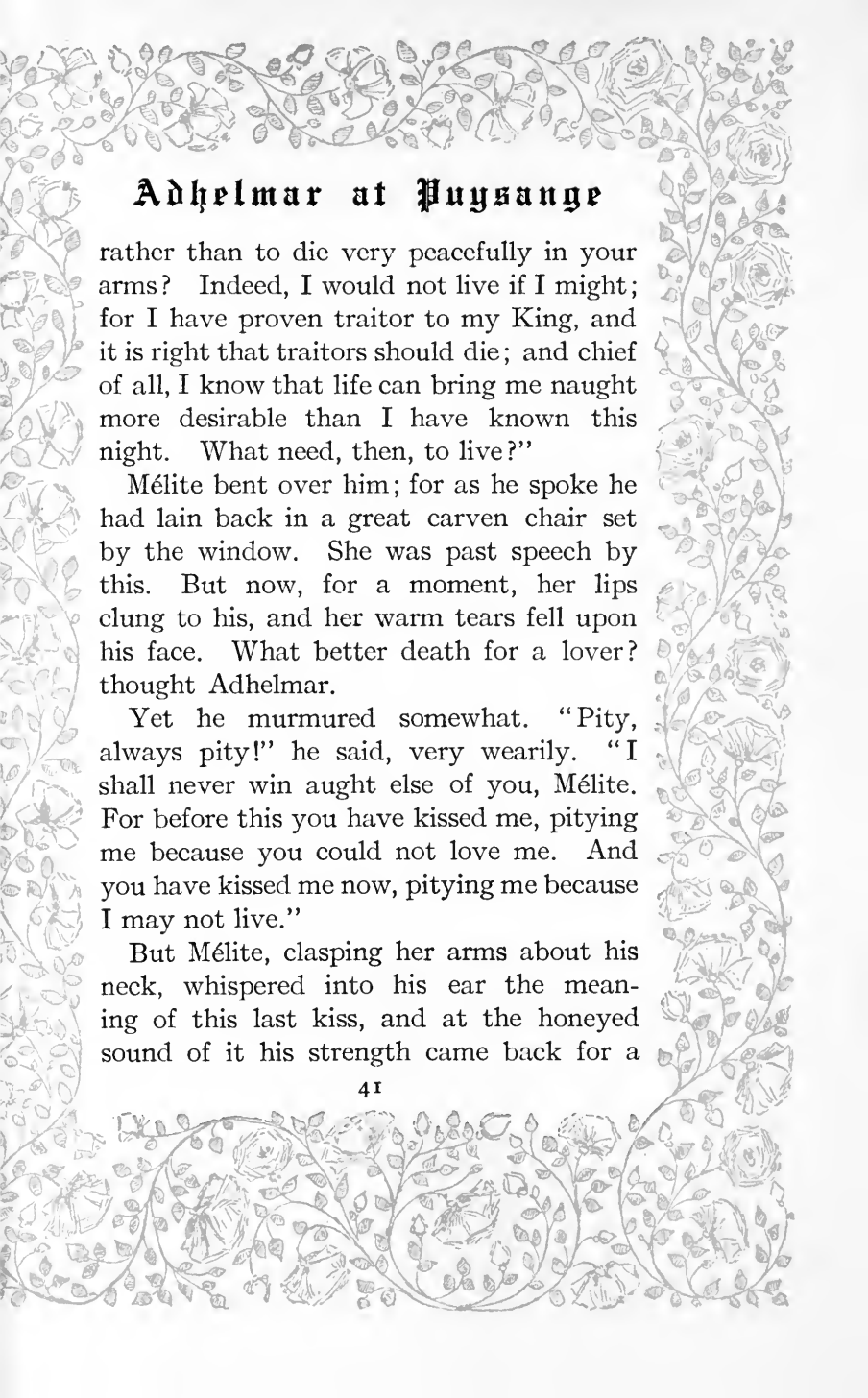
"No; ah, no!" Mélite whispered, and drew near to him. Adhelmar smiled, a little wistfully, for he did not believe that she spoke the truth; but it was good to feel her body close to his, even though he was dying, and he was content.

But by this the dawn had come completely, flooding the room with its first thin radiance, and Mélite saw the pallor of his face and so knew that he was wounded.

"Indeed, yes," said Adhelmar, when she had questioned him, "for my breast is quite cloven through." And when she presently disarmed him, Mélite found a great cut in his chest which had bled so much that it was apparent he must die, whether d'Andreghen and Edward of England would or no.

Mélice wept again and cried. "Why had you not told me of this?"

"To have you heal me, perchance?" said Adhelmar. "Ah, love, is hanging, then, so sweet a death that I should choose it,



Adhelmar at Haysange

rather than to die very peacefully in your arms? Indeed, I would not live if I might; for I have proven traitor to my King, and it is right that traitors should die; and chief of all, I know that life can bring me naught more desirable than I have known this night. What need, then, to live?"

Mélite bent over him; for as he spoke he had lain back in a great carven chair set by the window. She was past speech by this. But now, for a moment, her lips clung to his, and her warm tears fell upon his face. What better death for a lover? thought Adhelmar.

Yet he murmured somewhat. "Pity, always pity!" he said, very wearily. "I shall never win aught else of you, Mélite. For before this you have kissed me, pitying me because you could not love me. And you have kissed me now, pitying me because I may not live."

But Mélite, clasping her arms about his neck, whispered into his ear the meaning of this last kiss, and at the honeyed sound of it his strength came back for a

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of a repeating pattern of five-petaled flowers with dark centers, connected by a vine with small leaves. The flowers are arranged in a slightly overlapping, horizontal line.

The Line of Love

moment, and he strove to rise. The level sunlight smote full upon his face, which was very glad.

“God, God!” cried Adhelmar, and spread out his arms toward the dear, familiar world that was slowly taking form beneath them, —a world now infinitely dear to him; “ah, my God, have pity and let me live a little longer!”

As Mélite, half frightened, drew back from him, he crept out of his chair and fell prone at her feet. Afterward his hands stretched forward toward her, clutching, and then trembled and were still.

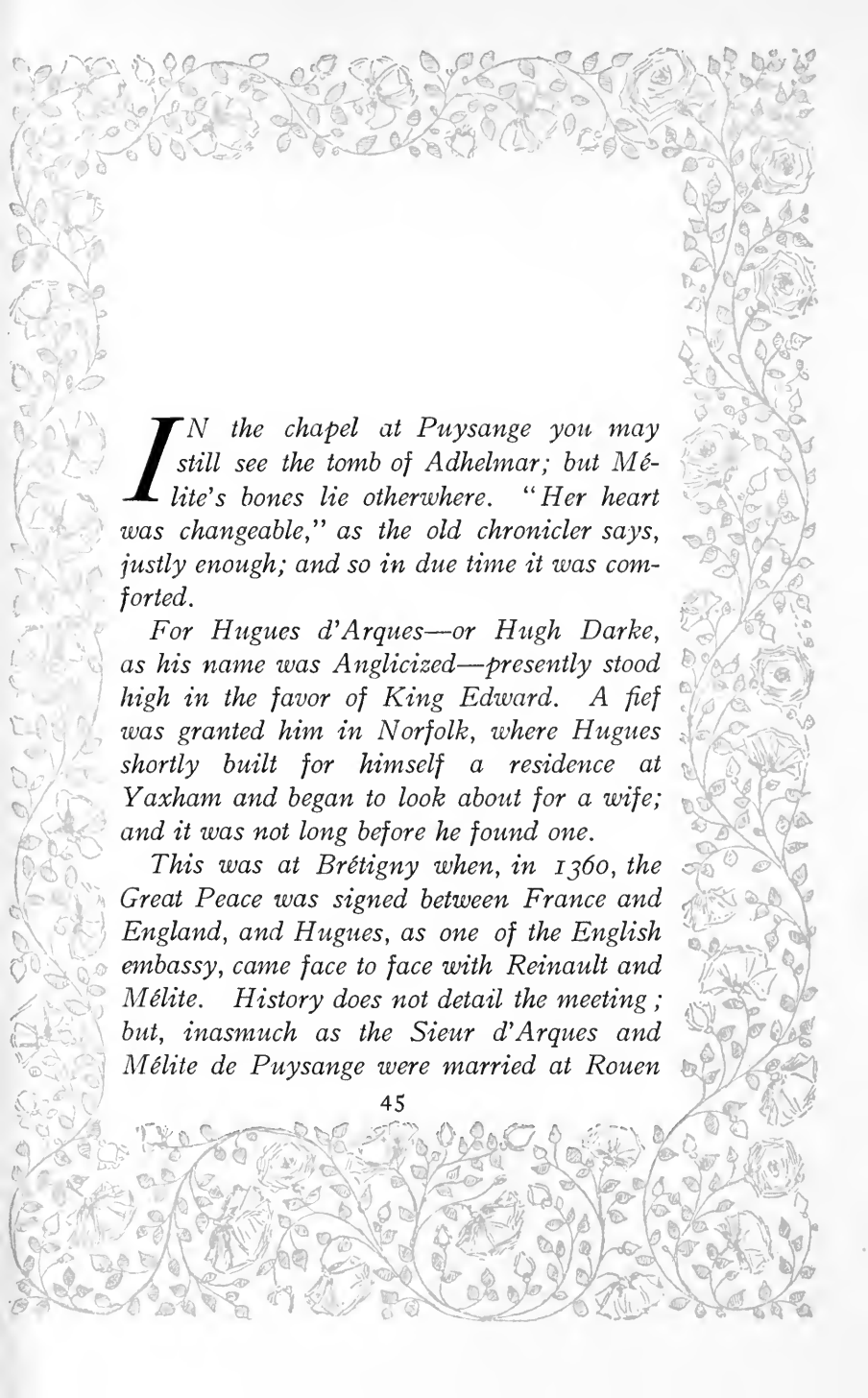
Mélice stood looking downward, wondering vaguely if she would ever know either joy or sorrow again. So the new day found them.



II

MARCH 2, 1414

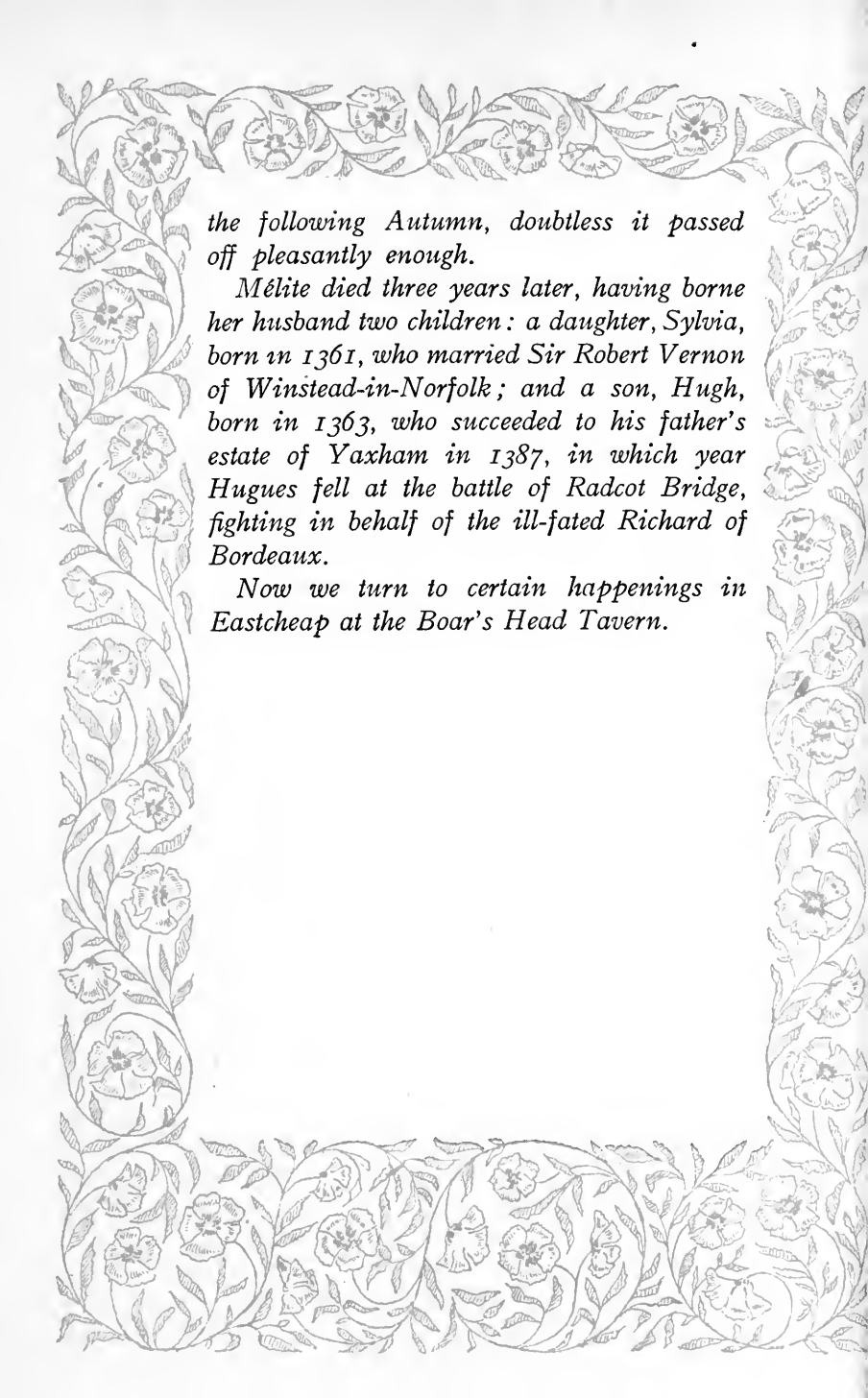
*"Jack, how agrees the devil and thee about thy soul,
that thou soldest him for a cup of Madeira and a cold
capon's leg?"*



IN the chapel at Puy-sange you may still see the tomb of Adhelmar; but Mé-lite's bones lie elsewhere. "Her heart was changeable," as the old chronicler says, justly enough; and so in due time it was comforted.

For Hugues d'Arques—or Hugh Darke, as his name was Anglicized—presently stood high in the favor of King Edward. A fief was granted him in Norfolk, where Hugues shortly built for himself a residence at Yaxham and began to look about for a wife; and it was not long before he found one.

This was at Brétigny when, in 1360, the Great Peace was signed between France and England, and Hugues, as one of the English embassy, came face to face with Reinault and Mé-lite. History does not detail the meeting; but, inasmuch as the Sieur d'Arques and Mé-lite de Puy-sange were married at Rouen

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the following Autumn, doubtless it passed off pleasantly enough.

Mélite died three years later, having borne her husband two children: a daughter, Sylvia, born in 1361, who married Sir Robert Vernon of Winstead-in-Norfolk; and a son, Hugh, born in 1363, who succeeded to his father's estate of Yaxham in 1387, in which year Hugues fell at the battle of Radcot Bridge, fighting in behalf of the ill-fated Richard of Bordeaux.


Now we turn to certain happenings in Eastcheap at the Boar's Head Tavern.

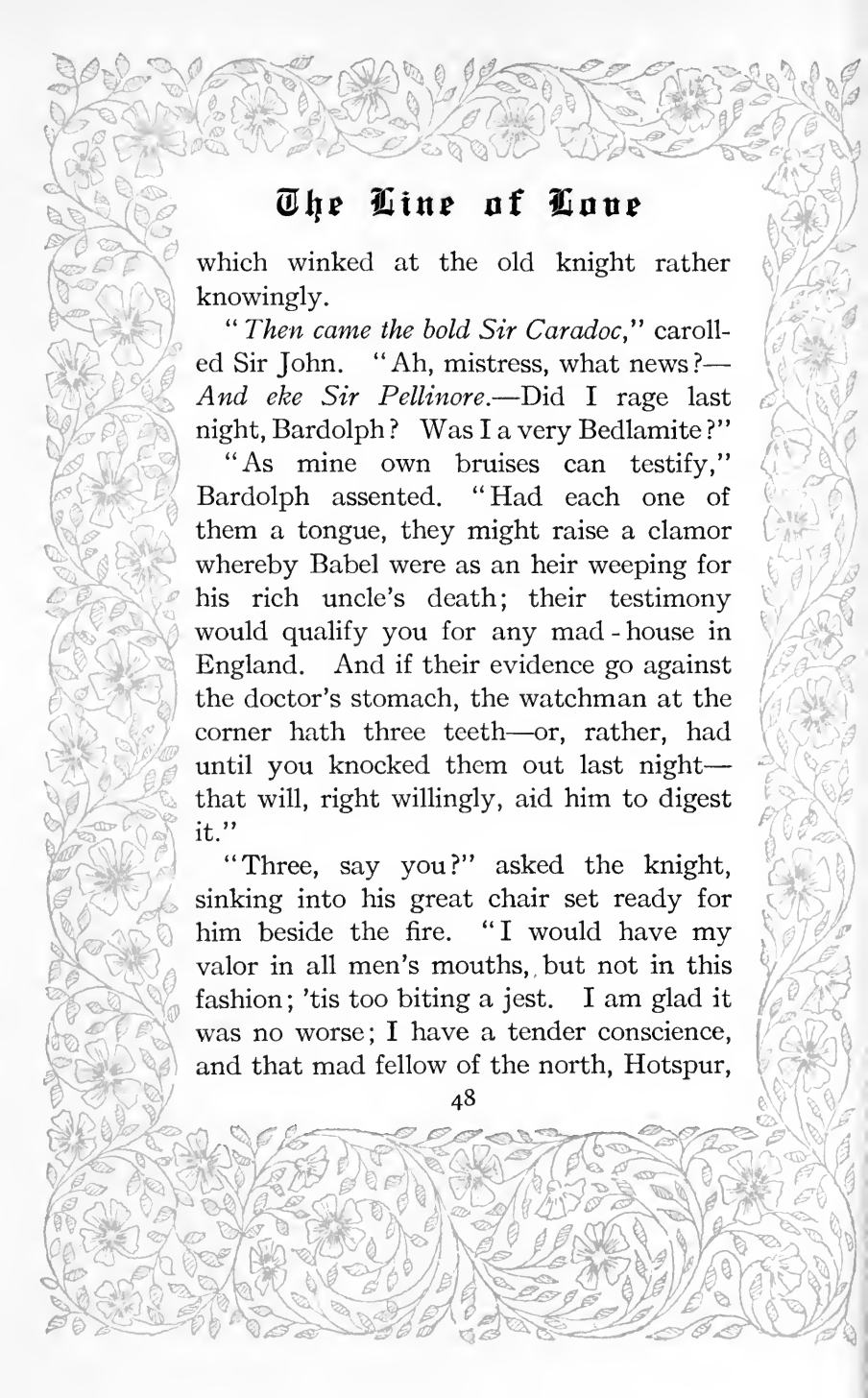
A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and various leaf shapes, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

The Episode Called Love-letters of Falstaff

I

“That Gray Iniquity”

HERE was a sound of scuffling within as Sir John Falstaff, very old now and very shaky after a night of hard drinking, fumbled for a moment at the door of the Angel room. Presently he came into the apartment, singing, as was often his custom when alone, and found Bardolph in one corner busily employed in sorting garments from a clothes-chest, while at the extreme end of the room Mistress Quickly demurely stirred the fire;



The Line of Love

which winked at the old knight rather knowingly.

"Then came the bold Sir Caradoc," carolled Sir John. "Ah, mistress, what news?—*And eke Sir Pellinore*.—Did I rage last night, Bardolph? Was I a very Bedlamite?"

"As mine own bruises can testify," Bardolph assented. "Had each one of them a tongue, they might raise a clamor whereby Babel were as an heir weeping for his rich uncle's death; their testimony would qualify you for any mad-house in England. And if their evidence go against the doctor's stomach, the watchman at the corner hath three teeth—or, rather, had until you knocked them out last night—that will, right willingly, aid him to digest it."

"Three, say you?" asked the knight, sinking into his great chair set ready for him beside the fire. "I would have my valor in all men's mouths, but not in this fashion; 'tis too biting a jest. I am glad it was no worse; I have a tender conscience, and that mad fellow of the north, Hotspur,

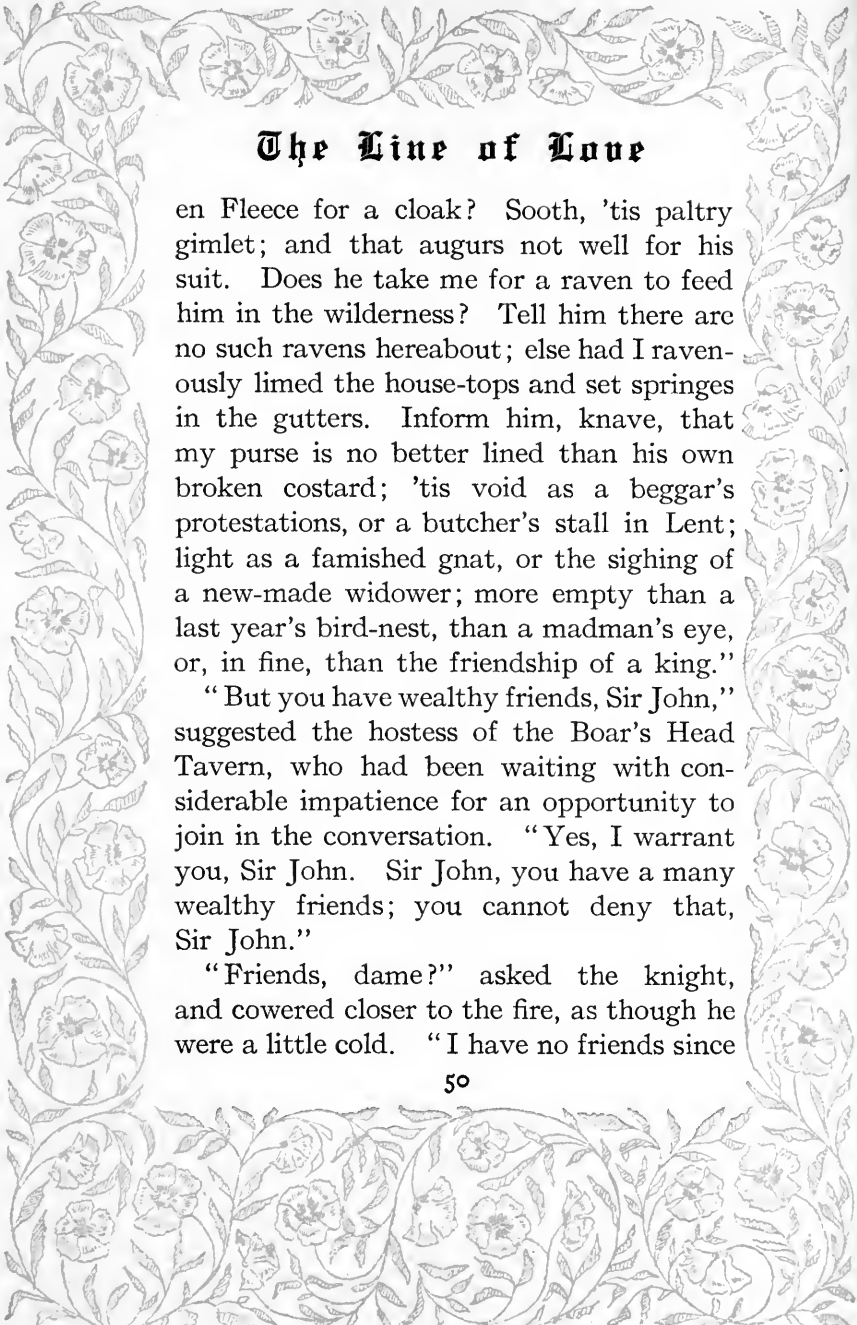


Love-letters of Halstaff

sits heavily upon it; thus, Percy being slain, is *per se* avenged; a plague on him! We fought a long hour by Shrewsbury clock, but I gave no quarter, I promise you; though, i' faith, the jest is ill-timed. Three, say you? I would to God my name were not so terrible to the enemy as it is; I would I had 'bated my natural inclination somewhat, and slain less tall fellows by some threescore. I doubt Agamemnon slept not well o' nights. Three, say you? Give the fellow a crown apiece for his mouldy teeth, an thou hast them; an thou hast not, bid him eschew drunkenness, whereby his misfortune hath befallen him."

"Indeed, sir," began Bardolph, "I doubt—"

"Doubt not, sirrah!" cried Sir John, testily; and continued, in a virtuous manner: "Was not the apostle reprov'd for that same sin? Thou art a very Didymus, Bardolph; — a very incredulous paynim, a most unspeculative rogue! Have I car-racks trading i' the Indies? Have I robbed the exchequer of late? Have I the Gold-



The Line of Love

en Fleece for a cloak? Sooth, 'tis paltry gimlet; and that augurs not well for his suit. Does he take me for a raven to feed him in the wilderness? Tell him there are no such ravens hereabout; else had I ravenously limed the house-tops and set springes in the gutters. Inform him, knave, that my purse is no better lined than his own broken costard; 'tis void as a beggar's protestations, or a butcher's stall in Lent; light as a famished gnat, or the sighing of a new-made widower; more empty than a last year's bird-nest, than a madman's eye, or, in fine, than the friendship of a king."

"But you have wealthy friends, Sir John," suggested the hostess of the Boar's Head Tavern, who had been waiting with considerable impatience for an opportunity to join in the conversation. "Yes, I warrant you, Sir John. Sir John, you have a many wealthy friends; you cannot deny that, Sir John."

"Friends, dame?" asked the knight, and covered closer to the fire, as though he were a little cold. "I have no friends since

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

Love-letters of Halstaff

Hal is King. I had, I grant you, a few score of acquaintances whom I taught to play at dice; paltry young blades of the City, very unfledged juvenals! Setting my knighthood and my valor aside, if I did swear friendship with these, I did swear to a lie. O, 'tis a most censorious world: look you, even these sprouting aldermen, these foul bacon-fed rogues, have eschewed my friendship of late; my reputation hath grown somewhat more murky than Erebus; no matter! I walk alone, as one that hath the pestilence. No matter! but I grow old; I am not in the vaward of my youth, mistress."

He nodded his head with extreme gravity; then reached for a cup of sack that Bardolph held at his elbow.

"Indeed, I know not what your worship will do," said Mistress Quickly, rather sadly.

"Faith!" answered Sir John, finishing the sack and grinning in a somewhat ghastly fashion; "unless the Providence that watches over the fall of a sparrow hath an

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The Line of Love

eye to the career of Sir John Falstaff, Knight, and so comes to my aid shortly, I must needs convert my last doublet into a mask, and turn highwayman in my shirt. I will take purses yet, i' faith, as I did at Gadshill, where that scurvy Poins, and he that is now King, and some twoscore other knaves, did rob me; yet I peppered some of them, I warrant you!"

"You must be rid of me, then, master," Bardolph interpolated. "I for one have no need of a hempen collar."

"Ah, well!" said the knight, stretching himself in his chair as the warmth of the liquor coursed through his inert blood; "I, too, would be loth to break the gallows' back! For fear of halters, we must alter our way of living; we must live close, Bardolph, till the wars make us either Croesuses or food for crows. And if Hal but hold to his bias, there'll be wars; I'll eat a piece of my sword, an he have not need of it shortly. Ah, go thy ways, old Jack; there live not three good men unchanged in England, and one of them is fat



Love-letters of Halstaff

and grows old. We must live close, Bardolph; we must forswear drinking and wenching! There's lime in this sack, you rogue; give me another cup.

"I pray you, hostess," he continued, "remember that Doll Tearsheet sups with me to-night; have a capon of the best, and be not sparing of the wine. I'll repay you, i' faith, when we young fellows return from France, all laden with rings and brooches and such trumperies like your Norfolkshire pedlars at Christmas-tide. We will sack a town for you, and bring you back the Lord Mayor's beard to stuff you a cushion; the Dauphin shall be a tapster yet; we will walk on lilies, I warrant you."

"Indeed, sir," said Mistress Quickly, in perfect earnest, "your worship is as welcome to my pantry as the mice—a pox on 'em!—think themselves; you are heartily welcome. Ah, well, old Puss is dead; I had her of Goodman Quickly these ten years since;—but I had thought you looked for the lady who was here but now;—she was a roaring lion among the mice."

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are arranged in a repeating pattern along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

The Line of Love

“What lady?” cried Sir John, with great animation. “Was it Flint the mercer’s wife, think you? Ah, she hath a liberal disposition, and will, without the aid of Prince Houssain’s carpet or the horse of Cambuscan, transfer the golden shining pieces from her husband’s coffers to mine.”

“No mercer’s wife, I think,” Mistress Quickly answered, after consideration. “She came in her coach and smacked of gentility;—Master Dumbleton’s father was a mercer; but he had red hair;—she is old;—and I could never abide red hair.”

“No matter!” cried the knight. “I can love her, be she a very Witch of Endor. Observe, what a thing it is to be a proper man, Bardolph! She hath marked me;—in public, perhaps; on the street, it may be;—and then, I warrant you, made such eyes! and sighed such sighs! and lain awake o’ nights, thinking of a pleasing portly man, whom, were my besetting sin not modesty, I might name;—and I, all this while, not knowing. Fetch me my Book of Riddles and my Sonnets, that I may

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is composed of several horizontal and vertical sections that frame the central text.

Love-letters of Halstaff

speak smoothly. Why was my beard not combed this morning? No matter, 'twill serve. Have I no better cloak than this?" Sir John was in a tremendous bustle, all a-beam with pleasurable anticipation.

But presently Mistress Quickly, who had been looking out of the window, said: "By'r lady, your worship must begin with unwashed hands, for the coach is even now at the door."

"Avaunt, minions!" cried the knight. "Avaunt! Conduct the lady hither, hostess; Bardolph, another cup of sack. We will ruffle it, lad, and go to France all gold, like Midas! Are mine eyes too red? I must look sad, you know, and sigh very pitifully. Ah, we will ruffle it! Another cup of sack, Bardolph;—I am a rogue if I have drunk to-day. And avaunt! vanish! for the lady comes."

He threw himself into a gallant attitude, suggestive of one suddenly palsied, and with the mien of a turkey-cock strutted toward the door to greet his unknown visitor.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and scrolling vines with leaves, creating a frame for the page's content.

II

“Then was Jack Falstaff, now Sir John, a Boy”

SHE was by no means what he had expected in her personal appearance; at first sight Sir John estimated her age as a trifle upon the staid side of sixty. But to her time had shown consideration, even kindness, as though he touched her less with intent to mar than to caress; her form was still unbent, and her countenance, bloodless and deep-furrowed, bore the traces of great beauty; and, whatever the nature of her errand, the woman who stood in the doorway was unquestionably a person of breeding.

Sir John advanced toward her with such



Love-letters of Falstaff

grace as he might muster; to speak plainly, his gout, coupled with his excessive bulk, did not permit an overpowering amount.

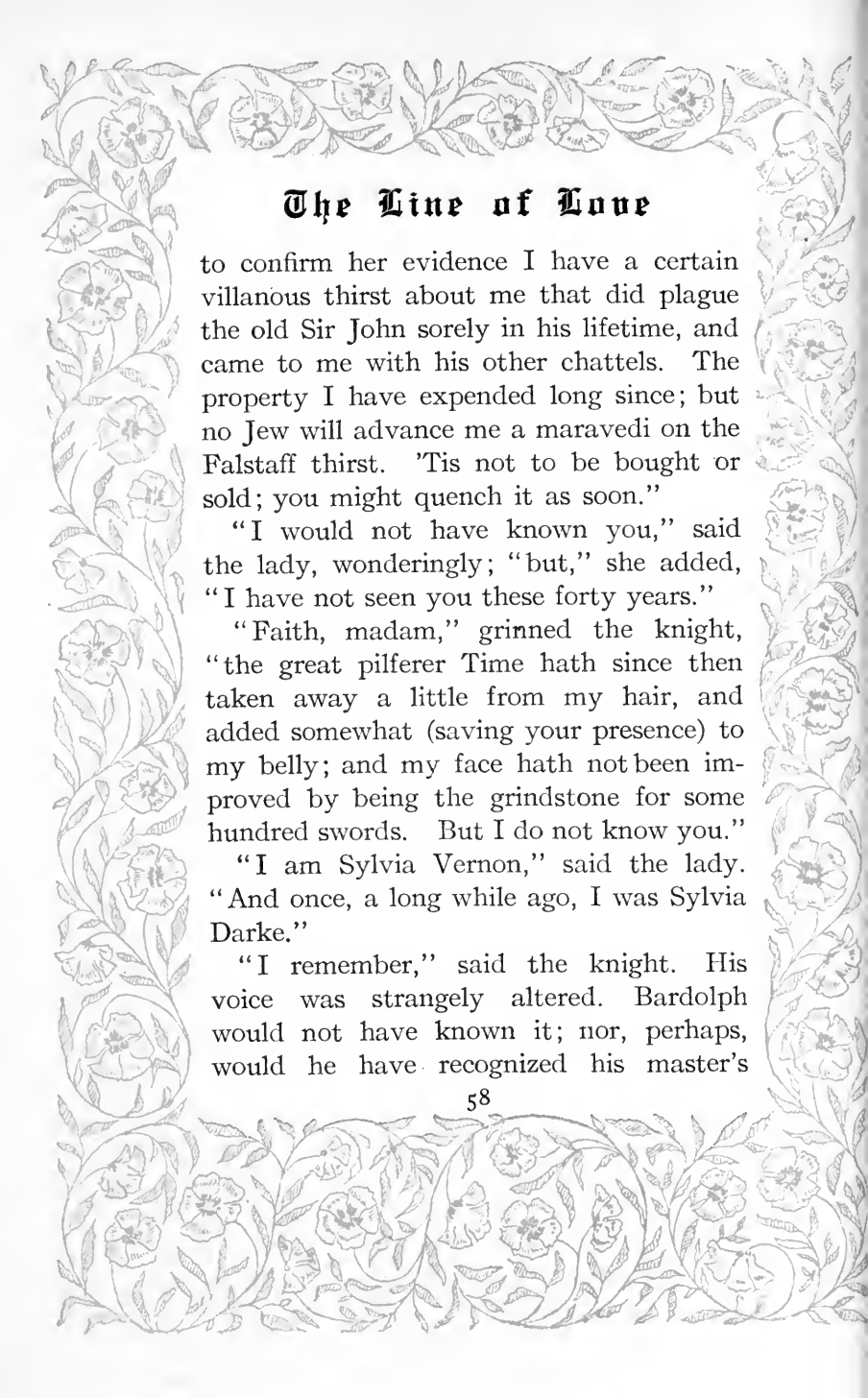
"See, from the glowing East, Aurora comes," he chirped. "Madam, permit me to welcome you to my poor apartments; they are not worthy—"

"I would see Sir John Falstaff, sir," said the lady courteously, but with some reserve of manner, looking him full in the face as she said this.

"Indeed, madam," suggested Sir John, "an those bright eyes—whose glances have already cut my poor heart into as many pieces as the man i' the front of the almanac—will but desist for a moment from such butcher's work and do their proper duty, you will have little trouble in finding the man you seek."

"Are you Sir John?" asked the lady, as though suspecting a jest, or, perhaps, in sheer astonishment. "The son of old Sir John Falstaff, of Norfolk?"

"His wife hath frequently assured me so," Sir John protested, very gravely; "and

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and arranged in a repeating pattern along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

The Line of Love

to confirm her evidence I have a certain villanous thirst about me that did plague the old Sir John sorely in his lifetime, and came to me with his other chattels. The property I have expended long since; but no Jew will advance me a maravedi on the Falstaff thirst. 'Tis not to be bought or sold; you might quench it as soon."

"I would not have known you," said the lady, wonderingly; "but," she added, "I have not seen you these forty years."

"Faith, madam," grinned the knight, "the great pilferer Time hath since then taken away a little from my hair, and added somewhat (saving your presence) to my belly; and my face hath not been improved by being the grindstone for some hundred swords. But I do not know you."

"I am Sylvia Vernon," said the lady. "And once, a long while ago, I was Sylvia Darke."

"I remember," said the knight. His voice was strangely altered. Bardolph would not have known it; nor, perhaps, would he have recognized his master's

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is drawn in a light, sketchy style.

Love-letters of Halstaff

manner as he handed Mistress Vernon to a seat.

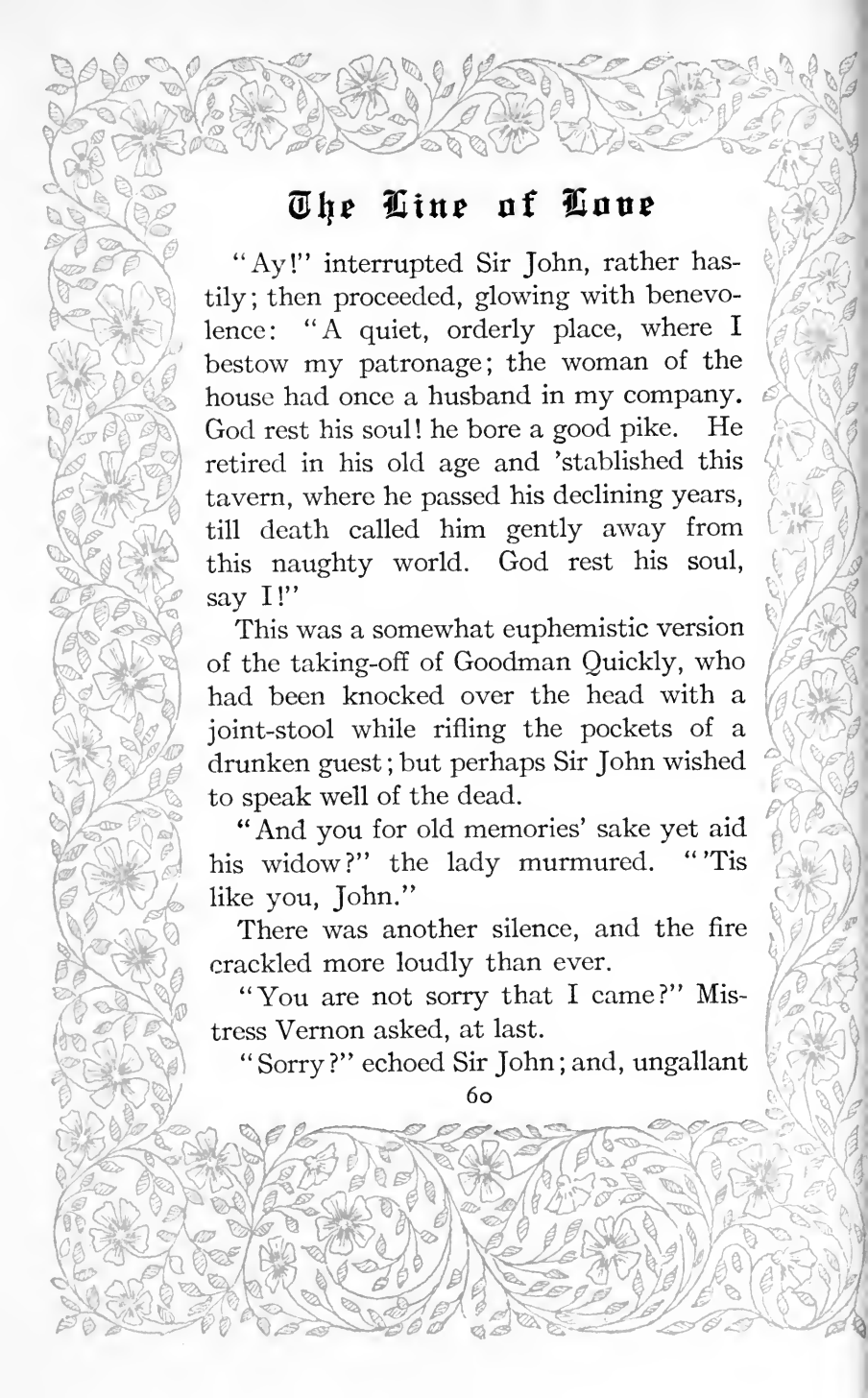
"A long while ago," she repeated, sadly, after a pause during which the crackling of the fire was very audible. "Time hath dealt harshly with us both, John;—the name hath a sweet savor. I am an old woman now. And you—"

"I would not have known you," said Sir John; then asked, almost resentfully, "What do you here?"

"My son goes to the wars," she answered, "and I am come to bid him farewell; yet I may not tarry in London, for my lord is feeble and hath constant need of me. And I, an old woman, am yet vain enough to steal these few moments from him who needs me to see for the last time, mayhap, him who was once my very dear friend."

"I was never your friend, Sylvia," said Sir John.

"Ah, the old wrangle!" said the lady, and smiled a little wistfully. "My dear and very honored lover, then; and I am come to see him here."



The Line of Love

"Ay!" interrupted Sir John, rather hastily; then proceeded, glowing with benevolence: "A quiet, orderly place, where I bestow my patronage; the woman of the house had once a husband in my company. God rest his soul! he bore a good pike. He retired in his old age and 'stablished this tavern, where he passed his declining years, till death called him gently away from this naughty world. God rest his soul, say I!"

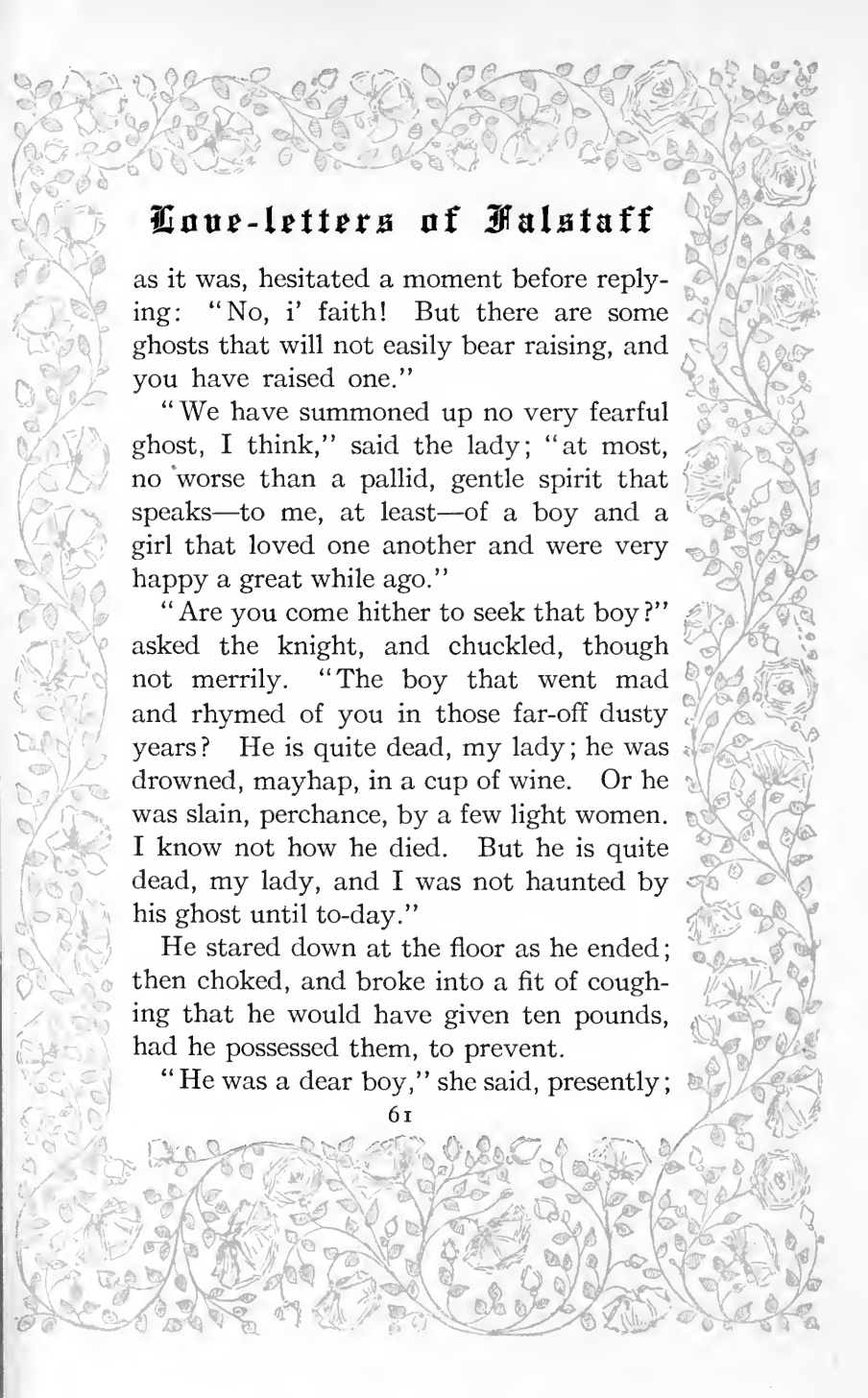
This was a somewhat euphemistic version of the taking-off of Goodman Quickly, who had been knocked over the head with a joint-stool while rifling the pockets of a drunken guest; but perhaps Sir John wished to speak well of the dead.

"And you for old memories' sake yet aid his widow?" the lady murmured. "'Tis like you, John."

There was another silence, and the fire crackled more loudly than ever.

"You are not sorry that I came?" Mistress Vernon asked, at last.

"Sorry?" echoed Sir John; and, ungallant



Love-letters of Halstaff

as it was, hesitated a moment before replying: "No, i' faith! But there are some ghosts that will not easily bear raising, and you have raised one."

"We have summoned up no very fearful ghost, I think," said the lady; "at most, no worse than a pallid, gentle spirit that speaks—to me, at least—of a boy and a girl that loved one another and were very happy a great while ago."

"Are you come hither to seek that boy?" asked the knight, and chuckled, though not merrily. "The boy that went mad and rhymed of you in those far-off dusty years? He is quite dead, my lady; he was drowned, mayhap, in a cup of wine. Or he was slain, perchance, by a few light women. I know not how he died. But he is quite dead, my lady, and I was not haunted by his ghost until to-day."

He stared down at the floor as he ended; then choked, and broke into a fit of coughing that he would have given ten pounds, had he possessed them, to prevent.

"He was a dear boy," she said, presently;

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are arranged in a repeating pattern, with some larger and more prominent than others. The leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The entire border is rendered in a light, sketchy style.

The Line of Love

"a boy who loved a woman very truly; a boy that, finding her heart given to another, yielded his right in her, and went forth into the world without protest."

"Faith!" admitted Sir John, "the rogue had his good points."

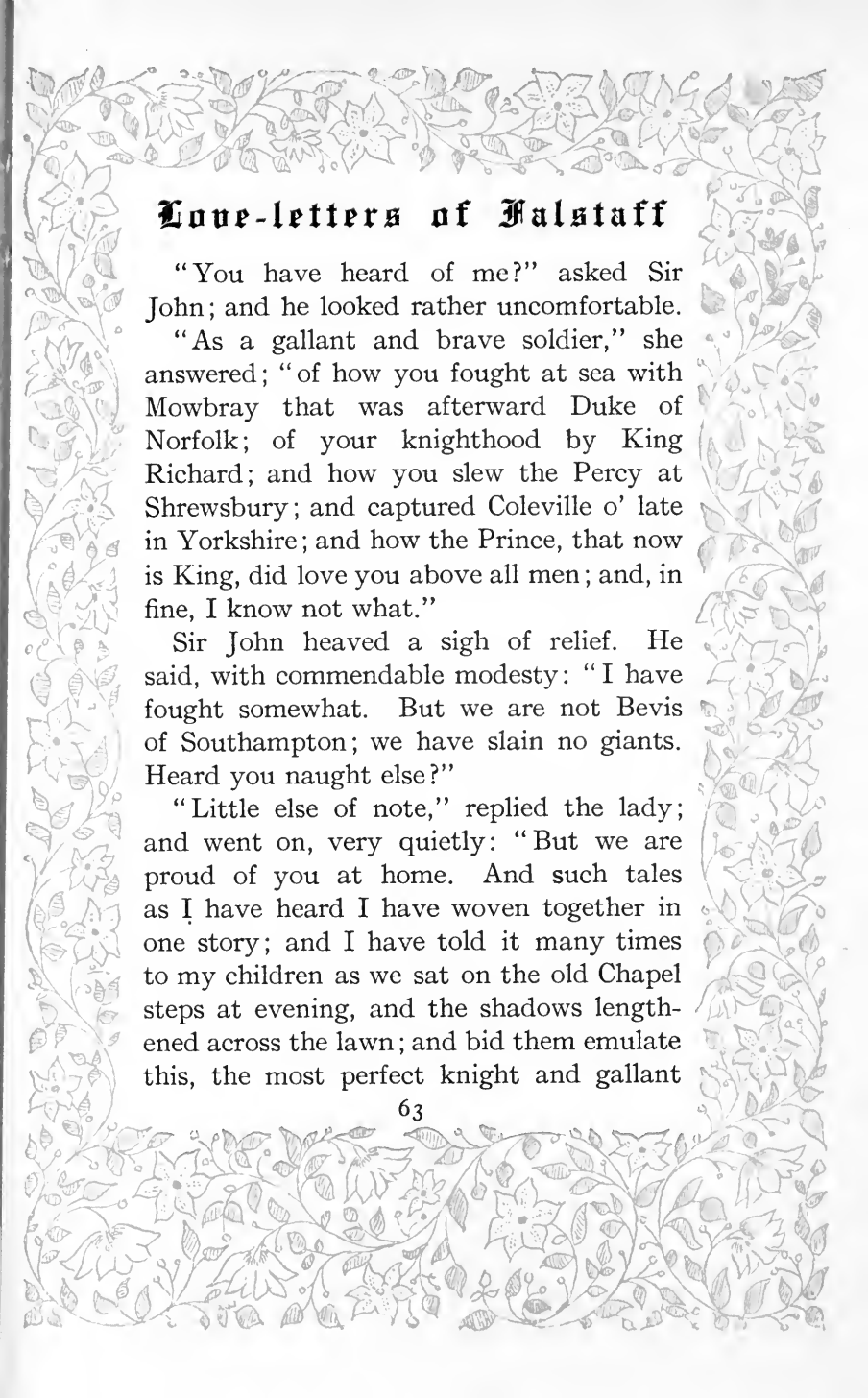
"Ah, John, you have not forgotten, I know," the lady said, looking up into his face, "and you will believe me that I am very heartily sorry for the pain I brought into your life?"

"My wounds heal easily," said Sir John.

"For though I might not accept your love, believe me—ah, believe me, John, I always knew the value of that love; 'tis an honor that any woman might be proud of."

"Dear lady," the knight suggested, with a slight grimace, "the world is not altogether of your opinion."

"I know not of the world," she said; "for we live very quietly. But we have heard of you ever and anon; I have your life quite letter-perfect for these forty years or more."

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is composed of several overlapping circular and rectangular patterns.

Love-letters of Halstaff

"You have heard of me?" asked Sir John; and he looked rather uncomfortable.

"As a gallant and brave soldier," she answered; "of how you fought at sea with Mowbray that was afterward Duke of Norfolk; of your knighthood by King Richard; and how you slew the Percy at Shrewsbury; and captured Coleville o' late in Yorkshire; and how the Prince, that now is King, did love you above all men; and, in fine, I know not what."

Sir John heaved a sigh of relief. He said, with commendable modesty: "I have fought somewhat. But we are not Bevis of Southampton; we have slain no giants. Heard you naught else?"

"Little else of note," replied the lady; and went on, very quietly: "But we are proud of you at home. And such tales as I have heard I have woven together in one story; and I have told it many times to my children as we sat on the old Chapel steps at evening, and the shadows lengthened across the lawn; and bid them emulate this, the most perfect knight and gallant



The Line of Love

gentleman that I have known. And they love you, I think, though but by repute."

Once more silence fell between them; and the fire grinned wickedly at the mimic fire reflected by the old chest, as though it knew of a most entertaining secret.

"Do you yet live at Winstead?" asked Sir John, half idly.

"Yes," she answered; "in the old house. It is little changed, but there are many changes about."

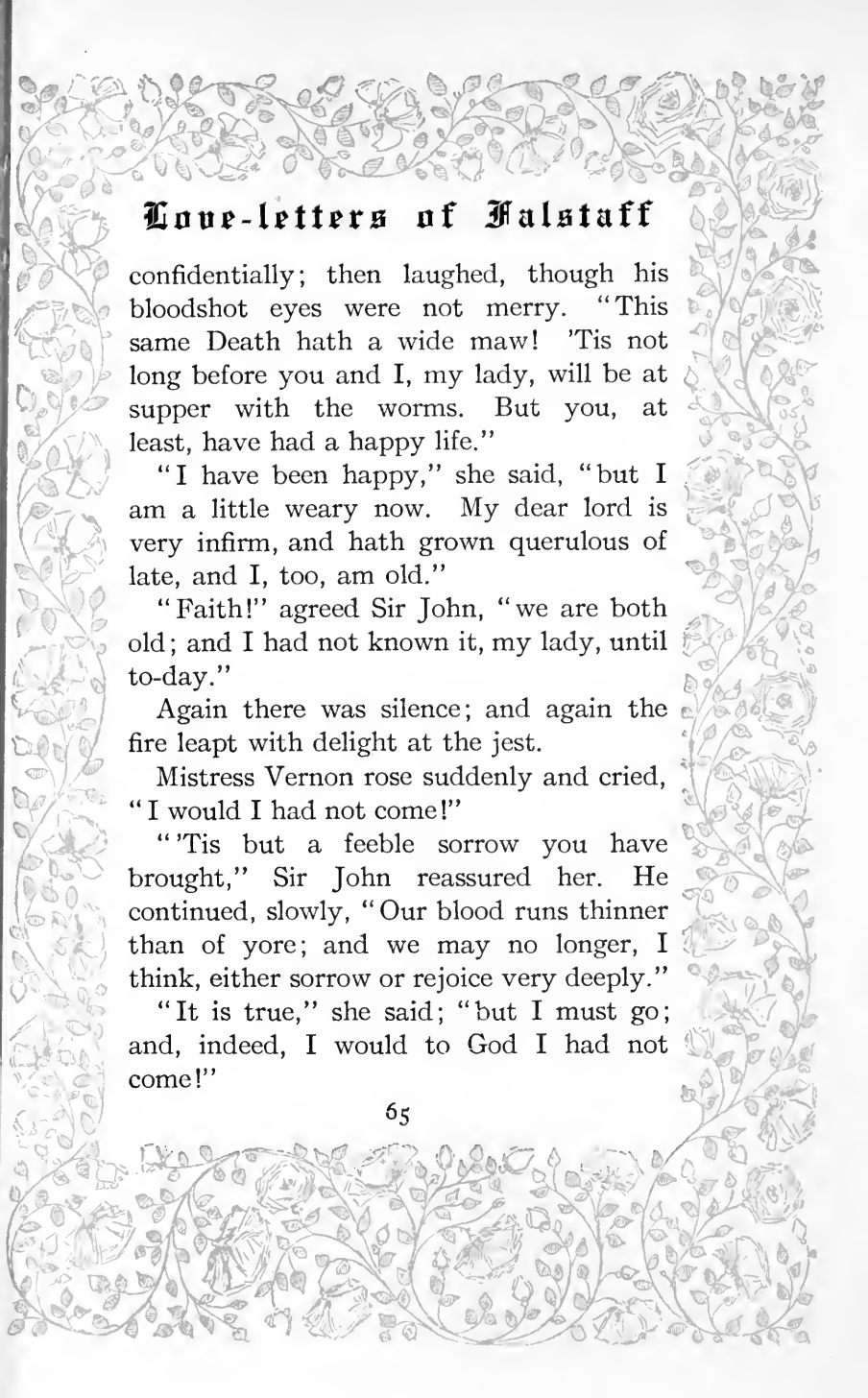
"Is Moll yet with you that did once carry our letters?" queried the knight.

"Married to Hodge, the tanner," the lady said; "and dead long since."

"And all our merry company?" Sir John demanded. "Marian? And Tom and little Osric? And Phyllis? And Adalais? 'Tis like a breath of country air to speak their names once more."

"All dead," she answered, in a hushed voice, "save Adalais, and she is very old; for Robert was slain in the French wars, and she hath never married."

"All dead," Sir John informed the fire,



Love-letters of Falstaff

confidentially; then laughed, though his bloodshot eyes were not merry. "This same Death hath a wide maw! 'Tis not long before you and I, my lady, will be at supper with the worms. But you, at least, have had a happy life."

"I have been happy," she said, "but I am a little weary now. My dear lord is very infirm, and hath grown querulous of late, and I, too, am old."

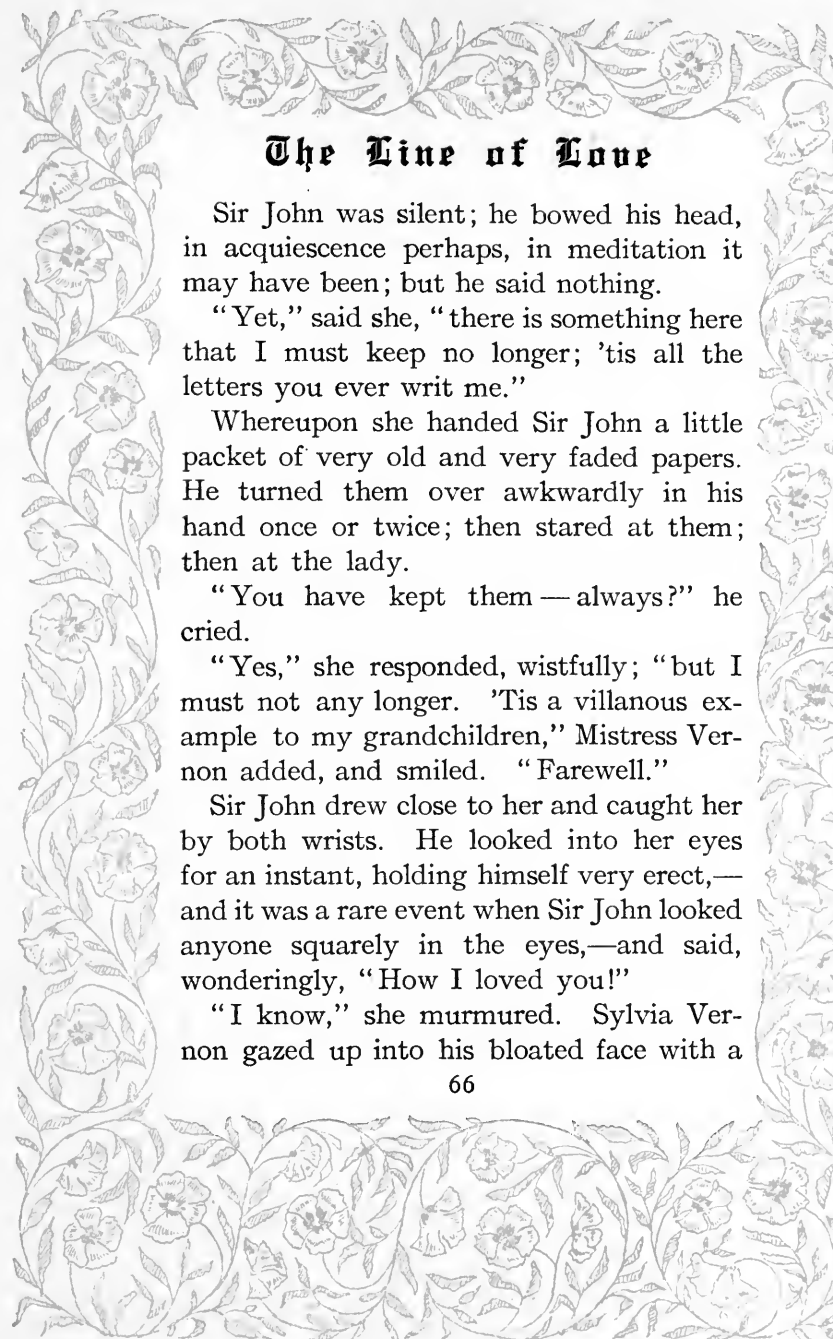
"Faith!" agreed Sir John, "we are both old; and I had not known it, my lady, until to-day."

Again there was silence; and again the fire leapt with delight at the jest.

Mistress Vernon rose suddenly and cried, "I would I had not come!"

"'Tis but a feeble sorrow you have brought," Sir John reassured her. He continued, slowly, "Our blood runs thinner than of yore; and we may no longer, I think, either sorrow or rejoice very deeply."

"It is true," she said; "but I must go; and, indeed, I would to God I had not come!"



The Line of Love

Sir John was silent; he bowed his head, in acquiescence perhaps, in meditation it may have been; but he said nothing.

"Yet," said she, "there is something here that I must keep no longer; 'tis all the letters you ever writ me."

Whereupon she handed Sir John a little packet of very old and very faded papers. He turned them over awkwardly in his hand once or twice; then stared at them; then at the lady.

"You have kept them — always?" he cried.

"Yes," she responded, wistfully; "but I must not any longer. 'Tis a villanous example to my grandchildren," Mistress Vernon added, and smiled. "Farewell."

Sir John drew close to her and caught her by both wrists. He looked into her eyes for an instant, holding himself very erect, — and it was a rare event when Sir John looked anyone squarely in the eyes, — and said, wonderingly, "How I loved you!"

"I know," she murmured. Sylvia Vernon gazed up into his bloated face with a

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

Love-letters of Falstaff

proud tenderness that was half-regretful. A catch came into her gentle voice. "And I thank you for your gift, my lover, — O brave true lover, whose love I was ne'er ashamed to own! Farewell, my dear; yet a little while, and I go to seek the boy and girl we wot of."

"I shall not be long, madam," said Sir John. "Speak a kind word for me in Heaven; for," he added, slowly, "I shall have sore need of it."

She had reached the door by this. "You are not sorry that I came?" she pleaded.

Sir John answered, very sadly: "There are many wrinkles now in your dear face, my lady; the great eyes are a little dimmed, and the sweet laughter is a little cracked; but I am not sorry to have seen you thus. For I have loved no woman truly save you alone; and I am not sorry. Farewell." And for a moment he bowed his unreverend gray head over her shrivelled fingers.



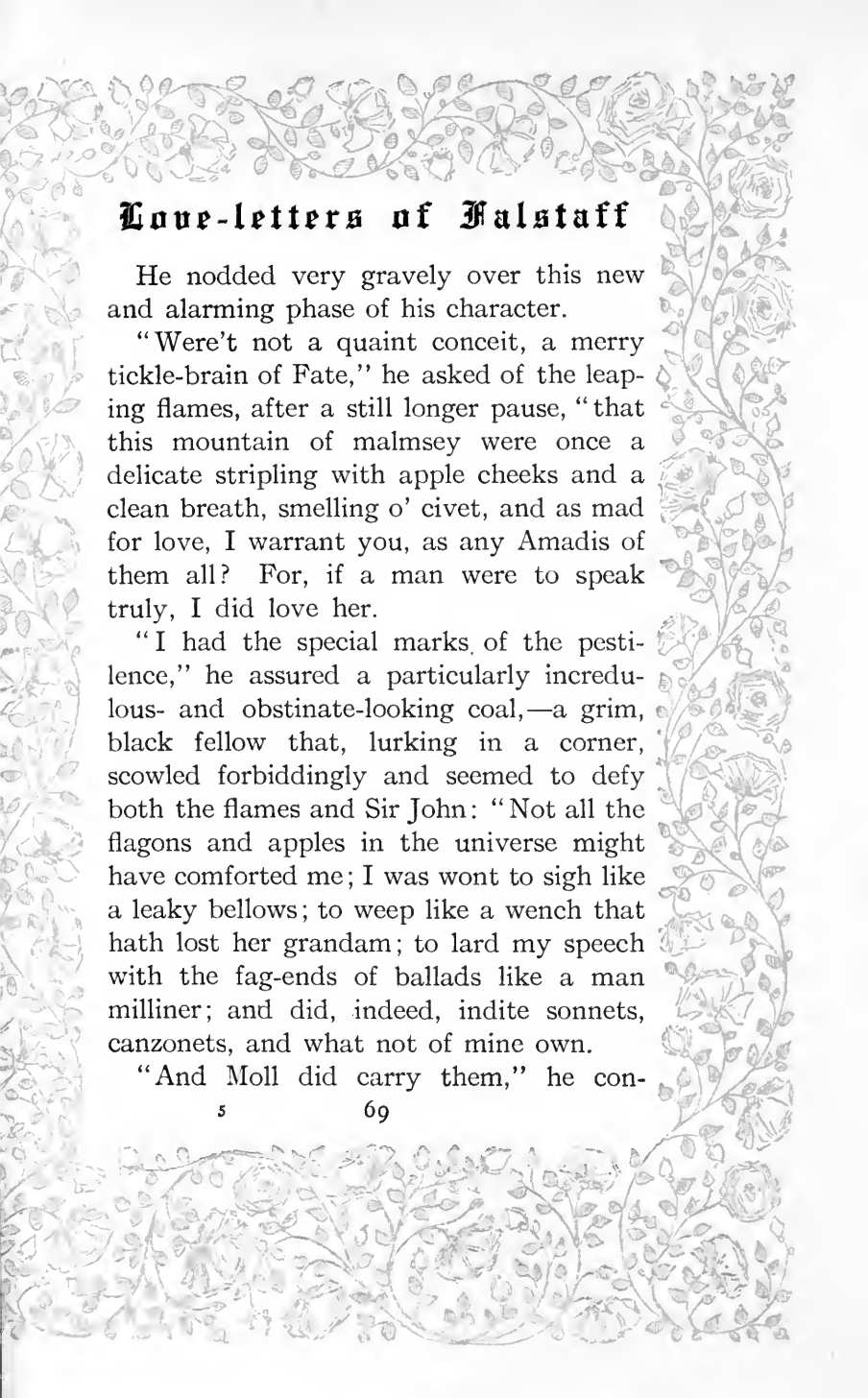
III

“This Pitch, as Ancient Writers
do Report, doth Defile”

“**L**ORD, Lord, how subject we old men are to the vice of lying!” chuckled Sir John, and threw himself back in his chair and mumbled over the jest.

“Yet ’twas not all a lie,” he confided, in some perplexity, to the fire; “but what a coil over a youthful green-sickness ’twixt a lad and a wench more than forty years syne!

“I might have had money of her for the asking,” he presently went on; “yet I am glad I did not; which is a parlous sign and smacks of dotage.”



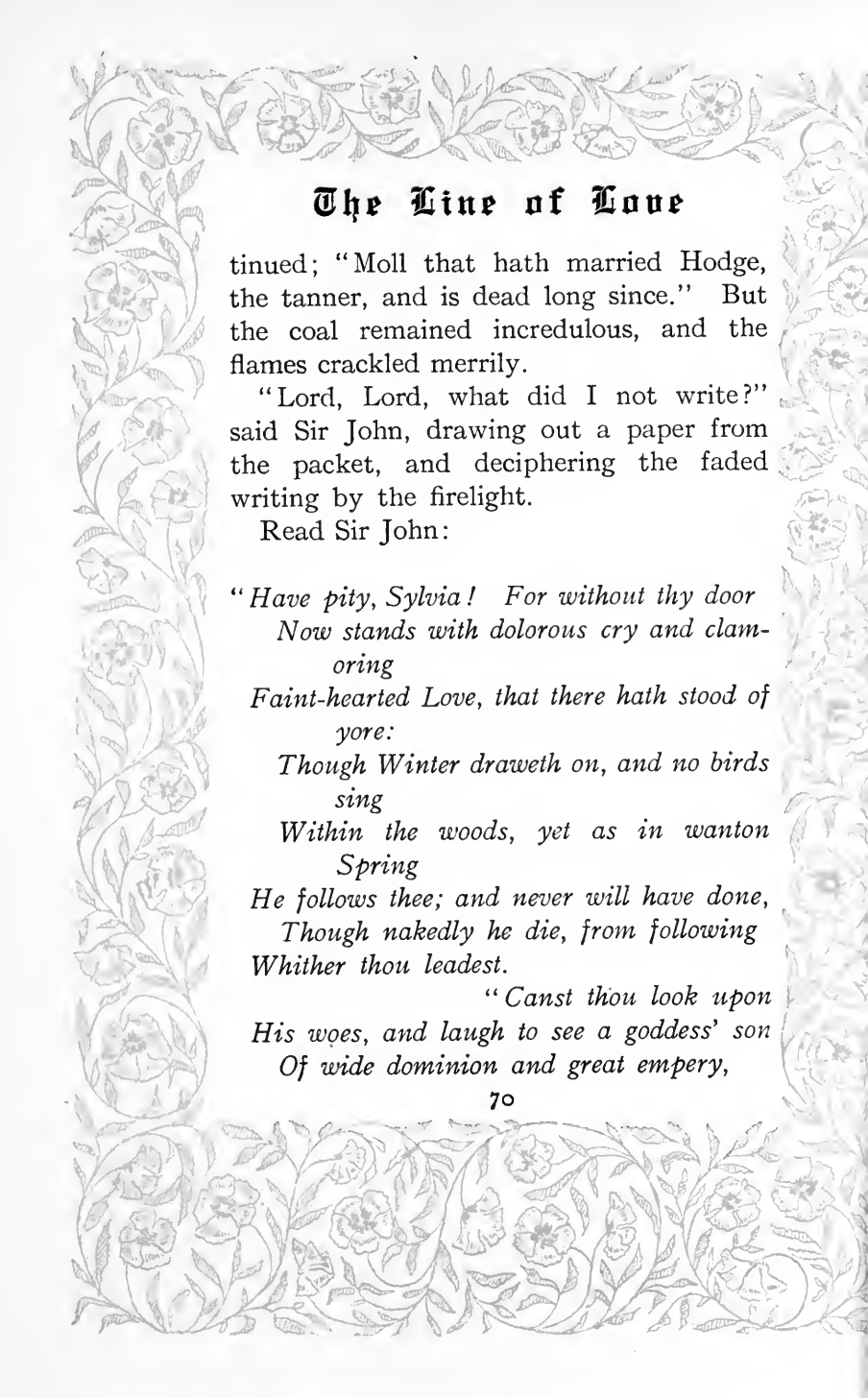
Love-letters of Halstaff

He nodded very gravely over this new and alarming phase of his character.

“Were’t not a quaint conceit, a merry tickle-brain of Fate,” he asked of the leaping flames, after a still longer pause, “that this mountain of malmsey were once a delicate stripling with apple cheeks and a clean breath, smelling o’ civet, and as mad for love, I warrant you, as any Amadis of them all? For, if a man were to speak truly, I did love her.

“I had the special marks of the pestilence,” he assured a particularly incredulous- and obstinate-looking coal,—a grim, black fellow that, lurking in a corner, scowled forbiddingly and seemed to defy both the flames and Sir John: “Not all the flagons and apples in the universe might have comforted me; I was wont to sigh like a leaky bellows; to weep like a wench that hath lost her grandam; to lard my speech with the fag-ends of ballads like a man milliner; and did, indeed, indite sonnets, canzonets, and what not of mine own.

“And Moll did carry them,” he con-



The Line of Love

tinued; "Moll that hath married Hodge, the tanner, and is dead long since." But the coal remained incredulous, and the flames crackled merrily.

"Lord, Lord, what did I not write?" said Sir John, drawing out a paper from the packet, and deciphering the faded writing by the firelight.

Read Sir John:

*"Have pity, Sylvia! For without thy door
Now stands with dolorous cry and clam-
oring*

*Faint-hearted Love, that there hath stood of
yore:*

*Though Winter draweth on, and no birds
sing*

*Within the woods, yet as in wanton
Spring*

*He follows thee; and never will have done,
Though nakedly he die, from following
Whither thou ledest.*

*"Canst thou look upon
His woes, and laugh to see a goddess' son
Of wide dominion and great empery,*

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text.

Love-letters of Falstaff

*More strong than Jove, more wise than
Solomon,*

*Too weak to combat thy severity?
Have pity, Sylvia! And let Love be one
Among the folk that bear thee company.*

“Is’t not the very puling speech of your true lover?” he chuckled; and the flames spluttered assent. “*Among the folk that bear thee company,*” he repeated, and afterward looked about him with a smack of gravity. “Faith, Adam Cupid hath forsworn my fellowship long since; he hath no score chalked up against him at the Boar’s Head Tavern; or, if he have, I doubt not a beggar might discharge it.

“And she hath commended me to her children as a very gallant gentleman and a true knight,” he went on, reflectively. He cast his eyes toward the ceiling, and grinned at invisible deities. “Jove that sees all hath a goodly commodity of mirth; I doubt not his sides ache at times, as they had conceived another wine-god.

“Yet, by my honor,” he insisted to the

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including large five-petaled flowers and smaller buds, connected by a vine-like structure with leaves.

The Line of Love

fire; then added, apologetically,—“if I had any, which, to speak plain, I have not,—I am glad; it is a brave jest; and I did love her once.”

He picked out another paper and read:

“My dear lady,—That I am not with thee to-night is, indeed, no fault of mine; for Sir Thomas Mowbray hath need of me, he saith. Yet the service that I have rendered him thus far is but to cool my heels in his antechamber and dream of two great eyes and of that net of golden hair wherewith Lord Love hath lately snared my poor heart. For it comforts me—’ And so on, and so on, the pen trailing most juvenal sugar, like a fly newly crept out of the honey-pot. And ending with a posy, filched, I warrant you, from some ring.

“I remember when I did write her this,” he explained to the fire. “Lord, Lord, an the fire of grace were not quite out of me, now should I be moved. For I did write it; and ’twas sent with a sonnet, all of Hell, and Heaven, and your pagan gods, and other tricks o’ speech. It should be somewhere.”



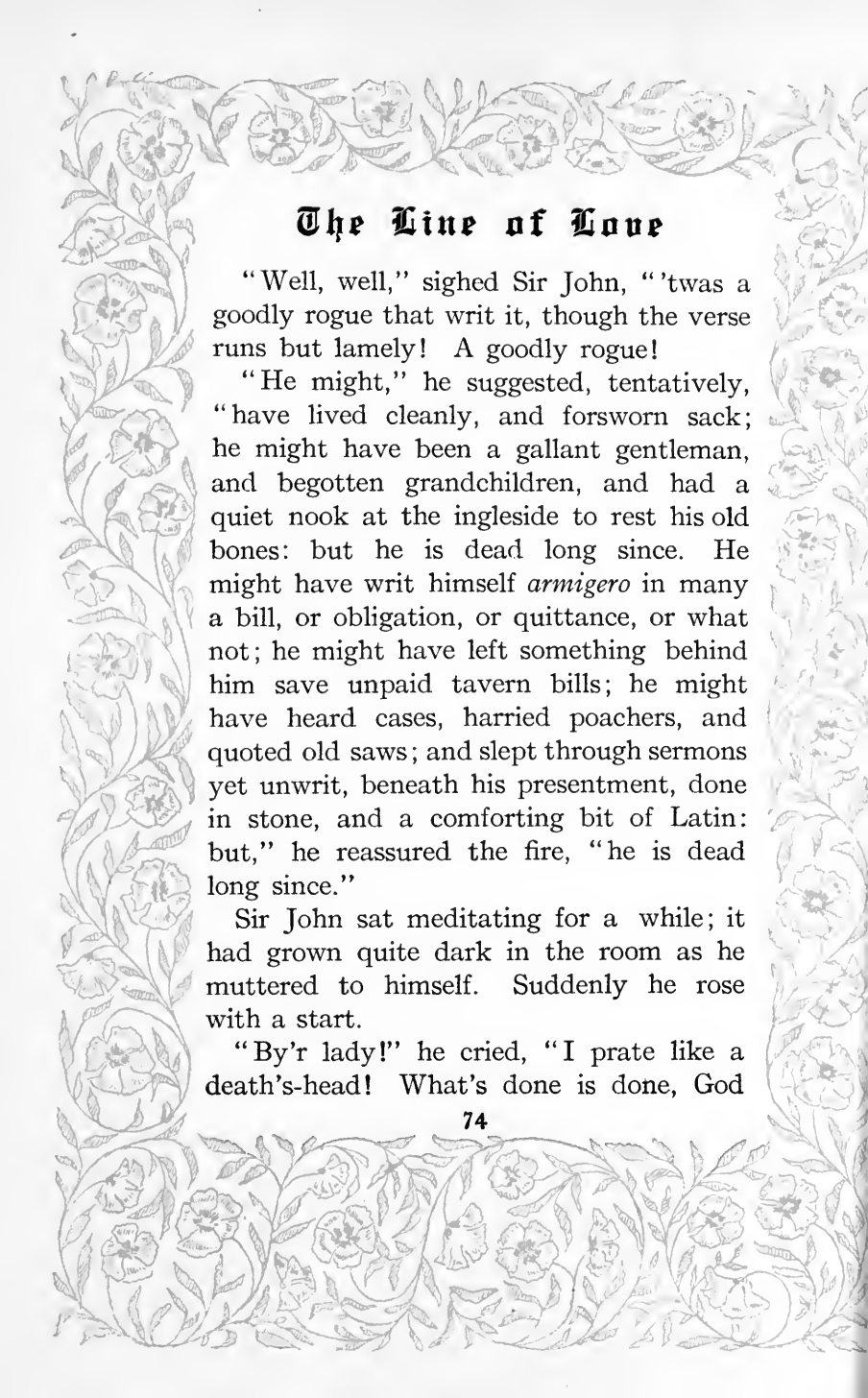
Love-letters of Halstaff

He fumbled with uncertain fingers among the papers. "Ah, here 'tis," he said at last, and again began to read aloud.

Read Sir John:

*"Cupid invaded Hell, and boldly drove
Before him all the hosts of Erebus
Till he had conquered; and grim Cerberus
Sang madrigals, the Furies rhymed of love,
Old Charon sighed, and sonnets rang above
The gloomy Styx, and even as Tantalus
Was Proserpine discrowned in Tartarus,
And Cupid regnant in the place thereof.*

*"Thus Love is monarch throughout Hell to-
day;
In Heaven we know his power was al-
ways great;
And Earth acclaimed Love's mastery
straightway
When Sylvia came to gladden Earth's
estate:
Thus Hell and Heaven and Earth his rule
obey,
And Sylvia's heart alone is obdurate.*

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are arranged in a repeating pattern, with some larger flowers and smaller buds interspersed. The leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is light-colored and blends into the background.

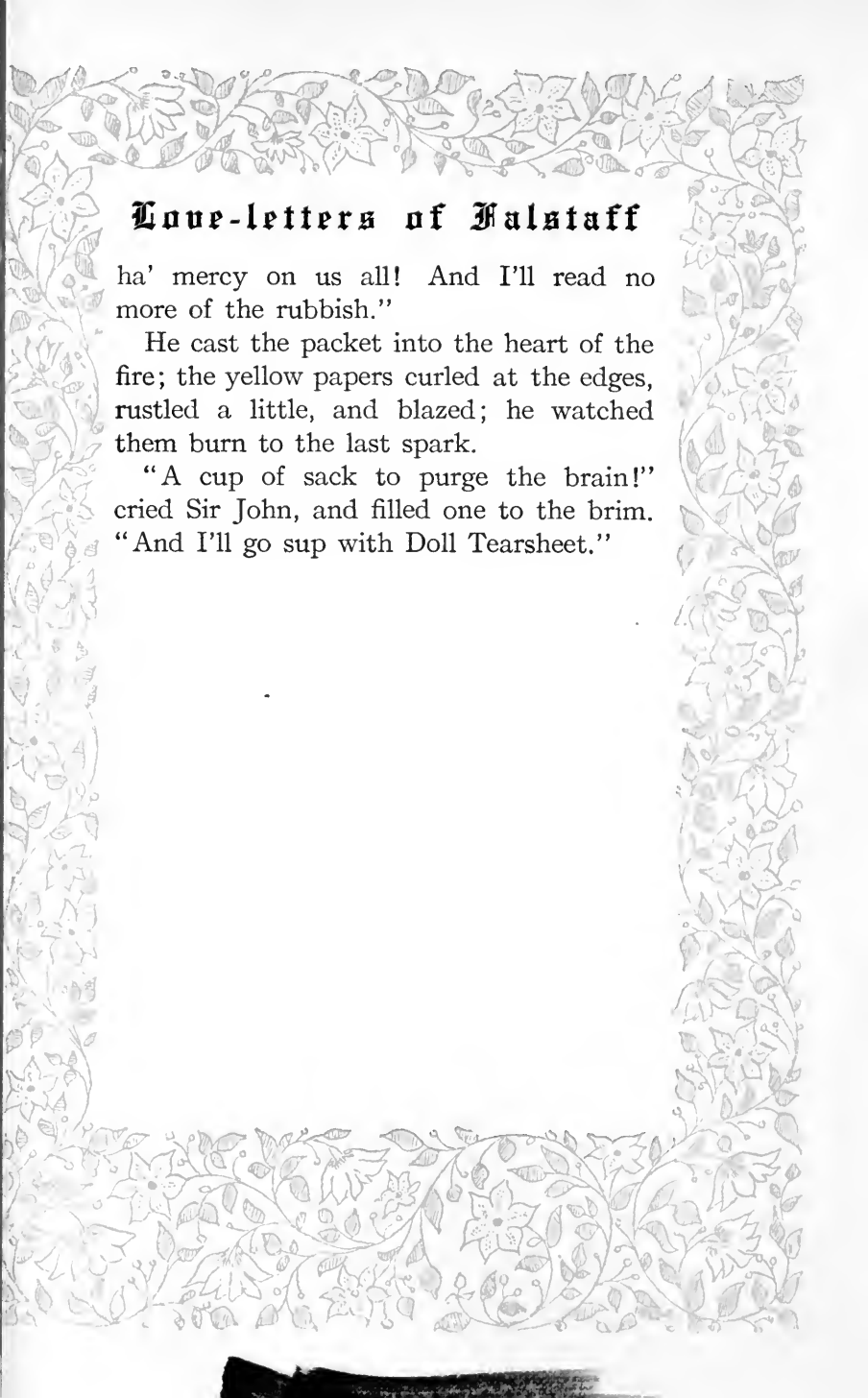
The Line of Love

"Well, well," sighed Sir John, "'twas a goodly rogue that writ it, though the verse runs but lamely! A goodly rogue!

"He might," he suggested, tentatively, "have lived cleanly, and forsworn sack; he might have been a gallant gentleman, and begotten grandchildren, and had a quiet nook at the ingleside to rest his old bones: but he is dead long since. He might have writ himself *armigero* in many a bill, or obligation, or quittance, or what not; he might have left something behind him save unpaid tavern bills; he might have heard cases, harried poachers, and quoted old saws; and slept through sermons yet unwrit, beneath his presentment, done in stone, and a comforting bit of Latin: but," he reassured the fire, "he is dead long since."

Sir John sat meditating for a while; it had grown quite dark in the room as he muttered to himself. Suddenly he rose with a start.

"By'r lady!" he cried, "I prate like a death's-head! What's done is done, God

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

Love-letters of Falstaff

ha' mercy on us all! And I'll read no more of the rubbish."

He cast the packet into the heart of the fire; the yellow papers curled at the edges, rustled a little, and blazed; he watched them burn to the last spark.

"A cup of sack to purge the brain!" cried Sir John, and filled one to the brim. "And I'll go sup with Doll Tearsheet."

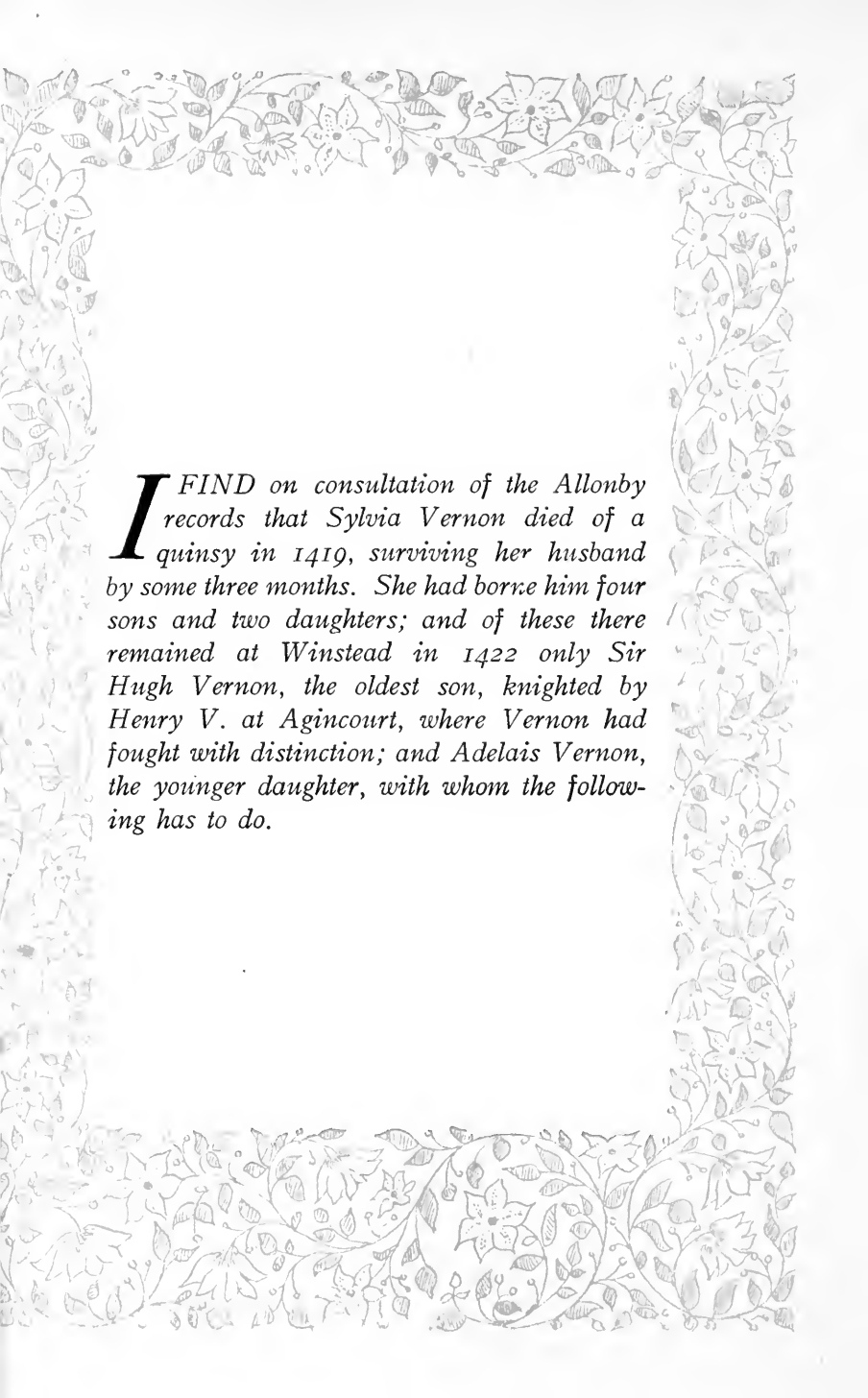




III

SEPTEMBER 29, 1422

*"Anoon her herte hath pitee of his wo,
And with that pitee, love com in also;
Thus is this quene in pleasaunce and in loye."*

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

FIND on consultation of the Allonby records that Sylvia Vernon died of a quinsy in 1419, surviving her husband by some three months. She had borne him four sons and two daughters; and of these there remained at Winstead in 1422 only Sir Hugh Vernon, the oldest son, knighted by Henry V. at Agincourt, where Vernon had fought with distinction; and Adelais Vernon, the younger daughter, with whom the following has to do.

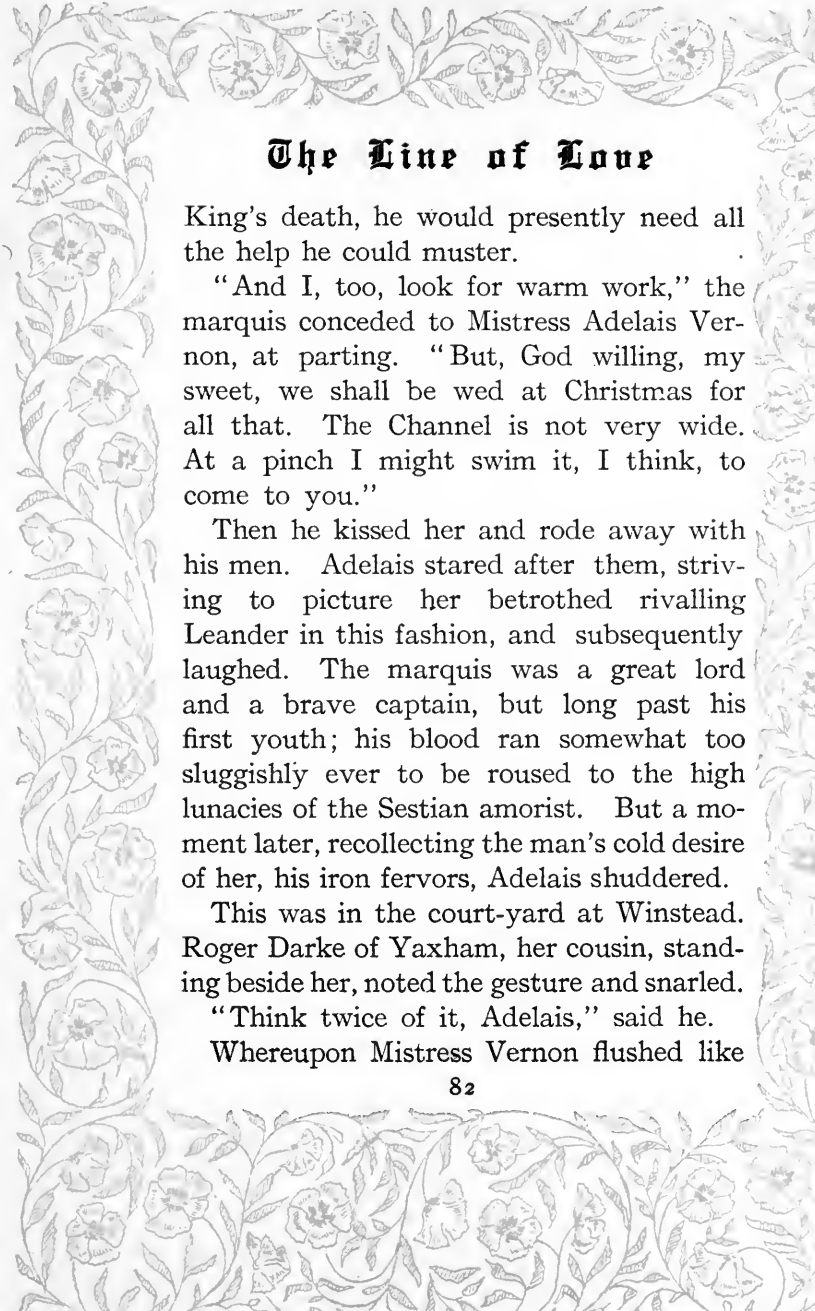


The Episode Called
"Sweet Adalais"

I

Gruntings at Awa

IT was on a clear September day that the Marquis of Falmouth set out for France. John of Bedford had summoned him post-haste when Henry V. was stricken at Senlis with what bid fair to prove a mortal distemper; for the marquis was Bedford's comrade-in-arms, veteran of Shrewsbury, Agincourt and other martial disputations, and the Duke-Regent suspected that, to hold France in case of the

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of repeating floral motifs, including roses and other blossoms, connected by leafy vines. The style is reminiscent of late 19th or early 20th-century book design.

The Line of Love

King's death, he would presently need all the help he could muster.

"And I, too, look for warm work," the marquis conceded to Mistress Adelais Vernon, at parting. "But, God willing, my sweet, we shall be wed at Christmas for all that. The Channel is not very wide. At a pinch I might swim it, I think, to come to you."

Then he kissed her and rode away with his men. Adelais stared after them, striving to picture her betrothed rivalling Leander in this fashion, and subsequently laughed. The marquis was a great lord and a brave captain, but long past his first youth; his blood ran somewhat too sluggishly ever to be roused to the high lunacies of the Sestian amorist. But a moment later, recollecting the man's cold desire of her, his iron fervors, Adelais shuddered.

This was in the court-yard at Winstead. Roger Darke of Yaxham, her cousin, standing beside her, noted the gesture and snarled.

"Think twice of it, Adelais," said he.

Whereupon Mistress Vernon flushed like

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is composed of a repeating pattern of these elements, creating a delicate frame around the central text.

“Sweet Adalais”

a peony. “I honor him,” she said, with some irrelevance, “and he loves me.”

“Love, love!” Roger scoffed. “O you piece of ice! You gray-stone saint! What do you know of love?” On a sudden Master Darke caught both her hands in his. “Now, by Almighty God, our Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ!” he said, between his teeth, his eyes flaming; “I, Roger Darke, have offered you undefiled love and you have mocked at it. Ha, Tears of Mary! how I love you! And you mean to marry this man for his title! Do you not believe that I love you, Adalais?” he whimpered.

Gently she disengaged herself. This was of a pattern with Roger’s behavior any time during the past two years. “I suppose you do,” Adalais conceded, with the tiniest possible shrug. “Perhaps that is why I find you so insufferable.”

Afterward Mistress Vernon turned on her heel and left Master Darke. In his fluent invocation of Mahound and Terma-gaunt and other overseers of the damned he presently touched upon eloquence.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of a repeating pattern of five-petaled flowers on a vine with small leaves, framing the central text.

II

Came One with Moly

ADELAIS came into the walled garden of Winstead, aflame now with Autumnal scarlet and gold. There she seated herself upon a semi-circular marble-bench, and laughed for no apparent reason, and contentedly waited what Dame Luck might send.

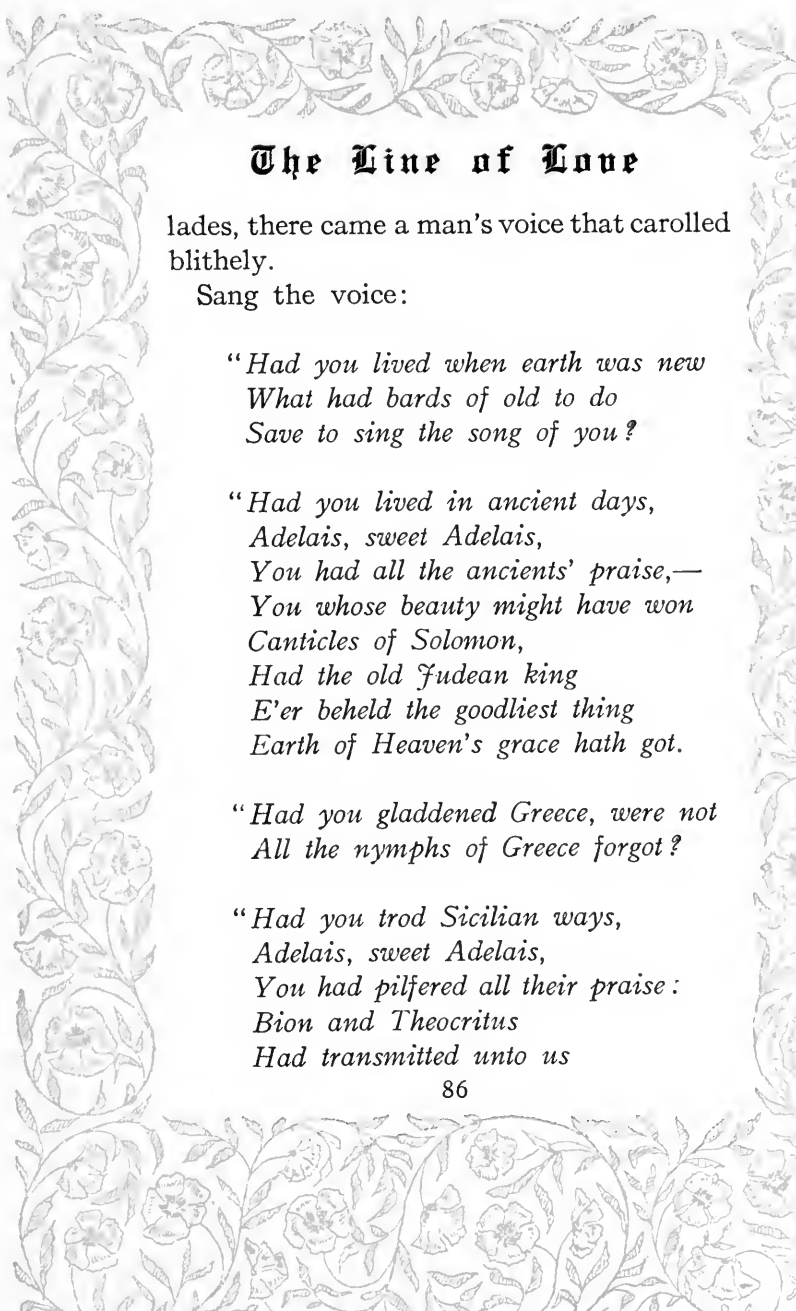
She was a comely maid, past argument or (as her lovers habitually complained) any adequate description. Circe, Colchian Medea, Viviane du Lac, were their favorite analogues; and what old romancers had fabled concerning these ladies they took to be the shadow of which Adelais Vernon was the substance. At times they might have supported this contention with a certain



“Sweet Adalais”

speciousness. As to-day, for example, when against the garden's hurly-burly of color, the prodigal blazes of scarlet and saffron and wine-yellow, her green gown glowed like an emerald, and her eyes, too, were emeralds, vivid, inscrutable, of a clear verdancy that was quite untinged with either blue or gray. Very black lashes shaded them. The long oval of her face, (you might have objected), was of an absolute pallor, rarely quickening to a flush; but her petulant lips burned crimson, and her hair mimicked the dwindling radiance of the Autumn sunlight and shamed it. All in all, the beauty of Adalais Vernon was, beyond any questioning, spiced with a sorcerous tang; say, the beauty of a young witch shrewd at love-potions, but ignorant of their flavor; yet before this it had stirred men's hearts to madness, and the county boasted it.

Presently Adalais lifted her small imperious head, and then again she smiled, for out of the depths of the garden, with an embellishment of divers trills and rou-

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including roses and smaller blossoms, connected by leafy vines. The style is reminiscent of late 19th or early 20th-century book design.

The Line of Love

lades, there came a man's voice that carolled
blithely.

Sang the voice:

*“Had you lived when earth was new
What had bards of old to do
Save to sing the song of you ?*

*“Had you lived in ancient days,
Adelais, sweet Adelais,
You had all the ancients' praise,—
You whose beauty might have won
Canticles of Solomon,
Had the old Judean king
E'er beheld the goodliest thing
Earth of Heaven's grace hath got.*

*“Had you gladdened Greece, were not
All the nymphs of Greece forgot ?*

*“Had you trod Sicilian ways,
Adelais, sweet Adelais,
You had pilfered all their praise :
Bion and Theocritus
Had transmitted unto us*

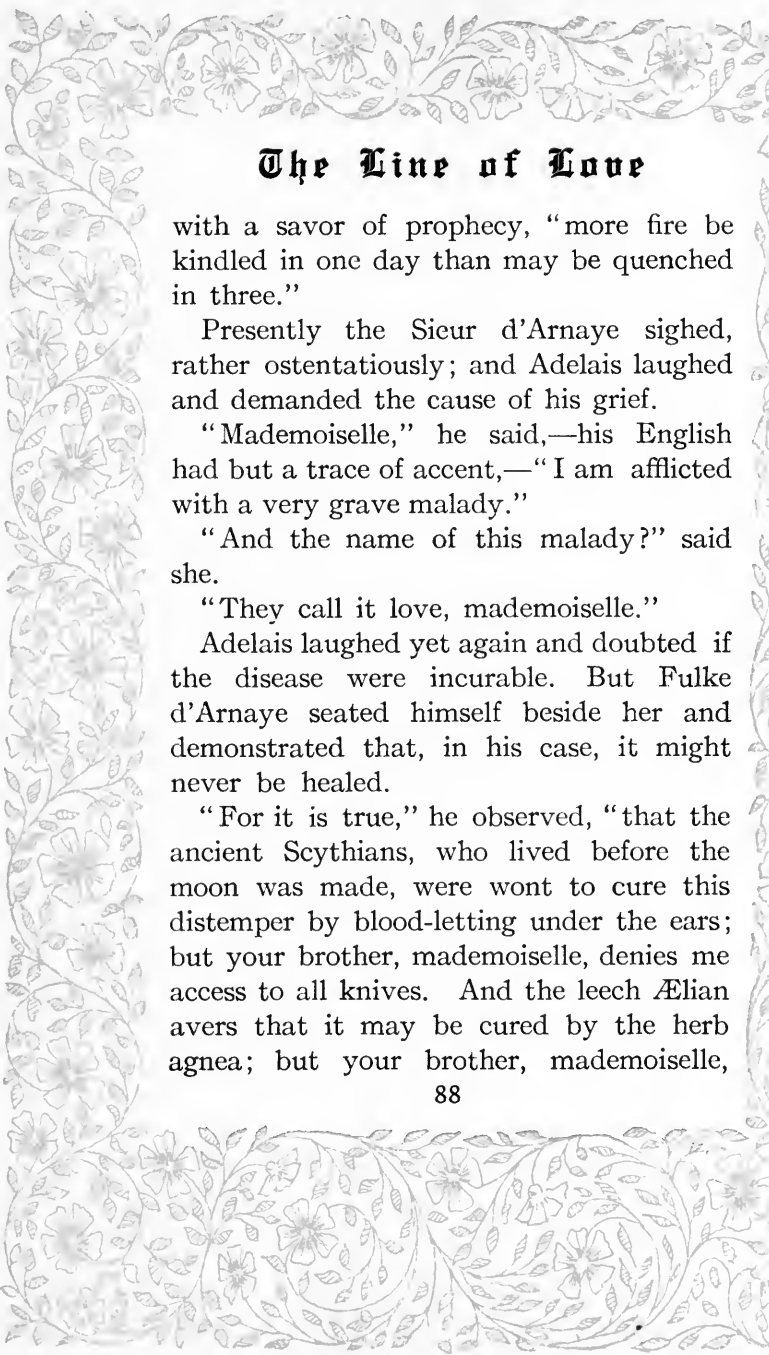
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“Sweet Adalais”

*Honeyed sounds and songs to tell
Of your beauty's miracle,
Delicate, desirable,
And their singing skill were bent
You alone to praise, content,
While the world slipped by, to gaze
On the grace of you and praise
Sweet Adalais.”*

Here the song ended, and a man, wheeling about the hedge, paused and regarded her with adoring eyes. Adalais looked up at him, incredibly surprised by his coming.

This was the young Sieur d'Arnaye, Hugh Vernon's prisoner, taken at Agincourt seven years earlier and held since then, by the King's command, without ransom; for it was Henry's policy to release none of the important French prisoners. Even on his death-bed he found time to admonish his brother, John of Bedford, that four of these—Charles d'Orléans and Jehan de Bourbon and Arthur de Rougemont and Fulke d'Arnaye—should never be set at liberty. “Lest,” as he said,

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The Line of Love

with a savor of prophecy, "more fire be kindled in one day than may be quenched in three."

Presently the Sieur d'Arnaye sighed, rather ostentatiously; and Adalais laughed and demanded the cause of his grief.

"Mademoiselle," he said,—his English had but a trace of accent,—“I am afflicted with a very grave malady.”

“And the name of this malady?” said she.

“They call it love, mademoiselle.”

Adalais laughed yet again and doubted if the disease were incurable. But Fulke d'Arnaye seated himself beside her and demonstrated that, in his case, it might never be healed.

“For it is true,” he observed, “that the ancient Scythians, who lived before the moon was made, were wont to cure this distemper by blood-letting under the ears; but your brother, mademoiselle, denies me access to all knives. And the leech Ælian avers that it may be cured by the herb agnea; but your brother, mademoiselle,

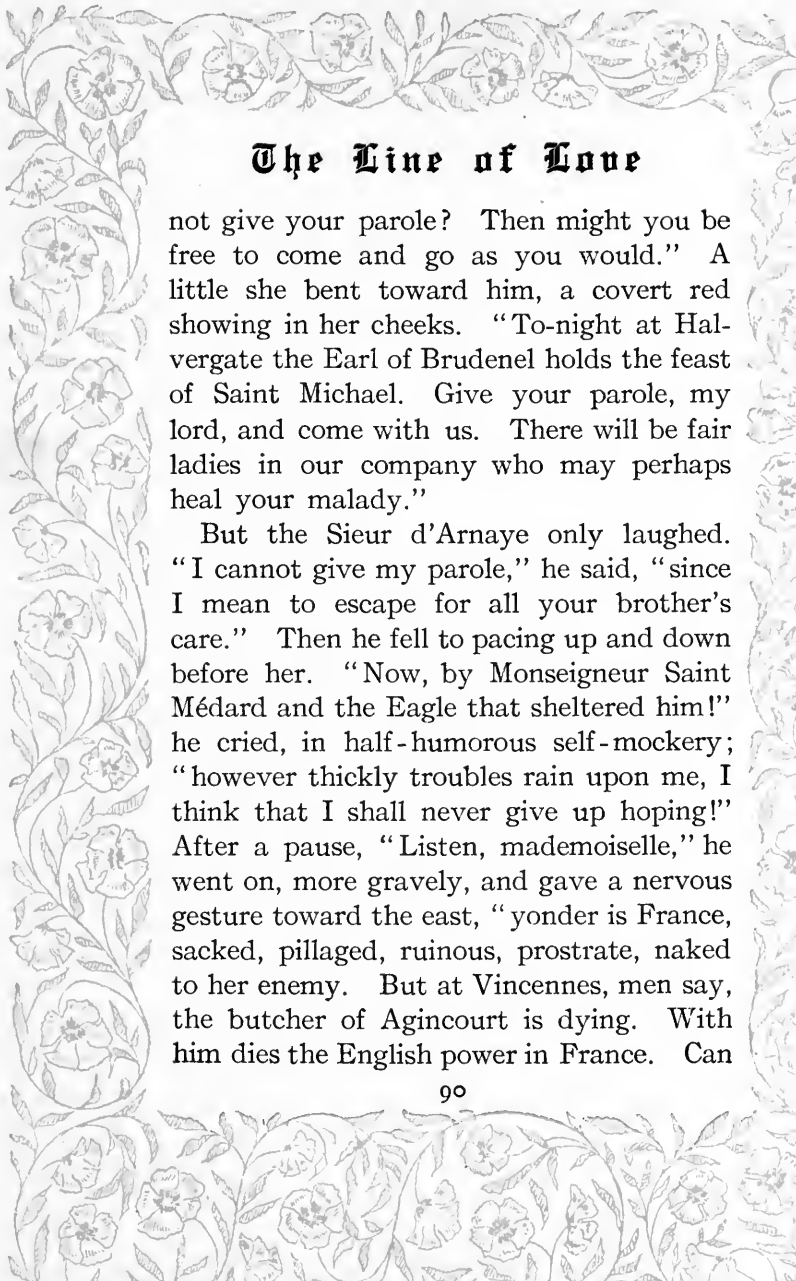


“Sweet Adalais”

will not permit that I go into the fields in search of this herb. And in Greece—hé, mademoiselle. I might easily be healed of my malady in Greece! For there is the rock, Leucata Petra, from which a lover may leap and be cured; and the well of the Cyziceni, from which a lover may drink and be cured; and the river Selemnus, in which a lover may bathe and be cured: and your brother will not permit that I go to Greece. You have a very cruel brother, mademoiselle; seven long years, no less, he has penned me here like a starling in a cage.” And Fulke d’Arnaye shook his head at her reproachfully.

Afterward he laughed. Always this Frenchman found something at which to laugh; Adalais could not remember in all the seven years a time when she had seen him downcast. But now as his lips jested of his imprisonment, his eyes stared at her mirthlessly, like a dog at his master, and her gaze fell before the candor of the passion she saw in them.

“My lord,” said Adalais, “why will you

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The Line of Love

not give your parole? Then might you be free to come and go as you would." A little she bent toward him, a covert red showing in her cheeks. "To-night at Halvergate the Earl of Brudenel holds the feast of Saint Michael. Give your parole, my lord, and come with us. There will be fair ladies in our company who may perhaps heal your malady."

But the Sieur d'Arnaye only laughed. "I cannot give my parole," he said, "since I mean to escape for all your brother's care." Then he fell to pacing up and down before her. "Now, by Monseigneur Saint Médard and the Eagle that sheltered him!" he cried, in half-humorous self-mockery; "however thickly troubles rain upon me, I think that I shall never give up hoping!" After a pause, "Listen, mademoiselle," he went on, more gravely, and gave a nervous gesture toward the east, "yonder is France, sacked, pillaged, ruinous, prostrate, naked to her enemy. But at Vincennes, men say, the butcher of Agincourt is dying. With him dies the English power in France. Can

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“Sweet Adalais”

his son hold that dear realm, think you? Are those tiny hands with which he may not yet feed himself capable to wield a sceptre? Can he who is yet beholden to nurses for milk distribute sustenance to the law and justice of a nation? Hé, I think not, mademoiselle! France will have need of me shortly. Therefore, I cannot give my parole.”

“Then must my brother still lose his sleep, lord, for always your safe-keeping is in his mind. Only to-day he set out for the coast at cock-crow to examine those Frenchmen who landed yesterday.”

At this he wheeled about. “Frenchmen!”

“Only Norman fishermen, lord, whom the storm drove to seek shelter in England. But he feared they had come to rescue you.”

Fulke d’Arnaye shrugged his shoulders. “That was my thought, too,” he said, with a laugh. “Always I dream of escape, mademoiselle. Have a care of me, sweet enemy! I shall escape yet, it may be.”

“But I will not have you escape,” said Adalais. She tossed her glittering little head. “Winstead would not be Winstead

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The Line of Love

without you. Why, I was but a child, my lord, when you came. Have you forgotten, then, the lank, awkward child who used to stare at you so gravely?"

"Mademoiselle," he returned, and now his voice trembled and still the hunger in his eyes grew more great, "I think that in all these years I have forgotten nothing—not even the most trivial happening, mademoiselle,—wherein you had a part. You were a very beautiful child. Look you, I remember as if it were yesterday that you never wept when your good lady mother—whose soul may Christ have in his keeping!—was forced to punish you for some little misdeed. No, you never wept; but your eyes would grow wistful, and you would come to me here in the garden, and sit with me for a long time in silence. 'Fulke,' you would say, quite suddenly, 'I love you better than my mother.' And I told you that it was wrong to make such observations, did I not, mademoiselle? My faith, yes! but I may confess now that I liked it," Fulke d'Arnaye ended, with a faint chuckle.

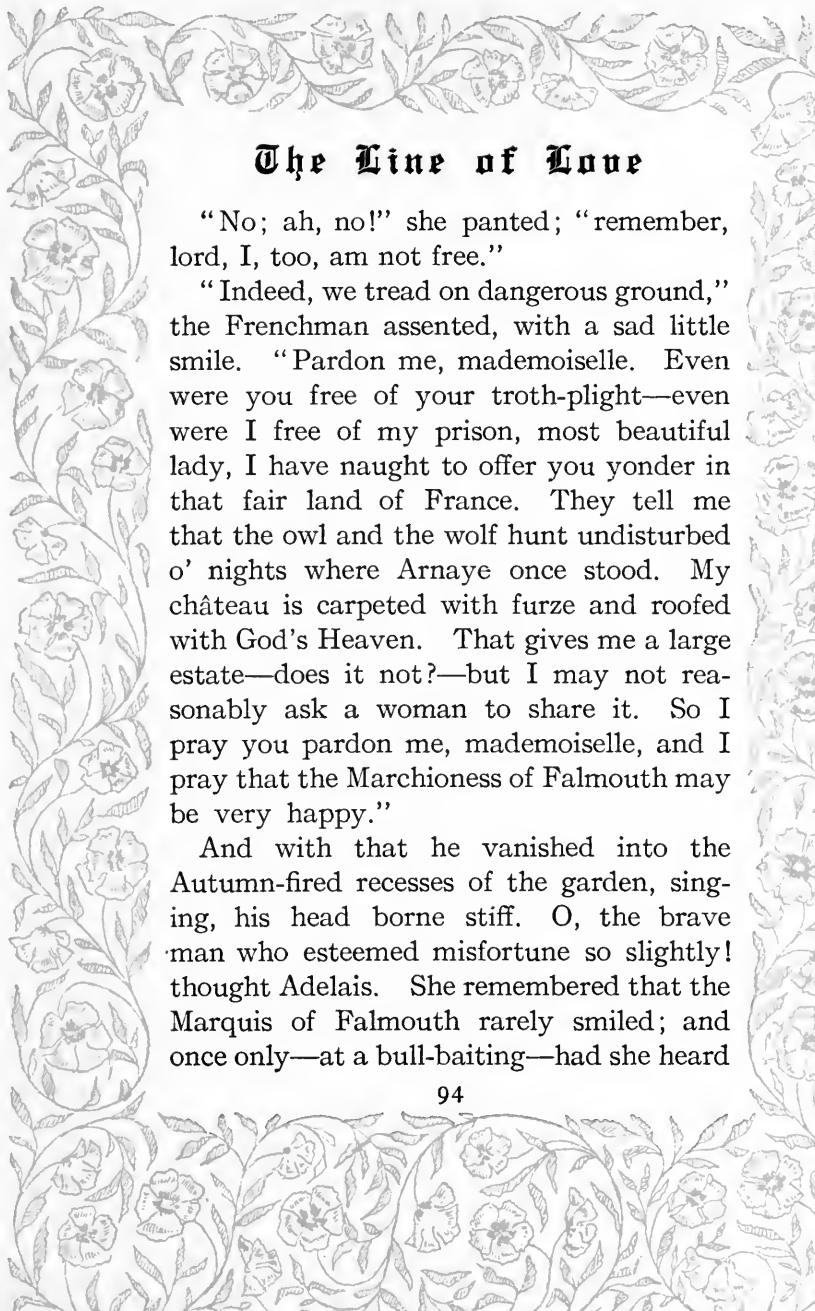


“Sweet Adalais”

Adalais sat motionless; but she trembled a little. Certainly it was strange, she thought, how the sound of this man's voice had power to move her.

“And now the child is a woman,—a woman who will presently be Marchioness of Falmouth. Look you, when I get free of my prison—and I shall get free, never fear, mademoiselle,—I shall often think of that great lady in France yonder. For only God can curb a man's dreams, and God is compassionate. So I hope to dream nightly of a gracious lady whose hair is gold and whose eyes are colored like the Summer sea and whose voice is clear and low and very wonderfully sweet. Nightly, I think, the vision of that dear enemy will hearten me to fight for France by day. In effect, mademoiselle, your traitor beauty will yet aid me to destroy your country.” The Sieur d'Arnay laughed, somewhat cheerlessly, as he lifted her hand to his lips.

Certainly it was strange, she thought, how his least touch was an alarm to her pulses. Adalais drew away from him, half in fear.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are arranged in a repeating pattern, with some larger flowers and smaller buds interspersed among the leaves. The border is symmetrical and frames the central text.

The Line of Love

“No; ah, no!” she panted; “remember, lord, I, too, am not free.”

“Indeed, we tread on dangerous ground,” the Frenchman assented, with a sad little smile. “Pardon me, mademoiselle. Even were you free of your troth-pledge—even were I free of my prison, most beautiful lady, I have naught to offer you yonder in that fair land of France. They tell me that the owl and the wolf hunt undisturbed o’ nights where Arnaye once stood. My château is carpeted with furze and roofed with God’s Heaven. That gives me a large estate—does it not?—but I may not reasonably ask a woman to share it. So I pray you pardon me, mademoiselle, and I pray that the Marchioness of Falmouth may be very happy.”

And with that he vanished into the Autumn-fired recesses of the garden, singing, his head borne stiff. O, the brave man who esteemed misfortune so slightly! thought Adalais. She remembered that the Marquis of Falmouth rarely smiled; and once only—at a bull-baiting—had she heard

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and various leaf shapes, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

“Sweet Adalais”

him laugh. It needed bloodshed, then, to amuse him. Adalais shuddered.

But through the scarlet coppices of the garden, growing fainter and yet more faint, rang the singing of Fulke d'Arname.

Sang the Frenchman:

*“Had you lived in Roman times
No Catullus in his rhymes
Had lamented Lesbia's sparrow:
He had praised your forehead, narrow
As the newly-crescent moon,
White as apple-trees in June;
He had made some amorous tune
Of the laughing light Eros
Snared as Psyche-ward he goes
By your beauty,—by your slim,
White, perfect beauty.”*

*“After him
Horace, finding in your eyes
Horace throned in Paradise,
Would have made you melodies
Fittingly to hymn your praise,
Sweet Adalais.”*

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and scrolling vines with leaves, creating a frame around the central text.

III

Roger is Explicit

INTO the midst of the Michaelmas festivities at Halvergate that night, there burst a mud-splattered fellow in search of Sir Hugh Vernon. Roger Darke brought him to the knight. He came, he said, from Simeon de Beck, the master of Castle Rising, with tidings that a strange boat, French-rigged, was hovering about the north coast. Let Sir Hugh have a care of his prisoner.

Vernon swore roundly. "I must look into this," he said. "But what shall I do with Adalais?"

"Will you trust her to me?" Roger asked. "If so, cousin, I will very gladly be her



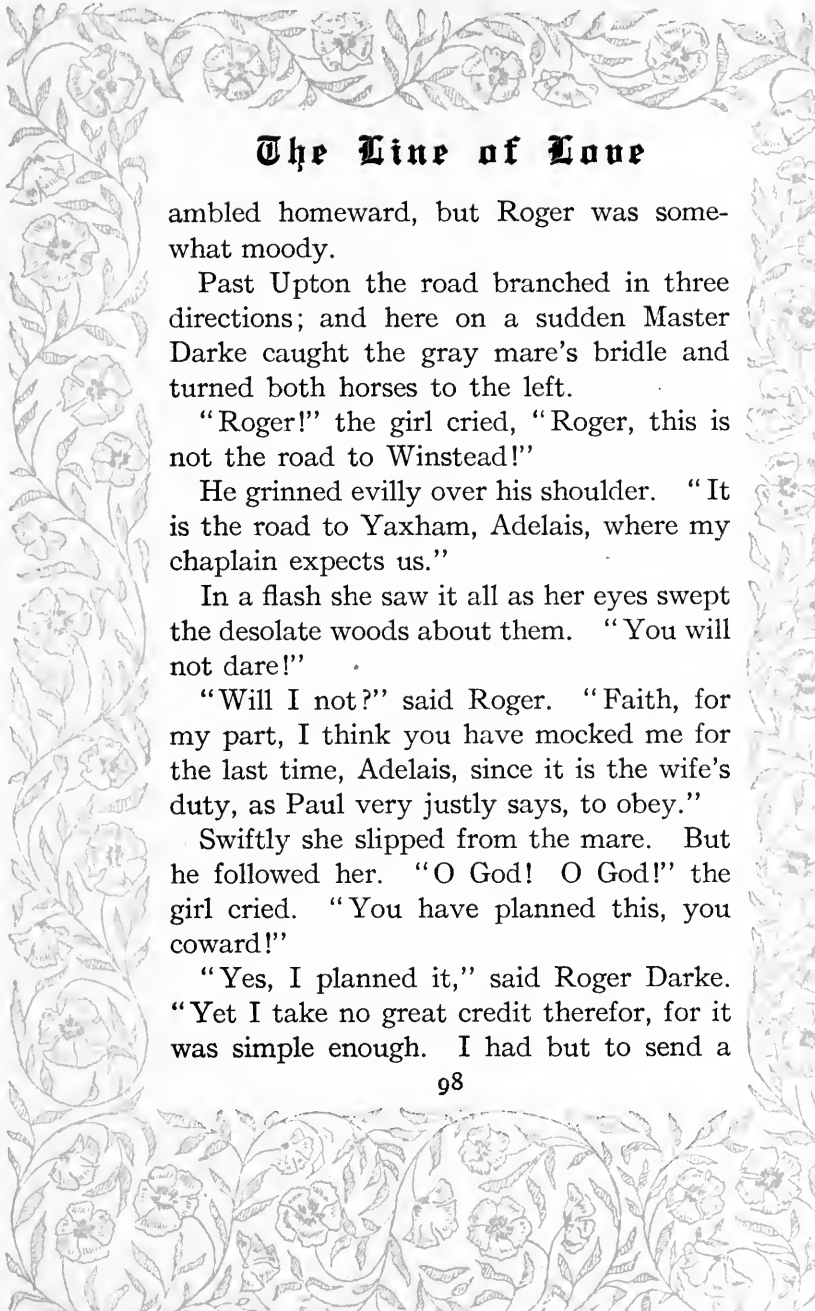
"Sweet Adalais"

escort to Winstead. Let the girl dance her fill while she may, Hugh. She will have little heart for dancing after a month or so of Falmouth's company."

"That is true," Vernon assented; "but the match is a good one, and she is bent upon it."

So presently he rode with his men to the north coast. An hour later Roger Darke and Adalais set out for Winstead, in spite of all Lady Brudenel's protestations that Mistress Vernon had best lie with her that night at Halvergate.

It was a moonlit night, cloudless, neither warm nor chill, but fine late September weather. About them the air was heavy with the damp odors of decaying leaves, for the road they followed was shut in by the Autumn woods, that now arched the way with sere foliage, rustling and whirring and thinly complaining overhead, and now left it open to broad splashes of moonlight, where fallen leaves scuttled about in the wind vortices. Adalais, elate with dancing, chattered of this and that as her gray mare

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are arranged in a repeating pattern, with some larger flowers and smaller buds interspersed with leafy vines.

The Line of Love

ambled homeward, but Roger was somewhat moody.

Past Upton the road branched in three directions; and here on a sudden Master Darke caught the gray mare's bridle and turned both horses to the left.

"Roger!" the girl cried, "Roger, this is not the road to Winstead!"

He grinned evilly over his shoulder. "It is the road to Yaxham, Adelais, where my chaplain expects us."

In a flash she saw it all as her eyes swept the desolate woods about them. "You will not dare!"

"Will I not?" said Roger. "Faith, for my part, I think you have mocked me for the last time, Adelais, since it is the wife's duty, as Paul very justly says, to obey."

Swiftly she slipped from the mare. But he followed her. "O God! O God!" the girl cried. "You have planned this, you coward!"

"Yes, I planned it," said Roger Darke. "Yet I take no great credit therefor, for it was simple enough. I had but to send a

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“Sweet Adelaia”

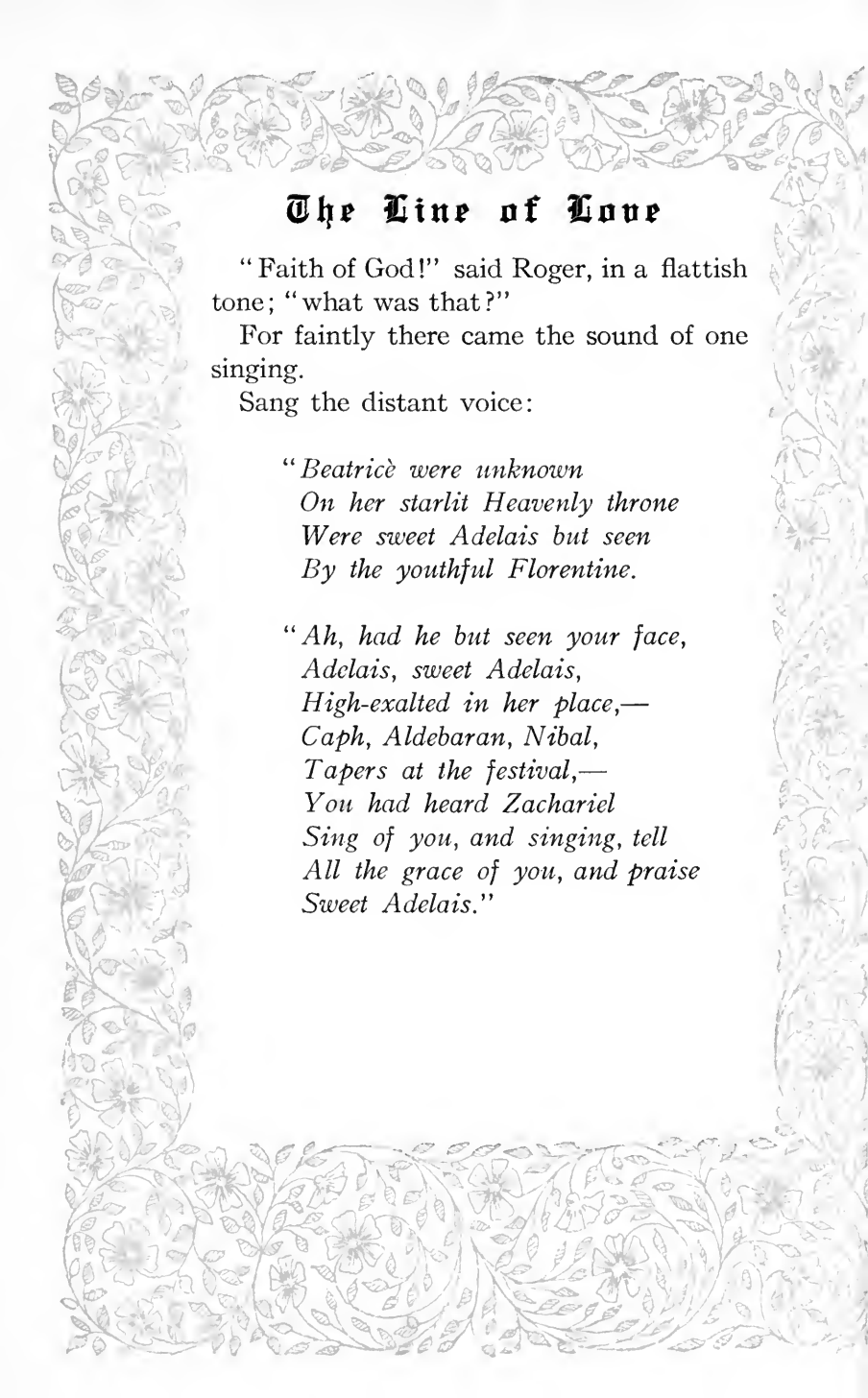
feigned message to your block-head brother. Ha, yes, I planned it, Adelaia, and I planned it well. To-morrow you will be Mistress Darke, never fear.”

And with that he grasped at her cloak as she shrank from him. The garment fell, leaving the girl momentarily free, her festival jewels shimmering in the moonlight, her bared shoulders glistening like silver. Darke, staring at her, giggled horribly. An instant later Adelaia fell upon her knees, sobbing, the dead leaves under her crackling sharply in the silence.

“Sweet Christ have pity upon Thy handmaiden! Do not forsake me, sweet Christ, in my extremity! Save me from this man!” she prayed, with an entire faith.

“My lady wife,” said Darke, and his hot, wet hand sank heavily upon her shoulder, “you had best finish your prayer before my chaplain, I think, since by ordinary Holy Church is skilled to comfort the sorrowing.”

“A miracle, dear lord Christ!” the girl wailed. “O sweet Christ, a miracle!”

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The Line of Love

“Faith of God!” said Roger, in a flattish tone; “what was that?”

For faintly there came the sound of one singing.

Sang the distant voice:

*“Beatricè were unknown
On her starlit Heavenly throne
Were sweet Adalais but seen
By the youthful Florentine.*

*“Ah, had he but seen your face,
Adalais, sweet Adalais,
High-exalted in her place,—
Caph, Aldebaran, Nibal,
Tapers at the festival,—
You had heard Zachariel
Sing of you, and singing, tell
All the grace of you, and praise
Sweet Adalais.”*

IV

Honor Brings a Padlock

HDELAIS sprang to her feet. "A miracle!" she cried, her voice shaking. "Fulke, Fulke! to me, Fulke!"

Master Darke hurried her struggling toward his horse, muttering curses in his beard, for there was now the beat of hoofs in the road yonder that led to Winstead. "Fulke, Fulke!" the girl shrieked.

Then presently, as Roger put foot to stirrup, two horsemen wheeled about the bend in the road, and one of them leapt to the ground.

"Mademoiselle," said Fulke d'Arnaye, "am I, indeed, so fortunate as to be of any service to you?"

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are arranged in a repeating pattern, with some larger and more prominent than others. The leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The overall style is reminiscent of a woodcut or a decorative book border.

The Line of Love

“Ho!” cried Roger, with a gulp of relief, “it is only the French dancing-master taking French leave of poor cousin Hugh! Man, but you startled me!”

Now Adalais ran to the Frenchman, clinging to him in a sort of frenzy, sobbing out the whole foul story. His face set mask-like.

“Monsieur,” he said, when she had ended, “you have wronged a sweet and innocent lady. As God lives, you shall answer to me for this.”

“Look you,” Roger pointed out, “this is none of your affair, Monsieur Jackanapes. You are bound for the coast, I take it. Very well,—ka me, and I’ll ka thee. Do you go your way in peace, and let us do the same.”

Fulke d’Arnaye put the girl aside and spoke rapidly in French to his companion. Then with mincing agility he stepped toward Master Darke.

Roger blustered. “You grinning fool!” said he, “what do you mean?”

“Chastisement!” said the Frenchman, and struck him in the face.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is composed of a repeating pattern of these elements, creating a frame around the central text.

“Sweet Adalais”

“Very well!” said Master Darke, strangely quiet. And with that they both drew.

The Frenchman laughed, high and shrill, as they closed, and afterward began to pour forth a voluble flow of discourse. Battle was wine to the man.

“Not since Agincourt, Master Coward—hé, no!—have I held sword in hand. It is a good sword, this,—a sharp sword, is it not? Ah, the poor arm—but see, your blood is quite red, monsieur, and I had thought cowards yielded a paler blood than brave men possess. We live and learn, do we not? Observe, I play with you like a child,—as I played with your King at Agincourt when I cut away the coronet from his helmet. I did not kill him—no!—but I wounded him, you conceive? Presently I shall wound you, too, monsieur. My compliments—you have grazed my hand. But I shall not kill you, because you are the kinsman of the fairest lady earth may boast, and I would not willingly shed the least drop of any blood that is partly hers. Ohé, no! Yet since I needs must

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The Line of Love

do this ungallant thing—why, see, monsieur, how easy it is!”

Thereupon he cut Roger down at a blow and composedly set to wiping his sword on the grass. The Englishman lay like a log where he had fallen.

“Lord,” Adalais quavered, “lord, have you killed him, then?”

Fulke d’Arnaye sighed. “Hélas, no!” said he, “since I knew that you did not wish it. See, mademoiselle,—I but struck him with the flat of my blade, this coward. He will recover in a half-hour.”

He stood as in thought for a moment, concluding his meditations with a grimace. After that he began again to speak in French to his companion. The debate seemed vital. The stranger gesticulated, pleaded, swore, implored, summoned all inventions between the starry spheres and the mud of Cocytus to judge of the affair; but Fulke d’Arnaye was resolute.

“Behold, mademoiselle,” he said, at length, “how my poor Olivier excites himself over a little matter. Olivier is my



“Sweet Adalais”

brother, most beautiful lady, but he speaks no English, so that I cannot present him to you. He came to rescue me, this poor Olivier, you conceive. Those Norman fishermen of whom you spoke to-day—but you English are blinded, I think, by the fogs of your cold island. Eight of the bravest gentlemen in France, mademoiselle, were those same fishermen, come to bribe my gaoler,—the incorruptible Tompkins, no less. Hé, yes, they came to tell me that Henry of Monmouth, by the wrath of God King of France, is dead at Vincennes yonder, mademoiselle, and that France will soon be free of you English. France rises in her might now.” His nostrils dilated for a moment; then he shrugged his shoulders. “And poor Olivier grieves that I may not strike a blow for her,—grieves that I must go back to Winstead.”

D’Arnaye laughed as he caught the bridle of the gray mare and turned her so that Adalais might mount. But the girl drew away from him with a faint, wondering cry.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including large five-petaled flowers and smaller buds, connected by a leafy vine. The style is reminiscent of late 19th or early 20th-century book design.

The Line of Love

"You will go back! You have escaped, lord, and you will go back!"

"Why, look you," said the Frenchman, "what else may I conceivably do? We are some ten miles from your home, most beautiful lady,—can you ride those ten long miles alone? in this night so dangerous? Can I leave you here? Hé, surely not. I am desolated, mademoiselle, but I needs must burden you with my company homeward."

Adelais drew a choking breath. He had fretted out seven years of captivity. Now he was free; and lest her name be smutched, however faintly, he would go back to his prison, jesting. "No, no!" she cried aloud, at the thought.

But he raised a deprecating hand. "You cannot go alone. Olivier here would go with you gladly. Not one of those brave gentlemen who await me at the coast yonder but would go with you very, very gladly, for they love France, these brave gentlemen, and they think that I can serve her better than most other men.

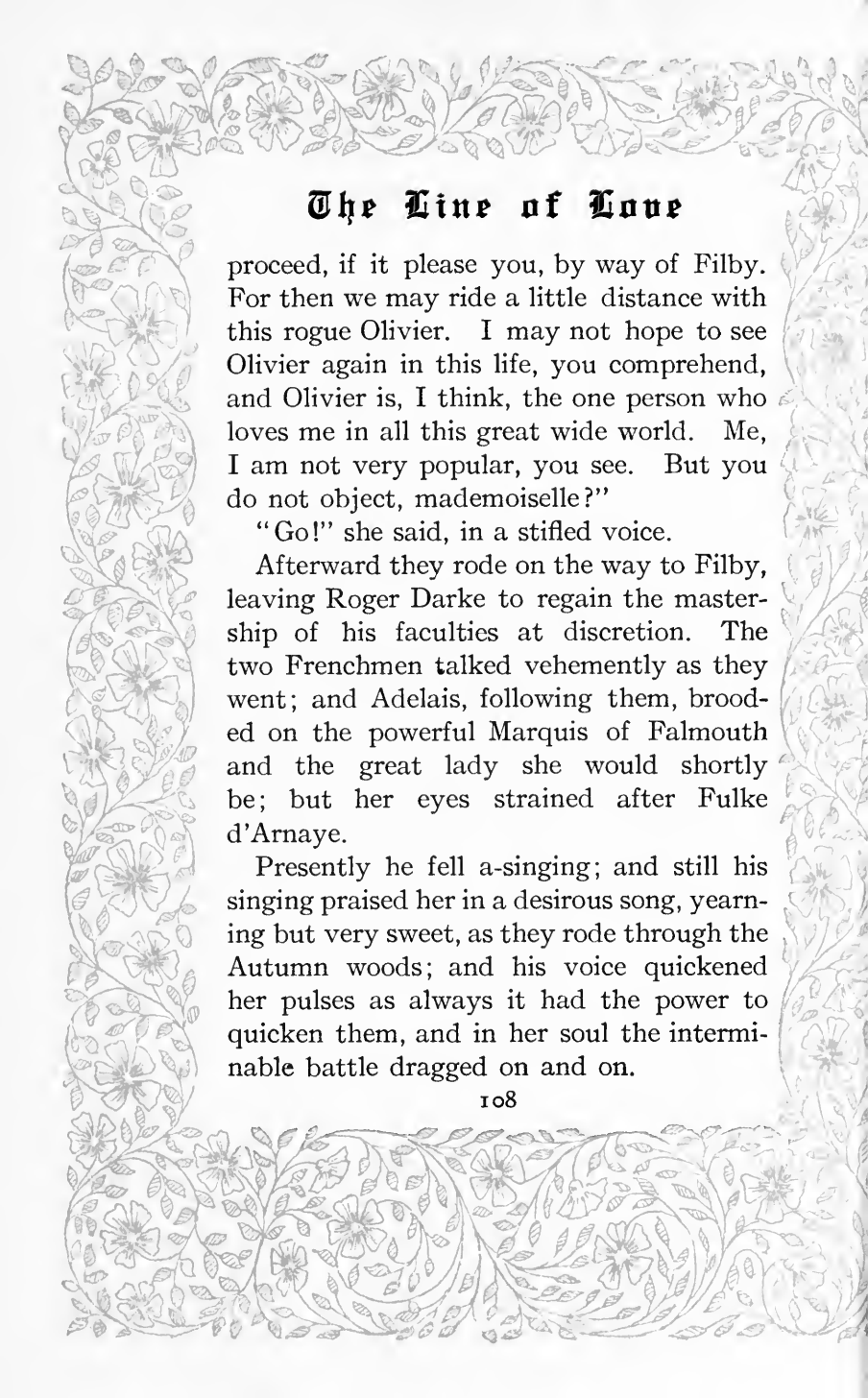
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“Sweet Adalais”

That is very flattering, is it not? But all the world conspires to flatter me, mademoiselle. Your good brother, by example, prizes my company so highly that he would infallibly hang the gentleman who rode back with you. So, you conceive, I cannot avail myself of their services. But with me it is different, hein? Ah, yes, he will merely lock me up again and for the future guard me more vigilantly. Will you not mount, mademoiselle?”

His voice was quiet, and his smile never failed him. It was this steady smile that set her heart to aching. Adalais knew that no natural power could dissuade him; he would go back with her: but she alone knew how constantly he had hoped for liberty, with what fortitude he had awaited his chance of liberty; and that he should return to captivity, smiling, thrilled her to impotent, heart-shaking rage. It maddened her that he dared love her so infinitely.

“But, mademoiselle,” Fulke d’Arnaye went on, when she had mounted, “let us



The Line of Love

proceed, if it please you, by way of Filby. For then we may ride a little distance with this rogue Olivier. I may not hope to see Olivier again in this life, you comprehend, and Olivier is, I think, the one person who loves me in all this great wide world. Me, I am not very popular, you see. But you do not object, mademoiselle?"

"Go!" she said, in a stifled voice.

Afterward they rode on the way to Filby, leaving Roger Darke to regain the mastery of his faculties at discretion. The two Frenchmen talked vehemently as they went; and Adelais, following them, brooded on the powerful Marquis of Falmouth and the great lady she would shortly be; but her eyes strained after Fulke d'Arnyae.

Presently he fell a-singing; and still his singing praised her in a desirous song, yearning but very sweet, as they rode through the Autumn woods; and his voice quickened her pulses as always it had the power to quicken them, and in her soul the interminable battle dragged on and on.



“Sweet Adelais”

Sang Fulke d'Arname:

*“Had you lived when earth was new
What had bards of old to do
Save to sing the song of you?”*

*“They had sung of you always,
Adelais, sweet Adelais;
Ne'er had other name had praise,
Ne'er had deathless memories
Clung as love may cling to these
Sweet, sad names of Héloïse,
Francesca, Thisbe, Bethsabe,
Morgaine, Dalida, Semele,
Semiramis, Antiope,
Iseult, Lucrece, Pisidice,
Alcestis and Alcione;
But your name had all men's praise,
Sweet Adelais.”*

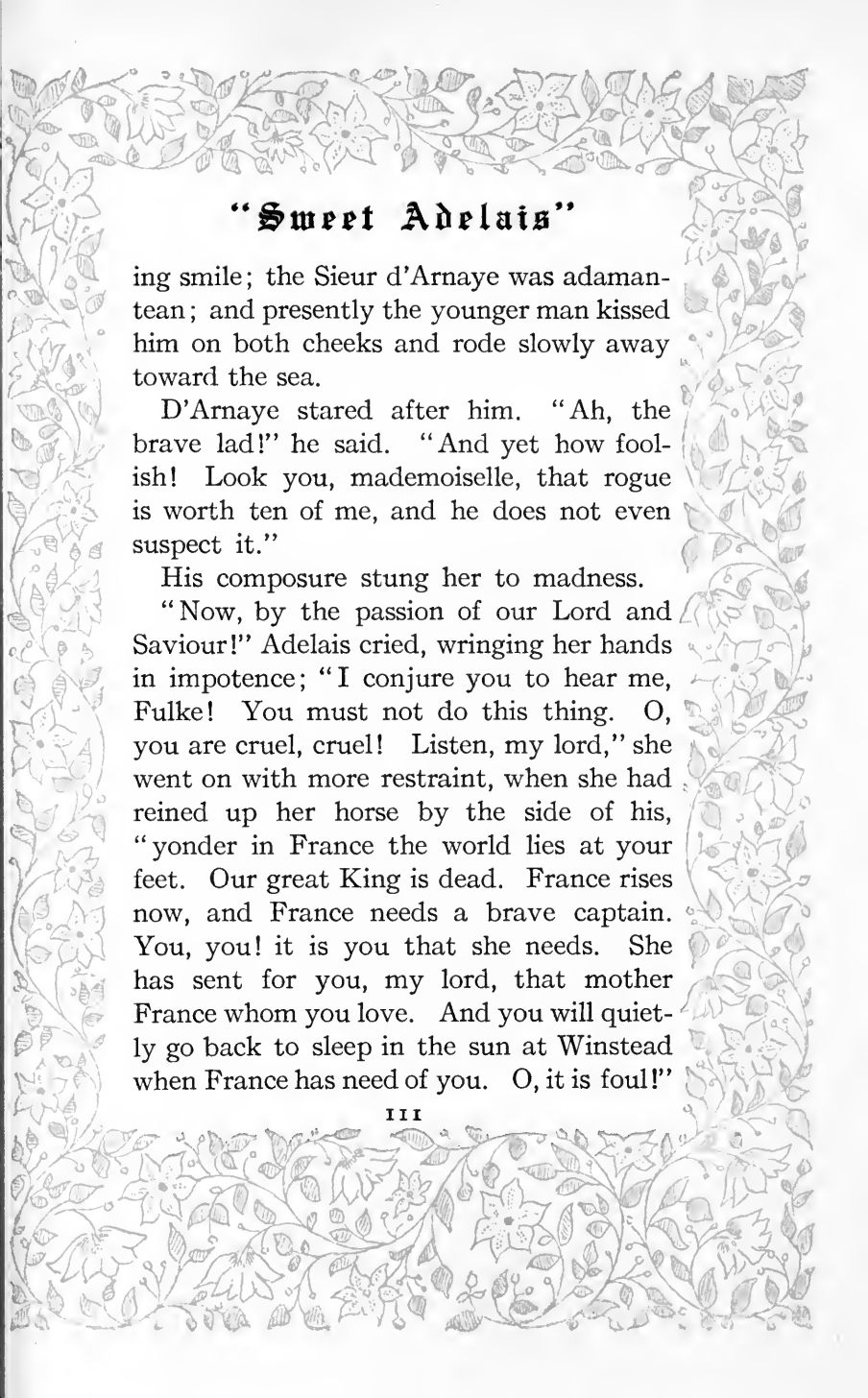
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V

“Thalatta!”

WHEN they had crossed the Bure, they had come into the open country,—a great plain, gray in the moonlight, that descended, hillock by hillock, toward the shores of the North Sea. On the right the dimpling lustre of tumbling waters stretched to a dubious sky-line, unbroken save for the sail of the French boat, moored near the ruins of the old Roman station, Garianonum, and showing very white against the unresting sea, like a naked arm; and to the left the lights of Filby flashed their unblinking, cordial radiance.

Here the brothers parted. Vainly Olivier wept and stormed before Fulke's unwaver-

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

“Sweet Adalais”

ing smile; the Sieur d’Arnaye was adamant; and presently the younger man kissed him on both cheeks and rode slowly away toward the sea.

D’Arnaye stared after him. “Ah, the brave lad!” he said. “And yet how foolish! Look you, mademoiselle, that rogue is worth ten of me, and he does not even suspect it.”

His composure stung her to madness.

“Now, by the passion of our Lord and Saviour!” Adalais cried, wringing her hands in impotence; “I conjure you to hear me, Fulke! You must not do this thing. O, you are cruel, cruel! Listen, my lord,” she went on with more restraint, when she had reined up her horse by the side of his, “yonder in France the world lies at your feet. Our great King is dead. France rises now, and France needs a brave captain. You, you! it is you that she needs. She has sent for you, my lord, that mother France whom you love. And you will quietly go back to sleep in the sun at Winstead when France has need of you. O, it is foul!”

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and scrolling vines with leaves, creating a frame around the central text.

The Line of Love

But he shook his head. "France is very dear to me," he said, "yet there are other men who can serve France. And there is no man save me who may serve you to-night, most beautiful lady."

"You shame me!" she cried, in a gust of passion. "You shame my worthlessness with this mad honor of yours that drags you jesting to your death! For you must die a prisoner now, without any hope. You and Orléans and Bourbon are England's only hold on France, and Bedford dare not let you go. Fetters, chains, dungeons, death, torture perhaps—that is what you must look for now."

"Hélas, you speak more truly than an oracle," he gayly assented; but still his eyes strained after Olivier.

Adelais laid her hand upon his arm. "You love me," she breathed, quickly. "Ah, I am past shame now! God knows, I am not worthy of it, but you love me. Ever since I was a child you have loved me,—always, always it was you who humored me, shielded me, protected me with



"Sweet Adalais"

this great love that I have not merited. Very well,"—she paused, for a single heart-beat,—“go! and take me with you.”

The hand he raised shook as though palsied. “O most beautiful!” the Frenchman cried, in an extreme of adoration; “you would do that! You would do that in pity to save me—unworthy me! And it is I whom you call brave—me, who annoy you with my woes so petty!” Fulke d’Arnaye slipped from his horse, and presently stood beside the gray mare, holding a long, slim hand in both of his. “I thank you,” he said, simply. “You know that it is impossible. But yes, I have loved you these seven years. And now— Ah, my heart shakes, my words tumble, I cannot speak! You know that I may not—may not let you do this thing. Even if you loved me—” He gave a hopeless gesture. “Why, there is always our brave marquis to be considered, who will so soon make you a powerful lady. And I?—I have nothing.”

But Adalais had rested either hand upon



The Line of Love

a stalwart shoulder, bending down to him till her hair brushed his. "Do you not understand?" she whispered. "Ah, my paladin, do you think I speak in pity? I wished to be a great lady,—yes. Yet always, I think, I loved you, Fulke, but until to-night I had believed that love was only the man's folly, the woman's diversion. See, here is Falmouth's ring." She drew it from her finger and flung it into the night. "Yes, I hungered for Falmouth's power, but you have shown me that which is above any temporal power. Ever I must crave the highest, Fulke. Ah, fair sweet friend, do not deny me!" Adelais cried, piteously. "Take me with you, Fulke! I will ride with you to the wars, my lord, as your page; I will be your wife, your slave, your scullion. I will do anything save leave you. Lord, it is not the maid's part to plead thus!"

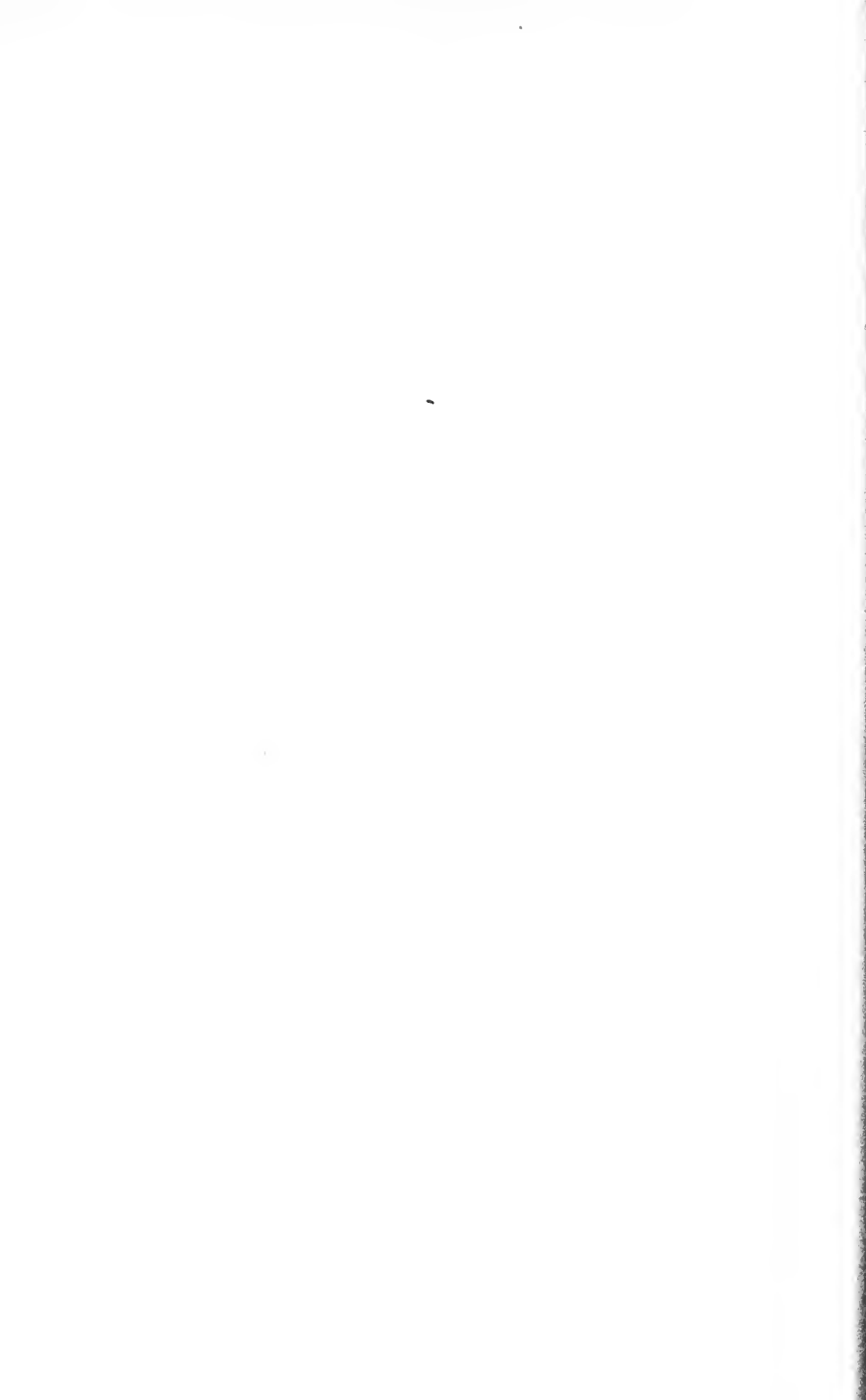
Fulke d'Arnaye drew her warm, yielding body toward him and stood in silence, choking. Then he raised his eyes to heaven. "Dear Lord God," he cried, in a great

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

“Sweet Adelais”

voice, “I entreat of Thee that if through my fault this woman ever know regret or sorrow I be cast into the nethermost pit of Hell for all eternity!” Afterward he kissed her.

And presently Adelais lifted her head from his shoulder, with a mocking little laugh. “Sorrow!” she echoed. “I think there is no sorrow in all the world. Mount, my lord, mount! See where brother Olivier waits for us yonder.”



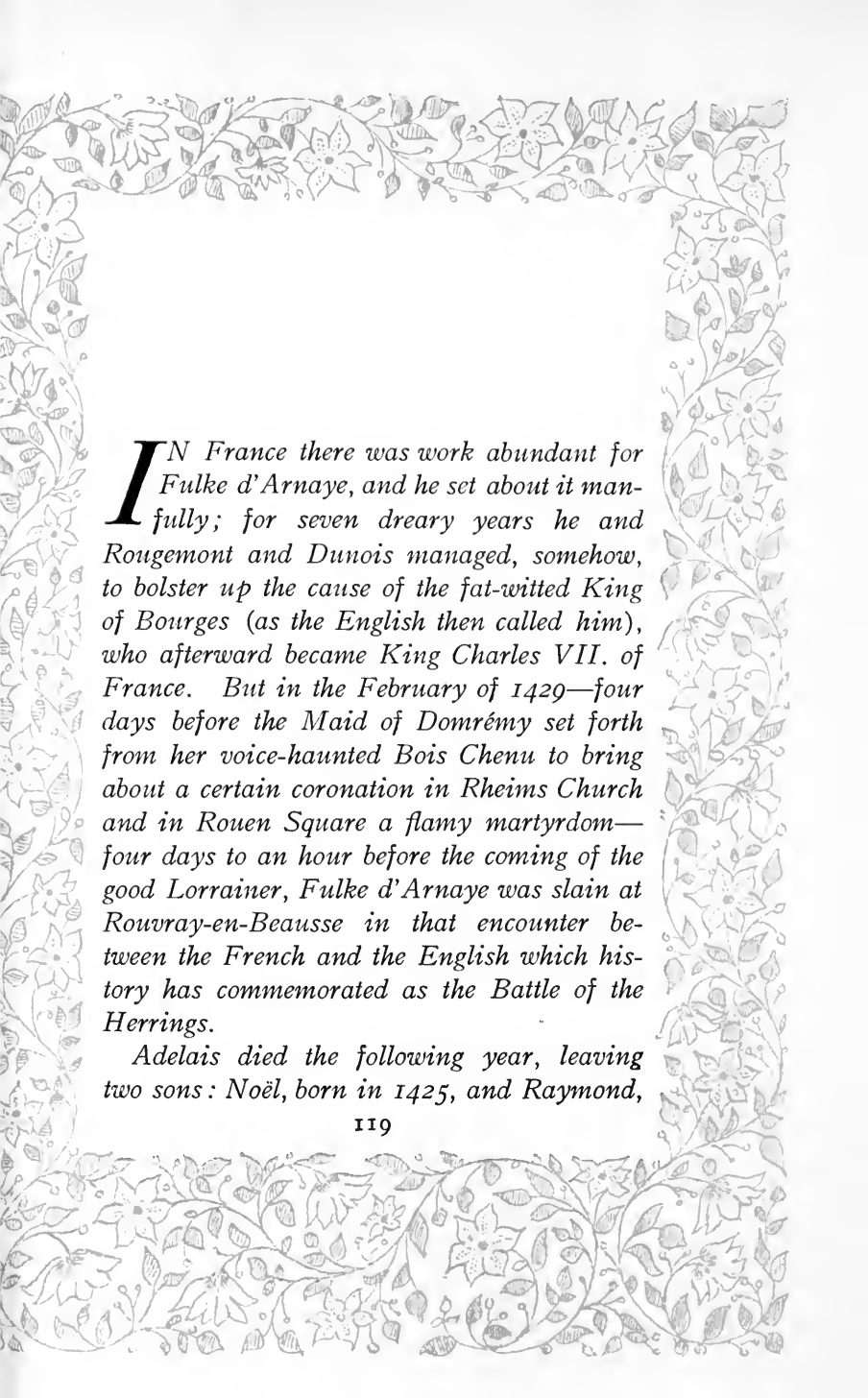


IV

JUNE 5, 1455—AUGUST 4, 1462

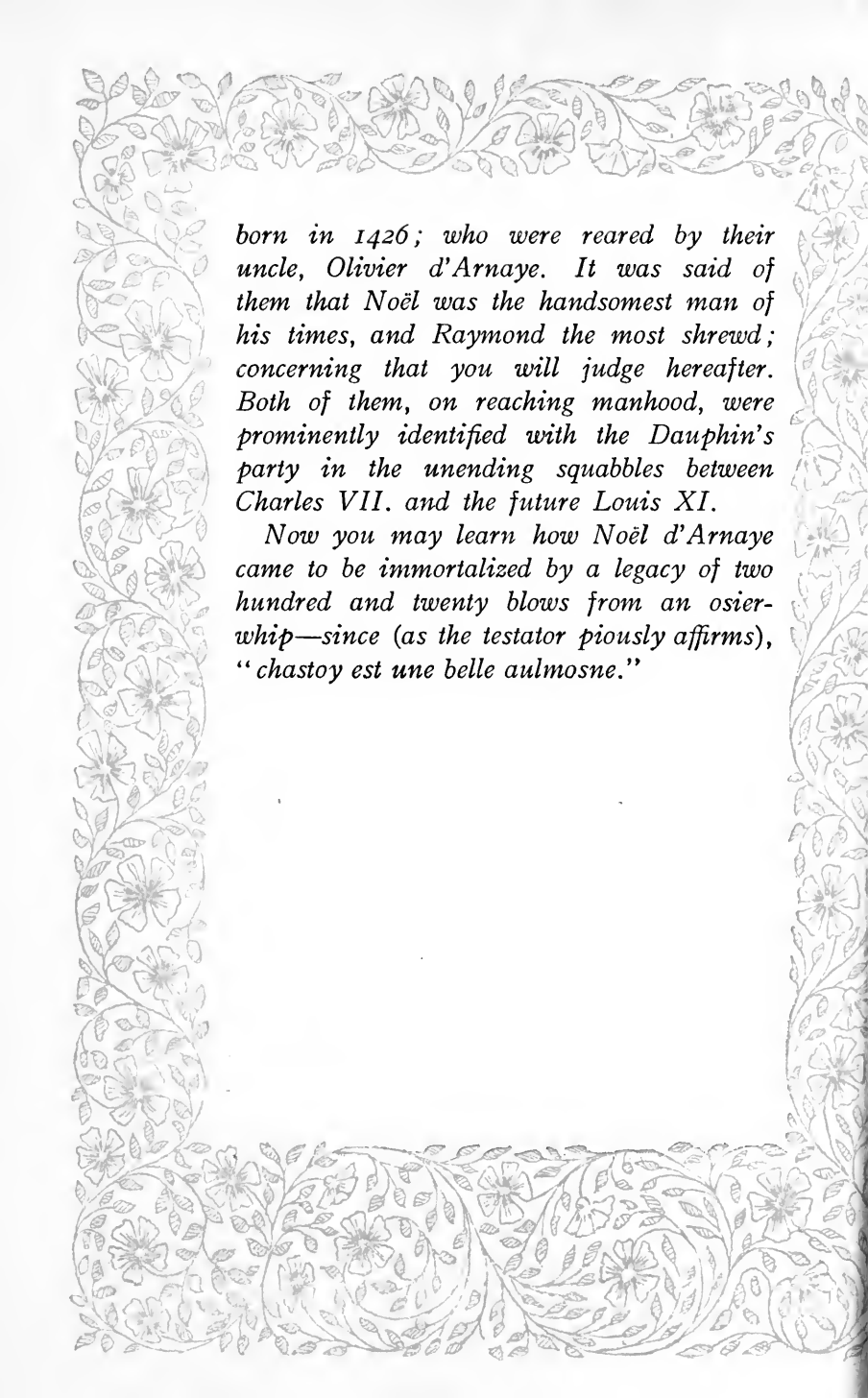
*“Fortune fuz par clerz jadis nommée,
Qui toi, François, crie et nomme meurtrière”*



A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is composed of a repeating pattern of these elements, creating a delicate frame around the central text.

*I*N France there was work abundant for Fulke d'Arnaye, and he set about it manfully; for seven dreary years he and Rougemont and Dunois managed, somehow, to bolster up the cause of the fat-witted King of Bourges (as the English then called him), who afterward became King Charles VII. of France. But in the February of 1429—four days before the Maid of Domrémy set forth from her voice-haunted Bois Chenu to bring about a certain coronation in Rheims Church and in Rouen Square a flaming martyrdom—four days to an hour before the coming of the good Lorrainer, Fulke d'Arnaye was slain at Rouvray-en-Beausse in that encounter between the French and the English which history has commemorated as the Battle of the Herrings.

Adelais died the following year, leaving two sons: Noël, born in 1425, and Raymond,

A decorative border of repeating floral and leaf motifs surrounds the text. The border consists of a continuous line of stylized flowers and leaves, creating a frame for the page's content.

born in 1426; who were reared by their uncle, Olivier d'Arnaye. It was said of them that Noël was the handsomest man of his times, and Raymond the most shrewd; concerning that you will judge hereafter. Both of them, on reaching manhood, were prominently identified with the Dauphin's party in the unending squabbles between Charles VII. and the future Louis XI.

Now you may learn how Noël d'Arnaye came to be immortalized by a legacy of two hundred and twenty blows from an osier-whip—since (as the testator piously affirms), “*chastoy est une belle aulmosne.*”

The Episode Called In Necessity's Mortar


I

“Bon Bec de Paris”



HERE went about the Rue Saint Jacques a notable shaking of heads on the day that Catherine de Vaucelles was betrothed to François de Montcorbier.

“Holy Virgin!” said the Rue Saint Jacques; “the girl is a fool. Why has she not taken Noël d’Arnaye,—Noël the Handsome? I grant you Noël is an ass, but, then, he is of the nobility, look you. He has the Dauphin’s favor. Noël will be a great man when our exiled Dauphin comes



The Line of Love

from Genepe yonder to be King of France. Then, too, she might have had Philippe Sermaise. Sermaise is a priest, of course, and one may not marry a priest, but Sermaise has money, and Sermaise is mad for love of her. She might have done worse. But François! Ho, death of my life, what is François? Perhaps—he, he!—perhaps Ysabeau de Montigny might inform us, you say? Perhaps, but I cannot. François is inoffensive enough, I dare assert, but what does she see in him? He is a scholar?—well, the College of Navarre has furnished food for the gallows before this. A poet?—rhyming will not fill the pot. Rhymes are a thin diet for two lusty young folk like these. And who knows if Guillaume de Villon, his foster-father, has one sou to rub against another? He is canon at Saint Benoît-le-Bétourné yonder, but canons are not Midases. The girl will have a hard life of it, neighbor, a hard life, I tell you, if—he, he!—if Ysabeau de Montigny does not knife her some day. O, beyond doubt, Catherine has played the fool.”

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

In Necessity's Mortar

Thus far the Rue Saint Jacques.

This was on the day of the Fête-Dieu. It was on this day that Noël d'Arnaye blasphemed for a matter of a half-hour and then went to the Crowned Ox, where he drank himself into a contented insensibility; that Ysabeau de Montigny, having wept a little, sent for Gilles Raguyer, a priest and aforetime a rival of François de Montcorbier for her favors; and that Philippe Sermaise grinned and said nothing. But afterward he gnawed at his under lip like a madman as he went about seeking for François de Montcorbier.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and scrolling vines with leaves, creating a frame around the central content.

II

“Deux estions, et n’avions qu’ung Coeur”

IT verged upon nine in the evening—a late hour in those days—when François climbed the wall of Jehan de Vaucelles’s garden.

A wall!—and what is a wall to your true lover? What bones, pray, did the Sieur Pyramus, that ill-starred Babylonish knight, make of a wall? did not his protestations slip through a chink, mocking at implacable granite and more implacable fathers? Most assuredly they did; and Pyramus was a pattern to all lovers. Thus ran the meditations of Master François as he leapt down into the garden.



CATHERINE DE VAUCELLES IN HER GARDEN



In Necessity's Mortar

He had not seen Catherine for three hours, you understand. Three hours! three eternities rather, and each one of them spent in Malebolge. Coming to a patch of moonlight, François paused there and cut an agile caper, as he thought of that approaching time when he might see Catherine every day.

"Madame François de Montcorbier," he said, tasting each syllable with gusto. "Catherine de Montcorbier. Was there ever a sweeter juxtaposition of sounds? It is a name for an angel. And an angel shall bear it,—eh, yes, an angel, no less. O saints in Paradise, envy me! Envy me," he cried, with a heroic gesture toward the stars, "for François would change places with none of you."

He crept through ordered rows of chestnuts and acacias to a window where a dim light burned. Then he unslung a lute from his shoulder and began to sing, secure in the knowledge that deaf old Jehan de Vaucelles was not likely to be disturbed by sound of any nature till that time when it should



The Line of Love

please God that the last trump be noised about the tumbling heavens.

It was good to breathe the mingled odor of roses and mignonette that was thick about him. It was good to sing to her a wailing song of unrequited love and know that she loved him. François dallied with his bliss, parodied his bliss, and — as he complacently reflected — lamented in the moonlight with as tuneful a dolor as Mes-sire Orpheus may have evinced when he carolled in Hades.

Sang François:

*“O Beauty of her, whereby I am undone!
O Grace of her, that hath no grace for
me!
O Love of her, the bit that guides me on
To sorrow and to grievous misery!
O Beauty of her, my poor heart's en-
emy!
O Pride of her, that slays! O pitiless, great,
Sweet Eyes of her! Have done with
cruelty!
Have pity upon me ere it be too late!*

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are simple, five-petaled shapes, and the leaves are small and pointed. The border is drawn in a light, sketchy style.

In Necessity's Mortar

*"Happier for me if elsewhere I had gone
For pity,—ah, far happier for me,
Since never of her may any grace be won,
And lest dishonor slay me, I must flee.
'Haro!' I cry, (and cry how uselessly!):
'Haro!' I cry to folk of all estate,
For I must die unless it chance that she
Have pity upon me ere it be too late.*

*"A time draws on 'neath whose disastrous sun
Your beauty's flower must fade and wane
and be
No longer beautiful, and thereupon
I may not mock at you,—not I, for we
Shall both be old and vigorless;—m'amy, e,
Drink deep of love, drink deep, and do not
wait
Until love's spring run dry. Have pity
on me!
Have pity upon me ere it be too late!*

*"Lord Love, that all love's lordship hast in
fee,
Lighten, ah, lighten thy displeasure's
weight,*



The Line of Love

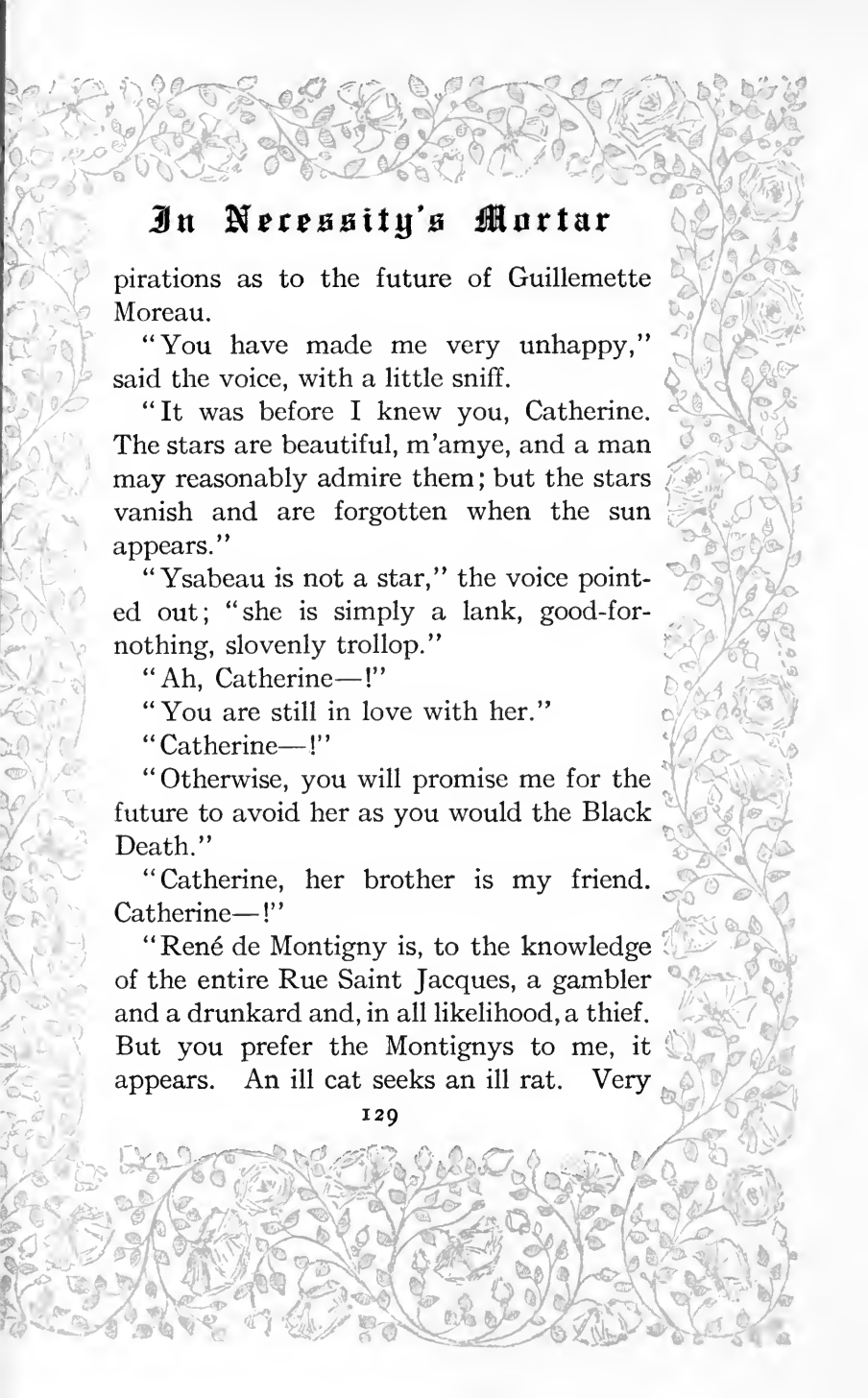
*For all true hearts should, of Christ's
charity,
Have pity upon me ere it be too late."*

Then from above a voice fluted in the twilight—a high, sweet, delicate voice: “You have mistaken the window, Monsieur de Montcorbier. Ysabeau de Montigny dwells in the Rue du Fouarre.”

“Ah, cruel!” sighed François. “Will you never let that kite hang upon the wall?”

“It is all very well to groan like a bellows. Guillemette Moreau did not sup here for nothing. I know of the verses you made her,—and the gloves you gave her at Candlemas, too. Saint Anne!” cried the voice, somewhat sharply; “she needed gloves. Her hands are so much raw beef. And the head-dress at Easter,—she looks like the steeple of Saint Benoît in it. But every man to his taste, Monsieur de Montcorbier. Good - night, Monsieur de Montcorbier.” But for all that the window did not close.

“Catherine—!” he pleaded; and under his breath he expressed uncharitable as-



In Necessity's Mortar

pirations as to the future of Guillemette Moreau.

"You have made me very unhappy," said the voice, with a little sniff.

"It was before I knew you, Catherine. The stars are beautiful, m'amy, and a man may reasonably admire them; but the stars vanish and are forgotten when the sun appears."

"Ysabeau is not a star," the voice pointed out; "she is simply a lank, good-for-nothing, slovenly trollop."

"Ah, Catherine—!"

"You are still in love with her."

"Catherine—!"

"Otherwise, you will promise me for the future to avoid her as you would the Black Death."

"Catherine, her brother is my friend. Catherine—!"

"René de Montigny is, to the knowledge of the entire Rue Saint Jacques, a gambler and a drunkard and, in all likelihood, a thief. But you prefer the Montignys to me, it appears. An ill cat seeks an ill rat. Very

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are arranged in a repeating pattern along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

The Line of Love

heartily do I wish you joy of them. You will not promise? Good-night, then, Monsieur de Montcorbier."

"Mother of God! I promise, Catherine."

From above Mademoiselle de Vaucelles gave a luxurious sigh. "Dear François!" said she.

"You are a tyrant," he complained. "Madame Penthesilea was not more cruel. Madame Herodias was less implacable, I think. And I think that neither was so beautiful."

"I love you," said Mademoiselle de Vaucelles, promptly.

"But there was never any one so many fathoms deep in love as I. Love bandies me from the postern to the frying-pan, from hot to cold. Ah, Catherine, Catherine, have pity upon my folly! Bid me fetch you Prester John's beard, and I will do it; bid me believe the sky is made of calf-skin, that morning is evening, that a fat sow is a wind-mill, and I will do it. Only love me a little, dear."

"My king, my king!" she murmured.

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In Necessity's Mortar

"My queen, my tyrant! Ah, what eyes you have! Ah, pitiless, great, sweet eyes, —sapphires that in the old days might have ransomed every monarch in Tamerlane's stable! Even in the night I see them, Catherine."

"Yet Ysabeau's eyes are brown."

"Then are her eyes the gutter's color. But Catherine's eyes are twin firmaments."

And about them the acacias rustled lazily, and the air was sweet with the odors of growing things, and the world, drenched in moonlight, slumbered. Without was Paris, but old Jehan's garden-wall cloistered Paradise.

"Has the world, think you, known lovers, long dead now, that were once as happy as we?"

"Love was not known till we discovered it."

"I am so happy, François, that I fear death."

"We have our day. Let us drink deep of love, not waiting until the spring run dry. Catherine, death comes to all, and

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The Line of Love

yonder in the church-yard the poor dead lie together, huggermugger, and a man may not tell an archbishop from a rag-picker. Yet they have exulted in their youth, and have laughed in the sun with some candid lass. We have our day, Catherine."

"I love you!"

"I love you!"

So they prattled in the moonlight. Their discourse was no more overburdened with wisdom than has been the ordinary communing of lovers since Adam first awakened ribless. Yet they were content.

Fate grinned and went on with her weaving.



III

“Et Usabeau, Qui Dit: Enné!”

SOMEWHAT later François came down the deserted street, treading on air. It was a bland Summer night, windless, moon - washed, odorous with garden - scents; the moon, nearing its full, was a silver egg set on end—(“Leda-hatched,” he termed it; “one may look for the advent of Queen Heleine ere dawn”); and the sky he likened to blue velvet studded with the gilt nail-heads of a seraphic upholsterer. François was a poet, but a civic poet; then, as always, he pilfered his similes from shop-windows.

But the heart of François was pure magnanimity, the heels of François mercury, as

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The Line of Love

he tripped past the church of Saint Benoît-le-Bétourné, stark snow and ink in the moonlight. Then with a jerk François paused.

On a stone-bench before the church sat Ysabeau de Montigny and Gilles Raguyer. The priest was fuddled, hiccuping in his amorous dithyrambics as he paddled with the girl's hand. "You tempt me to murder," he was saying. "It is a deadly sin, my soul, and I have no mind to fry in Hell while my body swings on the Saint Denis road, a crow's dinner. Let François live, my soul! My soul; he would stick little Gilles like a pig." He began to blubber at the thought.

"Holy Macaire!" said François; "here is a pretty plot a-brewing." Yet because his heart was filled just now with loving-kindness, he forgave the girl. "*Tantène iræ?*" said François; and aloud: "Ysabeau, it is time you were abed."

She wheeled upon him in apprehension; then, with recognition, her eyes flamed. "Now, Gilles!" cried Ysabeau de Montigny;

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are simple, five-petaled shapes, and the leaves are small and pointed. The border is composed of several horizontal and vertical sections that frame the central text.

In Necessity's Mortar

"now, coward! He is unarmed, Gilles. Look, Gilles! Kill for me this betrayer of women!"

Under his mantle François loosened the short sword he carried. But the priest plainly had no mind to the business. He rose, tipsily fumbling a knife, fear in his eyes, snarling like a cur at sight of a strange mastiff. "Vile rascal!" said Gilles Raguyer, as he strove to lash himself into a rage. "O coward! O parricide! O Tarquin!"

François began to laugh. "Let us have done with this farce," said he. "Your man has no stomach for battle, Ysabeau. And you do me wrong, my lass, to call me a betrayer of women. Doubtless, the tale served well enough to urge Gilles on; but you and I and God know that naught has passed between us save a few kisses and a trinket or so. It is no knifing matter. Yet for the sake of old time, come home, Ysabeau; your brother is my friend, and the hour is somewhat late for honest women to be abroad."

"Enné?" shrilled Ysabeau; "and yet, if I cannot strike a spark of courage from this



The Line of Love

clod here, there come those who may help me, François de Montcorbier. 'Ware Sermaise, Master François!"

François wheeled. Down the Rue Saint Jacques came Philippe Sermaise, like a questing hound, with drunken Jehan le Merdi at his heels. "Holy Virgin!" thought François; "this is likely to be a nasty affair. I would give a deal for a glimpse of the patrol lanterns just now."

He edged his way toward the cloister, to get a wall at his back. But Gilles Raguyer followed him, knife in hand. "O hideous Tarquin! O Absalom!" growled Gilles; "have you, then, no respect for churchmen?"

With an oath, Sermaise ran up. "Now, may God die twice," he panted, "if I have not found the skulker at last! There is a certain crow needs picking between us two, Montcorbier."

Hemmed in by his enemies, François temporized. "Why do you accost me thus angrily, Master Philippe?" he babbled. "What harm have I done you? What is



In Necessity's Mortar

your will of me?" But his fingers tore feverishly at the strap by which the lute was swung over his shoulder, and presently it fell at their feet, leaving him unhampered and his sword-arm free.

This was fuel to the priest's wrath. "Sacred bones of Benoît!" he snarled; "I could make a near guess as to what window you have been caterwauling under." From beneath his gown he suddenly hauled out a rapier and struck at the boy while François was yet tugging at his sword.

Full in the mouth he struck him, splitting the lower lip through. François felt the piercing cold of the steel, the tingling of it against his teeth, then the warm grateful spurt of blood; through a red mist, he saw Gilles and Ysabeau run screaming down the Rue Saint Jacques.

He drew and made at Sermaise, forgetful of le Merdi. It was shrewd work. Presently they were fighting in the moonlight, hammer-and-tongs, as the saying is, and presently Sermaise was cursing like a madman, for François had wounded him in the

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and arranged in a repeating pattern along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

The Line of Love

groin. Window after window rattled open as the Rue Saint Jacques ran nightcapped to peer at the brawl. Then as François hurled back his sword to slash at the priest's shaven head—Frenchmen had not yet learned to thrust with the point in the Italian manner—Jehan le Merdi leapt from behind, nimble as a snake, and wrested away the weapon. Sermaise closed with a glad shout.

“Heart of God!” cried Sermaise. “Pray, bridegroom, pray!”

But François jumped backward, tumbling over le Merdi, and with apish celerity caught up a great stone and flung it full in the priest's countenance.

The rest was hideous. For a breathing space Sermaise kept his feet, his outspread arms making a tottering cross. It was curious to see him peer about irresolutely now that he had no face. François, staring at the black featureless horror before him, began to choke. Immediately the man's wrists fell, and in the silence his rapier tinkled on the flagstones with the sound of shattering glass, and Philippe Sermaise slid

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In Necessity's Mortar

down, all a-jumble, crumpling like a broken toy. Afterward you might have heard a long, awed sibilance go about the windows overhead as the Rue Saint Jacques, watching, caught its breath again.

François de Montcorbier ran. He tore at his breast as he ran, stifling. He wept like a beaten child as he ran through the moon-washed Rue Saint Jacques, making bestial whistling noises. His split lip was a clammy dead thing that flapped against his chin as he ran.

"François!" a man cried, meeting him; "ah, name of a name, François!"


It was René de Montigny, lurching from the Crowned Ox, half-tipsy. He caught the boy by the shoulder and hurried him, still sobbing, to Fouquet the barber-surgeon's, where they sewed up his wound. In accordance with the police regulations, they first demanded an account of how he had received it. René lied up-hill and down-dale, while in a corner of the room François monotonously wept.

Fate grinned and went on with her weaving.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and arranged in a repeating pattern along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

IV

“Necessité Faict Gens Mesprendre”

A large, ornate initial letter 'G' filled with a pattern of small flowers and leaves. The 'G' is positioned at the start of the first paragraph.

HE Rue Saint Jacques had toothsome sauce for its breakfast. The quarter smacked stiff lips over the news, as it pictured François de Montcorbier dangling from Montfaucon. “Horrible!” said the Rue Saint Jacques and deduced a moral for the edification of the children.

Guillemette Moreau had told Catherine of the affair before the day was aired. The girl's hurt vanity flamed.

“Sermaise!” said she. “Bah, what do I care for Sermaise! He killed him in fair fight. But within an hour, Guillemette,—within an hour after leaving me, he is junketing on church-porches with that trollop.



In Necessity's Mortar

They were not there for holy-water. Midnight, look you! And he swore to me—chaff, chaff! His honor is chaff, Guillemette, and his heart a bran-bag. O, swine, filthy swine! Eh, well, let the swine stick to his sty. Send Noël d'Arnaye to me."

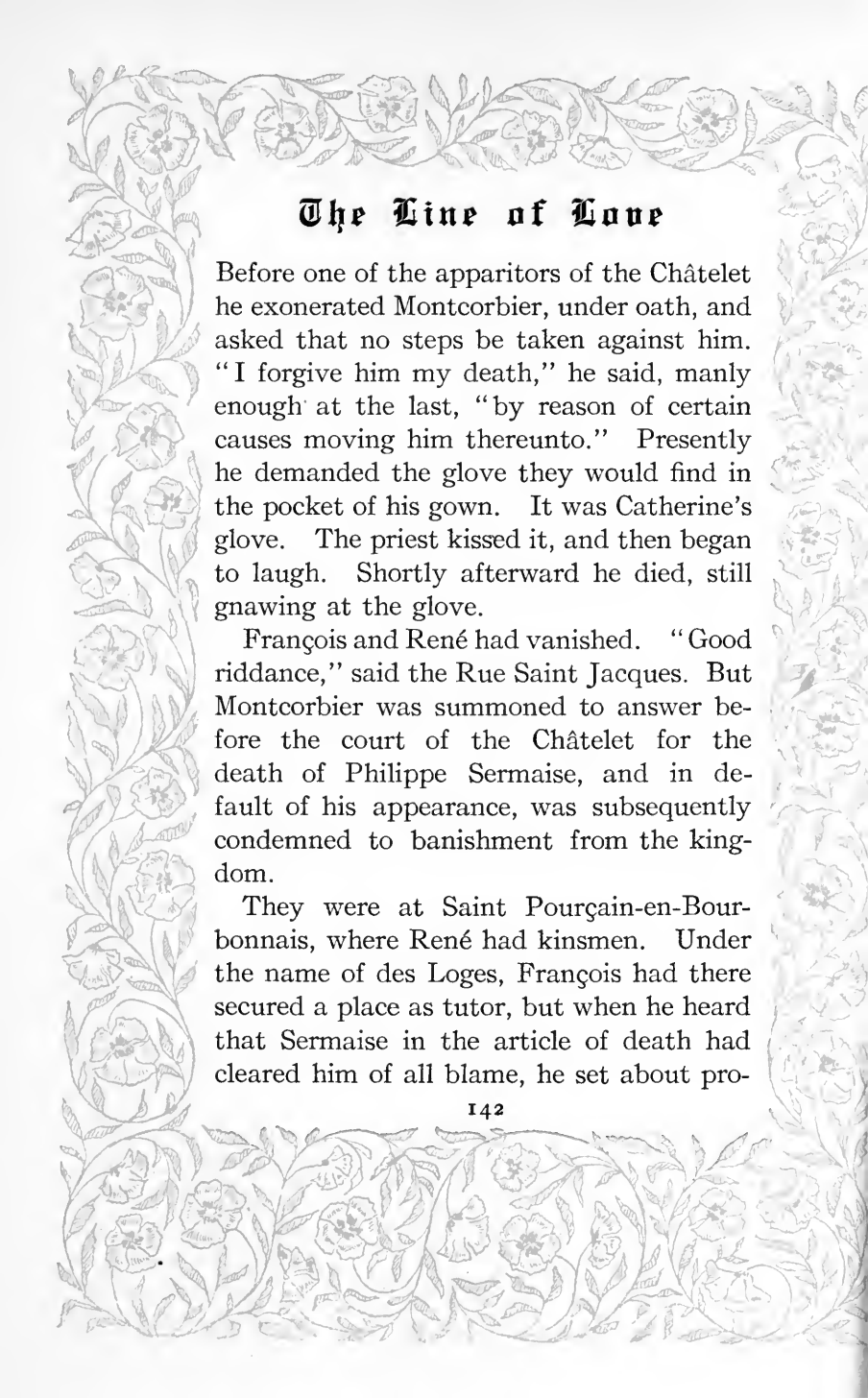
The Sieur d'Arnaye came, his head tied in a napkin.

"Foh!" said she; "another swine fresh from the gutter? No, this is a bottle, a tun, a wine-barrel! Noël, I despise you. I will marry you if you like."

He fell to mumbling her hand. An hour later she told Jehan de Vaucelles she intended to marry Noël the Handsome when he should come back from Geneppe with the exiled Dauphin. The old man, having wisdom, lifted his brows and returned to his reading.

The patrol had transported Sermaise to the prison of Saint Benoît, where he lay all night. That day he was carried to the hospital of the Hôtel Dieu. He died the following Saturday.

Death exalted the man to some nobility.



The Line of Love

Before one of the apparitors of the Châtelet he exonerated Montcorbier, under oath, and asked that no steps be taken against him. "I forgive him my death," he said, manly enough at the last, "by reason of certain causes moving him thereunto." Presently he demanded the glove they would find in the pocket of his gown. It was Catherine's glove. The priest kissed it, and then began to laugh. Shortly afterward he died, still gnawing at the glove.

François and René had vanished. "Good riddance," said the Rue Saint Jacques. But Montcorbier was summoned to answer before the court of the Châtelet for the death of Philippe Sermaise, and in default of his appearance, was subsequently condemned to banishment from the kingdom.

They were at Saint Pourçain-en-Bourbonnais, where René had kinsmen. Under the name of des Loges, François had there secured a place as tutor, but when he heard that Sermaise in the article of death had cleared him of all blame, he set about pro-

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is drawn in a light, sketchy style.

In Necessity's Mortar

curing a pardon.* It was January before he succeeded in obtaining it.

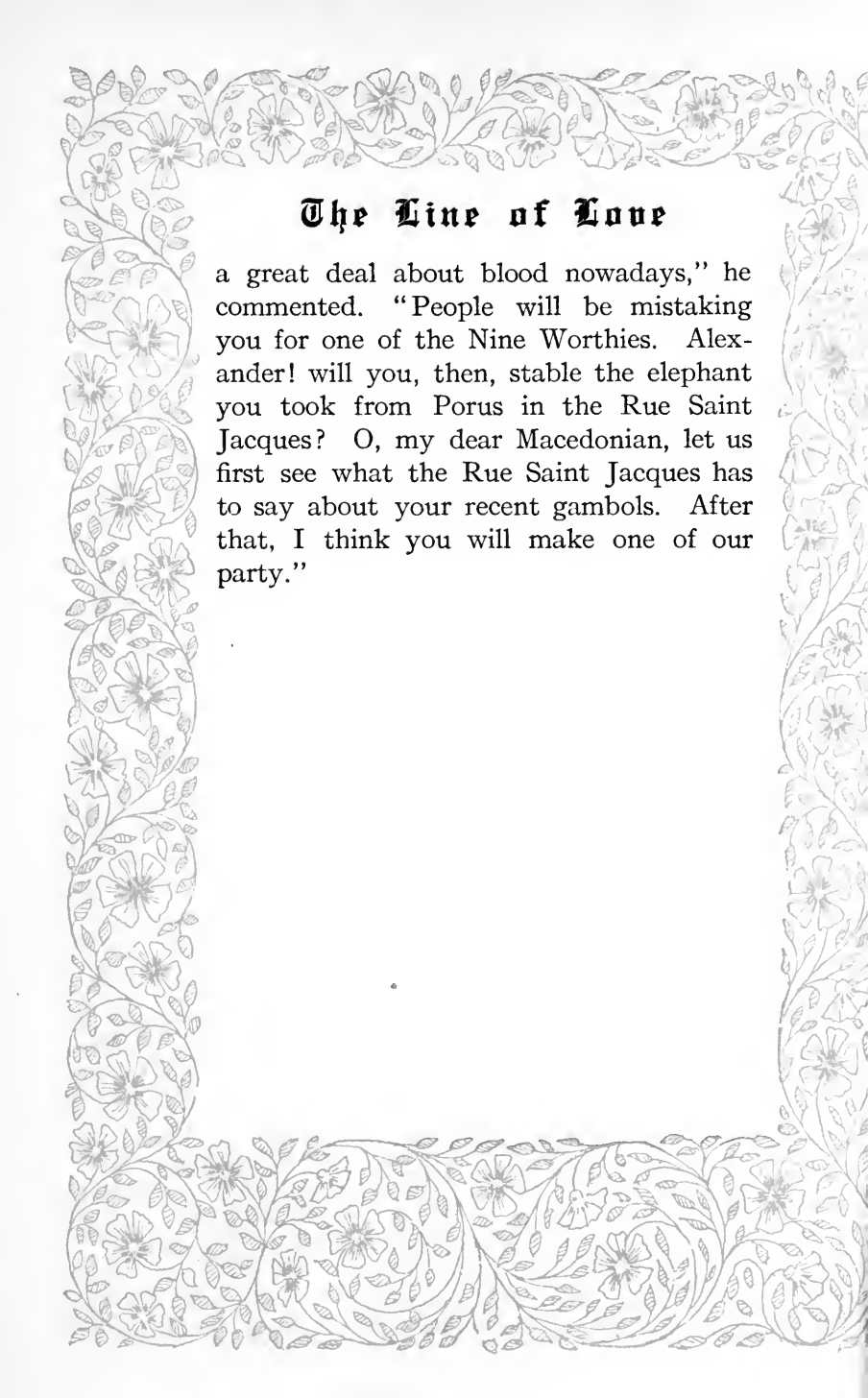
Meanwhile he had learned a deal of René's way of living. "You are a thief," he said to him, the day his pardon came, "but you have played a kindly part by me. I think you are Dysmas, René, not Gestas. Heh, I throw no stones. You have stolen, but I have killed. Let us go to Paris, lad, and start afresh."

Montigny grinned. "I shall certainly go to Paris," he said. "My friends wait for me there,—Guy Tabary, Petit Jehan and Colin de Cayeux. We are planning to visit Guillaume Coiffier, a fat priest with some six hundred crowns in the cupboard. You will make one of the party, François."

"René, René," said he, "my heart bleeds for you."

Again Montigny grinned. "You think

* There is humor in his deposition that Gilles and Ysabeau and he were loitering before Saint Benoît's in friendly discourse,—"*pour soy, esbatre.*" Perhaps René prompted this; but in itself, it is characteristic of Montcorbier that he trenched on perjury, blithely, in order to screen Ysabeau.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of a repeating pattern of five-petaled flowers on a vine with small leaves, forming a rectangular frame around the central text.

The Line of Love

a great deal about blood nowadays," he commented. "People will be mistaking you for one of the Nine Worthies. Alexander! will you, then, stable the elephant you took from Porus in the Rue Saint Jacques? O, my dear Macedonian, let us first see what the Rue Saint Jacques has to say about your recent gambols. After that, I think you will make one of our party."



V

“Heulx sans Pitié!”

HERE was a light crackling frost under foot the day that François came back to the Rue Saint Jacques. A brisk, clear January day. It was good to be home again, an excellent thing to be alive.

“Eh, Guillemette, Guillemette,” he laughed. “Why, lass—!”

“Faugh!” said Guillemette Moreau, as she passed him, nose in air. “A murderer, a priest-killer.”

Then the sun went black for François. It was a bucket of cold water, full in the face. He gasped, staring after her; and pursy Thomas Tricot, on his way from mass, nudged Martin Blaru in the ribs.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are arranged in a repeating pattern along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

The Line of Love

“Martin,” said he, “fruit must be cheap this year. Yonder in the gutter is an apple from the gallows-tree, and no one will pick it up.”

Blaru turned and spat out, “Cain! Judas!”

This was only a sample. Everywhere François found rigid faces and skirts drawn aside. A little girl in a red cap, Robin Trousseau's daughter, flung a stone at him as he slunk into the cloister of Saint Benoît-le-Bétourné. In those days a slain priest was God's servant slain, no less.

“My father!” he cried, rapping upon the door of the Hôtel de la Porte-Rouge; “O, my father, open to me, for I think that my heart is breaking.”

Shortly his foster-father, Guillaume de Villon, came to the window. “Murderer!” said he. “Betrayed of women! Now, by the caldron of John! how dare you show your face here? I gave you my name and you soiled it. Back to your husks, rascal!”

“O God, O God!” François cried, one or two times, as he looked up into the old man's

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

In Necessity's Mortar

implacable countenance. "You, too, my father!" He burst into a fit of sobbing.

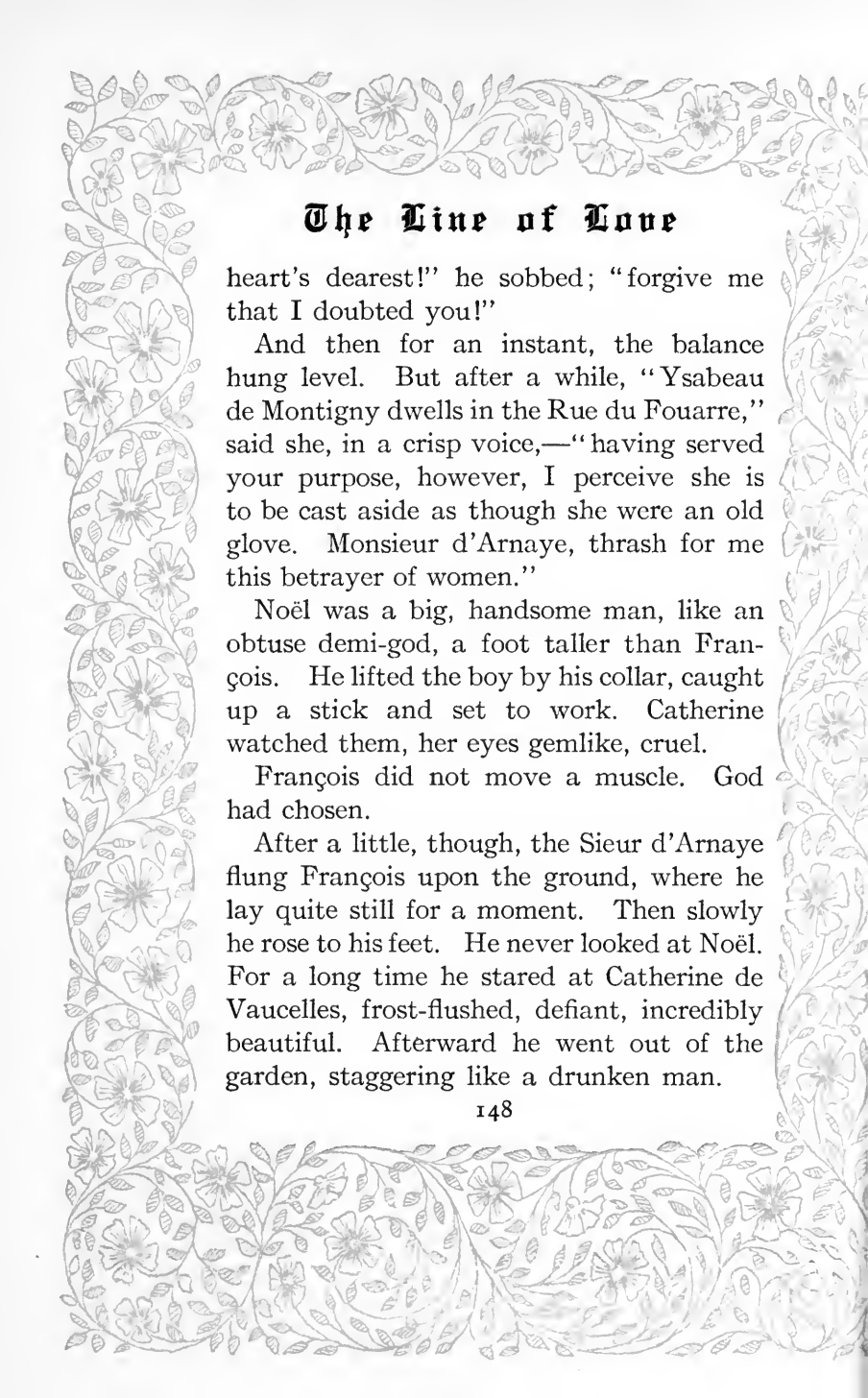
"Go!" the priest stormed; "go, murderer!"

It was not good to hear François's laughter. "What a world we live in!" he giggled. "You gave me your name and I soiled it? Eh, Master Priest, Master Pharisee, beware! *Villon* is good French for *vagabond*, an excellent name for an outcast. And as God lives, I will presently drag that name through every muckheap in France."

Yet he went to Jehan de Vaucelles's home. "I will afford God one more chance at my soul," he said.

In the garden he met Catherine and Noël d'Arnaye coming out of the house. They stopped short. Her face, half-muffled in her cloak, flushed to a wonderful rose of happiness, the great eyes glowed, and Catherine reached out her hands to him with a glad cry.

His heart was hot wax as he fell upon his knees before her. "O heart's dearest,



The Line of Love

heart's dearest!" he sobbed; "forgive me that I doubted you!"

And then for an instant, the balance hung level. But after a while, "Ysabeau de Montigny dwells in the Rue du Fouarre," said she, in a crisp voice,—“having served your purpose, however, I perceive she is to be cast aside as though she were an old glove. Monsieur d'Arnaye, thrash for me this betrayer of women.”

Noël was a big, handsome man, like an obtuse demi-god, a foot taller than François. He lifted the boy by his collar, caught up a stick and set to work. Catherine watched them, her eyes gemlike, cruel.

François did not move a muscle. God had chosen.

After a little, though, the Sieur d'Arnaye flung François upon the ground, where he lay quite still for a moment. Then slowly he rose to his feet. He never looked at Noël. For a long time he stared at Catherine de Vaucelles, frost-flushed, defiant, incredibly beautiful. Afterward he went out of the garden, staggering like a drunken man.



In Necessity's Mortar

He found Montigny at the Crowned Ox. "René," said he, "there is no charity on earth, there is no God in Heaven. But in Hell there is most assuredly a devil, and I think that he must laugh a great deal. What was that you were telling me about the priest with six hundred crowns in his cupboard?"

René slapped him on the shoulder. "Now," said he, "you talk like a man." He opened the door at the back and cried: "Colin, you and Petit Jehan and that pig Tabary may come out. I have the honor, messieurs, to offer you a new Companion of the Cockleshell—Master François de Montcorbier."

But the recruit raised a protesting hand. "No," said he,—"François Villon. The name is triply indisputable, since it was given me not by one priest but by three."


A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including roses and smaller blossoms, connected by a vine-like structure. The style is reminiscent of late 19th or early 20th-century book design.

VI

“Voilà l’Estat Divers d’entre Eulx”

WHEN the Dauphin came from Geneppe to be crowned King of France, there rode with him Noël d’Ar-naye and his brother Raymond. The news that Charles the Well-Served was now servitor to Death, brought the exiled Louis post-haste to Paris, where the Rue Saint Jacques turned out full force to witness his triumphal entry. They expected Saturnian doings of Louis XI. in those days, a recrudesence of the Golden Age; and when the new king began his reign by granting Noël a snug fief in Picardy, the Rue Saint Jacques applauded.

“Noël has followed his fortunes these ten



In Necessity's Mortar

years," said the Rue Saint Jacques; "it is only just. And now, neighbor, we may look to see Noël the Handsome and Catherine de Vaucelles make a match of it. The girl has a tidy dowry, they say; old Jehan proved wealthier than the quarter suspected. But death of my life, yes! You may see his tomb in the Innocents' yonder, with weeping seraphim and a yard of Latin on it. I warrant you that rascal Montcorbier has lain awake in half the prisons in France thinking of what he flung away. Seven years, no less, since he and Montigny showed their thieves' faces here. La, the world wags, neighbor, and they say there will be a new tax on salt if we go to war with the English."

Somewhat to this effect, also, ran the meditations of Catherine de Vaucelles one still August night as she sat at her window, overlooking the acacias and chestnuts of her garden. Noël, conspicuously prosperous in blue and silver, had but now gone down the Rue Saint Jacques, singing, clinking the fat purse whose plumpness was still a novelty.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and arranged in a repeating pattern along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

The Line of Love

That evening she had given her promise to marry him at Michaelmas.

It was a black night, moonless, windless. There were a scant half-dozen stars overhead, and the thick scent of roses and mignonette came up to her in hot, stifling waves. Below the tree-tops conferred, stealthily, and the fountain plashed its eternal remonstrance to the conspiracy they lisped of.

After a while Catherine rose and stood contemplative before a long mirror that was in her room. Catherine de Vaucelles was twenty-three now, in the full flower of her beauty. Blue eyes the mirror showed her, —luminous and tranquil eyes, set very far apart; honey-colored hair that hung heavily about her face, a mouth all curves, the hue of a strawberry, tender but rather fretful, and beneath it a firm chin; only her nose left something to be desiderated,—for that feature, though well-formed, was diminutive and bent, by perhaps the thickness of a cobweb, toward the left. She might reasonably have smiled at what the mirror showed her, but, for all that, she sighed.



In Necessity's Mortar

“O Beauty of her, whereby I am undone,” said Catherine, wistfully; then on a sudden she burst into tearless sobbing. “Ah, God in Heaven, forgive me for my folly! Sweet Christ, intercede for me who have paid so dearly for my folly!”

Fate grinned in her weaving. There stole through the open window the sound of a voice singing below.

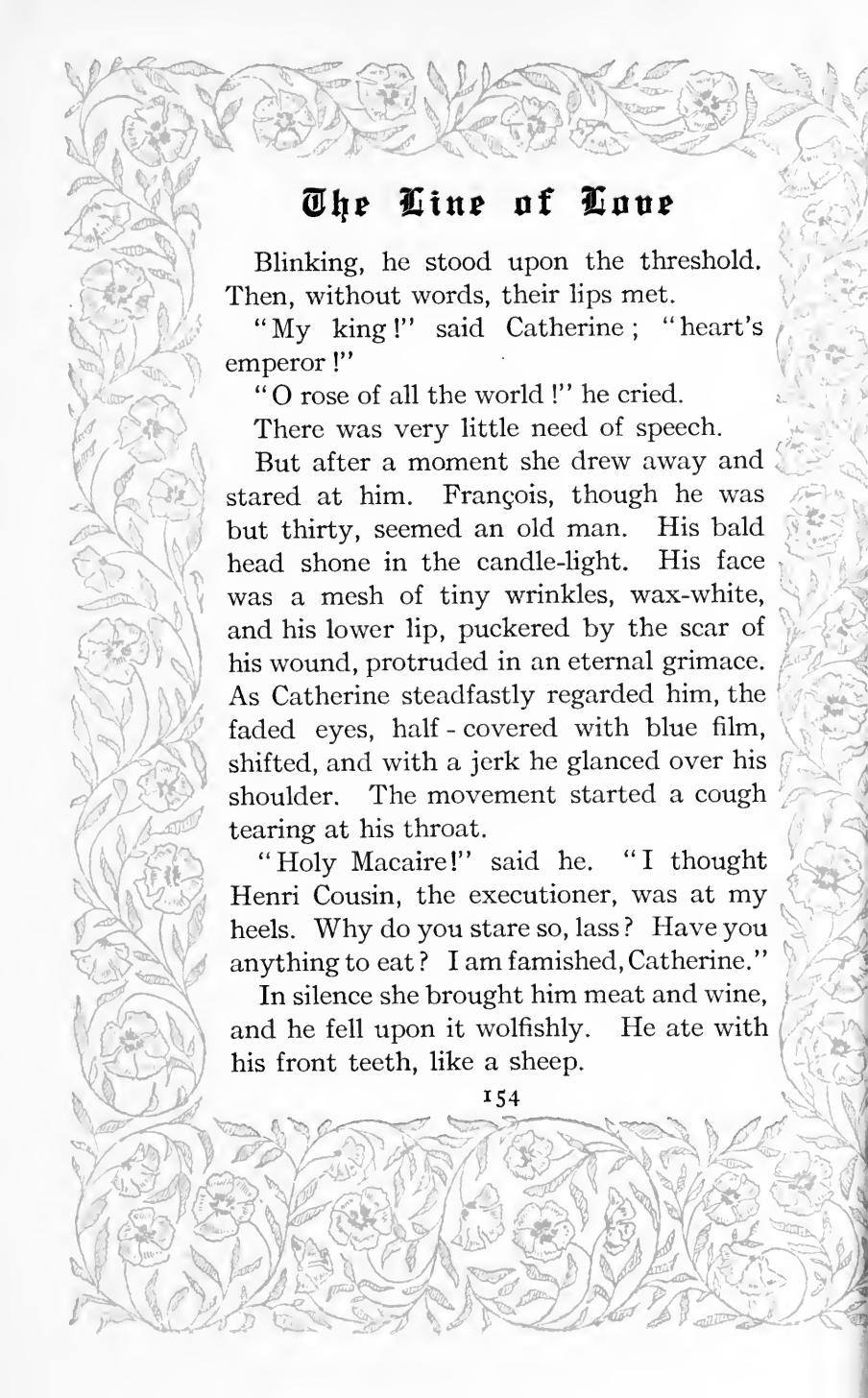
Sang the voice:

*“O Beauty of her, whereby I am undone!
O Grace of her, that hath no grace for me!
O Love of her, the bit that guides me on
To sorrow and to grievous misery!
O Beauty of her, my poor heart's enemy—”*

and broke off in a fit of coughing.

She remained motionless for a matter of two minutes, her head poised alertly. Then, with a gasp, she sprang to the gong and struck it seven or eight times.

“Macée, there is a man in the garden. Bring him to me, Macée,—ah, love of God, Macée, make haste!”



The Line of Love

Blinking, he stood upon the threshold. Then, without words, their lips met.

"My king!" said Catherine; "heart's emperor!"

"O rose of all the world!" he cried.

There was very little need of speech.

But after a moment she drew away and stared at him. François, though he was but thirty, seemed an old man. His bald head shone in the candle-light. His face was a mesh of tiny wrinkles, wax-white, and his lower lip, puckered by the scar of his wound, protruded in an eternal grimace. As Catherine steadfastly regarded him, the faded eyes, half-covered with blue film, shifted, and with a jerk he glanced over his shoulder. The movement started a cough tearing at his throat.

"Holy Macaire!" said he. "I thought Henri Cousin, the executioner, was at my heels. Why do you stare so, lass? Have you anything to eat? I am famished, Catherine."

In silence she brought him meat and wine, and he fell upon it wolfishly. He ate with his front teeth, like a sheep.

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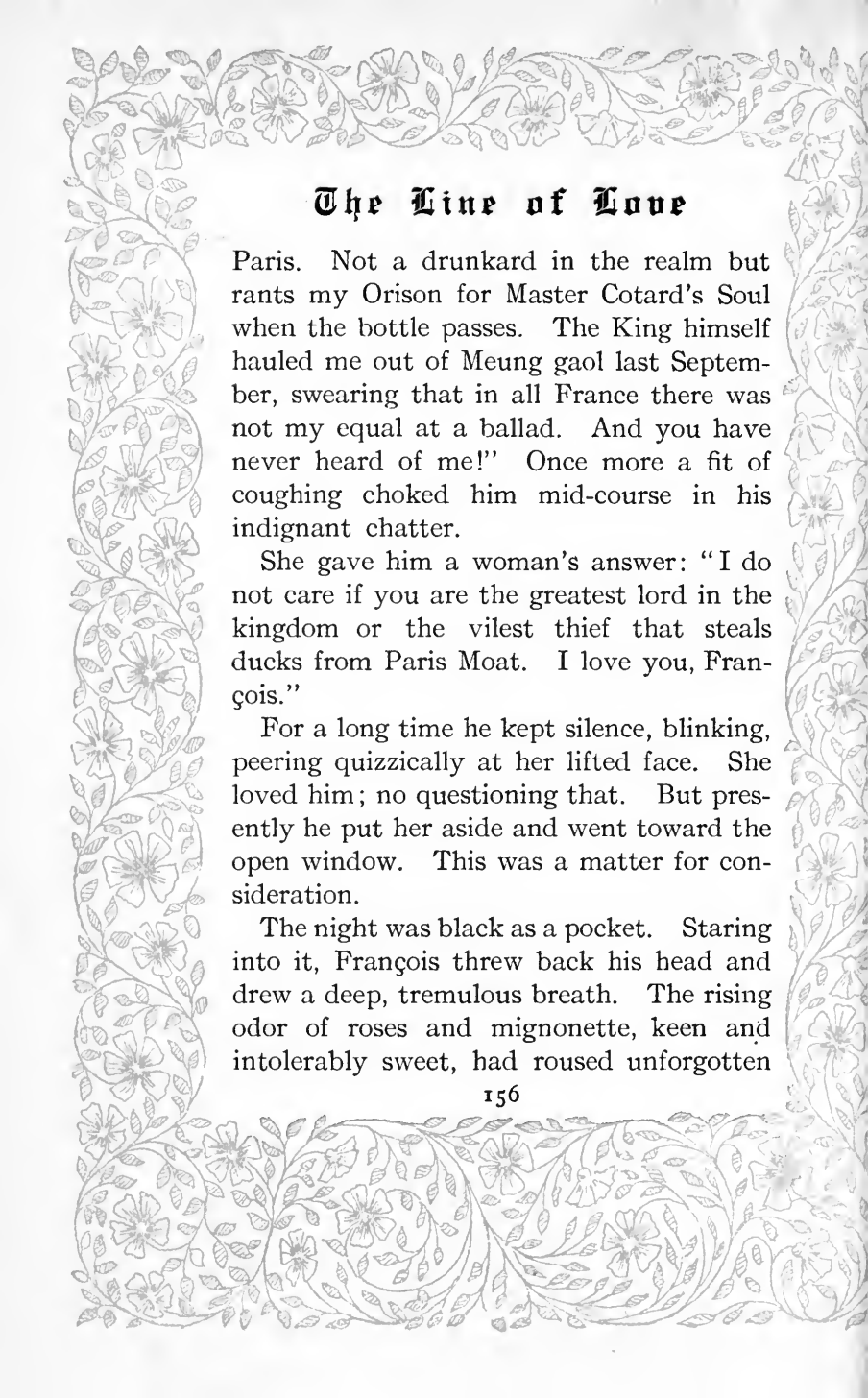
In Necessity's Mortar

When he had ended, Catherine came to him and took both his hands in hers and lifted them to her lips. "God, God, God!" she sobbed, and her voice was the flat voice of an old woman.

François pushed her away. Then he strode to the mirror and regarded it intently. With a snarl, he turned about. "Yes," said he; "you killed François de Montcorbier as surely as Montcorbier killed Sermaise. Eh, Sovereign Virgin! that is scant cause for grief. You made François Villon. What do you think of him, lass?"

She echoed the name. It was in many ways a seasoned name, but one unaccustomed to disregard. Accordingly François sneered.

"Now, by all the fourteen joys and sorrows of Our Lady! I believe that you have never heard of François Villon! The Rue Saint Jacques has not heard of François Villon! Pigs, pigs, that dare not peep out of their sty! Why, I have capped verses with the Duke of Orléans. The very street-boys know my Ballad of the Women of



The Line of Love

Paris. Not a drunkard in the realm but rants my Orison for Master Cotard's Soul when the bottle passes. The King himself hauled me out of Meung gaol last September, swearing that in all France there was not my equal at a ballad. And you have never heard of me!" Once more a fit of coughing choked him mid-course in his indignant chatter.

She gave him a woman's answer: "I do not care if you are the greatest lord in the kingdom or the vilest thief that steals ducks from Paris Moat. I love you, François."

For a long time he kept silence, blinking, peering quizzically at her lifted face. She loved him; no questioning that. But presently he put her aside and went toward the open window. This was a matter for consideration.

The night was black as a pocket. Staring into it, François threw back his head and drew a deep, tremulous breath. The rising odor of roses and mignonette, keen and intolerably sweet, had roused unforgotten



“THE KING HIMSELF HAULED ME OUT OF MEUNG GAOL.”

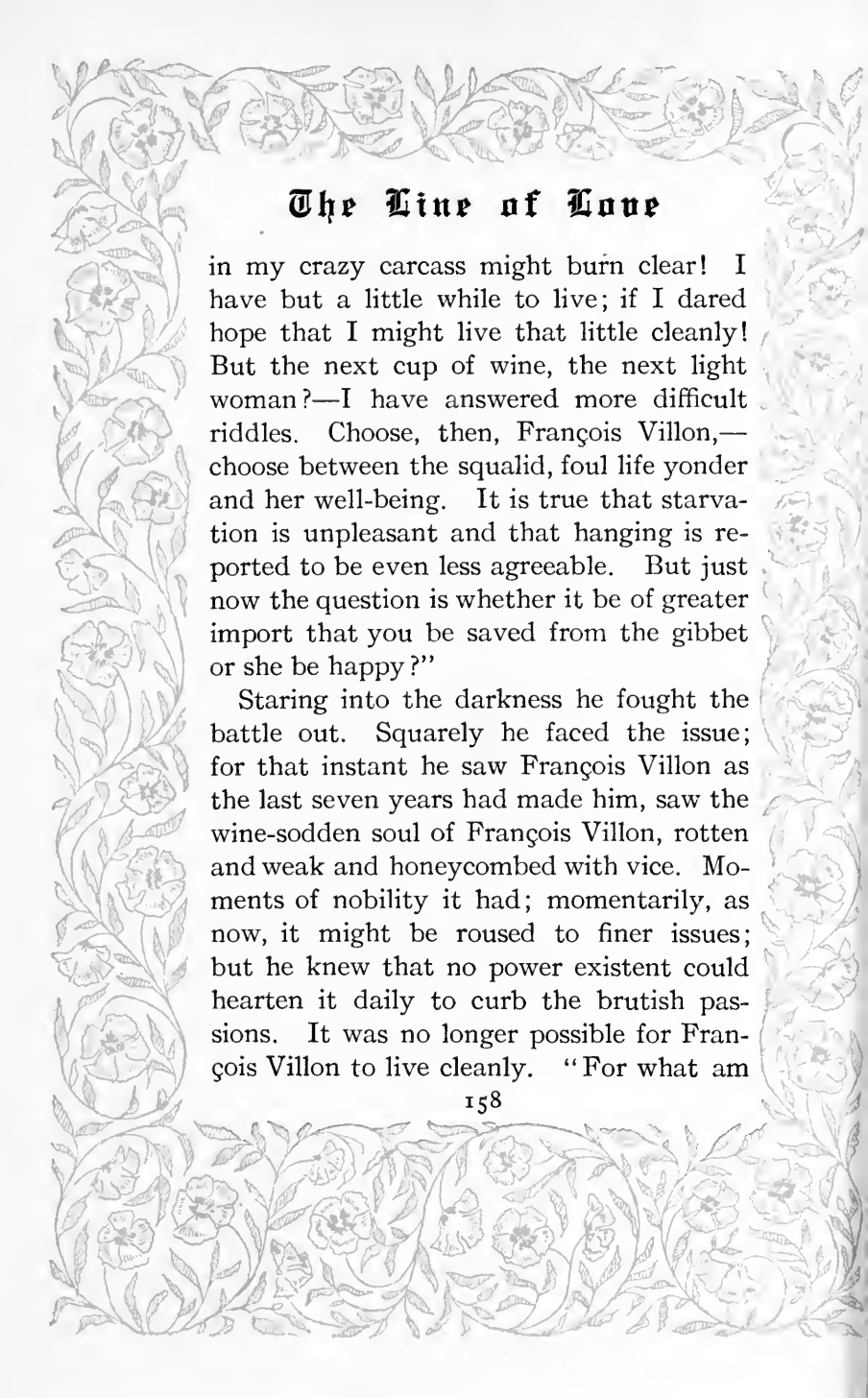


In Necessity's Mortar

pulses in his blood, had set shame and joy a-drum in his breast.

She loved him! Through all these years, with a woman's unreasoning fidelity she had loved him. He knew well enough how matters stood between her and Noël d'Arnaye; the host of the Crowned Ox had been garrulous that evening. But it was he whom she loved. She was rich. Here for the asking was a competence, love, an ingleside of his own. And he feared to ask.

"Because I love her. Mother of God! has there been in my life a day, an hour, a moment when I have not loved her! To see her once was all that I had craved,—as a lost soul might covet, ere the Pit take him, one splendid glimpse of Heaven and the Nine Blessed Orders at their fiddling. And I find that she loves me—me! Fate must have her jest, I perceive, though the firmament crack for it. She would have been content enough with Noël, thinking me dead. And with me?" Contemplatively he spat out of the window. "Eh, if I dared hope that this last flicker of life left

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of a repeating pattern of circular floral motifs connected by a vine-like structure. The flowers are simple in design, with five petals and a central stem. The leaves are elongated and pointed. The entire border is rendered in a light, sketchy style.

The Line of Love

in my crazy carcass might burn clear! I have but a little while to live; if I dared hope that I might live that little cleanly! But the next cup of wine, the next light woman?—I have answered more difficult riddles. Choose, then, François Villon,—choose between the squalid, foul life yonder and her well-being. It is true that starvation is unpleasant and that hanging is reported to be even less agreeable. But just now the question is whether it be of greater import that you be saved from the gibbet or she be happy?"

Staring into the darkness he fought the battle out. Squarely he faced the issue; for that instant he saw François Villon as the last seven years had made him, saw the wine-sodden soul of François Villon, rotten and weak and honeycombed with vice. Moments of nobility it had; momentarily, as now, it might be roused to finer issues; but he knew that no power existent could hearten it daily to curb the brutish passions. It was no longer possible for François Villon to live cleanly. "For what am

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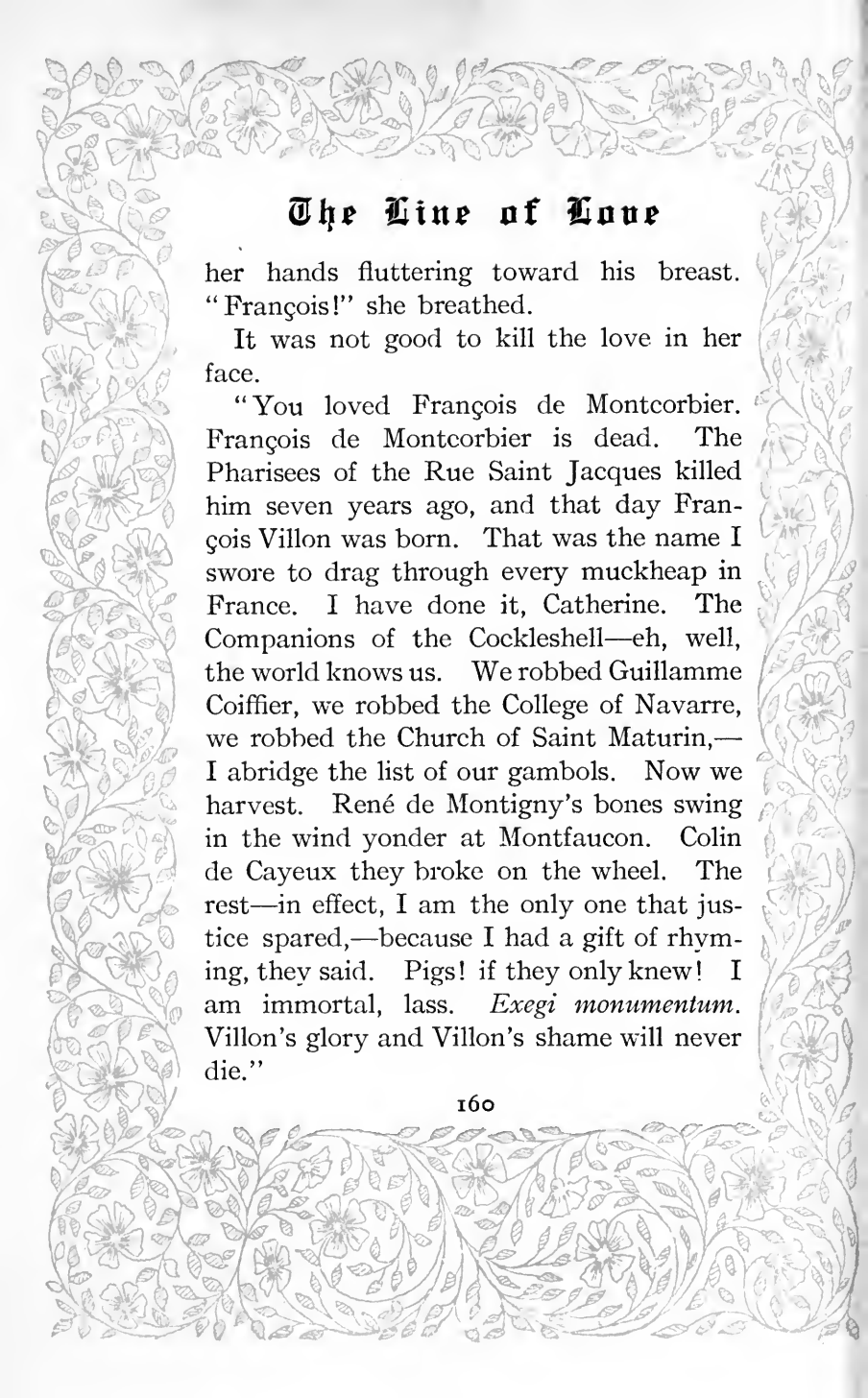
In Necessity's Mortar

I?—a hog with a voice. And shall I hazard her life's happiness to get me a more comfortable sty?"

He turned with a quick gesture.

"Listen," François said. "Yonder is Paris,—laughing, tragic Paris, who once had need of a singer to proclaim her splendor and all her misery. Fate made the man; in necessity's mortar she pounded his soul into the shape Fate needed. To king's courts she lifted him; to thieves' hovels she thrust him down; Lutetia's palaces and abbeys and taverns and lupanars and gutters and prisons and its very gallows—Fate dragged him past each in turn that he might make the Song of Paris. He could not have made it here in the smug Rue Saint Jacques. Well! the song is made, Catherine. So long as Paris endures, François Villon will not be forgot. Villon the singer Fate fashioned to her liking; Villon the man she has damned body and soul. And by God! the song was worth it!"

She gave a startled cry and ran to him,

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and scrolling vines with leaves, creating a frame around the central text.

The Line of Love

her hands fluttering toward his breast. "François!" she breathed.

It was not good to kill the love in her face.

"You loved François de Montcorbier. François de Montcorbier is dead. The Pharisees of the Rue Saint Jacques killed him seven years ago, and that day François Villon was born. That was the name I swore to drag through every muckheap in France. I have done it, Catherine. The Companions of the Cockleshell—eh, well, the world knows us. We robbed Guillaume Coiffier, we robbed the College of Navarre, we robbed the Church of Saint Maturin,— I abridge the list of our gambols. Now we harvest. René de Montigny's bones swing in the wind yonder at Montfaucon. Colin de Cayeux they broke on the wheel. The rest—in effect, I am the only one that justice spared,—because I had a gift of rhyming, they said. Pigs! if they only knew! I am immortal, lass. *Exegi monumentum.* Villon's glory and Villon's shame will never die."



"VILLON THE SINGER FATE FASHIONED TO HER LIKING"



In Necessity's Mortar

He flung back his head and laughed harshly, tittering over that calamitous, shabby secret between God and François Villon. She had drawn a little away from him. She saw him exultant in infamy, steeped to the hair in infamy. But still the nearness of her, the faint perfume of her, shook in his veins, and still he must play the miserable comedy to the end, since the prize he played for was her happiness.

"A thief—a common thief!" But again her hands fluttered back. "I drove you to it. Mine is the shame."

"Holy Macaire! what is a theft or two? Hunger that causes the wolf to sally from the wood, may well make a man do worse than steal. I could tell you—Ask in Hell of one Thevenin Pensete, who knifed him in the cemetery of Saint John," he hissed at her.

He hinted a lie, for it was Montigny who killed Thevenin Pensete. Villon played without scruple now.

Catherine's face went white. "Stop," she pleaded; "no more, François,—ah, Holy Virgin! do not tell me any more."

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including roses and smaller blossoms, connected by leafy vines. The style is reminiscent of Art Nouveau or early 20th-century decorative arts.

The Line of Love

But after a little she came to him, touching him with a curious aversion. "Mine is the shame. It was my jealousy, my vanity, François, that thrust you back into temptation. And we are told by those in holy orders that the compassion of God is infinite. If you still care for me, I will be your wife."

Yet she shuddered.

He saw it. His face, too, was paper.

"He, he, he!" François laughed, horribly. "If I still love you! Go, ask of Denise, of Jacqueline, of Pierrette, of Marion the Statue, of Jehanne of Brittany, of Blanche Slippermaker, of Fat Peg,—ask of any trollop in all Paris how François Villon loves. You thought me faithful! You thought that I preferred you to any painted light o' love! Eh, I perceive that the credo of the Rue Saint Jacques is somewhat narrow-minded. For my part I find one woman much the same as another." And his voice shook, seeing how beautiful she was, seeing how she suffered. But he managed a laugh.

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In Necessity's Mortar

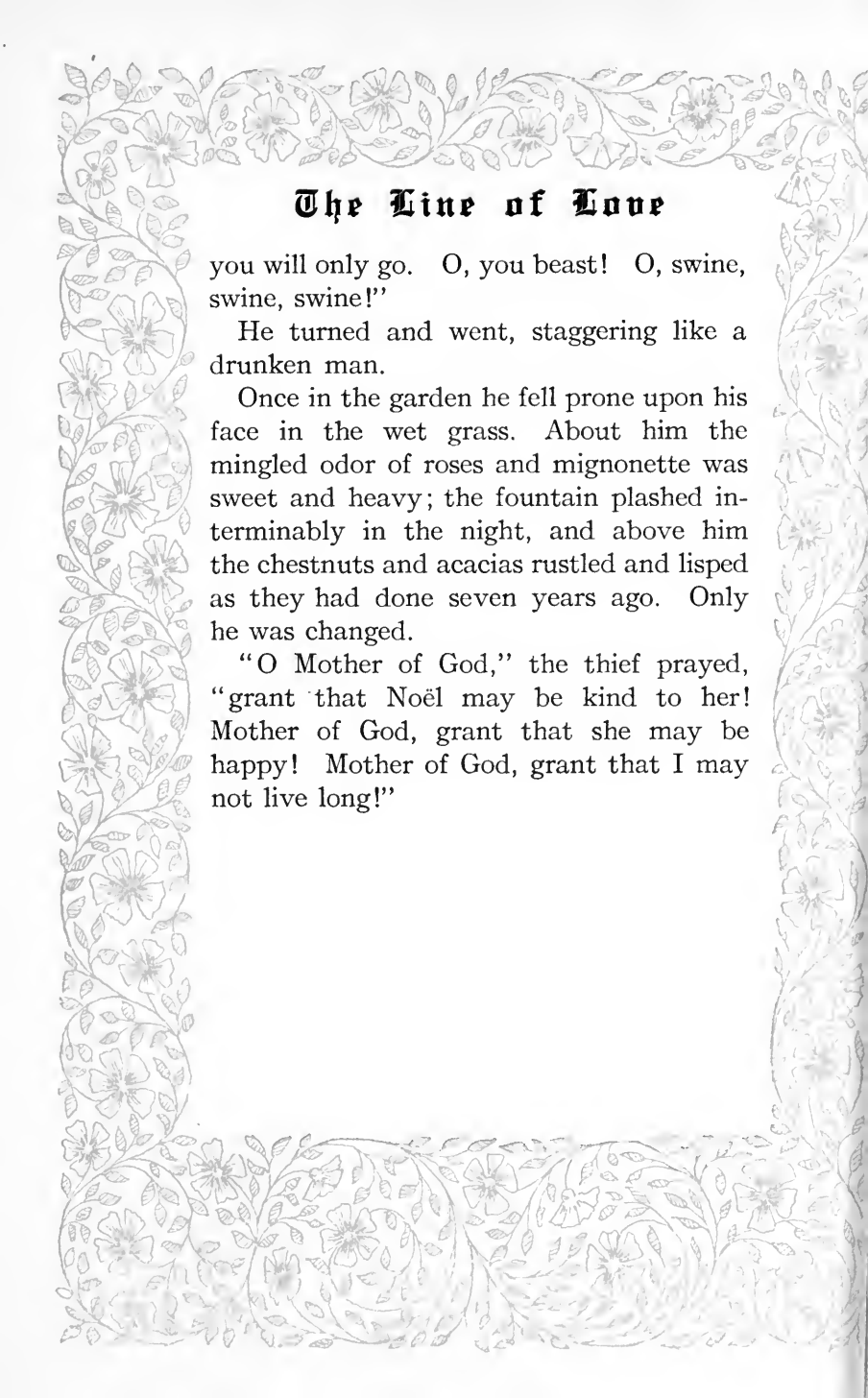
"I do not believe you," Catherine said, in muffled tones. "François! You loved me, François. Ah, boy, boy!" she cried, with a pitiable lift of speech; "come back to me, O boy that I loved!"

It was a difficult business. But he grinned in her face.

"He is dead. Let François de Montcorbier rest in his grave. Your voice is very sweet, Catherine, and—and he could refuse you nothing, could he, lass? Ah, God, God, God!" he cried, in his agony; "why can you not believe me? I tell you Necessity pounds us in her mortar to what shape she will. I tell you that Montcorbier loved you, but François Villon prefers Fat Peg. An ill cat seeks an ill rat." And with this a sudden tranquillity fell upon his soul, for he knew that he had won.

Her face told him that. Loathing. He saw it there.

"I am sorry," Catherine said, dully. "I am sorry. O, for God's sake!" the girl wailed, on a sudden; "go, go! Do you want money? I will give you anything if



The Line of Love

you will only go. O, you beast! O, swine, swine, swine!"

He turned and went, staggering like a drunken man.

Once in the garden he fell prone upon his face in the wet grass. About him the mingled odor of roses and mignonette was sweet and heavy; the fountain plashed interminably in the night, and above him the chestnuts and acacias rustled and lispd as they had done seven years ago. Only he was changed.

"O Mother of God," the thief prayed, "grant that Noël may be kind to her! Mother of God, grant that she may be happy! Mother of God, grant that I may not live long!"

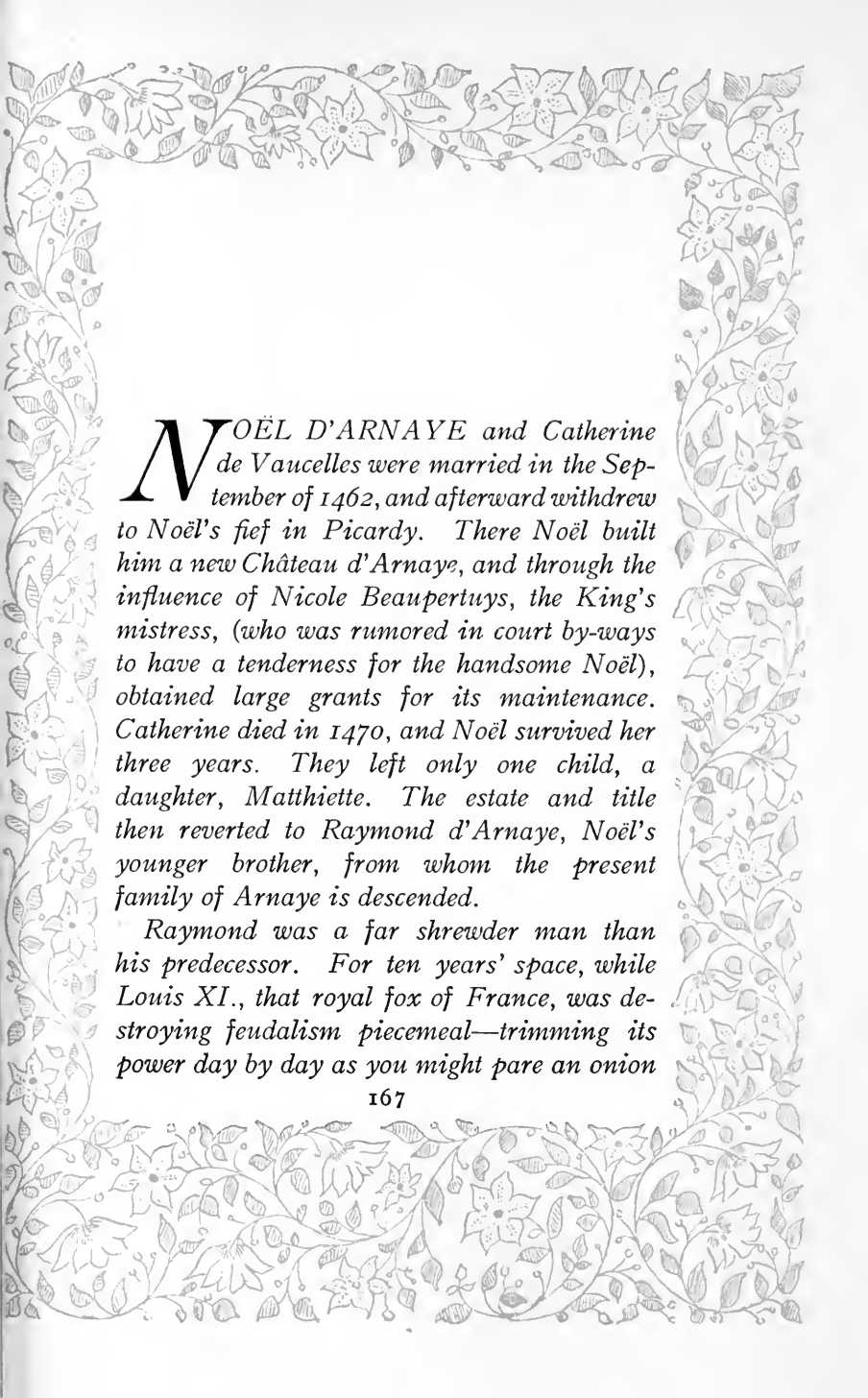
A decorative border of roses and leaves surrounds the text. The roses are in various stages of bloom, and the leaves are detailed with veins. The border is composed of several strands of vines that curve and overlap, creating a lush, garden-like frame.

V

JULY 17, 1484

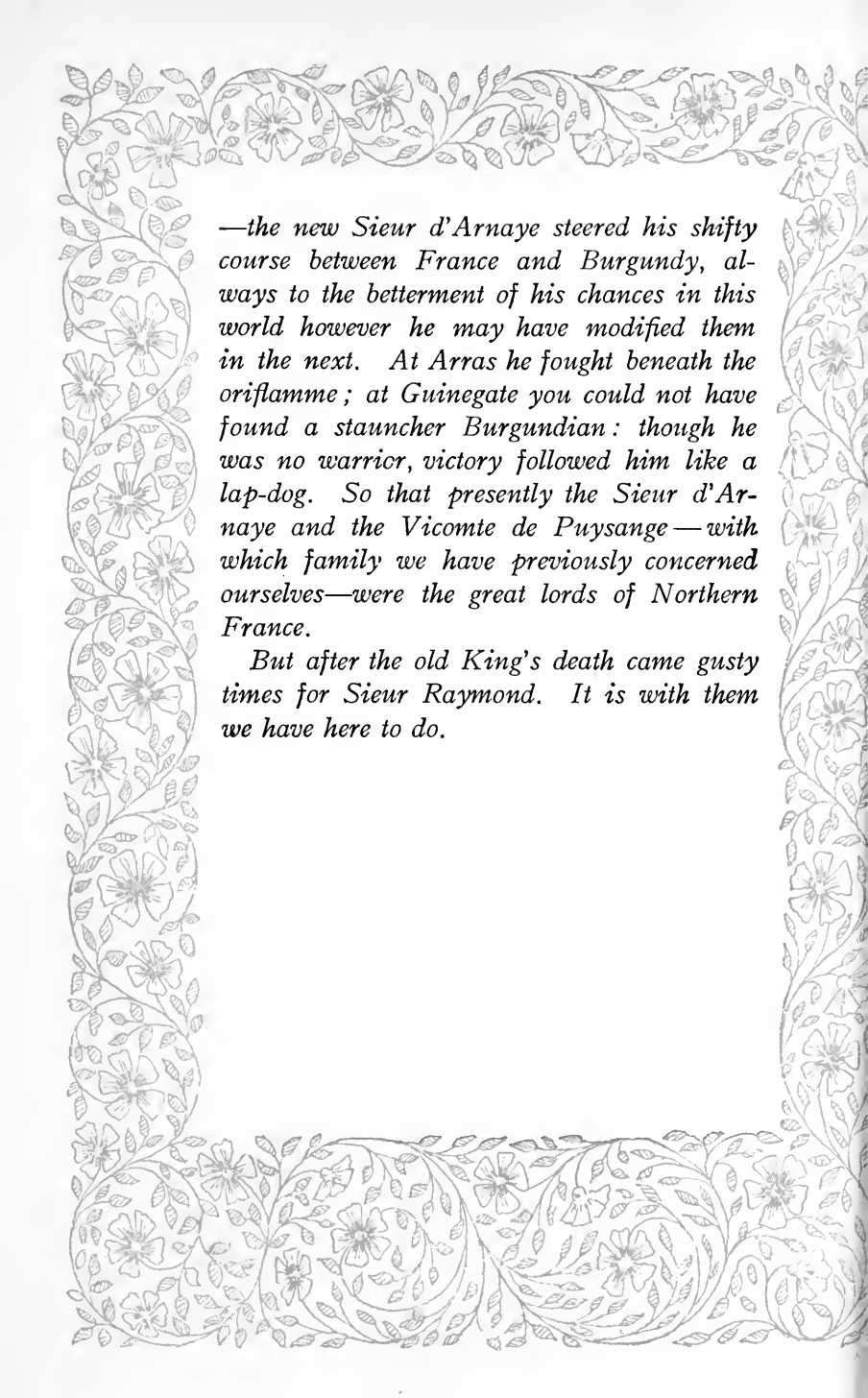
“ Et puis il se rencontre icy une aventure merveilleuse, c'est que le fils de Grand Turc ressemble à Cléonte, à peu de chose près ”



A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and various leaf shapes, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

NOËL D'ARNAYE and Catherine de Vaucelles were married in the September of 1462, and afterward withdrew to Noël's fief in Picardy. There Noël built him a new Château d'Arnaye, and through the influence of Nicole Beaupertuys, the King's mistress, (who was rumored in court by-ways to have a tenderness for the handsome Noël), obtained large grants for its maintenance. Catherine died in 1470, and Noël survived her three years. They left only one child, a daughter, Matthiette. The estate and title then reverted to Raymond d'Arnaye, Noël's younger brother, from whom the present family of Arnaye is descended.

Raymond was a far shrewder man than his predecessor. For ten years' space, while Louis XI., that royal fox of France, was destroying feudalism piecemeal—trimming its power day by day as you might pare an onion

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of a repeating pattern of five-petaled flowers on a vine with small leaves, forming a rectangular frame around the central text.

—the new *Sieur d'Arnay* steered his shifty course between France and Burgundy, always to the betterment of his chances in this world however he may have modified them in the next. At Arras he fought beneath the *oriflamme*; at Guinegate you could not have found a stauncher Burgundian: though he was no warrior, victory followed him like a lap-dog. So that presently the *Sieur d'Arnay* and the *Vicomte de Puyssange*—with which family we have previously concerned ourselves—were the great lords of Northern France.

But after the old King's death came gusty times for *Sieur Raymond*. It is with them we have here to do.



The Episode Called The Conspiracy of Arnaye

I

Policy Tempered with Singing

AND so," said the Sieur d'Arnaye, as he laid down the letter, "we may look for the coming of Monsieur de Puyssange to-morrow."

The Demoiselle Matthiette contorted her features in an expression of disapproval. "So soon!" said she. "I had thought—"

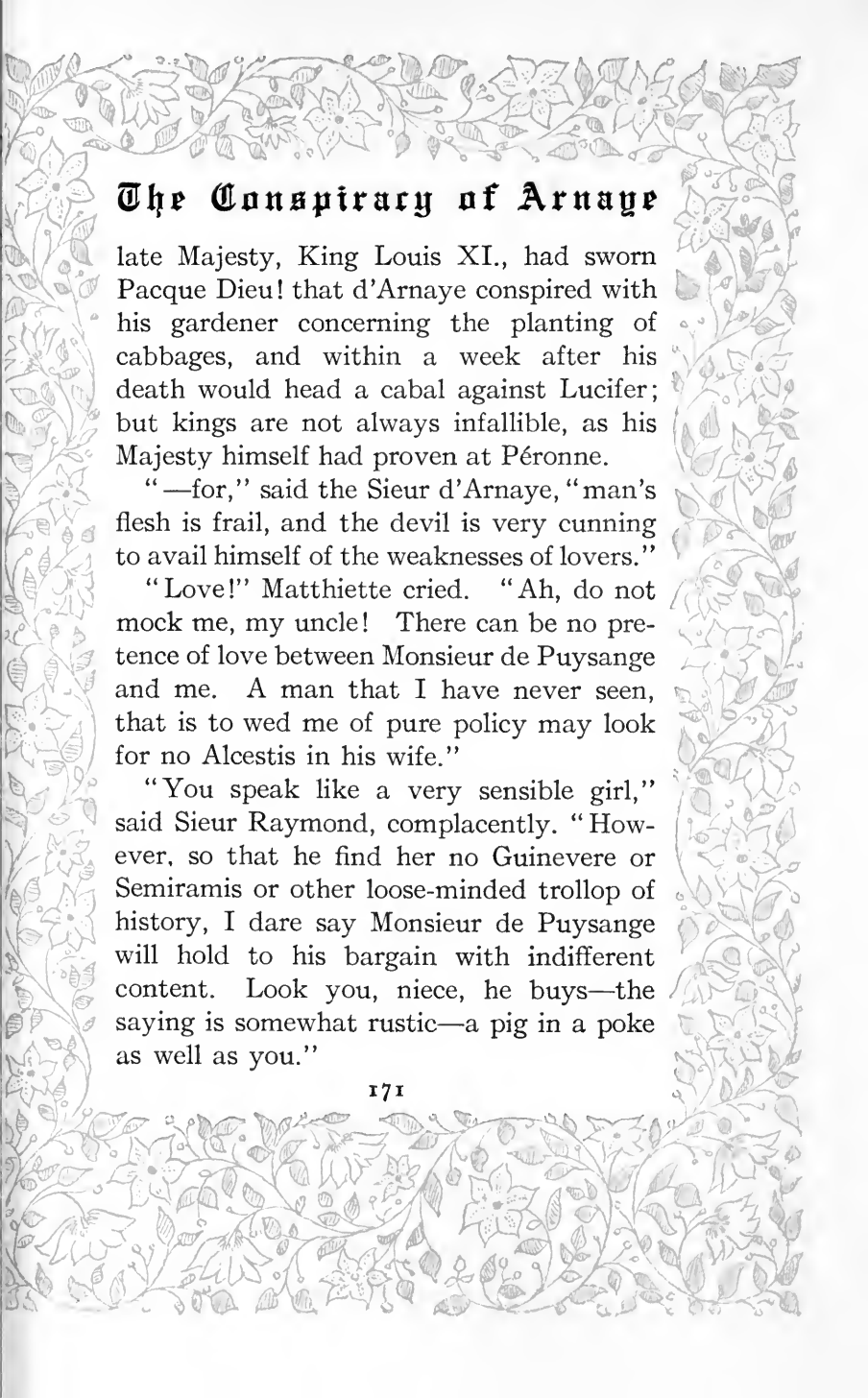
"Ouais, my dear niece, Love rides by ordinary with a dripping spur, and is still as arbitrary as in the day when Mars was taken with a net and amorous Jove bel-



The Line of Love

lowed in Europa's kail-yard. My faith! if he distemper thus the spectral ichor of the gods, is it remarkable that the warmer blood of man pulses rather vehemently at his bidding? It were the least of his miracles that a lusty bridegroom of some twenty-and-odd outstrip the dial by a scant week. For love—I might tell you such tales—”

Sieur Raymond crossed his white, dimpled hands over a well-rounded paunch and chuckled reminiscently; had he spoken doubtless he would have left Master Jehan de Troyes very little to reveal in his Scandalous Chronicle: but on a sudden, remembering with whom he conversed, his lean face assumed an expression of placid sanctity, and the somewhat unholy flame died out of his green eyes. He resembled nothing so much as a plethoric cat purring over the follies of kittenhood. You would have taken oath that a cultured taste for good living was the chief of his offences, and that this benevolent gentleman had some sixty well-spent years to his credit. True, his

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is composed of several overlapping floral motifs that create a continuous, ornate frame around the page's content.

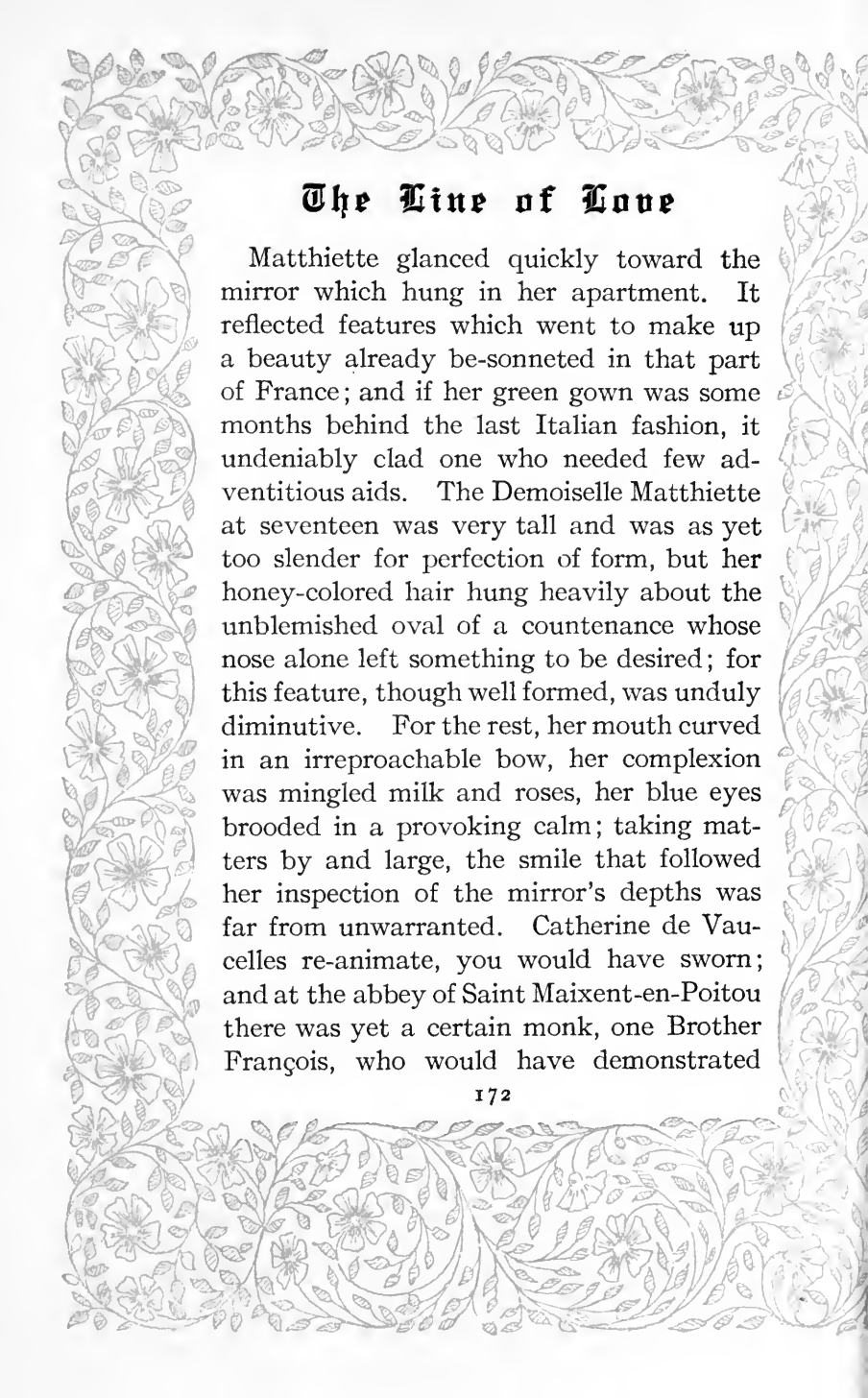
The Conspiracy of Arnage

late Majesty, King Louis XI., had sworn *Pacque Dieu!* that d'Arnage conspired with his gardener concerning the planting of cabbages, and within a week after his death would head a cabal against Lucifer; but kings are not always infallible, as his Majesty himself had proven at Péronne.

"—for," said the *Sieur d'Arnage*, "man's flesh is frail, and the devil is very cunning to avail himself of the weaknesses of lovers."

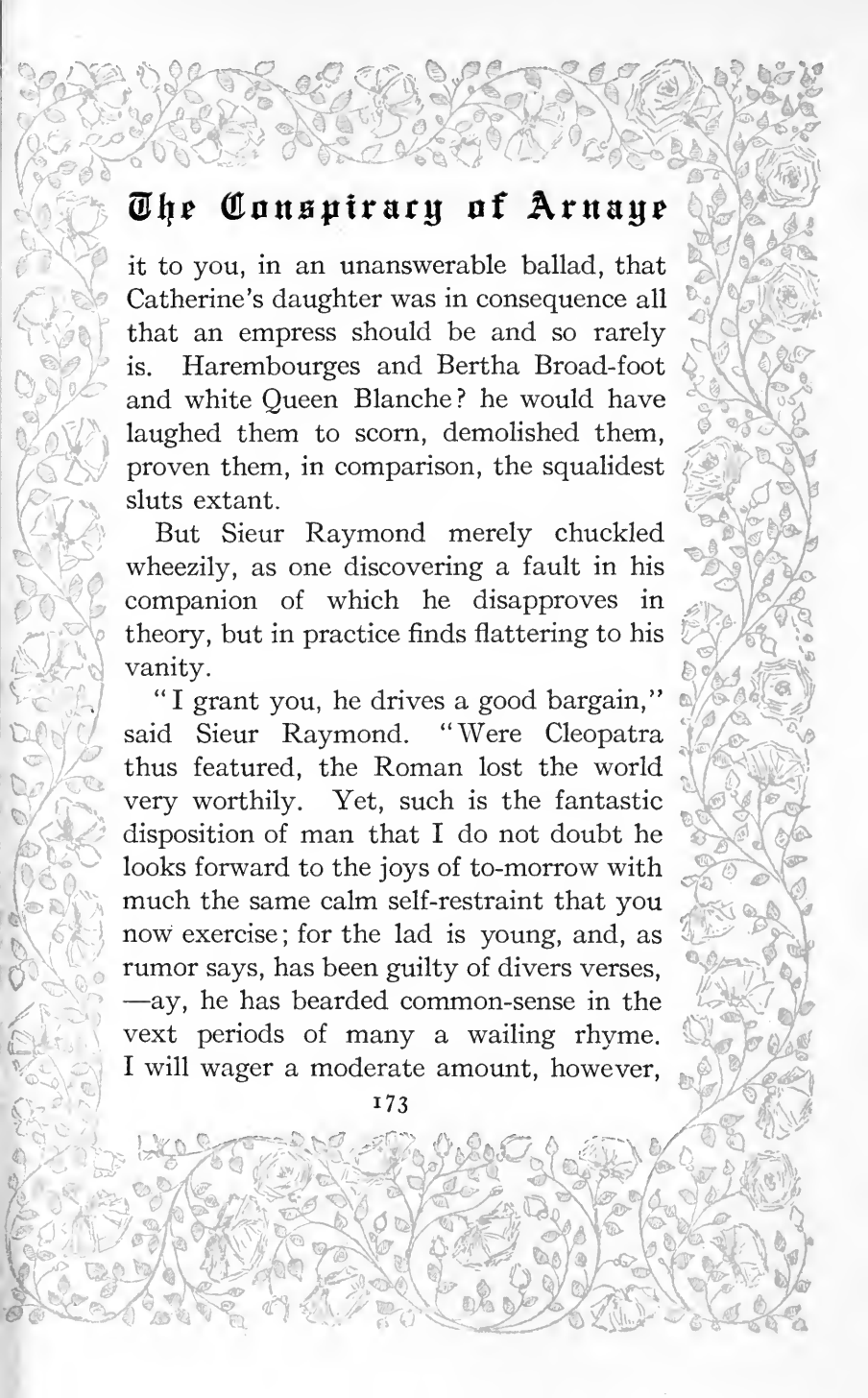
"Love!" *Matthiette* cried. "Ah, do not mock me, my uncle! There can be no pretence of love between *Monsieur de Puysange* and me. A man that I have never seen, that is to wed me of pure policy may look for no *Alcestis* in his wife."

"You speak like a very sensible girl," said *Sieur Raymond*, complacently. "However, so that he find her no *Guinevere* or *Semiramis* or other loose-minded trollop of history, I dare say *Monsieur de Puysange* will hold to his bargain with indifferent content. Look you, niece, he buys—the saying is somewhat rustic—a pig in a poke as well as you."

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and arranged in a repeating pattern along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

The Line of Love

Matthiette glanced quickly toward the mirror which hung in her apartment. It reflected features which went to make up a beauty already be-sonneted in that part of France; and if her green gown was some months behind the last Italian fashion, it undeniably clad one who needed few adventitious aids. The Demoiselle Matthiette at seventeen was very tall and was as yet too slender for perfection of form, but her honey-colored hair hung heavily about the unblemished oval of a countenance whose nose alone left something to be desired; for this feature, though well formed, was unduly diminutive. For the rest, her mouth curved in an irreproachable bow, her complexion was mingled milk and roses, her blue eyes brooded in a provoking calm; taking matters by and large, the smile that followed her inspection of the mirror's depths was far from unwarranted. Catherine de Vaucelles re-animate, you would have sworn; and at the abbey of Saint Maixent-en-Poitou there was yet a certain monk, one Brother François, who would have demonstrated



The Conspiracy of Arnage

it to you, in an unanswerable ballad, that Catherine's daughter was in consequence all that an empress should be and so rarely is. Harembourges and Bertha Broad-foot and white Queen Blanche? he would have laughed them to scorn, demolished them, proven them, in comparison, the squalidest sluts extant.

But Sieur Raymond merely chuckled wheezily, as one discovering a fault in his companion of which he disapproves in theory, but in practice finds flattering to his vanity.

"I grant you, he drives a good bargain," said Sieur Raymond. "Were Cleopatra thus featured, the Roman lost the world very worthily. Yet, such is the fantastic disposition of man that I do not doubt he looks forward to the joys of to-morrow with much the same calm self-restraint that you now exercise; for the lad is young, and, as rumor says, has been guilty of divers verses,—ay, he has bearded common-sense in the vext periods of many a wailing rhyme. I will wager a moderate amount, however,



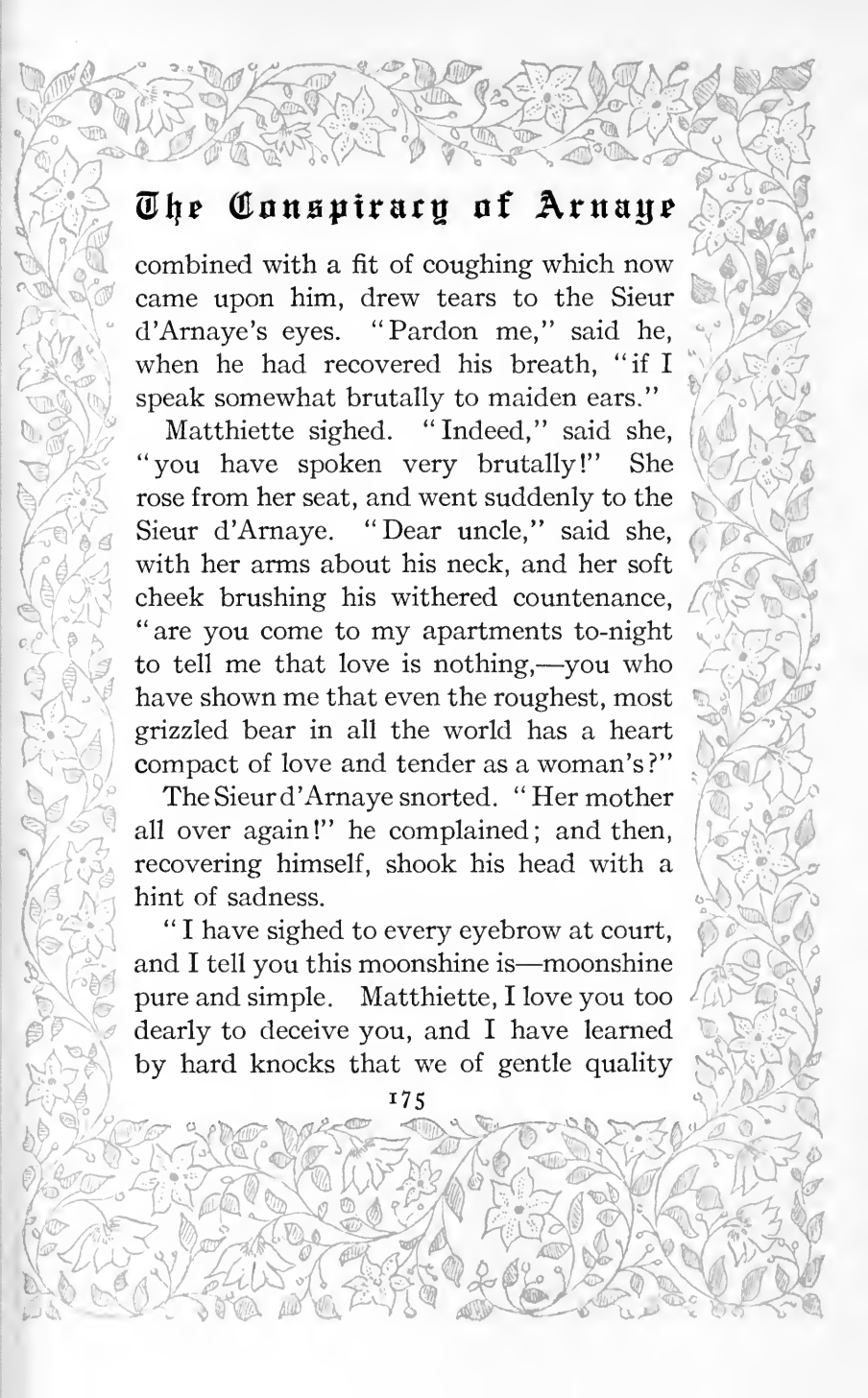
The Line of Love

that the Vicomte, like a sensible young man, keeps these whimsies of flames and dames laid away in lavender for festivals and the like; they are somewhat too fine for everyday wear."

He sipped the sugared wine that stood beside him. "Like any sensible young man," he repeated, in a meditative fashion that was half a query.

Matthiette stirred uneasily. "Is love, then, nothing?" she murmured.

"Love!" Sieur Raymond barked like a kicked dog. "It is very discreetly fabled that love was born of the mists at Cythera. Thus, look you, even ballad-mongers admit it comes of a short-lived family, that fade as time wears on. I may have a passion for fogs, and, doubtless, the morning mists are beautiful; but if I give rein to my admiration, breakfast is likely to grow cold. I deduce that mere beauty, as represented by the sunrise, is less worthy of consideration than utility, as personified by the frying-pan. And love! A niece of mine prating of love!" The idea of such an occurrence,

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and have small dots in their centers. The leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is symmetrical and runs along the top, sides, and bottom of the page.

The Conspiracy of Arnaye

combined with a fit of coughing which now came upon him, drew tears to the *Sieur d'Arnaye's* eyes. "Pardon me," said he, when he had recovered his breath, "if I speak somewhat brutally to maiden ears."

Matthiette sighed. "Indeed," said she, "you have spoken very brutally!" She rose from her seat, and went suddenly to the *Sieur d'Arnaye*. "Dear uncle," said she, with her arms about his neck, and her soft cheek brushing his withered countenance, "are you come to my apartments to-night to tell me that love is nothing,—you who have shown me that even the roughest, most grizzled bear in all the world has a heart compact of love and tender as a woman's?"

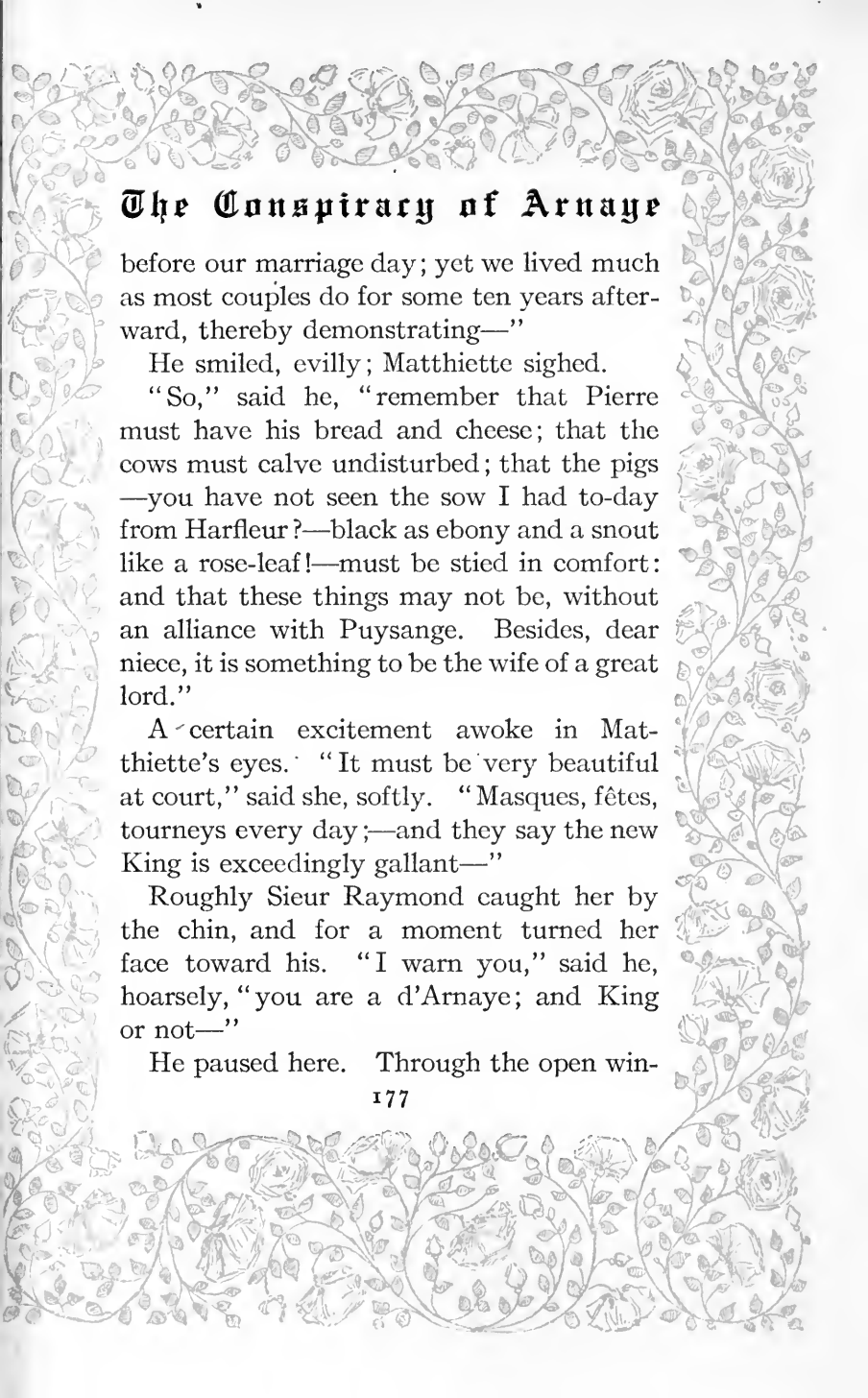
The *Sieur d'Arnaye* snorted. "Her mother all over again!" he complained; and then, recovering himself, shook his head with a hint of sadness.

"I have sighed to every eyebrow at court, and I tell you this moonshine is—moonshine pure and simple. Matthiette, I love you too dearly to deceive you, and I have learned by hard knocks that we of gentle quality

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and scrolling vines with leaves, creating a frame around the central text.

The Line of Love

may not lightly follow our own inclinations. Happiness is a luxury that the great can very rarely afford. Granted that you have an aversion to this marriage. Yet consider this: Arnaye and Puyange united may sit snug and let the world wag; otherwise, lying here between the Breton and the Austrian, we are so many nuts in a door-crack, at the next wind's mercy. And yonder in the South, Orléans and Dunois are raising every devil in Hell's register! Ah, no, ma mie; I put it to you fairly is it of greater import that a girl have her callow heart's desire than that a province go free of Monsieur War and Madame Rapine?" Sieur Raymond struck his hand upon the table with considerable heat. "Everywhere Death yawps at the frontier; will you, a d'Arnaye, bid him enter and surfeit? An alliance with Puyange alone may save us. Eheu, it is, doubtless, pitiful that a maid may not wait and wed her chosen paladin, but our vassals demand these sacrifices. For example, do you think I wedded my late wife in any fervor of adoration? I had never seen her



The Conspiracy of Arnaye

before our marriage day; yet we lived much as most couples do for some ten years afterward, thereby demonstrating—”

He smiled, evilly; Matthiette sighed.

“So,” said he, “remember that Pierre must have his bread and cheese; that the cows must calve undisturbed; that the pigs—you have not seen the sow I had to-day from Harfleur?—black as ebony and a snout like a rose-leaf!—must be stied in comfort: and that these things may not be, without an alliance with Puyange. Besides, dear niece, it is something to be the wife of a great lord.”

A certain excitement awoke in Matthiette’s eyes. “It must be very beautiful at court,” said she, softly. “Masques, fêtes, tourneys every day;—and they say the new King is exceedingly gallant—”

Roughly Sieur Raymond caught her by the chin, and for a moment turned her face toward his. “I warn you,” said he, hoarsely, “you are a d’Arnaye; and King or not—”

He paused here. Through the open win-



The Line of Love

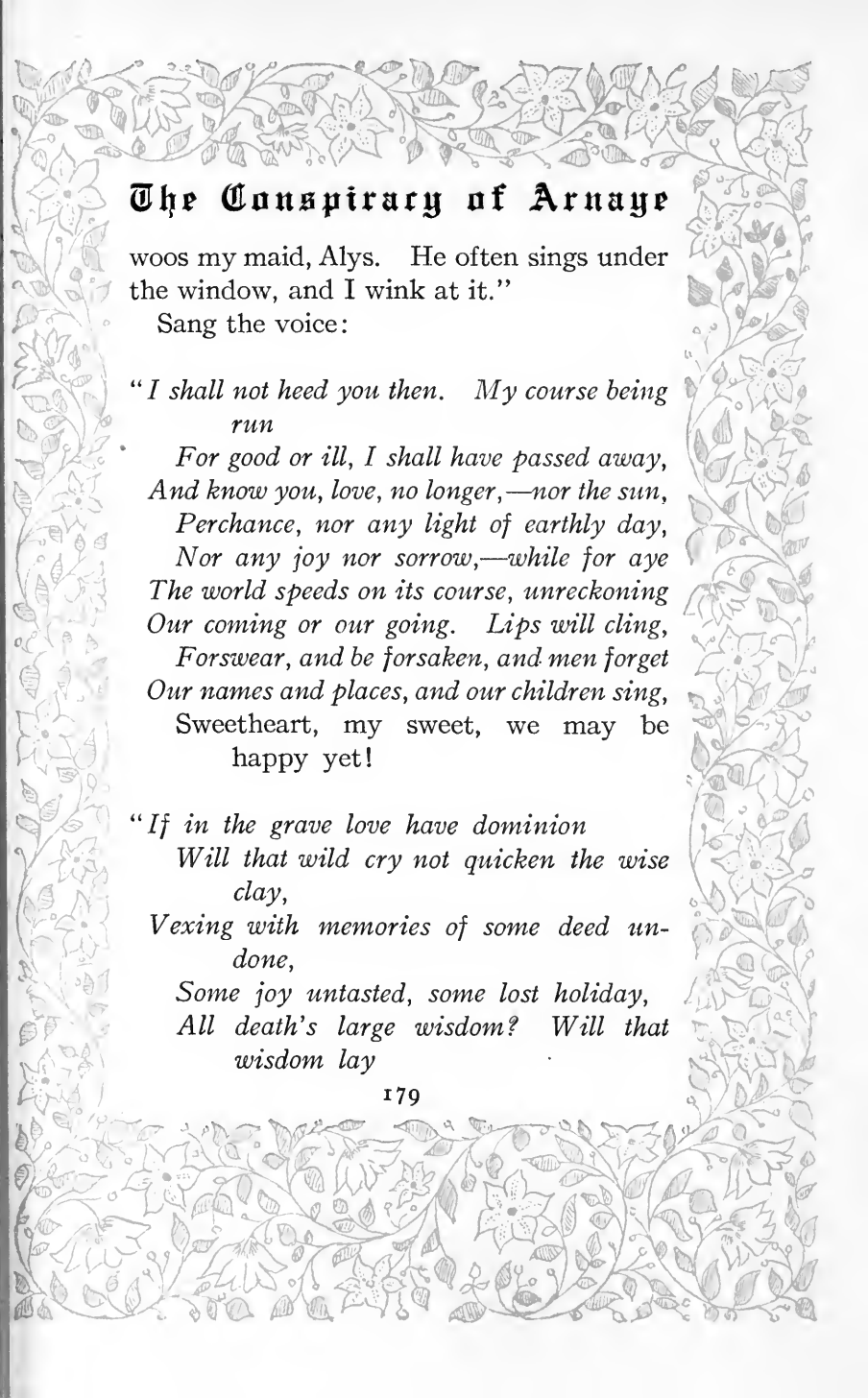
dow came the voice of one without, singing
to the demure accompaniment of a lute.

“Hey?” said the Sieur d’Arnaye.
Sang the voice:

*“When you are very old, and I am gone
Out of your life, it may be you will say—
Hearing my name and holding me as one
Long dead to you—in some half-jesting
way
Of speech, sweet as vague heraldings of
May
Rumored in woods when first the throstles
sing—
He loved me once. And straightway mur-
muring
My half-forgotten rhymes, you will regret
The vanished day when I was wont to sing,
Sweetheart, my sweet, we may be
happy yet!”*

“Now, may I never sit among the saints,”
said the Sieur d’Arnaye, “if that is not the
voice of Raoul de Frison, my new page.”

“Hush,” Matthiette whispered. “He

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is composed of a repeating pattern of these elements, creating a frame for the page.

The Conspiracy of Arnage

woos my maid, Alys. He often sings under
the window, and I wink at it.”

Sang the voice:

“*I shall not heed you then. My course being
run*

*For good or ill, I shall have passed away,
And know you, love, no longer,—nor the sun,
Perchance, nor any light of earthly day,
Nor any joy nor sorrow,—while for aye
The world speeds on its course, unreckoning
Our coming or our going. Lips will cling,
Forswear, and be forsaken, and men forget
Our names and places, and our children sing,
Sweetheart, my sweet, we may be
happy yet!*

“*If in the grave love have dominion
Will that wild cry not quicken the wise
clay,
Vexing with memories of some deed un-
done,
Some joy untasted, some lost holiday,
All death’s large wisdom? Will that
wisdom lay*



The Line of Love

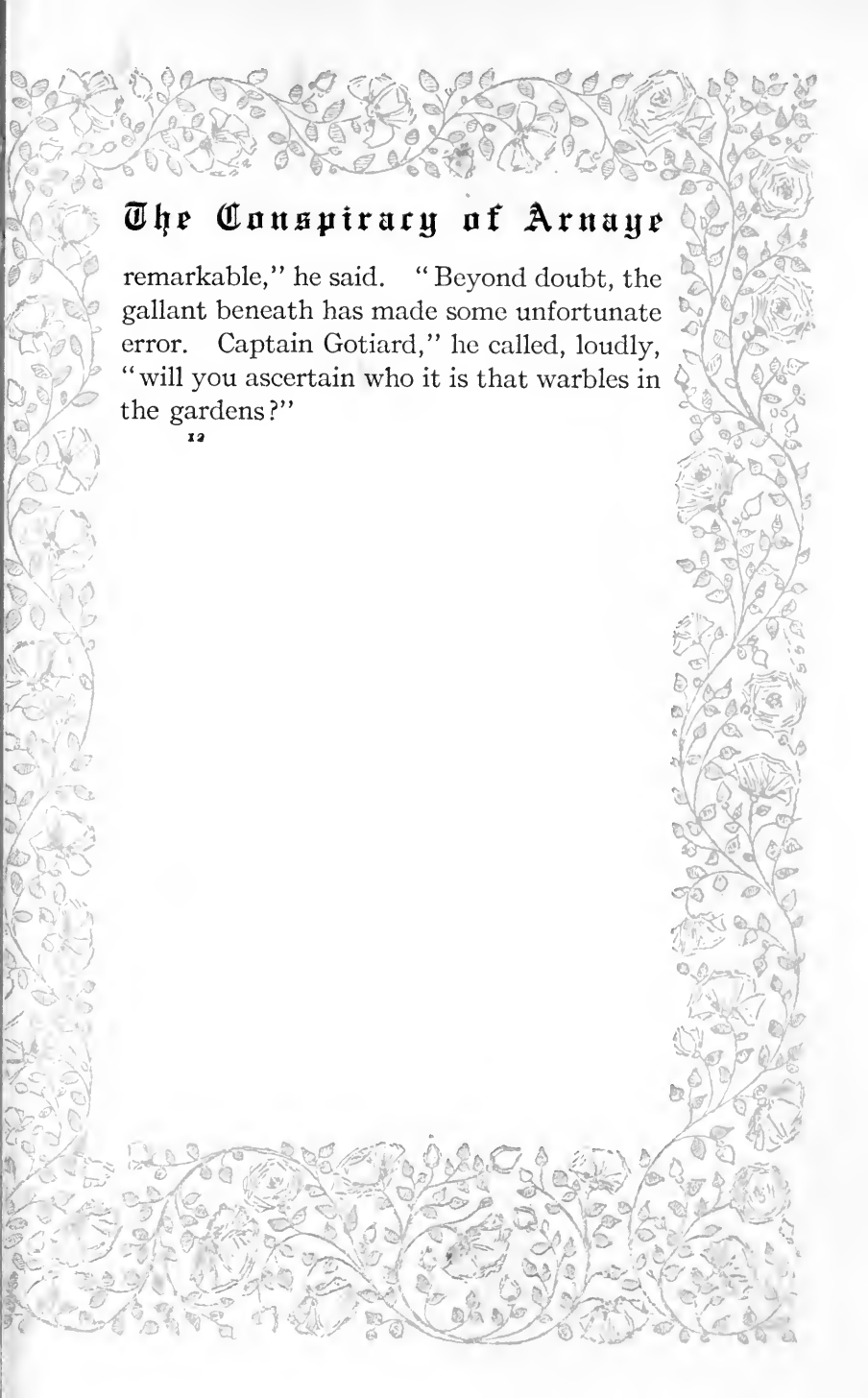
*The ghost of any sweet familiar thing
Come haggard from the Past, or ever bring
Forgetfulness of those two lovers met
Within the Springtide?—nor too wise to
sing,
Sweetheart, my sweet, we may be
happy yet!"*

*"Yea, though the years of vain remember-
ing
Draw nigh, and age be drear, yet in the
Spring
We meet and kiss. Ah, Lady Mat-
thiette,
Dear love, there is yet time for garnering!
Sweetheart, my sweet, we may be happy
yet!"*

"Dear, dear!" said the Sieur d'Arnaye.
"You mentioned your maid's name, I
think?"

"Alys," said Matthiette, with unwonted
humbleness.

Sieur Raymond spread out his hands in a
gesture of commiseration. "This is very

A decorative border of roses and leaves surrounds the text. The roses are in various stages of bloom, and the leaves are detailed with veins. The border is composed of several strands of vines that intertwine to form a rectangular frame around the central text.

The Conspiracy of Arnage

remarkable," he said. "Beyond doubt, the gallant beneath has made some unfortunate error. Captain Gotiard," he called, loudly, "will you ascertain who it is that warbles in the gardens?"


A decorative border of repeating floral motifs, possibly roses, with leaves and smaller flowers, framing the page.

II

Age Glasses the Text of Youth

COTIARD was not long in returning; he was followed by two men-at-arms, who held between them the discomfited minstrel. Envy alone could have described the lutanist as ill-favored; his close-fitting garb, wherein the brave reds of Autumn were judiciously mingled, at once set off a well-knit form and enhanced the dark beauty of a countenance less French than Italian in cast. The young man stood silent for a moment, his eyes mutely questioning the *Sieur d'Arnaye*.

“O, la, la, la!” chirped *Sieur Raymond*. “Captain, I think you are at liberty to retire.” He sipped his wine meditatively,

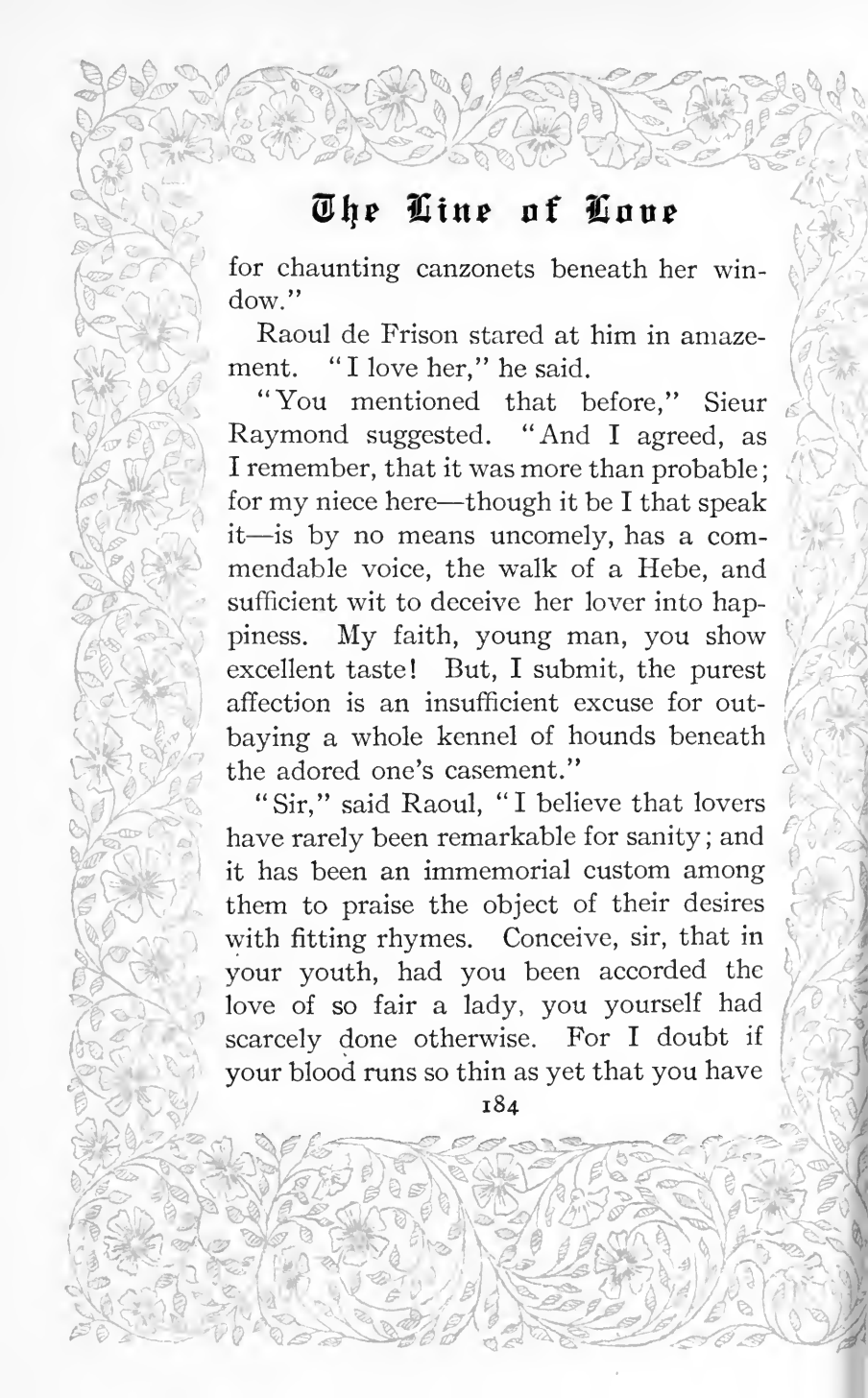


The Conspiracy of Arnage

as the men filed out. "Monsieur de Frison," he resumed, when the arras had fallen, "believe me, I grieve to interrupt your very moving and most excellently phrased ballad in this fashion. But the hour is somewhat late for melody, and the curiosity of old age is privileged. May one inquire, therefore, why you warble my nightingales to rest with this pleasing but—if I may venture a suggestion—rather ill-timed madrigal?"

The young man hesitated for an instant before replying. "Sir," said he, at length, "I confess that had I known of your whereabouts, the birds had gone without their lullaby. But you so rarely come to this wing of the château, that your presence here to-night is naturally unforeseen. As it is, since chance has betrayed my secret to you, I must make bold to avow it—it is that I love your niece."

"Hey, no doubt you do," Sieur Raymond assented, pleasantly. "Indeed, I think half the young men hereabout are in much the same predicament. But, my question, if I mistake not, related to your reason



The Line of Love

for chaunting canzonets beneath her window."

Raoul de Frison stared at him in amazement. "I love her," he said.

"You mentioned that before," Sieur Raymond suggested. "And I agreed, as I remember, that it was more than probable; for my niece here—though it be I that speak it—is by no means uncomely, has a commendable voice, the walk of a Hebe, and sufficient wit to deceive her lover into happiness. My faith, young man, you show excellent taste! But, I submit, the purest affection is an insufficient excuse for out-baying a whole kennel of hounds beneath the adored one's casement."

"Sir," said Raoul, "I believe that lovers have rarely been remarkable for sanity; and it has been an immemorial custom among them to praise the object of their desires with fitting rhymes. Conceive, sir, that in your youth, had you been accorded the love of so fair a lady, you yourself had scarcely done otherwise. For I doubt if your blood runs so thin as yet that you have



The Conspiracy of Arnaye

quite forgot young Raymond d'Arnaye and the gracious ladies that he loved,—I think that your heart must needs yet treasure the memories of divers moonlit nights, even such as this, when there was a great silence in the world, and the nested trees were astir with desire of the dawn, and your waking dreams were vexed with the singular favor of some woman's face. It is in the name of that young Raymond I now appeal to you."

"H'm!" said the Sieur d'Arnaye. "As I understand it, you appeal on the ground that you were coerced by the trees and led astray by the nightingales; and you desire me to punish your accomplices rather than you."

"Sir,—" said Raoul.

Sieur Raymond snarled. "You young dog, you know that in the most prosaic breast a minor poet survives his entombment,—and you endeavor to make capital of the knowledge. You know that I have a most sincere affection for your father, and have even contracted a liking for you,

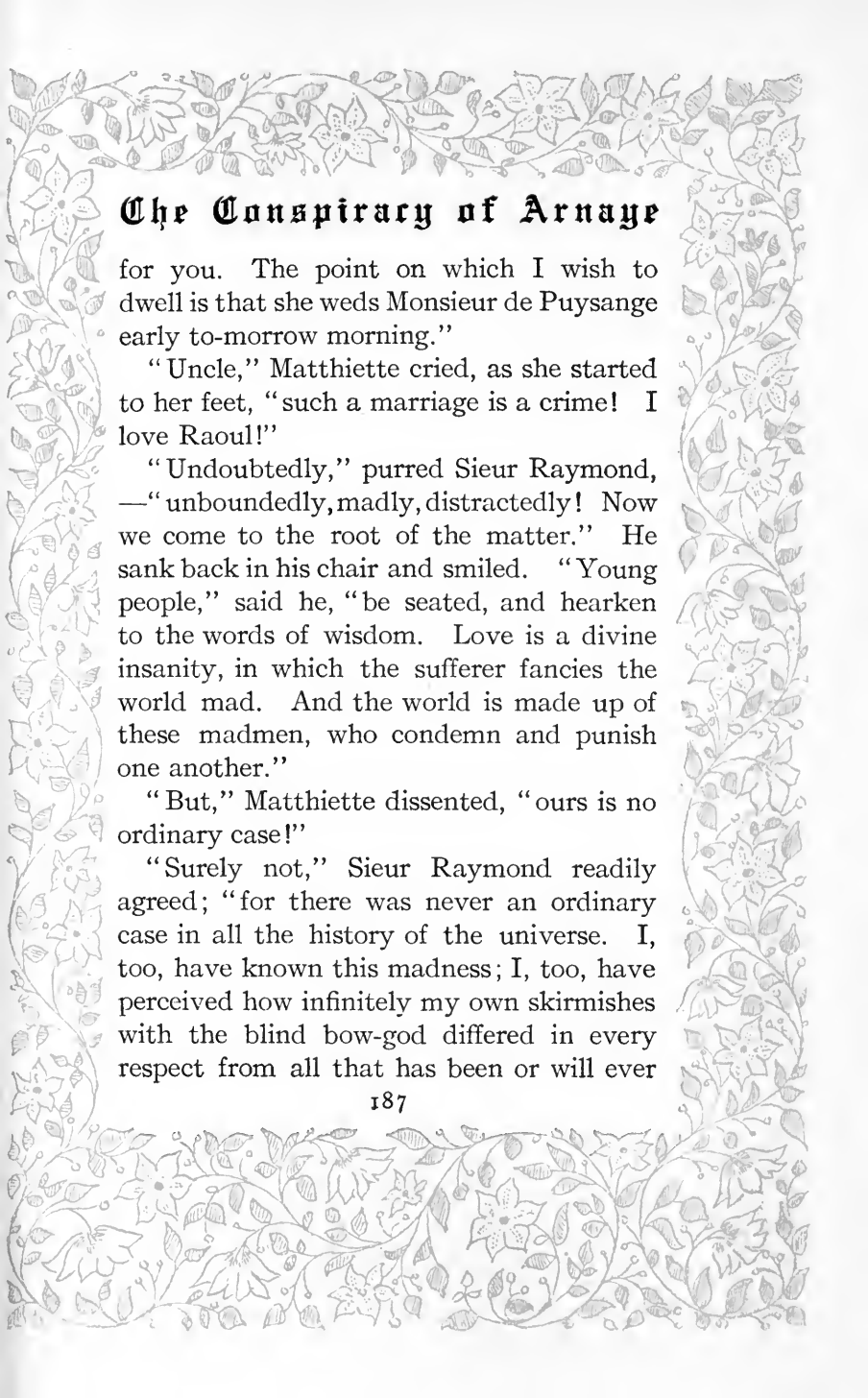
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The Line of Love

— which emboldens you, my friend, to keep me out of a comfortable bed at this hour of the night with an idiotic discourse of moonlight and nightingales! As it happens, I am not a lank wench in her first country - dance. Remember that, Raoul de Frison, and praise the good God who gave me at birth a very placable disposition! There is not a seigneur in all France, save me, but would hang you at the crack of that same dawn for which your lackadaisical trees are whining outside; but the quarrel will soon be Monsieur de Puyange's, and I prefer that he settle it at his own discretion. I content myself with advising you to pester my niece no more."

Raoul spoke boldly. "She loves me," said he, standing very erect.

Sieur Raymond glanced at Matthiette, who sat with downcast head. "H'm!" said he. "She moderates her transports indifferently well. Though, again, why not? You are not an ill-looking lad. Indeed, Monsieur de Frison, I am quite ready to admit that my niece is breaking her heart

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The Conspiracy of Arnage

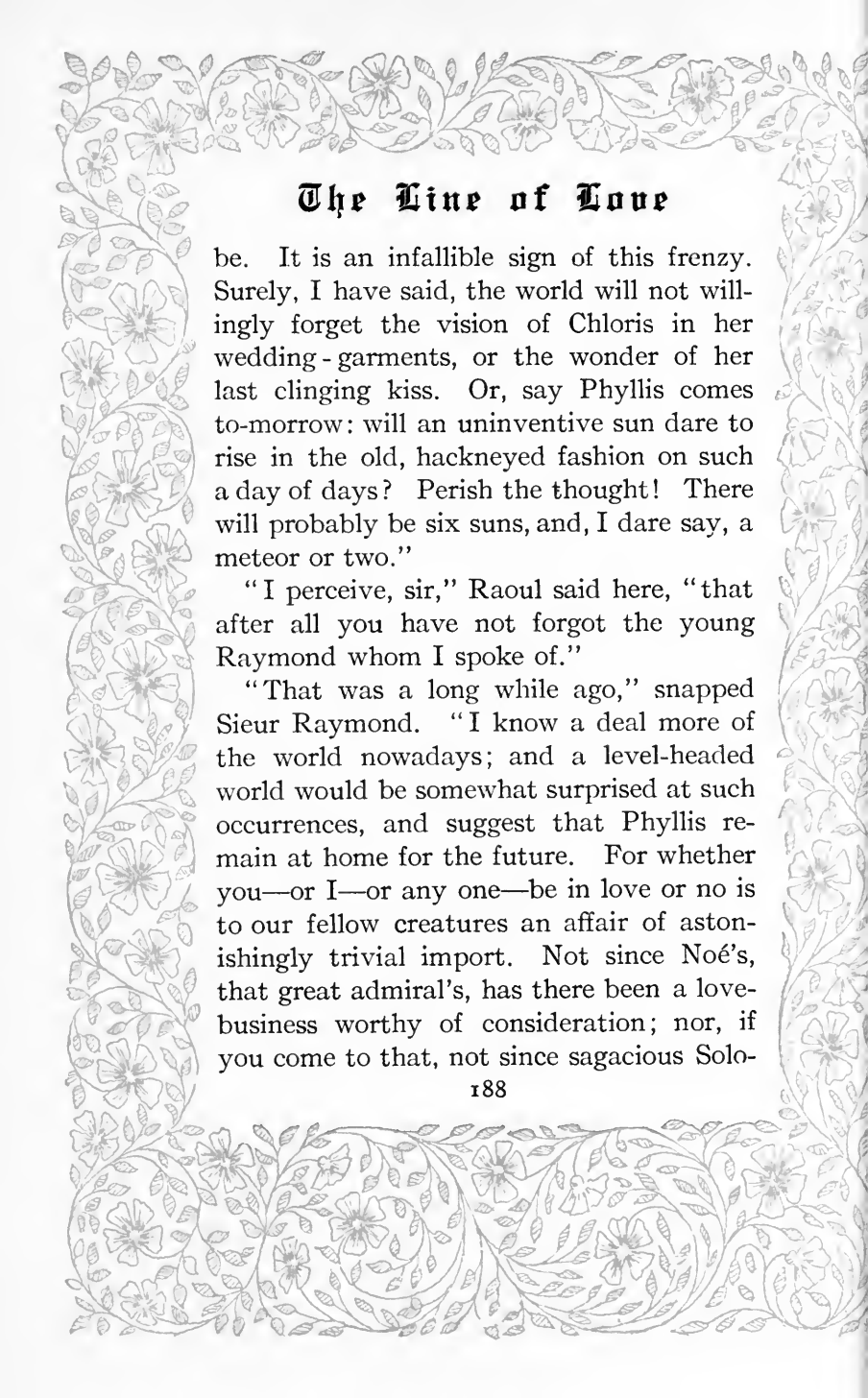
for you. The point on which I wish to dwell is that she weds Monsieur de Puysange early to-morrow morning."

"Uncle," Matthiette cried, as she started to her feet, "such a marriage is a crime! I love Raoul!"

"Undoubtedly," purred Sieur Raymond,—"unboundedly, madly, distractedly! Now we come to the root of the matter." He sank back in his chair and smiled. "Young people," said he, "be seated, and hearken to the words of wisdom. Love is a divine insanity, in which the sufferer fancies the world mad. And the world is made up of these madmen, who condemn and punish one another."

"But," Matthiette dissented, "ours is no ordinary case!"

"Surely not," Sieur Raymond readily agreed; "for there was never an ordinary case in all the history of the universe. I, too, have known this madness; I, too, have perceived how infinitely my own skirmishes with the blind bow-god differed in every respect from all that has been or will ever

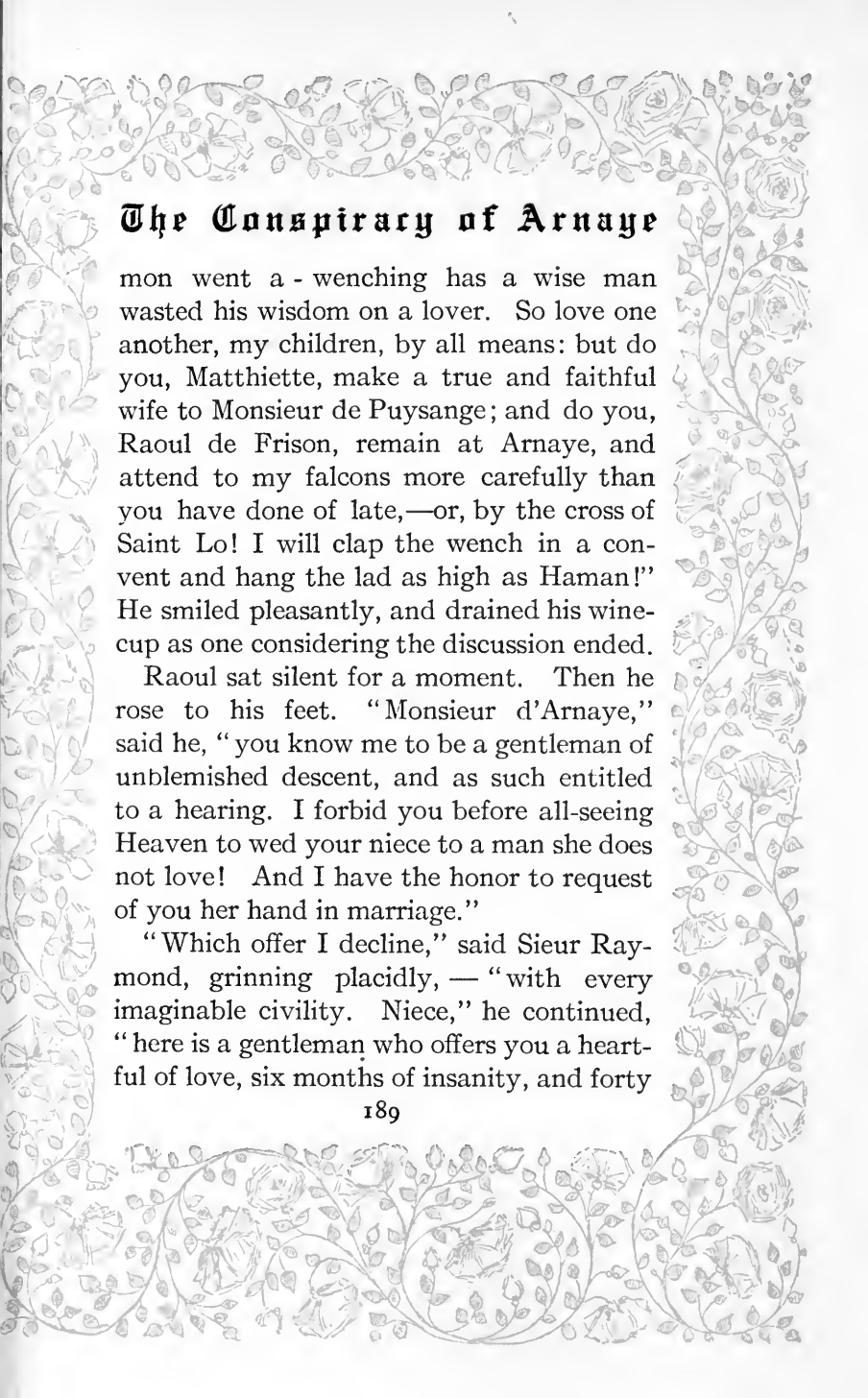


The Line of Love

be. It is an infallible sign of this frenzy. Surely, I have said, the world will not willingly forget the vision of Chloris in her wedding-garments, or the wonder of her last clinging kiss. Or, say Phyllis comes to-morrow: will an uninventive sun dare to rise in the old, hackneyed fashion on such a day of days? Perish the thought! There will probably be six suns, and, I dare say, a meteor or two."

"I perceive, sir," Raoul said here, "that after all you have not forgot the young Raymond whom I spoke of."

"That was a long while ago," snapped *Sieur Raymond*. "I know a deal more of the world nowadays; and a level-headed world would be somewhat surprised at such occurrences, and suggest that Phyllis remain at home for the future. For whether you—or I—or any one—be in love or no is to our fellow creatures an affair of astonishingly trivial import. Not since *Noé's*, that great admiral's, has there been a love-business worthy of consideration; nor, if you come to that, not since sagacious *Solo-*



The Conspiracy of Arnaye

mon went a - wenching has a wise man wasted his wisdom on a lover. So love one another, my children, by all means: but do you, Matthiette, make a true and faithful wife to Monsieur de Puitsange; and do you, Raoul de Frison, remain at Arnaye, and attend to my falcons more carefully than you have done of late,—or, by the cross of Saint Lo! I will clap the wench in a convent and hang the lad as high as Haman!” He smiled pleasantly, and drained his wine-cup as one considering the discussion ended.

Raoul sat silent for a moment. Then he rose to his feet. “Monsieur d’Arnaye,” said he, “you know me to be a gentleman of unblemished descent, and as such entitled to a hearing. I forbid you before all-seeing Heaven to wed your niece to a man she does not love! And I have the honor to request of you her hand in marriage.”

“Which offer I decline,” said Sieur Raymond, grinning placidly, — “with every imaginable civility. Niece,” he continued, “here is a gentleman who offers you a heartful of love, six months of insanity, and forty

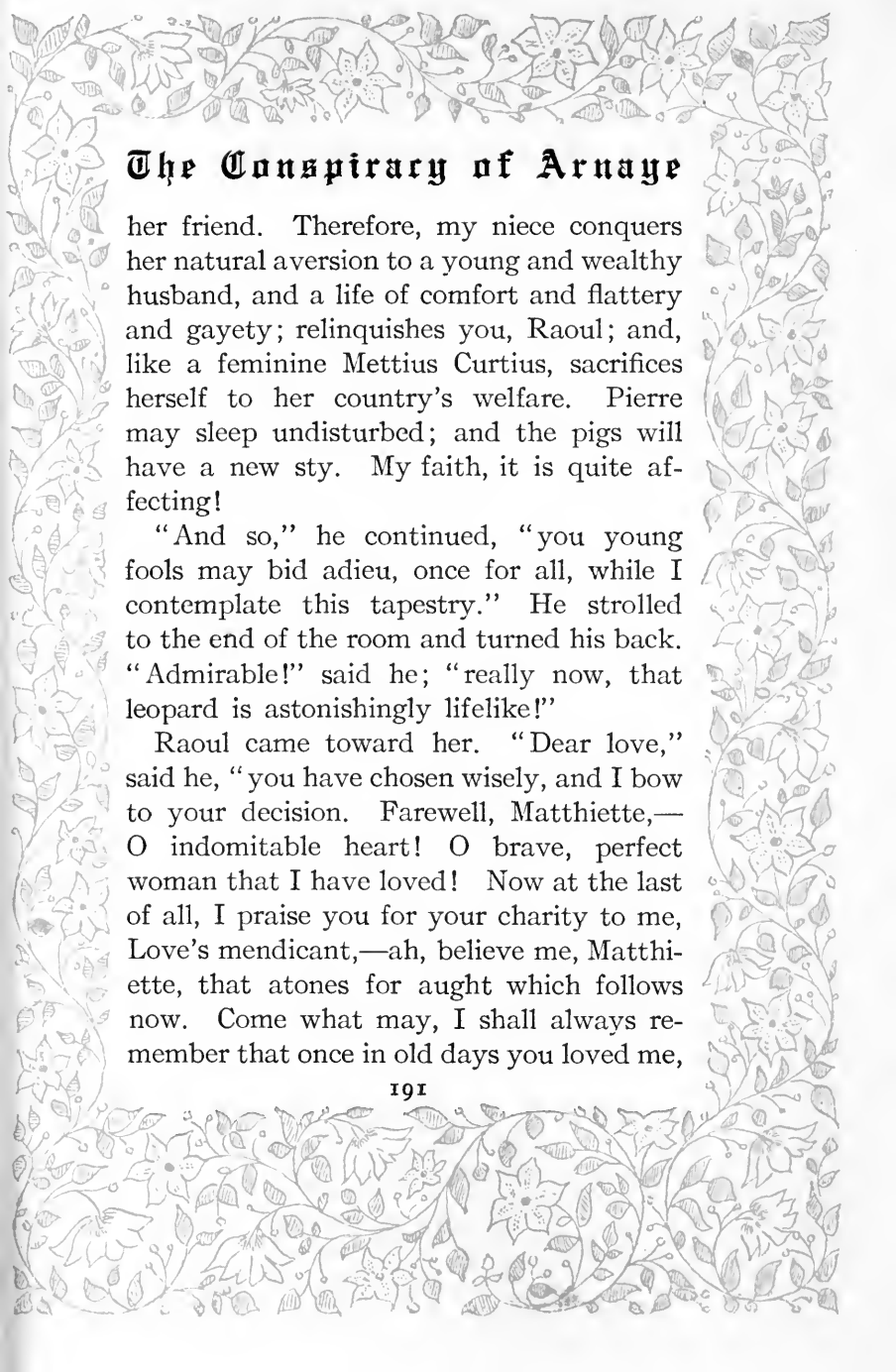


The Line of Love

years of boredom in a leaky, wind-swept château. He has dreamed dreams concerning you: allow me to present to you the reality." He grasped Matthiette's hand and led her mirror-ward. "Permit me to present the wife of Monsieur de Puitsange. Could he have made a worthier choice? Ah, happy lord, that shall so soon embrace such perfect loveliness! Thrice happy lady, that shall so soon taste every joy the age affords! Frankly, my niece, is not that golden hair of a shade that would set off a coronet extraordinarily well? Are those wondrous eyes not fashioned to surfeit themselves upon the homage and respect accorded the wife of a great lord? Ouais, the thing is indisputable: and, therefore, I must differ from Monsieur de Frison here, who would condemn this perfection to bloom and bud unnoticed in a paltry country town."

There was an interval, during which Matthiette gazed sadly into the mirror. "And Arnaye—?" said she.

"Undoubtedly," said Sieur Raymond,—
"Arnaye must perish unless Puitsange prove

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

The Conspiracy of Arnage

her friend. Therefore, my niece conquers her natural aversion to a young and wealthy husband, and a life of comfort and flattery and gayety; relinquishes you, Raoul; and, like a feminine Mettius Curtius, sacrifices herself to her country's welfare. Pierre may sleep undisturbed; and the pigs will have a new sty. My faith, it is quite affecting!

"And so," he continued, "you young fools may bid adieu, once for all, while I contemplate this tapestry." He strolled to the end of the room and turned his back. "Admirable!" said he; "really now, that leopard is astonishingly lifelike!"

Raoul came toward her. "Dear love," said he, "you have chosen wisely, and I bow to your decision. Farewell, Matthiette,—O indomitable heart! O brave, perfect woman that I have loved! Now at the last of all, I praise you for your charity to me, Love's mendicant,—ah, believe me, Matthiette, that atones for aught which follows now. Come what may, I shall always remember that once in old days you loved me,

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The Line of Love

and, remembering that, thank God with a contented heart." He bowed over her unresponsive hand. "Matthiette," he whispered, "be happy! For I desire that very heartily, and I beseech of our Sovereign Lady—though I confess without shame that there are tears even now in my eyes—that you may never know unhappiness. You have chosen wisely, Matthiette; but ah, my dear, do not forget me utterly,—keep a little place in your heart for your boy lover!"

Sieur Raymond concluded his inspection of the tapestry, and turned with a premonitory cough. "Thus ends the comedy," said he, shrugging, "and the world triumphs. Invariably the world triumphs, my children. Eheu, we are as God made us, we men and women that cumber His stately earth!" He drew his arm through Raoul's. "Farewell, niece," said he, smiling; "I rejoice that you are cured of your malady. Now in respect to gerfalcons—" said he.

The arras fell behind them.



III

Obdurate Love

MATTHIETTE sat brooding in her room, as the night wore on. She was pitifully frightened, numb in her misery. There was a heavy silence in the room, she dimly noted, that her sobs had no power to shatter. Dimly, too, she seemed aware of a multitude of wide, incurious eyes that watched her from every corner, where panels snapped at times with sharp echoes. The night was wellnigh done when she arose.

“After all,” she said, wearily, “it is my manifest duty.” Matthiette crept to the mirror and studied it.

“Madame de Puyange,” said she, with-




The Line of Love

out any intonation; then threw her arms above her head, with a hard gesture of despair. "I love him!" she cried, in a frightened voice.

Matthiette went hurriedly to a great chest and fumbled among its contents. Presently she drew out a dagger in a leather case, and unsheathed it. The light shone evilly scintillant upon the blade. She laughed, and hid it in the bosom of her gown, and fastened a cloak about her with impatient fingers. Then Matthiette crept down the winding stair that led to the gardens, and unlocked the door at the foot of it.

A sudden rush of night swept toward her, big with the secrecy of dawn. The sky, washed clean of stars, sprawled above,—a leaden, monotonous blank. Many trees whispered thickly over the chaos of earth; to the left a field of growing maize bristled in the uncertain dove-colored twilight like the chin of an unshaven Titan. Matthiette rustled into the silence.

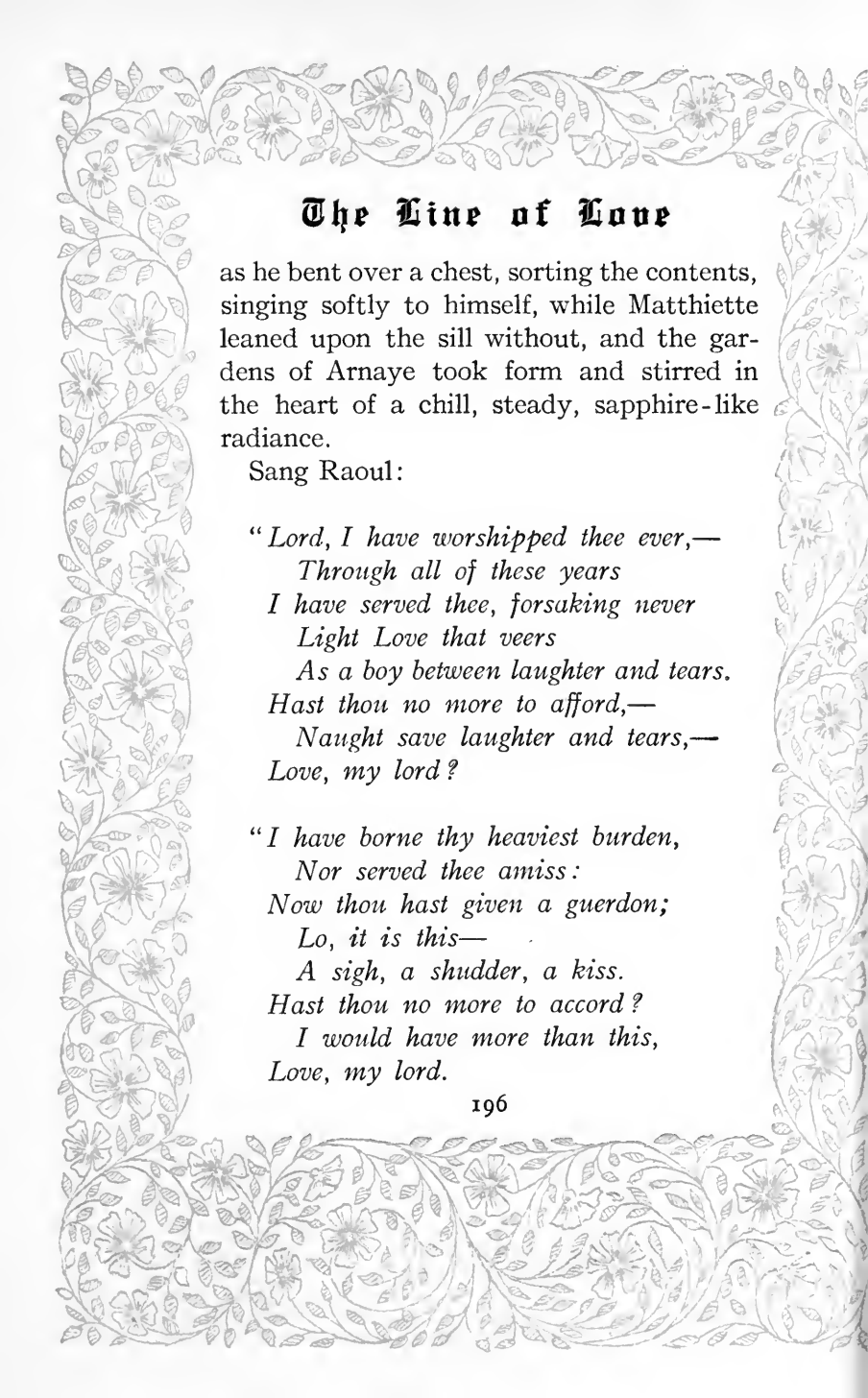
She entered an expectant world. Once in the tree-chequered gardens, it was as



The Conspiracy of Arnaye

though she crept through the aisles of an unlit cathedral already garnished for its sacred pageant. Matthiette heard the querulous birds call sleepily above; the margin of night was thick with their petulant complaints; behind her was the monstrous shadow of the Château d'Arnaye, and past that a sullen red, the red of bruised flesh, that hinted dawn. Infinity waited a-tiptoe, tense for the coming miracle, and against this vast repression, her grief dwindled into irrelevancy: the leaves whispered comfort; each tree-bole hid chuckling fauns. Matthiette laughed. Content had flooded the universe all through and through now that yonder, unseen as yet, the red-faced sun was toiling up the rim of the world.

Matthiette came to a hut, from whose open window a faded golden glow spread out into obscurity like a tawdry fan. From without she peered into the hut and saw Raoul. A lamp flickered upon the table. His shadow twitched and wavered about the plastered walls,—a portentous mass of head upon a hemisphere of shoulders,—



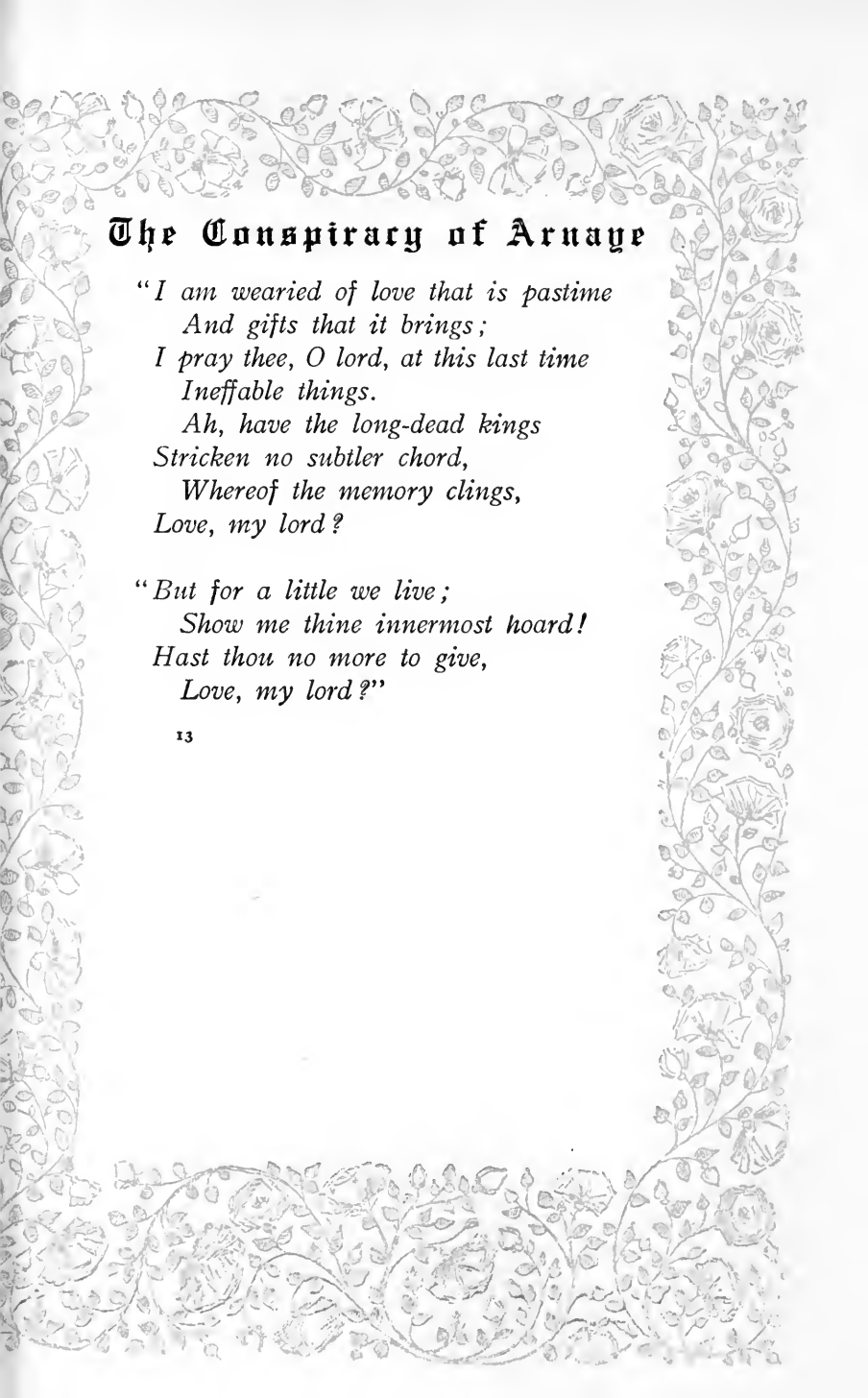
The Line of Love

as he bent over a chest, sorting the contents, singing softly to himself, while Matthiette leaned upon the sill without, and the gardens of Arnaye took form and stirred in the heart of a chill, steady, sapphire-like radiance.

Sang Raoul:

*“Lord, I have worshipped thee ever,—
Through all of these years
I have served thee, forsaking never
Light Love that veers
As a boy between laughter and tears.
Hast thou no more to afford,—
Naught save laughter and tears,—
Love, my lord?”*

*“I have borne thy heaviest burden,
Nor served thee amiss:
Now thou hast given a guerdon;
Lo, it is this—
A sigh, a shudder, a kiss.
Hast thou no more to accord?
I would have more than this,
Love, my lord.”*



The Conspiracy of Arnage

*"I am wearied of love that is pastime
And gifts that it brings;
I pray thee, O lord, at this last time
Ineffable things.*

*Ah, have the long-dead kings
Stricken no subtler chord,
Whereof the memory clings,
Love, my lord?"*

*"But for a little we live;
Show me thine innermost hoard!
Hast thou no more to give,
Love, my lord?"*

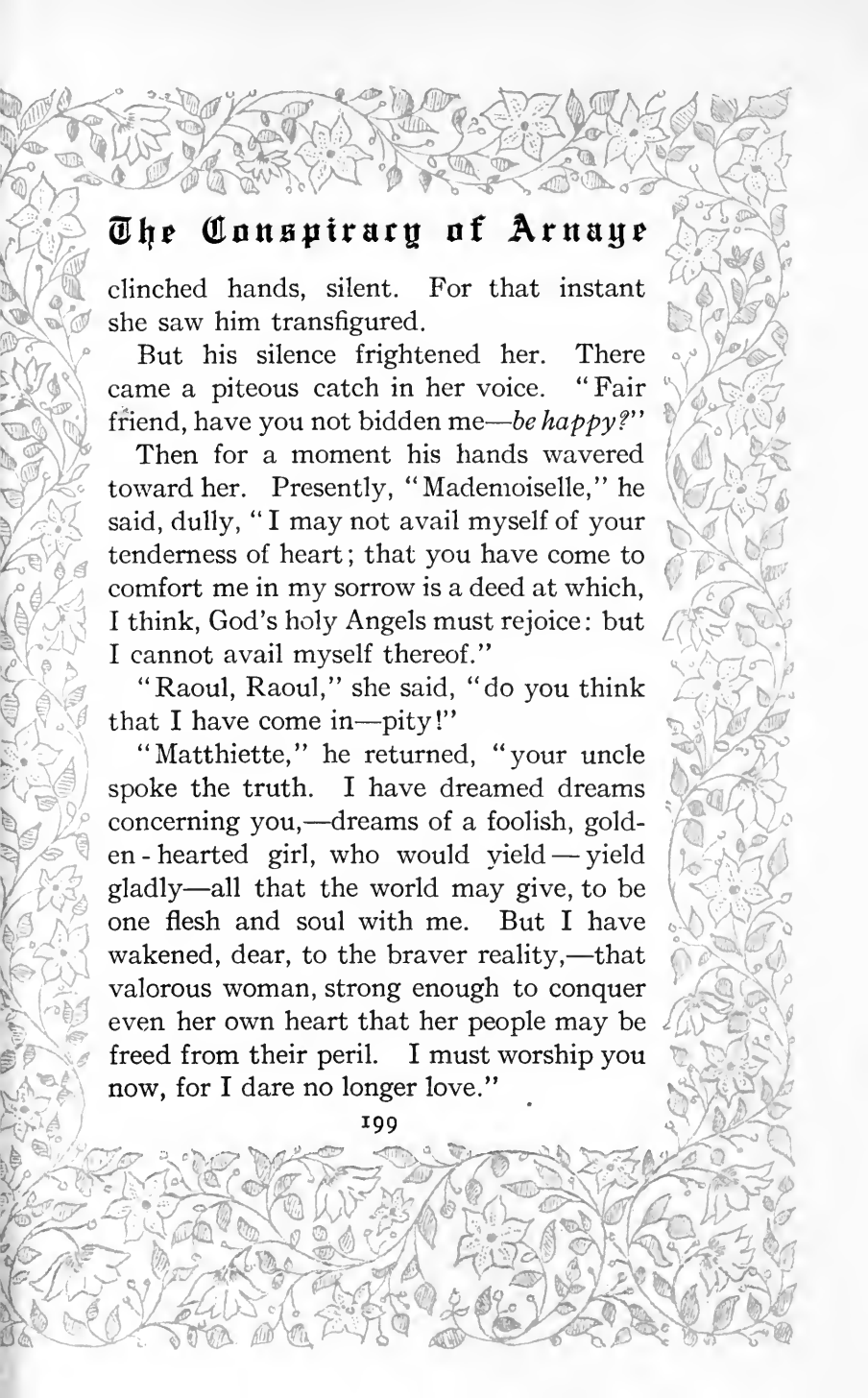
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IV

Raymond Psychopompos

MATTHIETTE crept to the door of the hut; her hands fell irresolutely upon the rough surface of it and lay still for a moment. Then with a hoarse groan the door swung inward, and the light guttered in a swirl of keen morning air, casting convulsive shadows upon her lifted countenance, and was extinguished. She held out her arms in a gesture that was half maternal. "Raoul!" she murmured.

He turned toward her. A sudden bird plunged through the twilight without with a glad cry that pierced like a knife through the stillness that had fallen in the little room. Raoul de Frison faced her with

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The Conspiracy of Arnage

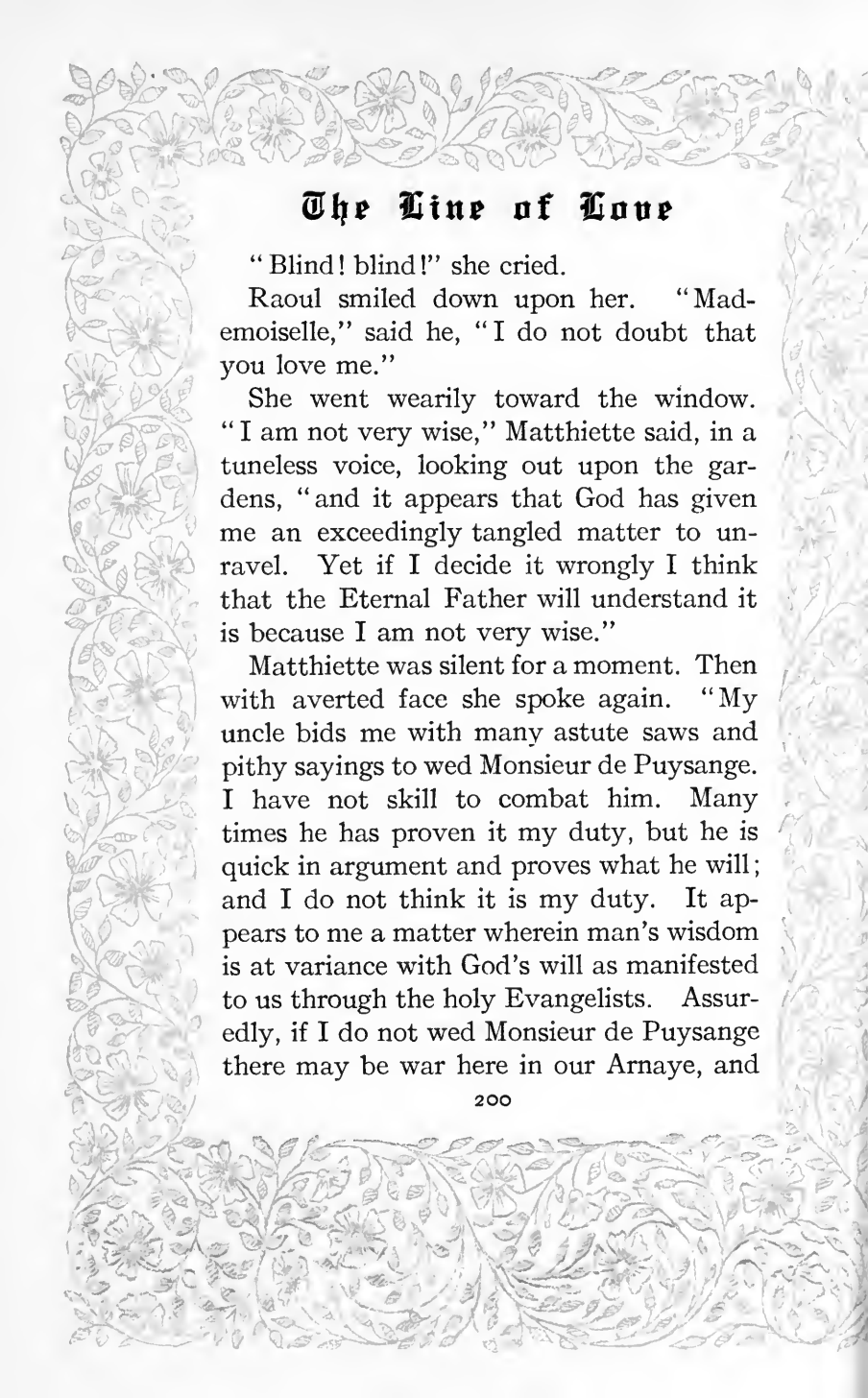
clined hands, silent. For that instant she saw him transfigured.

But his silence frightened her. There came a piteous catch in her voice. "Fair friend, have you not bidden me—*be happy?*"

Then for a moment his hands wavered toward her. Presently, "Mademoiselle," he said, dully, "I may not avail myself of your tenderness of heart; that you have come to comfort me in my sorrow is a deed at which, I think, God's holy Angels must rejoice: but I cannot avail myself thereof."

"Raoul, Raoul," she said, "do you think that I have come in—pity!"

"Matthiette," he returned, "your uncle spoke the truth. I have dreamed dreams concerning you,—dreams of a foolish, golden-hearted girl, who would yield—yield gladly—all that the world may give, to be one flesh and soul with me. But I have wakened, dear, to the braver reality,—that valorous woman, strong enough to conquer even her own heart that her people may be freed from their peril. I must worship you now, for I dare no longer love."

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including large five-petaled flowers and smaller buds, connected by a vine-like structure with leaves. The style is reminiscent of Art Nouveau or early 20th-century decorative arts.

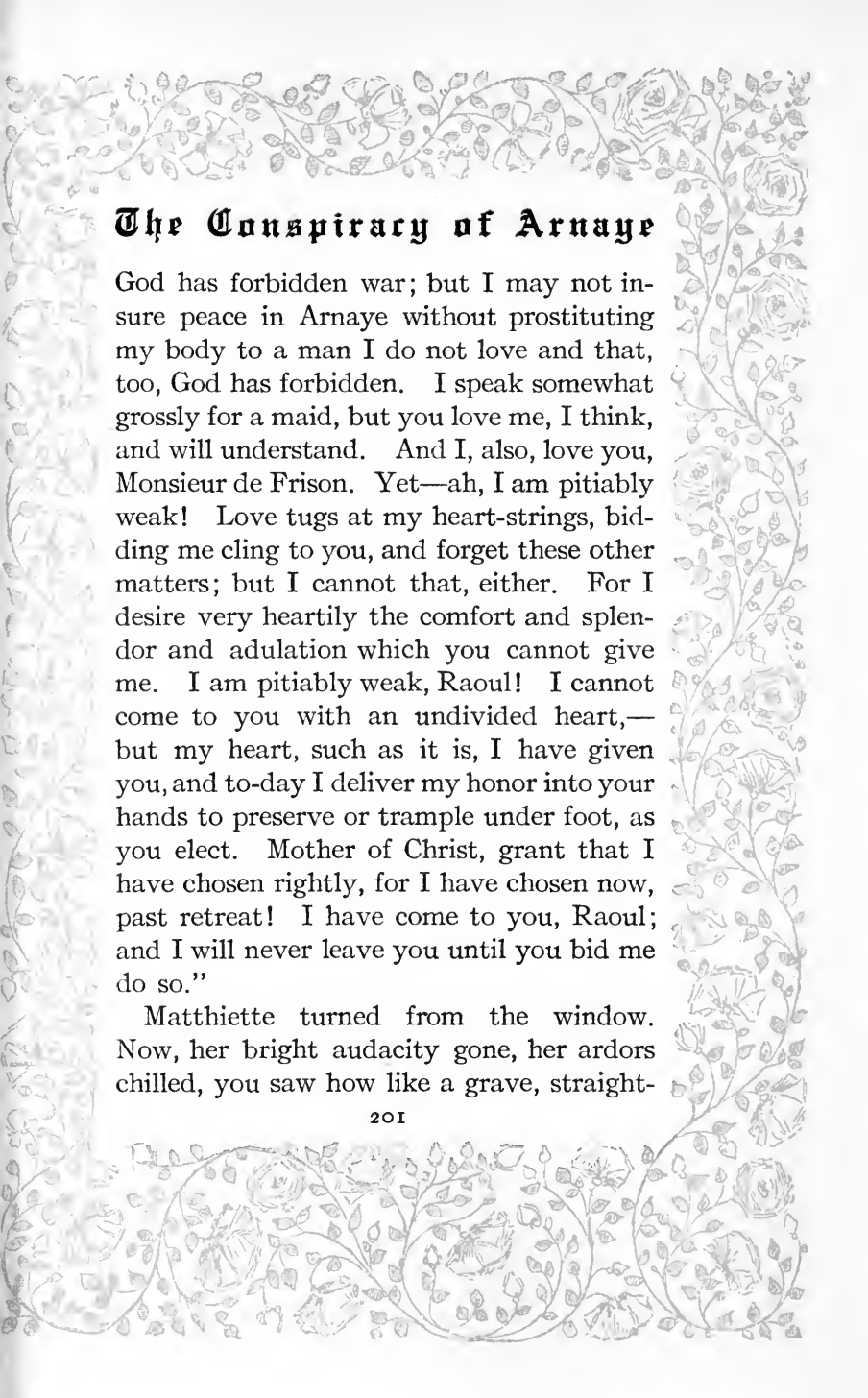
The Line of Love

"Blind! blind!" she cried.

Raoul smiled down upon her. "Mademoiselle," said he, "I do not doubt that you love me."

She went wearily toward the window. "I am not very wise," Matthiette said, in a tuneless voice, looking out upon the gardens, "and it appears that God has given me an exceedingly tangled matter to unravel. Yet if I decide it wrongly I think that the Eternal Father will understand it is because I am not very wise."

Matthiette was silent for a moment. Then with averted face she spoke again. "My uncle bids me with many astute saws and pithy sayings to wed Monsieur de Puitsange. I have not skill to combat him. Many times he has proven it my duty, but he is quick in argument and proves what he will; and I do not think it is my duty. It appears to me a matter wherein man's wisdom is at variance with God's will as manifested to us through the holy Evangelists. Assuredly, if I do not wed Monsieur de Puitsange there may be war here in our Arnaye, and



The Conspiracy of Arnaye

God has forbidden war; but I may not insure peace in Arnaye without prostituting my body to a man I do not love and that, too, God has forbidden. I speak somewhat grossly for a maid, but you love me, I think, and will understand. And I, also, love you, Monsieur de Frison. Yet—ah, I am pitifully weak! Love tugs at my heart-strings, bidding me cling to you, and forget these other matters; but I cannot that, either. For I desire very heartily the comfort and splendor and adulation which you cannot give me. I am pitifully weak, Raoul! I cannot come to you with an undivided heart,—but my heart, such as it is, I have given you, and to-day I deliver my honor into your hands to preserve or trample under foot, as you elect. Mother of Christ, grant that I have chosen rightly, for I have chosen now, past retreat! I have come to you, Raoul; and I will never leave you until you bid me do so.”

Matthiette turned from the window. Now, her bright audacity gone, her ardors chilled, you saw how like a grave, straight-



The Line of Love

forward boy she was, how illimitably tender, how inefficient. "It may be that I have decided wrongly in this tangled matter," she said, very quiet. "And yet I think that God, Who loves us infinitely, cannot be greatly vexed at anything His children do for love of one another."


He came toward her. "I bid you go," he said. "Matthiette, it is my duty to bid you go, and it is your duty to obey."

She smiled wistfully through unshed tears. "Man's wisdom!" said Matthiette. "I think that it is not my duty. And so I disobey,—this once, and no more hereafter."

"And yet last night—" Raoul began.

"Last night," said she, "I thought that I was strong. I know now it was my vanity that was strong,—vanity and pride and fear, Raoul, that for a little mastered me. But in the dawn all things seem very trivial, saving love alone."

They looked out into the dew-washed gardens. The day was growing strong, and already clear-cut forms were passing be-



The Conspiracy of Arnage

neath the swaying branches. In the distance a trumpet snarled.

"Dear love," said Raoul, "do you not understand that you have brought about my death? For Monsieur de Puyssange is at the gates of Arnage; and he or Sieur Raymond will hang me ere noon."

"I do not know," she said, in a tired voice. "I think that Monsieur de Puyssange has some cause to thank me; and my uncle loves me, and his heart, for all his gruffness, is very tender. And—see, Raoul!" She drew the dagger from her bosom. "I shall not survive you long, O man of all the world!"

Perplexed joy flushed through his countenance. "You will do this—for me?" he cried, with a sort of sob. "Matthiette, Matthiette, you shame me!"

"But I love you," said Matthiette. "How could it be possible, then, for me to live after you were dead?"

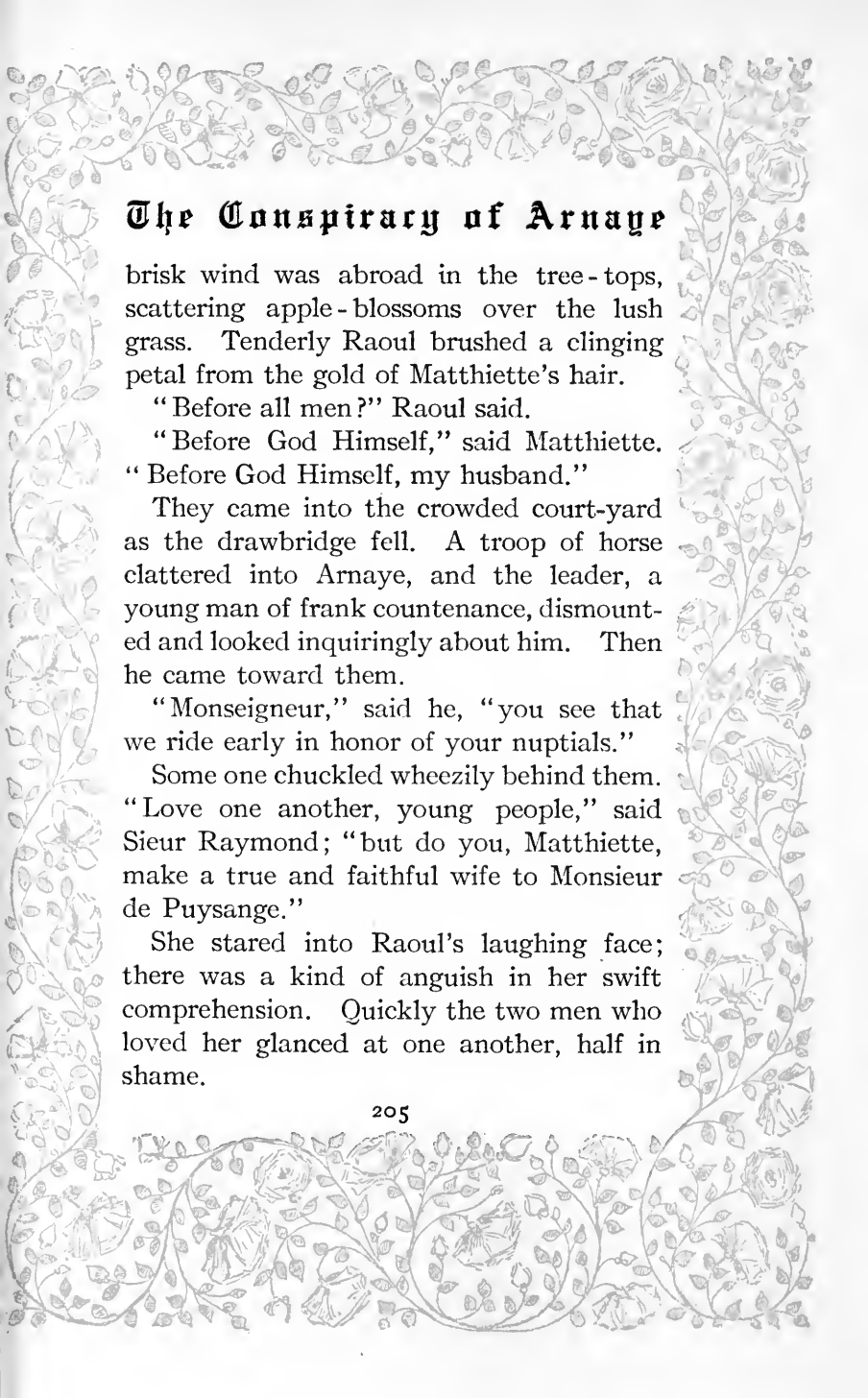
He bent over her drawn face, that turned quickly from his lips.

"Not here," she said,—“before all men, if they try to take you from me.”

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and scrolling vines with leaves, creating a frame around the central text.

The Line of Love

Hand in hand they went forth into the daylight. The kindly, familiar place seemed in Matthiette's eyes oppressed and transformed by the austerity of dawn. It was a clear Sunday morning, at the hightide of Summer, and she found the world unutterably Sabbatical; only by a vigorous effort could memory connect it with the normal life of yesterday. The cool recesses of the woods, vibrant now with multitudinous shrill pipings, the purple shadows shrinking eastward on the dimpling lawns, the intricate and broken traceries of the dial (where they had met so often), the blurred windings of their path, above which brooded the peaked-roofs and gables and slender clerestories of Arnaye, the broad river yonder lapsing through deserted sunlit fields,—these things lay before them scarce heeded, stript of all perspective, flat as an open scroll. To them all this was alien. She and Raoul were quite apart from these matters, quite alone, despite the men of Arnaye, hurrying toward the court-yard, who stared at them curiously, and muttered in their beards. A



The Conspiracy of Arnage

brisk wind was abroad in the tree-tops, scattering apple-blossoms over the lush grass. Tenderly Raoul brushed a clinging petal from the gold of Matthiette's hair.

"Before all men?" Raoul said.

"Before God Himself," said Matthiette.

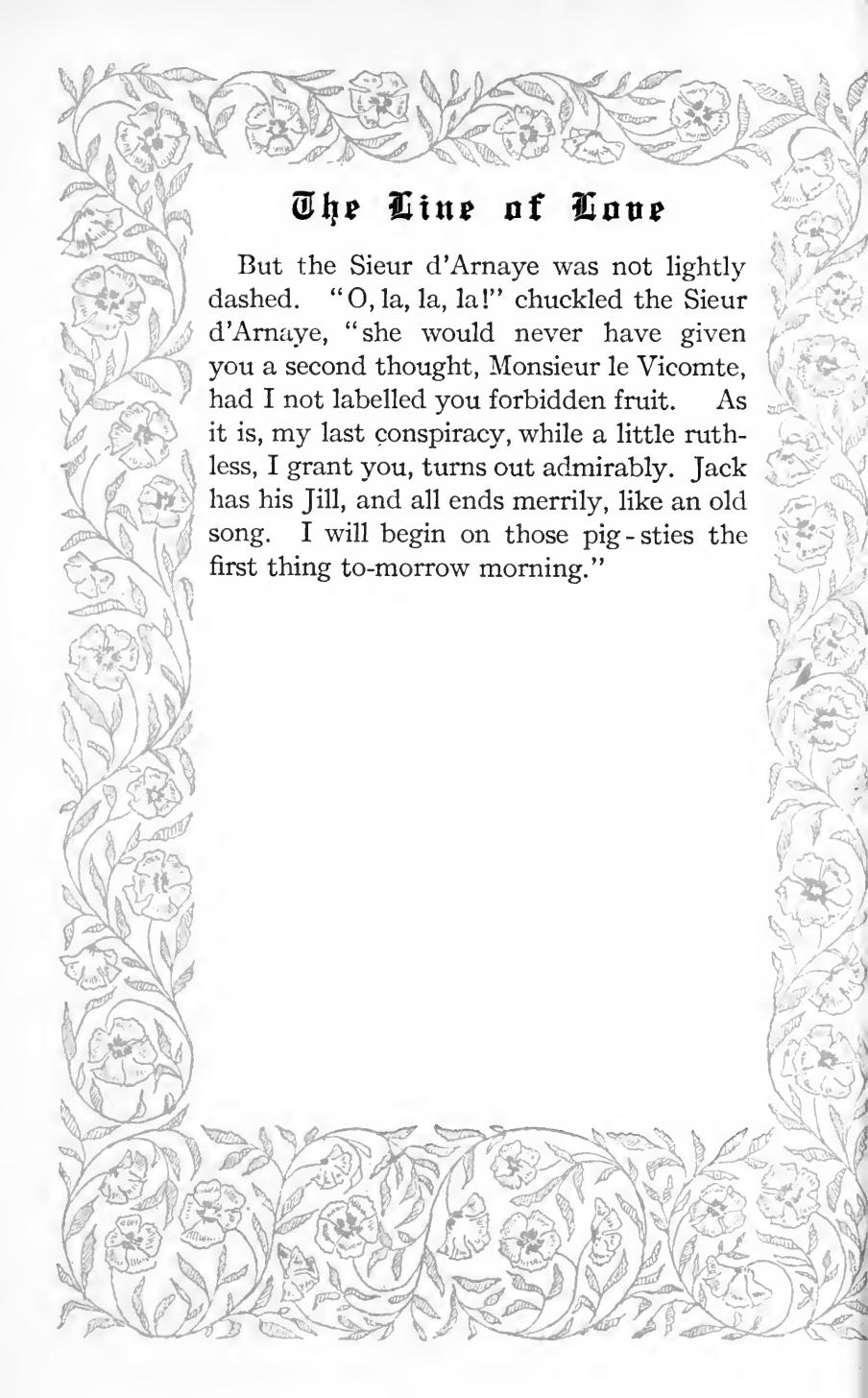
"Before God Himself, my husband."

They came into the crowded court-yard as the drawbridge fell. A troop of horse clattered into Arnage, and the leader, a young man of frank countenance, dismounted and looked inquiringly about him. Then he came toward them.

"Monseigneur," said he, "you see that we ride early in honor of your nuptials."

Some one chuckled wheezily behind them. "Love one another, young people," said Sieur Raymond; "but do you, Matthiette, make a true and faithful wife to Monsieur de Puyssange."

She stared into Raoul's laughing face; there was a kind of anguish in her swift comprehension. Quickly the two men who loved her glanced at one another, half in shame.



The Line of Love

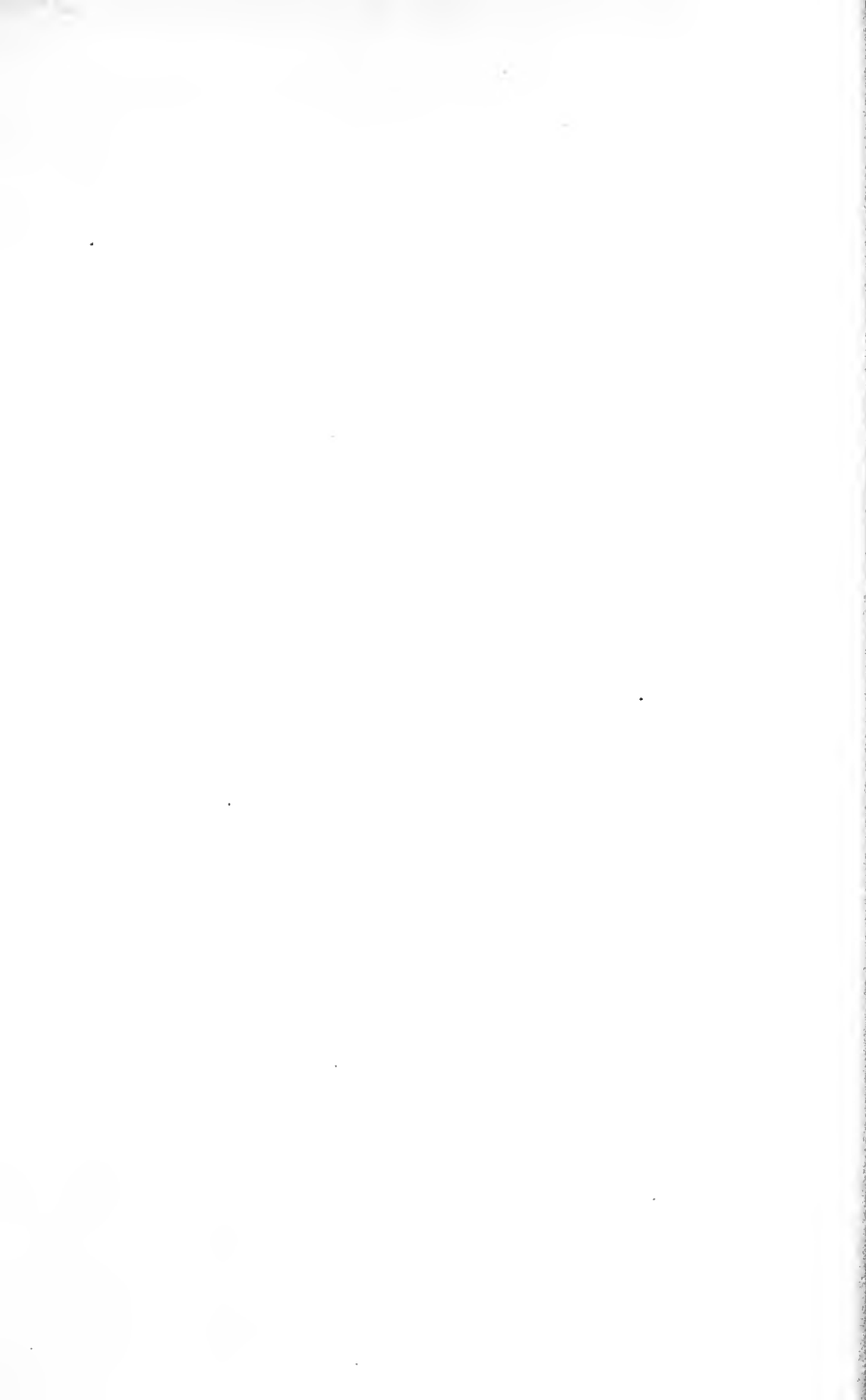
But the Sieur d'Arnaye was not lightly dashed. "O, la, la, la!" chuckled the Sieur d'Arnaye, "she would never have given you a second thought, Monsieur le Vicomte, had I not labelled you forbidden fruit. As it is, my last conspiracy, while a little ruthless, I grant you, turns out admirably. Jack has his Jill, and all ends merrily, like an old song. I will begin on those pig-sties the first thing to-morrow morning."

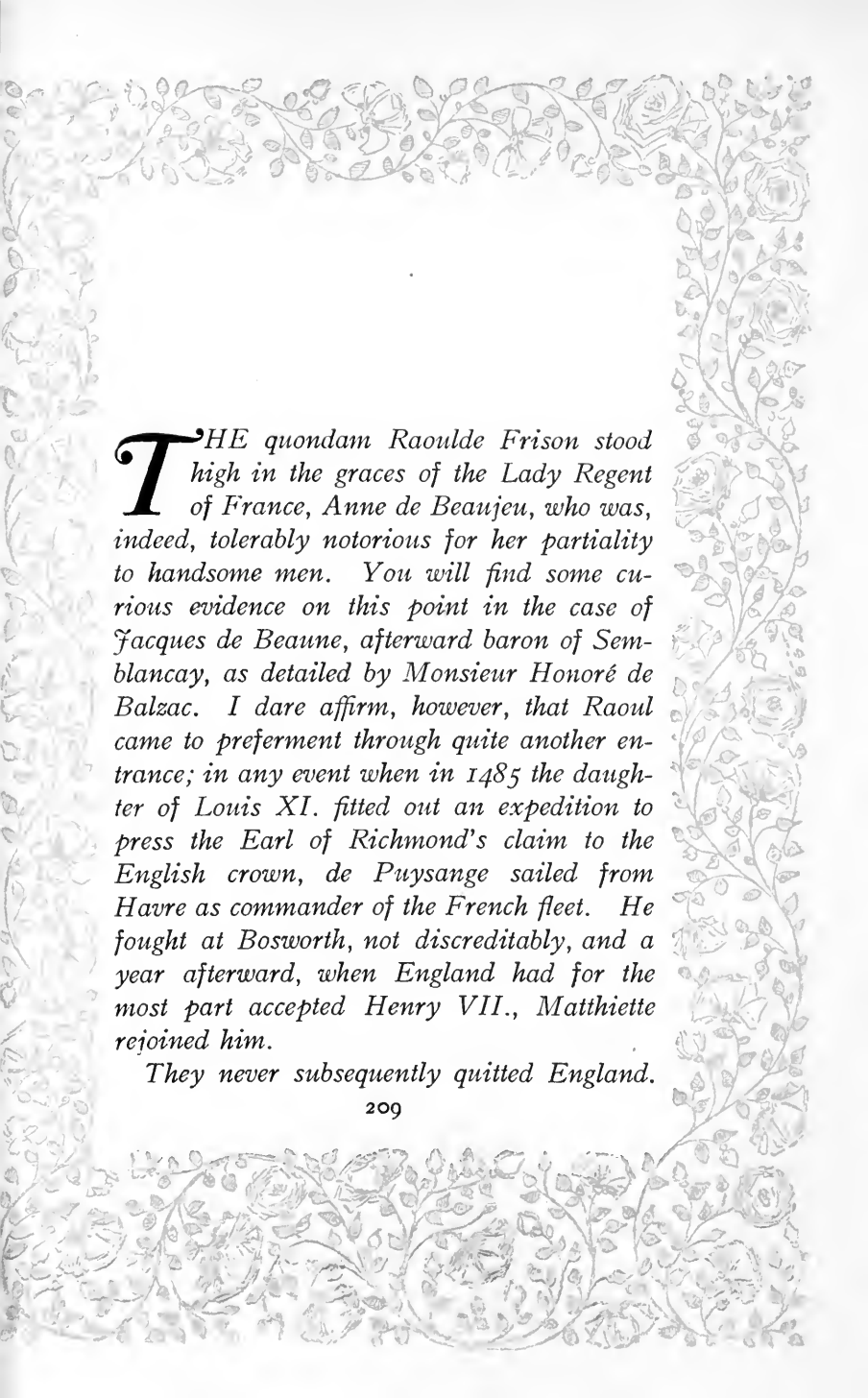
A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and various leaf shapes, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

VI

OCTOBER 6, 1519

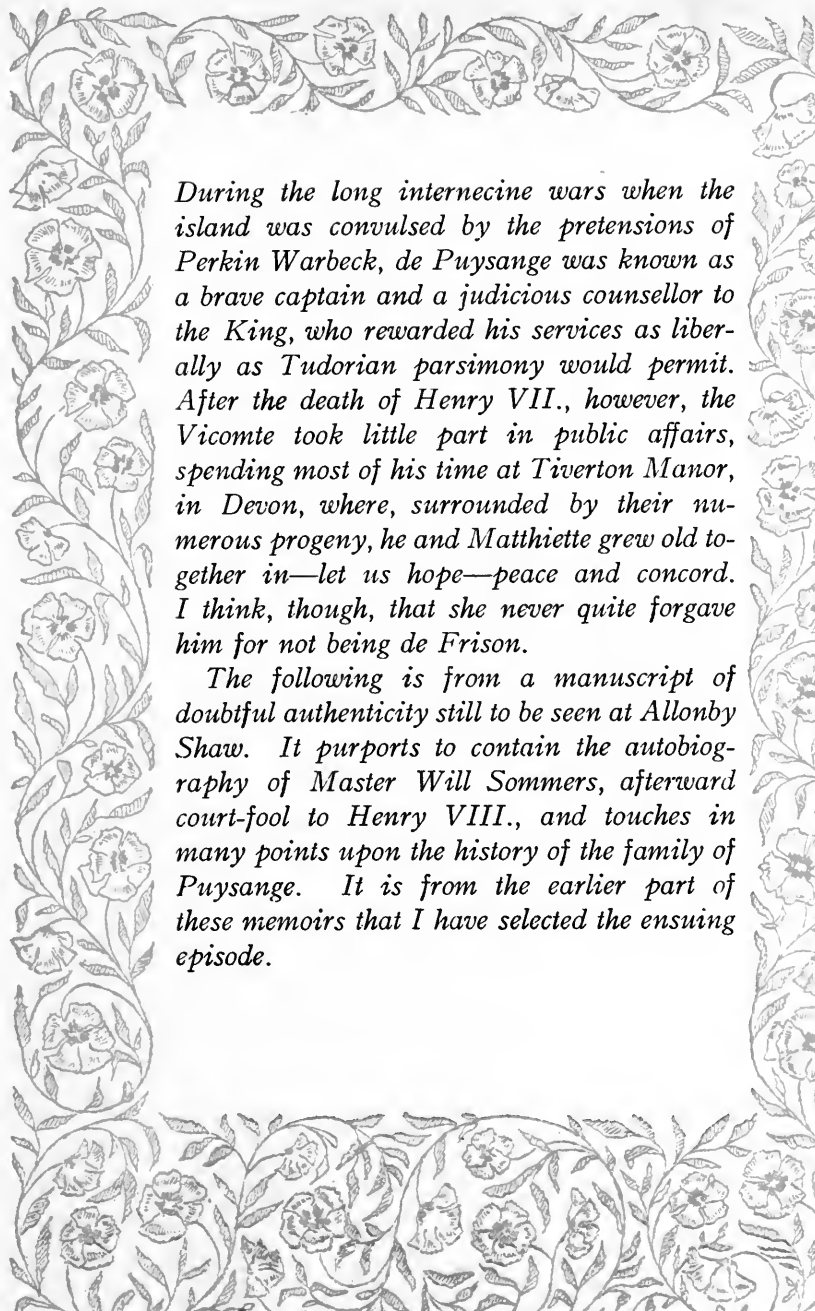
“ Therefore, like as May month flowereth and flourisheth in many gardens, so in likewise let every man of worship flourish his heart in this world; first unto God, and next unto the joy of them that he promiseth his faith unto ”





THE quondam Raoulde Frison stood high in the graces of the Lady Regent of France, Anne de Beaujeu, who was, indeed, tolerably notorious for her partiality to handsome men. You will find some curious evidence on this point in the case of Jacques de Beaune, afterward baron of Semblancay, as detailed by Monsieur Honoré de Balzac. I dare affirm, however, that Raoul came to preferment through quite another entrance; in any event when in 1485 the daughter of Louis XI. fitted out an expedition to press the Earl of Richmond's claim to the English crown, de Puyssange sailed from Havre as commander of the French fleet. He fought at Bosworth, not discreditably, and a year afterward, when England had for the most part accepted Henry VII., Matthiette rejoined him.

They never subsequently quitted England.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of a repeating pattern of five-petaled flowers with dark centers, connected by a vine with small leaves. The flowers are arranged in a slightly overlapping, horizontal line at the top and bottom, and vertically along the sides.

During the long internecine wars when the island was convulsed by the pretensions of Perkin Warbeck, de Puyssange was known as a brave captain and a judicious counsellor to the King, who rewarded his services as liberally as Tudorian parsimony would permit. After the death of Henry VII., however, the Vicomte took little part in public affairs, spending most of his time at Tiverton Manor, in Devon, where, surrounded by their numerous progeny, he and Matthiette grew old together in—let us hope—peace and concord. I think, though, that she never quite forgave him for not being de Frison.

The following is from a manuscript of doubtful authenticity still to be seen at Allonby Shaw. It purports to contain the autobiography of Master Will Sommers, afterward court-fool to Henry VIII., and touches in many points upon the history of the family of Puyssange. It is from the earlier part of these memoirs that I have selected the ensuing episode.

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The Episode Called The Castle of Content

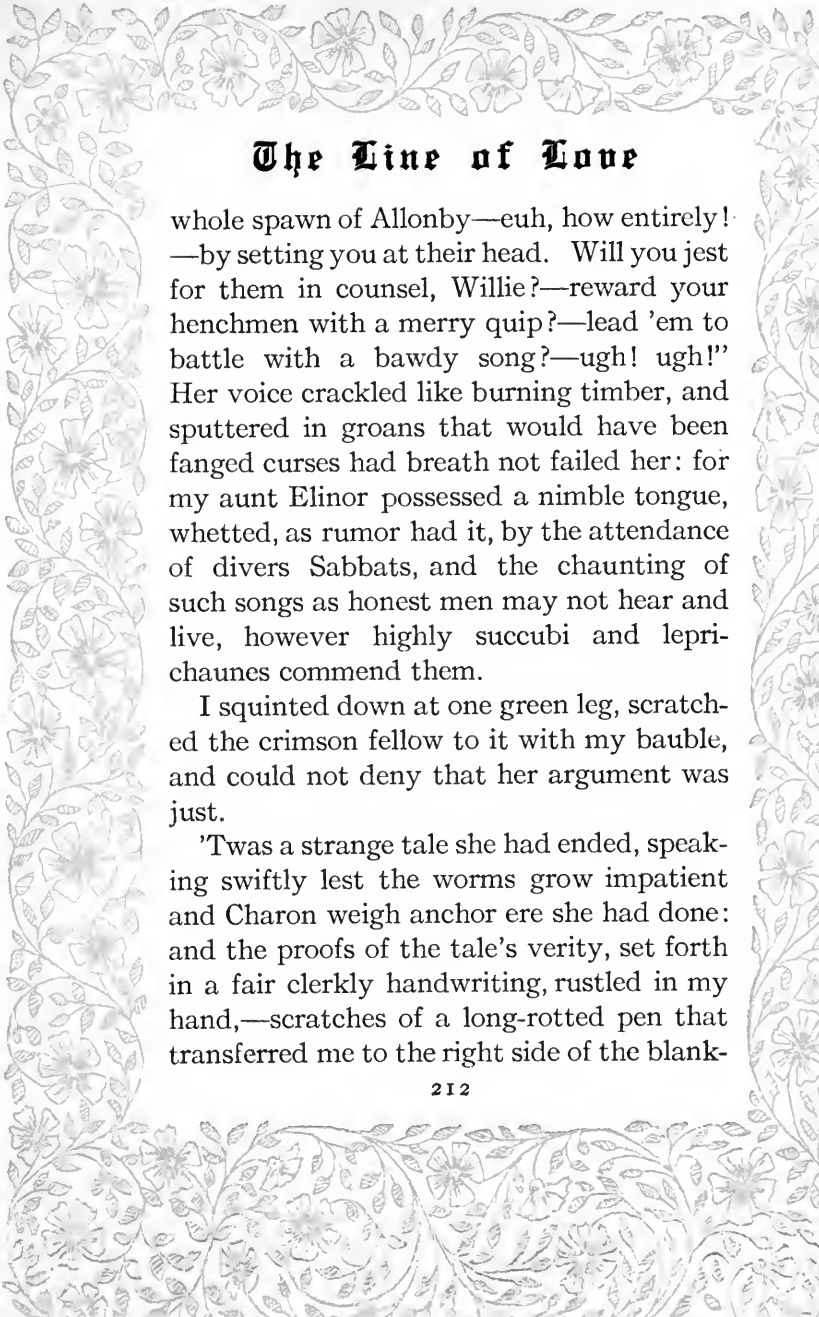
I

A Glimpse the Castle

AND so, dearie," she ended, "you may seize the revenues of Allonby with unwashed hands."

I said: "Why have you done this?" I was half-frightened by the sudden whirl of Dame Fortune's wheel.

"Dear cousin in motley," grinned the beldame, "'twas for hatred of Tom Allonby and all his accursed race that I have kept the secret thus long. Now comes a braver revenge: and I wreak my vengeance on the

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including large five-petaled flowers and smaller buds, connected by a vine of leaves. The design is symmetrical and fills the top, bottom, and side margins of the page.

The Line of Love

whole spawn of Allonby—euh, how entirely!—by setting you at their head. Will you jest for them in counsel, Willie?—reward your henchmen with a merry quip?—lead 'em to battle with a bawdy song?—ugh! ugh!” Her voice crackled like burning timber, and sputtered in groans that would have been fanged curses had breath not failed her: for my aunt Elinor possessed a nimble tongue, whetted, as rumor had it, by the attendance of divers Sabbats, and the chaunting of such songs as honest men may not hear and live, however highly succubi and leprichaunes commend them.

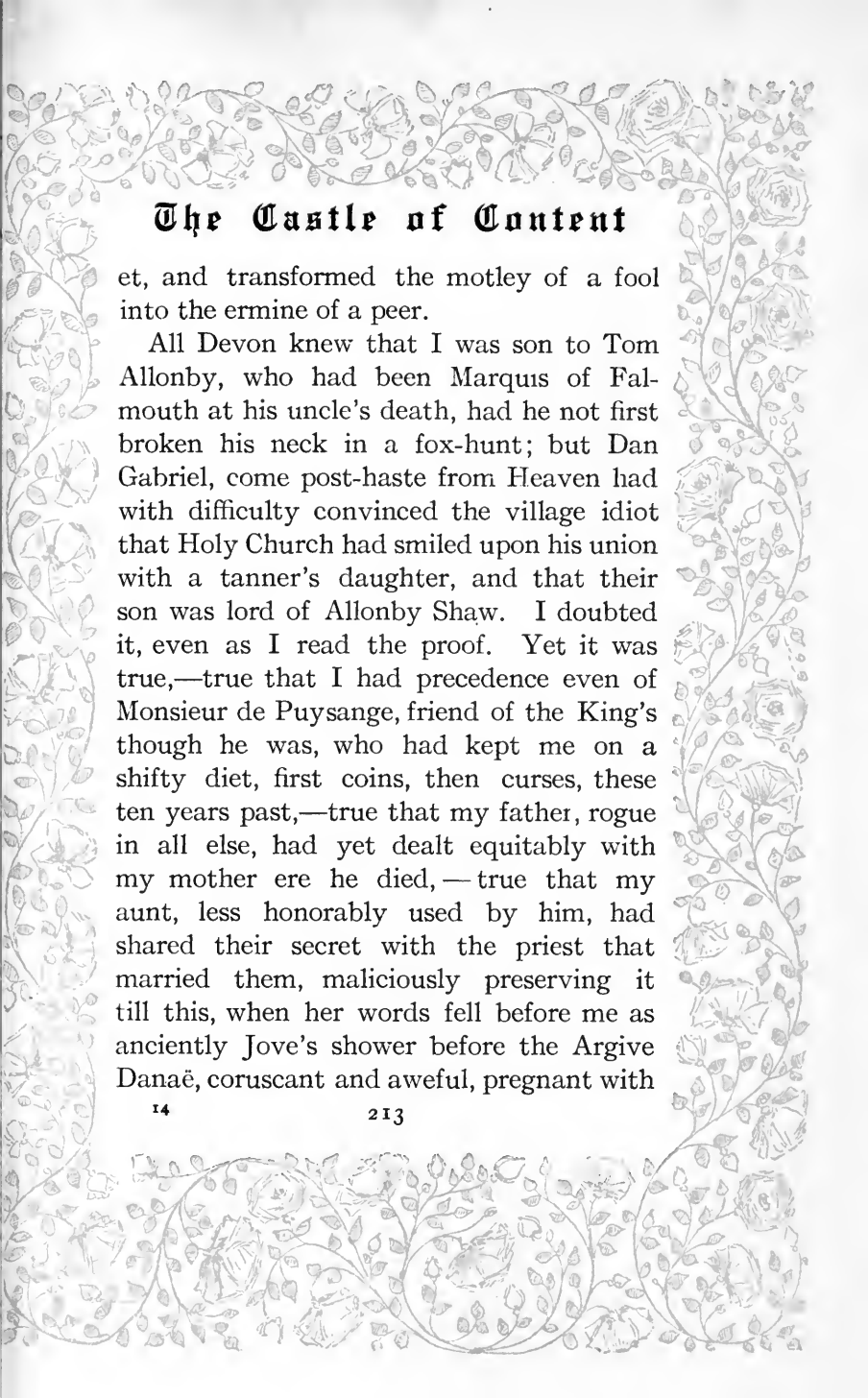
I squinted down at one green leg, scratched the crimson fellow to it with my bauble, and could not deny that her argument was just.

'Twas a strange tale she had ended, speaking swiftly lest the worms grow impatient and Charon weigh anchor ere she had done: and the proofs of the tale's verity, set forth in a fair clerkly handwriting, rustled in my hand,—scratches of a long-rotted pen that transferred me to the right side of the blank-



"'T WAS A STRANGE TALE SHE HAD ENDED"





The Castle of Content

et, and transformed the motley of a fool into the ermine of a peer.

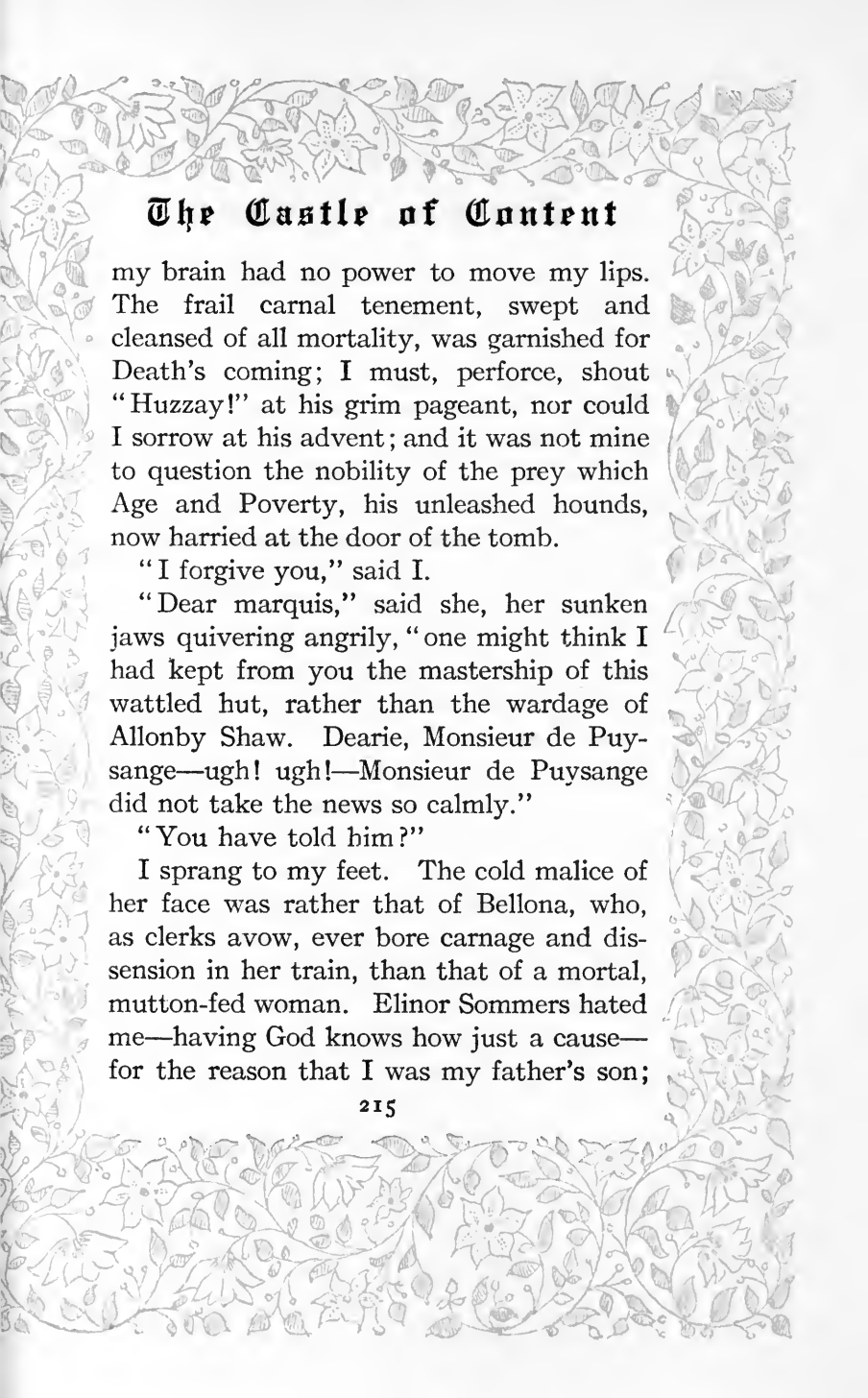
All Devon knew that I was son to Tom Allonby, who had been Marquis of Fal-mouth at his uncle's death, had he not first broken his neck in a fox-hunt; but Dan Gabriel, come post-haste from Heaven had with difficulty convinced the village idiot that Holy Church had smiled upon his union with a tanner's daughter, and that their son was lord of Allonby Shaw. I doubted it, even as I read the proof. Yet it was true,—true that I had precedence even of Monsieur de Puy-sange, friend of the King's though he was, who had kept me on a shifty diet, first coins, then curses, these ten years past,—true that my father, rogue in all else, had yet dealt equitably with my mother ere he died,—true that my aunt, less honorably used by him, had shared their secret with the priest that married them, maliciously preserving it till this, when her words fell before me as anciently Jove's shower before the Argive Danaë, coruscant and awful, pregnant with

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including roses and other blossoms, connected by leafy vines. The style is reminiscent of early 20th-century decorative arts.

The Line of Love

undreamed-of chances that stirred as yet blindly in Time's womb.

A sick anger woke in me, remembering the burden of ignoble years she had suffered me to bear; yet my callow gentility bade me deal tenderly with this dying peasant woman, who, when all was said, had been but ill-used by our house. Death hath a strange potency: commanding as he doth, unquestioned and unchidden, the emperor to have done with slaying, the poet to rise from his unfinished rhyme, the tender and gracious lady to cease from nice denying words (mixed though they be with pitiful sighs that break their sequence as an amorous ditty heard through the strains of a martial stave), and all men, gentle or base, to follow his gaunt standard into unknown realms, his majesty enshrines the paltriest knave on whom the weight of his chill finger hath fallen. I doubt not that Cain's children wept about his death-bed, and that the centurions spake in whispers as they lowered Iscariot from the elder-tree: and in like manner the maledictions that stirred in

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and various leaf shapes, connected by thin, curving lines. The style is reminiscent of late 19th or early 20th-century book design.

The Castle of Content

my brain had no power to move my lips. The frail carnal tenement, swept and cleansed of all mortality, was garnished for Death's coming; I must, perforce, shout "Huzzay!" at his grim pageant, nor could I sorrow at his advent; and it was not mine to question the nobility of the prey which Age and Poverty, his unleashed hounds, now harried at the door of the tomb.

"I forgive you," said I.

"Dear marquis," said she, her sunken jaws quivering angrily, "one might think I had kept from you the mastership of this wattled hut, rather than the wardage of Allonby Shaw. Dearie, Monsieur de Puy-sange—ugh! ugh!—Monsieur de Puy-sange did not take the news so calmly."

"You have told him?"

I sprang to my feet. The cold malice of her face was rather that of Bellona, who, as clerks avow, ever bore carnage and dis-sension in her train, than that of a mortal, mutton-fed woman. Elinor Sommers hated me—having God knows how just a cause—for the reason that I was my father's son;

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The Line of Love

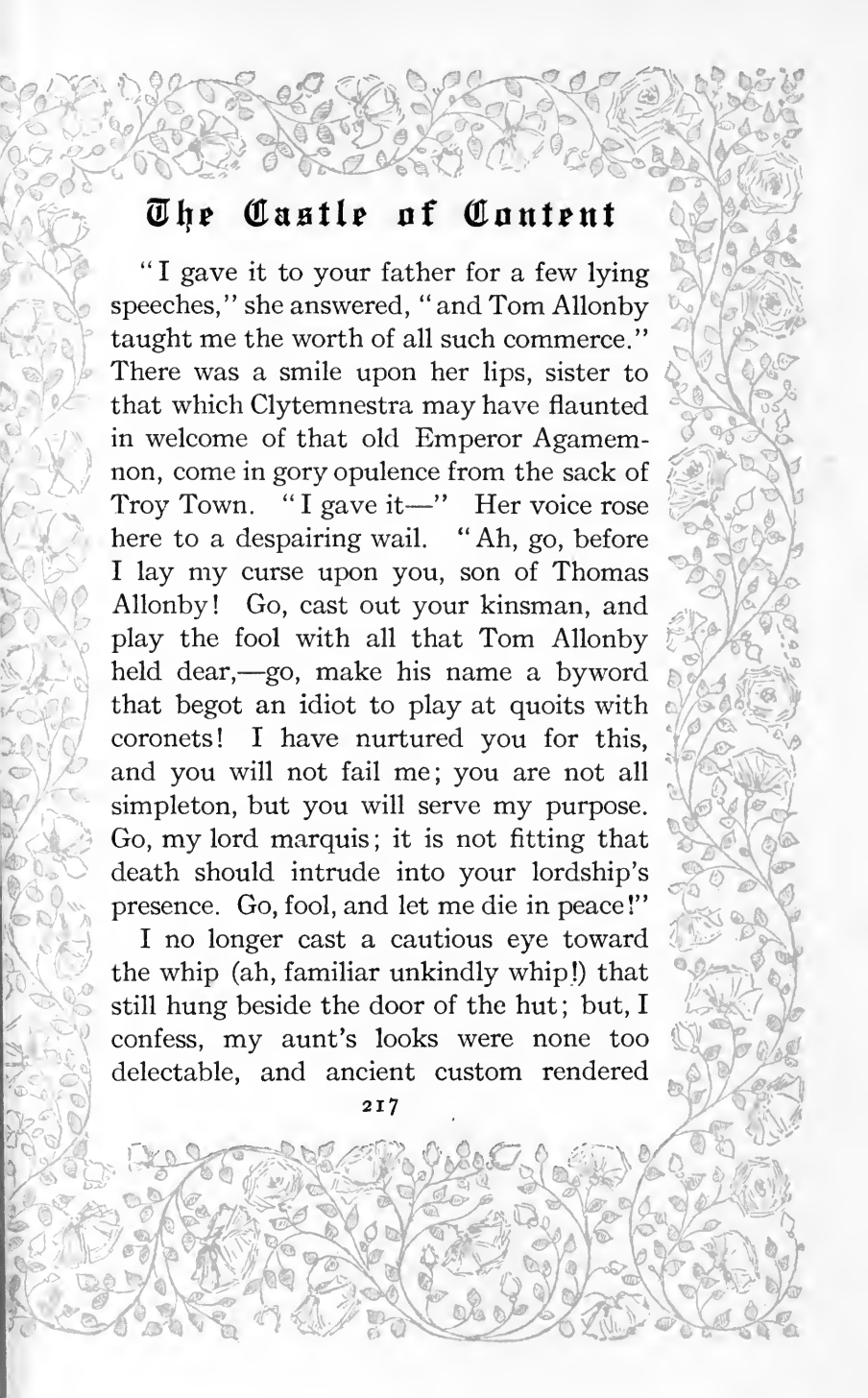
and yet, for that same reason as I think, there was in all our intercourse an odd, harsh, grudging sort of tenderness.

Now the hag laughed,—flat and shrill, like the laughter of the damned heard in Hell between the roaring of the flames. “Were it not common kindness,” she asked, “since his daughter is troth-plight to the usurper? He hath known since morning.”

“And Adeliza?” I asked, in a voice that tricked me.

“Heh, my Lady-High-and-Mighty knows nothing as yet. She will learn of it soon enough, though, for Monsieur Fine-Words her father, that silky, grinning thief, is very keen in a money-chase,—keen as a terrier on a rat-track, may Satan twist his neck! Pshutt, dearie! he means to take the estate of Allonby as it stands; what live-stock may go therewith, whether crack-brained or not, is all one to him. He will not balk at a drachm or two of wit in his son-in-law. You have but to whistle,—but to whistle, Willie, and she’ll come!”

I said: “Woman, have you no heart?”



The Castle of Content

“I gave it to your father for a few lying speeches,” she answered, “and Tom Allonby taught me the worth of all such commerce.” There was a smile upon her lips, sister to that which Clytemnestra may have flaunted in welcome of that old Emperor Agamemnon, come in gory opulence from the sack of Troy Town. “I gave it—” Her voice rose here to a despairing wail. “Ah, go, before I lay my curse upon you, son of Thomas Allonby! Go, cast out your kinsman, and play the fool with all that Tom Allonby held dear,—go, make his name a byword that begot an idiot to play at quoits with coronets! I have nurtured you for this, and you will not fail me; you are not all simpleton, but you will serve my purpose. Go, my lord marquis; it is not fitting that death should intrude into your lordship’s presence. Go, fool, and let me die in peace!”

I no longer cast a cautious eye toward the whip (ah, familiar unkindly whip!) that still hung beside the door of the hut; but, I confess, my aunt’s looks were none too delectable, and ancient custom rendered

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are arranged in a repeating pattern, with some larger and more prominent than others. The leaves are simple and pointed, interspersed among the blooms. The overall style is reminiscent of early 20th-century book design.

The Line of Love

her wrath yet terrible. If the farmers thereabouts were to be trusted, I knew Old Legion's bailiff would shortly be at hand, come for a certain overdue soul, escheat and forfeited to Dis by many years of cruel witchcrafts, close wiles, and nameless sorceries; and I could never abide unpared nails, even though they be red-hot. Therefore, I relinquished her to the village gossips, who waited without, and tucked my bauble under my arm.

"Dear cousin," said I, "farewell!"

"Good-bye, Willie!" said she; "I shall often laugh in Hell to think of the crack-brained marquis that I made on earth. Play the fool yet, dearie."

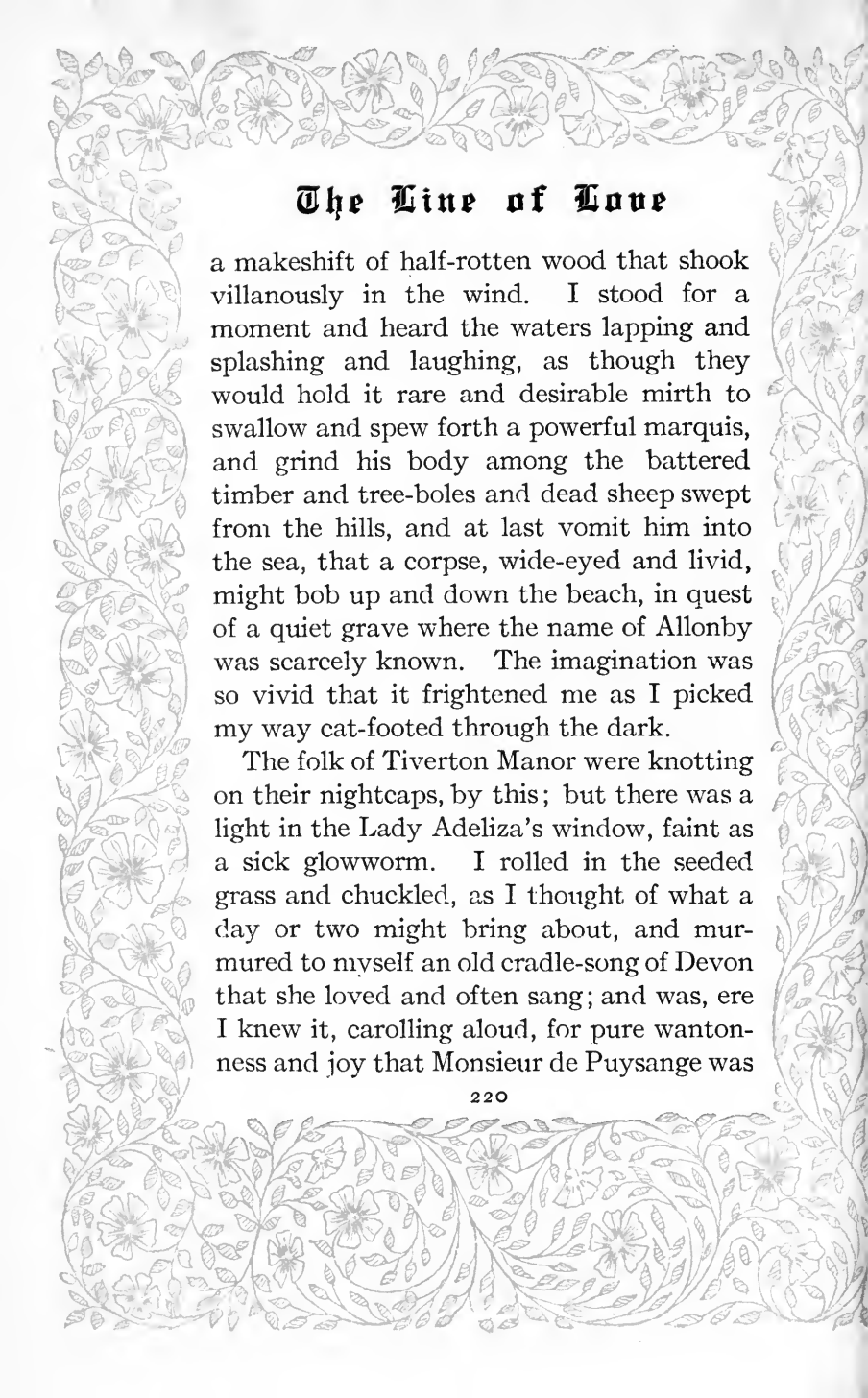
"'Tis my vocation," I answered, briefly: and so went forth into the night.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

II

At the Ladder's Foot

ICAME to Tiverton Manor through a darkness black as the lining of Baalzebub's oldest cloak. The moon was not yet risen, and the clouds hung heavy as feather-beds between mankind and the stars; even the swollen Exe was but dimly visible as I crossed the bridge, though it roared beneath me, and shook the frail timbers hungrily. The bridge had long been unsafe: Monsieur de Puyssange had planned one stronger and less hazardous than the former edifice, of which the arches yet remained, and this was now in the making, as divers piles of unhewn lumber and stone attested: meanwhile, the roadway was

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of a repeating pattern of five-petaled flowers with long stems and small leaves, arranged in a slightly undulating line.

The Line of Love

a makeshift of half-rotten wood that shook villanously in the wind. I stood for a moment and heard the waters lapping and splashing and laughing, as though they would hold it rare and desirable mirth to swallow and spew forth a powerful marquis, and grind his body among the battered timber and tree-boles and dead sheep swept from the hills, and at last vomit him into the sea, that a corpse, wide-eyed and livid, might bob up and down the beach, in quest of a quiet grave where the name of Allonby was scarcely known. The imagination was so vivid that it frightened me as I picked my way cat-footed through the dark.

The folk of Tiverton Manor were knotting on their nightcaps, by this; but there was a light in the Lady Adeliza's window, faint as a sick glowworm. I rolled in the seeded grass and chuckled, as I thought of what a day or two might bring about, and murmured to myself an old cradle-song of Devon that she loved and often sang; and was, ere I knew it, carolling aloud, for pure wantonness and joy that Monsieur de Puyssange was



"LADY ADELIZA CAME UPON THE BALCONY"





The Castle of Content

not likely to have me whipped now, how-
ever blatantly I might elect to discourse.

Sang I:

*"In the lapse of years there lingers yet
A fair and free extent
Of shadowy turret and parapet,—
'Tis the Castle of Content.*

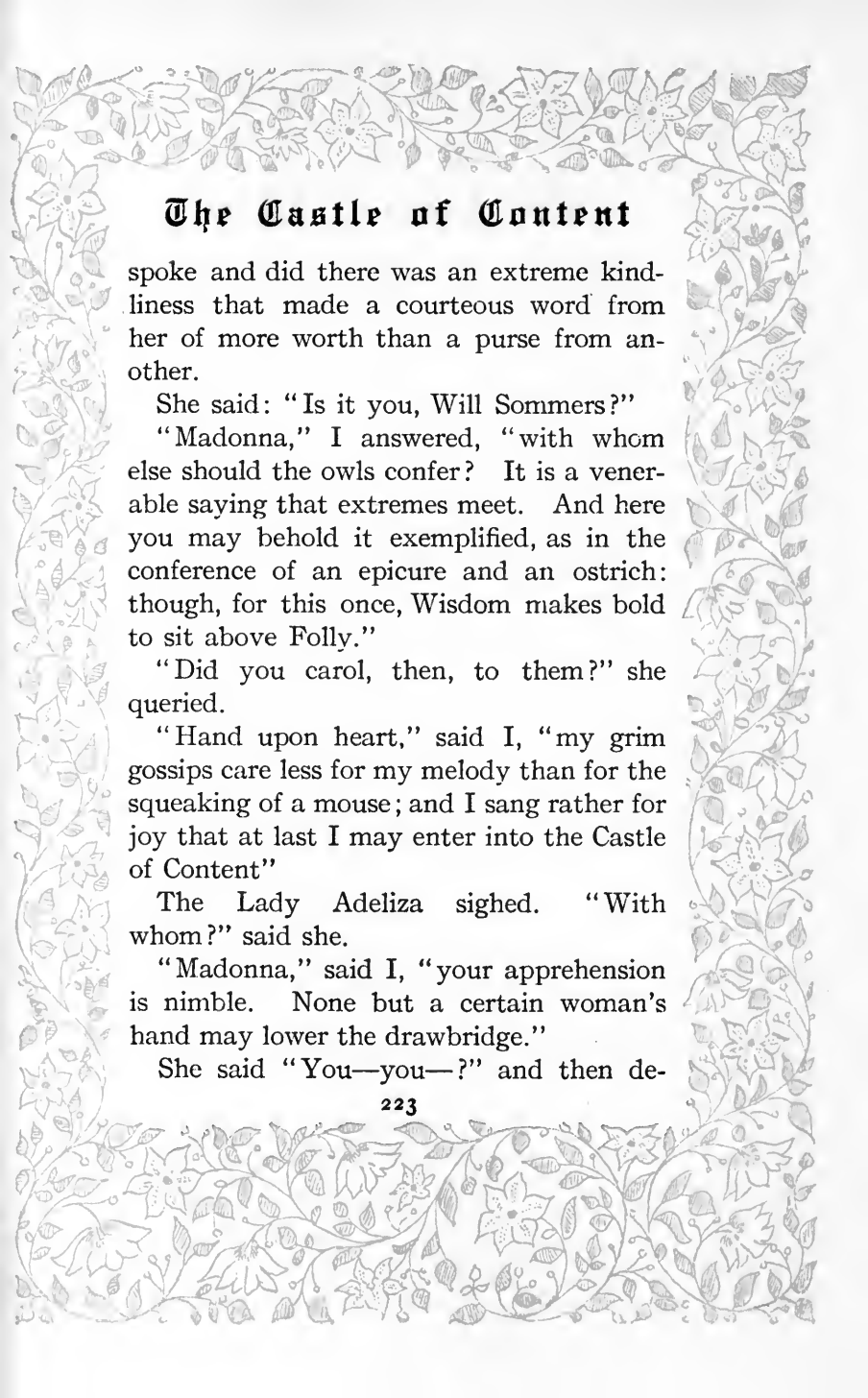
*"Ei ho! Ei ho! the Castle of Content,
With drowsy music drowning merriment,
Where Dreams and Visions held high
carnival
And Love, vine-crowned, sat laughing over
all,—
Ei ho!
The vanished Castle of Content!"*

As I ended, the casement was pushed open, and the Lady Adeliza came upon the balcony, the light streaming from behind her in such fashion as made her appear an angel peering out of Heaven at our mortal antics. Indeed, there was something more than human in her beauty, though it savor-

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of repeating circular and oval motifs containing various floral designs, including roses and pansies, connected by a leafy vine.

The Line of Love

ed less of divinity than of a vision of some silent great-eyed queen of faery, such as those whose feet glide unwetted over our fen-waters when they roam o' nights in search of unwary travellers; the perfection of her comeliness left men almost cold. She was a fair beauty; that is, her eyes were of the color of opals, and her complexion as the first rose of Spring, blushing at her haste to snare men's hearts with beauty; and her loosened hair rippled in such a burst of splendor that I have seen a pale brilliancy, like that of amber, reflected by her bared shoulders where the bright waves fell heavily against the tender flesh and ivory vied with gold in beauty. She was somewhat proud, they said; and to others she may have been, but to me, never. Her voice was a low, sweet song, her look that of the chaste Roman, beneficent Saint Dorothy, as she is pictured in our Chapel here at Tiverton. Proud, they called her! to me her condescensions were so manifold that I cannot set them down: indeed, in all she

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and various leaf shapes, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

The Castle of Content

spoke and did there was an extreme kindness that made a courteous word from her of more worth than a purse from another.

She said: "Is it you, Will Sommers?"

"Madonna," I answered, "with whom else should the owls confer? It is a venerable saying that extremes meet. And here you may behold it exemplified, as in the conference of an epicure and an ostrich: though, for this once, Wisdom makes bold to sit above Folly."

"Did you carol, then, to them?" she queried.

"Hand upon heart," said I, "my grim gossips care less for my melody than for the squeaking of a mouse; and I sang rather for joy that at last I may enter into the Castle of Content"

The Lady Adeliza sighed. "With whom?" said she.

"Madonna," said I, "your apprehension is nimble. None but a certain woman's hand may lower the drawbridge."

She said "You—you—?" and then de-

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The Line of Love

sisted, incredulous laughter breaking the soft flow of speech.

“Now, by Paul and Peter, those eminent apostles! the prophet Jeremy never spake more veraciously in Edom! The fool sighs for a fair woman,—what else should he do, being a fool? Ah, madonna, as in very remote times that notable jester, Love, popped out of Night’s wind-egg, and by his sorcery fashioned from the primeval tangle the pleasant earth that sleeps about us—even thus, may he not frame the disorder of a fool’s brain into the semblance of a lover’s? Believe me, the change is not so great as you might think. Yet if you will, laugh at me, madonna, for I love a woman far above me,—a woman who knows not of my love, or, at most, considers it but as the homage that grateful peasants accord the all-nurturing sun; and now that chance hath woven me a ladder whereby to mount to her, I scarcely dare to set my foot upon the bottom rung.”

“A ladder?” she said, quickly; “a rope ladder?”



The Castle of Content

"A golden one," said I.

There came a silence. About us the wind wailed among the gaunt, deserted choir of the trees, and in the distance an owl hooted sardonically.

Presently the Lady Adeliza said: "Be bold. Be bold, and know that a woman loves once and forever, whether she will or no. Love is not sold in the shops, and the grave merchants that trade in the ultimate seas, and send forth argosies even to jewelled Ind, to fetch home rich pearls, and strange outlandish dyes, and spiceries, and the raiment of proud, long-dead queens, have bought and sold no love, for all their traffic. It is above gold. I know"—here her voice faltered somewhat—"I know of a woman whose birth is very near the throne, and whose beauty, such as it is, men have commended, who loved a man the politic world would have none of, for he was not wealthy. And the world bade her relinquish him; but within the chambers of her heart his voice rang more loudly than that of the world, and for his least word said

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including roses and smaller blossoms, connected by a leafy vine. The style is reminiscent of late 19th or early 20th-century book design.

The Line of Love

she would leave all and go with him whither he would. And—she waits for the speaking of that word.”

“Be bold?” said I.

“Ay,” she returned; “that is the moral of my tale. Make me a song of it, dear Will,—and to-morrow, perhaps, you shall learn how this woman, too, entered into the Castle of Content.”

“Madonna—!” I cried.

“It is late,” said she, “and I must go.”

“To-morrow—?” I said. Eh, my heart was racing now.

“Ay, to-morrow,—the morrow that by this draws very near. Farewell!” She was gone, casting one swift glance backward, even as the ancient Parthians are fabled to have shot their arrows as they fled; and, if the airier missile, also, left a wound, I, for one, would not willingly have quitted her unscathed.

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III

Night—and a Stormed Castle

I WENT forth into the woods that stand thick about Tiverton Manor, where I lay flat on my back among the fallen leaves, dreaming many dreams to myself,—dreams that were frolic songs of happiness, to which the papers in my jerkin rustled a reassuring chorus.

I have heard that night is own sister to death; now, as the harvest-moon broke forth in a red glory, and the stars clustered about her like a swarm of golden bees, I thought her rather the parent of a new life. But, indeed, there is a solemnity in the night past all jesting: it knits up the tangled yarn of our day's doings into a pattern either



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good or ill; it renews the vigor of the living, and with the lapsing of the tide draws the dying toward night's impenetrable depths, gently; and it honors the secrecy of lovers as zealously as that of rogues. In the morning our bodies rise to their allotted work; but our wits have had their season in the night, or of kissing, or of wassail, or of high resolve; and the greater part of such noble deeds as day witnesses have been planned in the solitude of night. It is the sage counsellor, the potent physician that heals and comforts the sorrows of all the world: and such night proved to me, as I pondered on the proud race of Allonby, and knew that in the general record of time my name must soon be set as a sonorous word significant, as the cat might jump, for much good or for unspeakable evil.

And Adeliza loved me! I may not write of what my thoughts were as I considered that stupendous miracle.

But even the lark that daily soars into the naked presence of the sun must seek his woven nest among the grass at twilight;

“IN THE NIGHT”







The Castle of Content

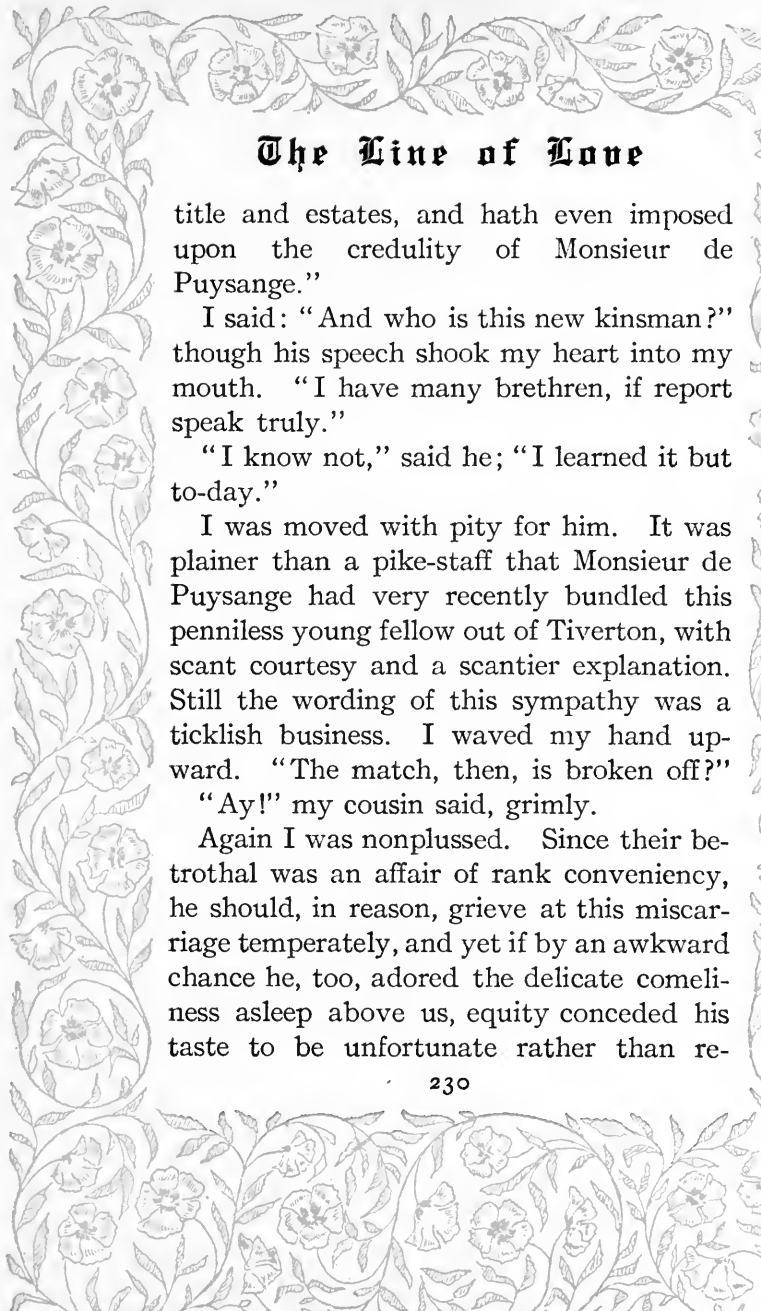
and so, with many yawns, I rose after an hour to repair bedward. Tiverton Manor was a formless blot on the mild radiance of the heavens, but I must needs pause for a while, gazing up at the Lady Adeliza's window, like a hen drinking water, and thinking of diverse matters.

It was then that something rustled among the leaves, and, turning, I stared straight into the countenance of Stephen Allonby, until to-day Marquis of Falmouth, a slim, comely youth, and my very good cousin.

"Fool," said he, "you walk late."

"Faith!" said I, "instinct warned me that a fool might find fit company here,—cousin." He winced at the word, for he was never prone to admit the relationship, being in disposition somewhat precise.

"Eh?" said he; then paused for a while. "I have more kinsmen than I knew of," he resumed, at length, "and to-day spawns them thick as herrings. Your greeting falls strangely pat with that of a brother of yours, alleged to be begot in lawful matrimony, who hath appeared to claim the



The Line of Love

title and estates, and hath even imposed upon the credulity of Monsieur de Puyssange."

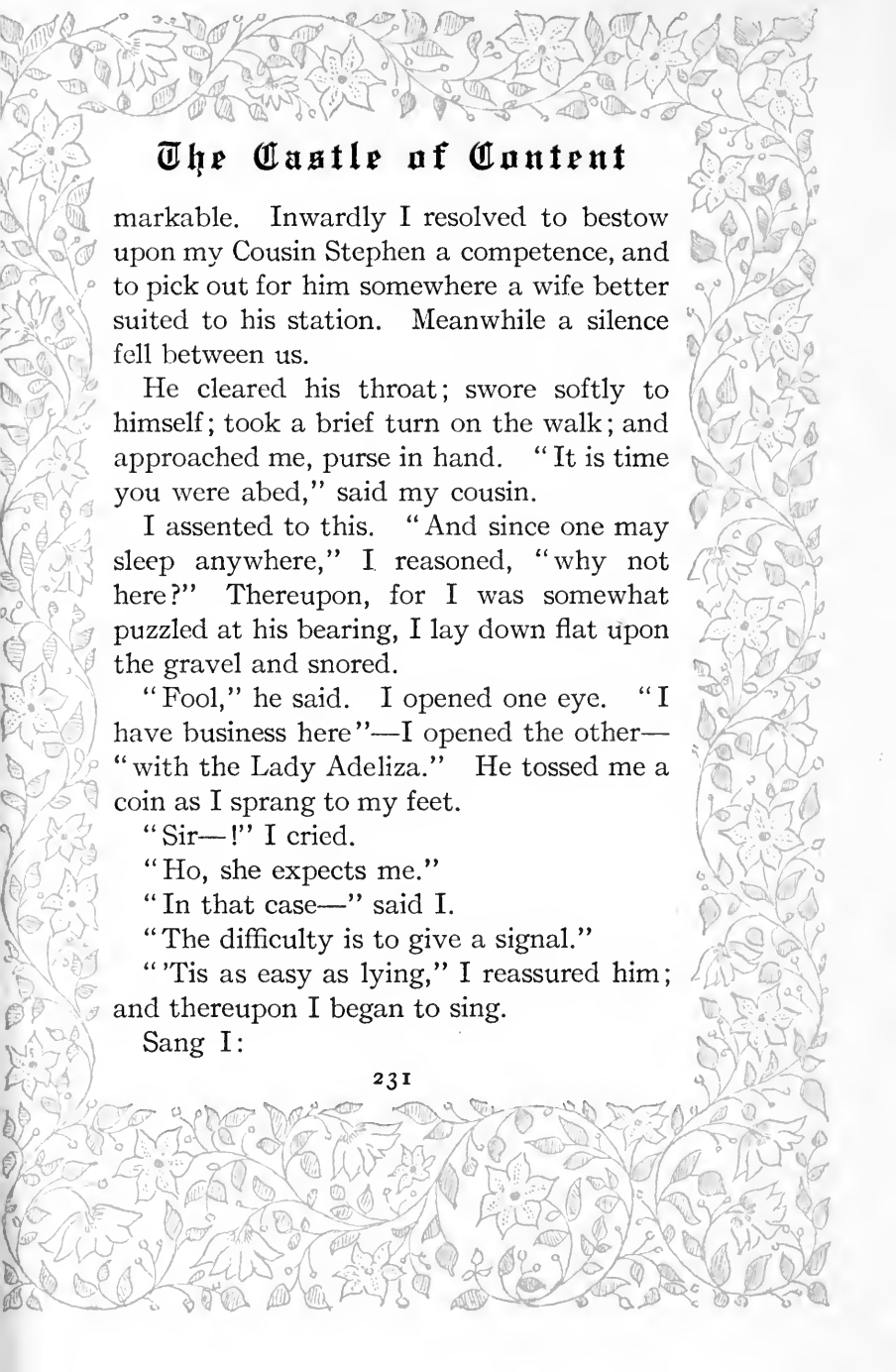
I said: "And who is this new kinsman?" though his speech shook my heart into my mouth. "I have many brethren, if report speak truly."

"I know not," said he; "I learned it but to-day."

I was moved with pity for him. It was plainer than a pike-staff that Monsieur de Puyssange had very recently bundled this penniless young fellow out of Tiverton, with scant courtesy and a scantier explanation. Still the wording of this sympathy was a ticklish business. I waved my hand upward. "The match, then, is broken off?"

"Ay!" my cousin said, grimly.

Again I was nonplussed. Since their betrothal was an affair of rank conveniency, he should, in reason, grieve at this miscarriage temperately, and yet if by an awkward chance he, too, adored the delicate comeliness asleep above us, equity conceded his taste to be unfortunate rather than re-

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and the leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is composed of a repeating pattern of these elements, creating a frame for the page.

The Castle of Content

markable. Inwardly I resolved to bestow upon my Cousin Stephen a competence, and to pick out for him somewhere a wife better suited to his station. Meanwhile a silence fell between us.

He cleared his throat; swore softly to himself; took a brief turn on the walk; and approached me, purse in hand. "It is time you were abed," said my cousin.

I assented to this. "And since one may sleep anywhere," I reasoned, "why not here?" Thereupon, for I was somewhat puzzled at his bearing, I lay down flat upon the gravel and snored.

"Fool," he said. I opened one eye. "I have business here"—I opened the other—"with the Lady Adeliza." He tossed me a coin as I sprang to my feet.

"Sir—!" I cried.

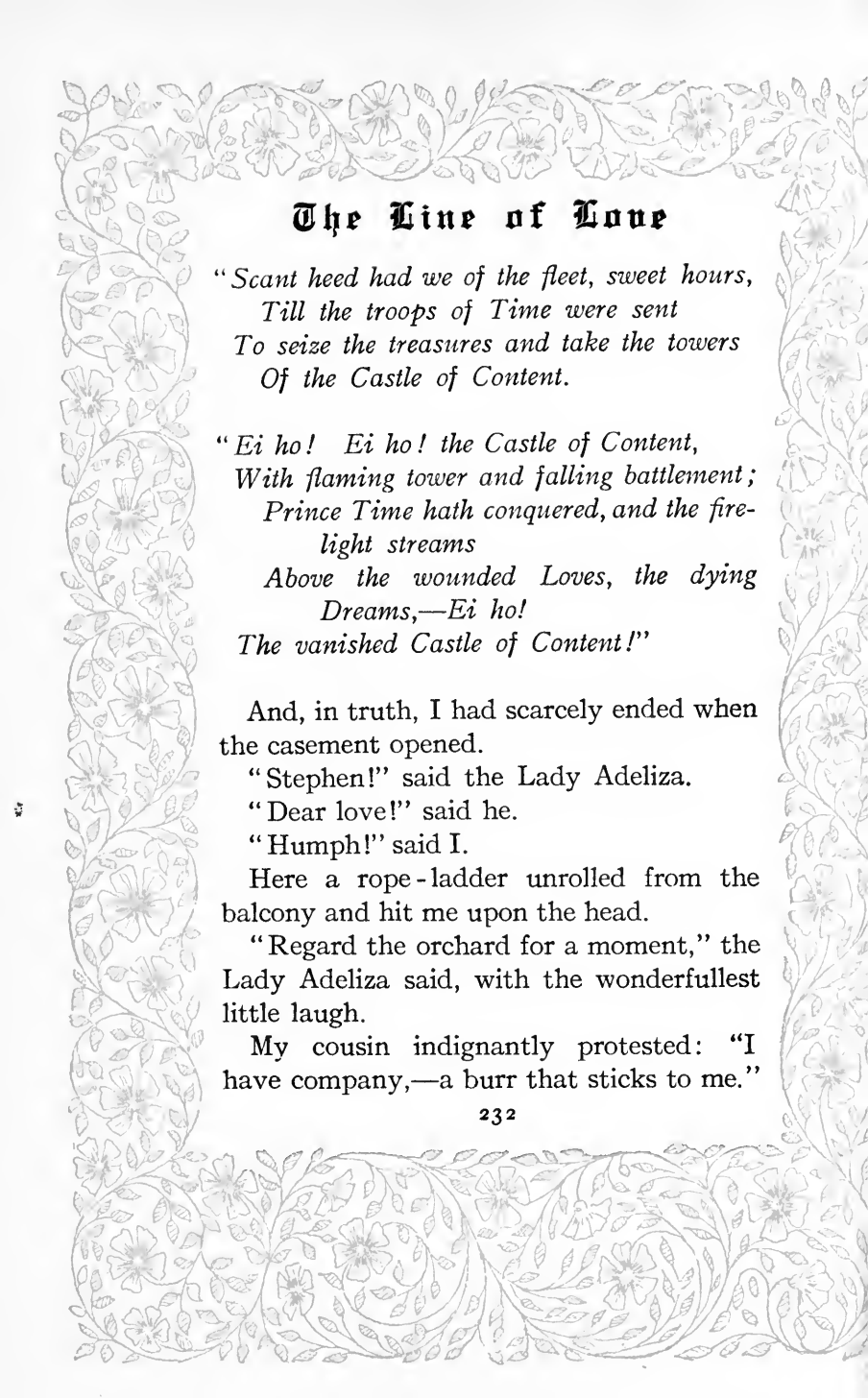
"Ho, she expects me."

"In that case—" said I.

"The difficulty is to give a signal."

"'Tis as easy as lying," I reassured him; and thereupon I began to sing.

Sang I:



The Line of Love

*"Scant heed had we of the fleet, sweet hours,
Till the troops of Time were sent
To seize the treasures and take the towers
Of the Castle of Content.*

*"Ei ho! Ei ho! the Castle of Content,
With flaming tower and falling battlement;
Prince Time hath conquered, and the fire-
light streams
Above the wounded Loves, the dying
Dreams,—Ei ho!
The vanished Castle of Content!"*

And, in truth, I had scarcely ended when the casement opened.

"Stephen!" said the Lady Adeliza.

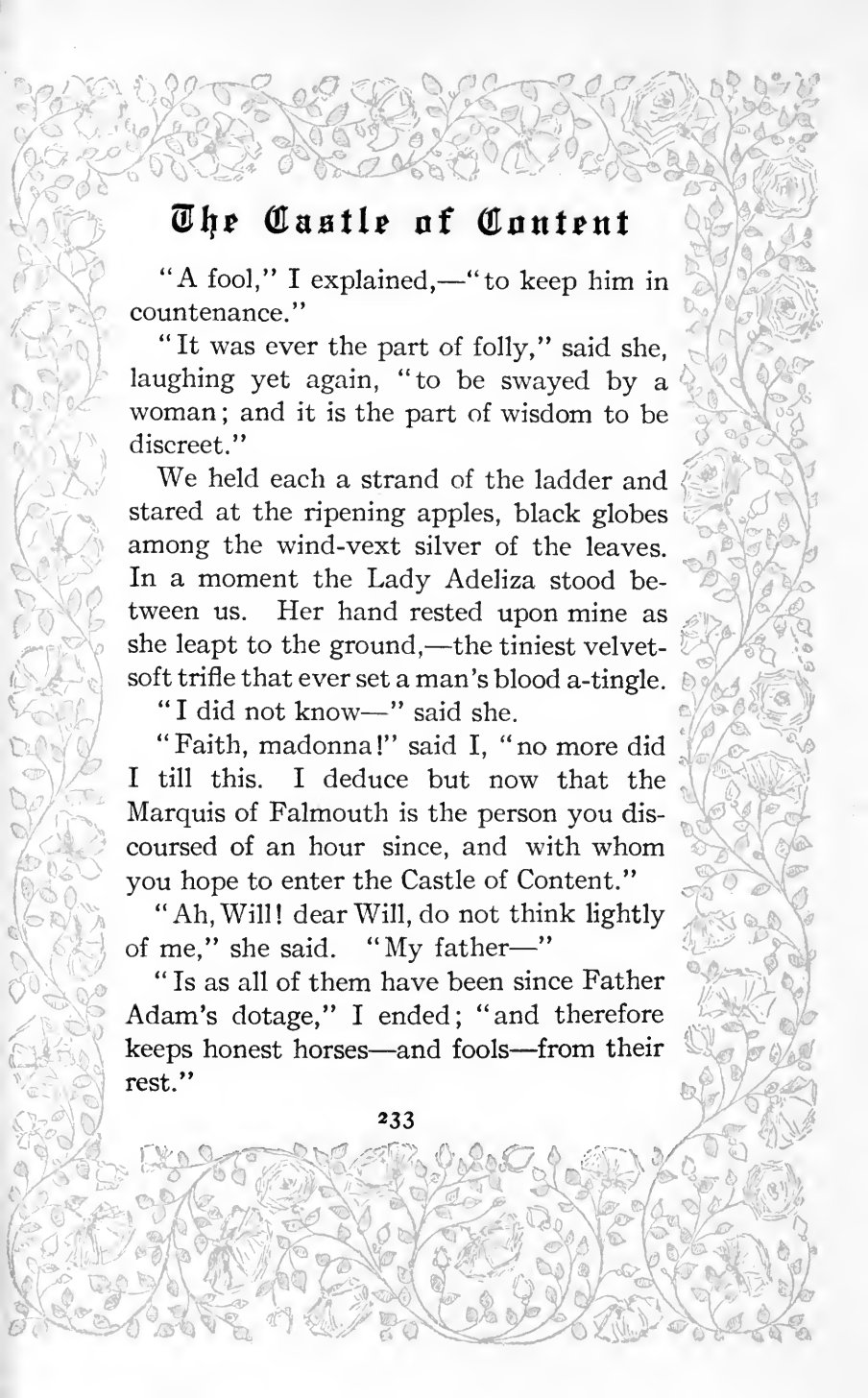
"Dear love!" said he.

"Humph!" said I.

Here a rope-ladder unrolled from the balcony and hit me upon the head.

"Regard the orchard for a moment," the Lady Adeliza said, with the wonderfulest little laugh.

My cousin indignantly protested: "I have company,—a burr that sticks to me."



The Castle of Content

"A fool," I explained,—“to keep him in countenance.”

“It was ever the part of folly,” said she, laughing yet again, “to be swayed by a woman; and it is the part of wisdom to be discreet.”

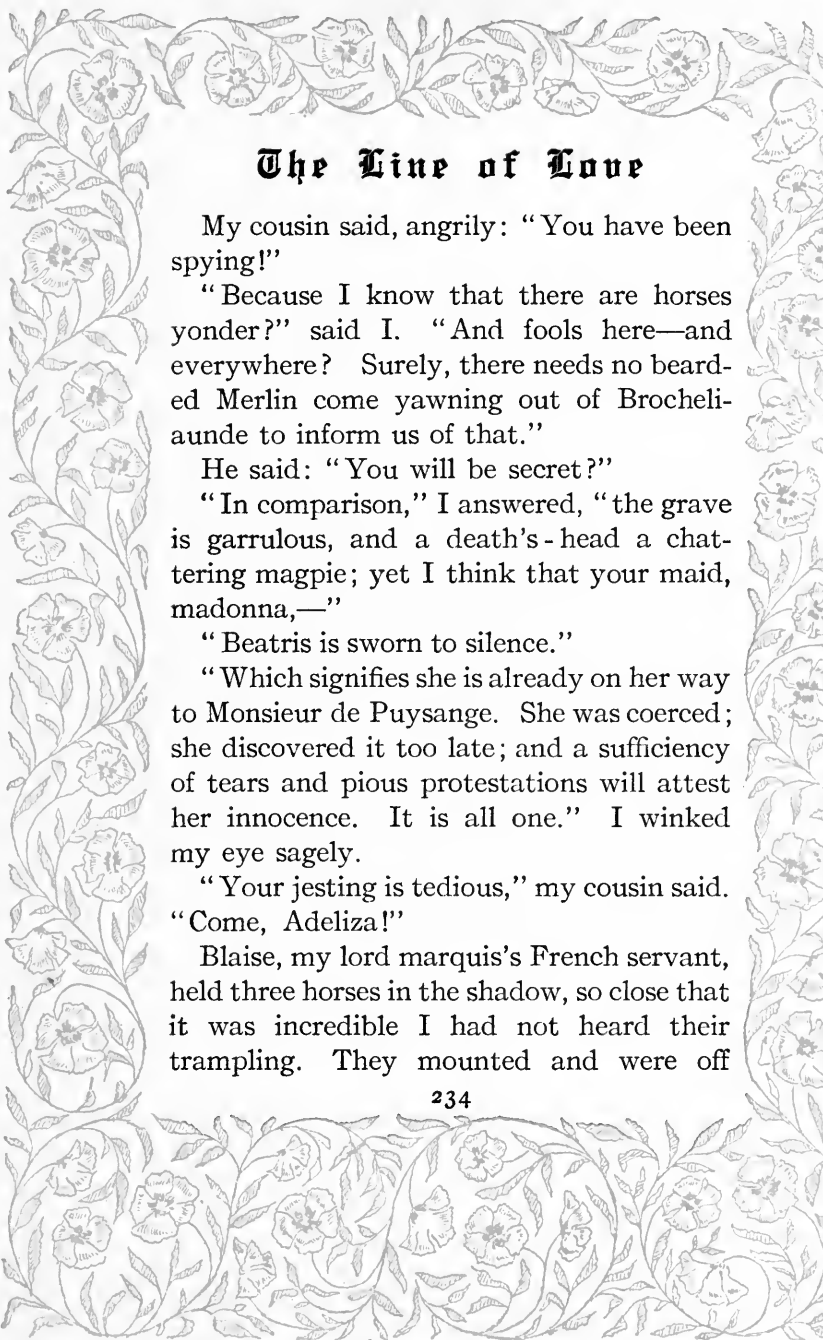
We held each a strand of the ladder and stared at the ripening apples, black globes among the wind-vevt silver of the leaves. In a moment the Lady Adeliza stood between us. Her hand rested upon mine as she leapt to the ground,—the tiniest velvet-soft trifle that ever set a man’s blood a-tingle.

“I did not know—” said she.

“Faith, madonna!” said I, “no more did I till this. I deduce but now that the Marquis of Falmouth is the person you discoursed of an hour since, and with whom you hope to enter the Castle of Content.”

“Ah, Will! dear Will, do not think lightly of me,” she said. “My father—”

“Is as all of them have been since Father Adam’s dotage,” I ended; “and therefore keeps honest horses—and fools—from their rest.”



The Line of Love

My cousin said, angrily: "You have been spying!"

"Because I know that there are horses yonder?" said I. "And fools here—and everywhere? Surely, there needs no bearded Merlin come yawning out of Brocheli-aunde to inform us of that."

He said: "You will be secret?"

"In comparison," I answered, "the grave is garrulous, and a death's-head a chattering magpie; yet I think that your maid, madonna,—"

"Beatris is sworn to silence."

"Which signifies she is already on her way to Monsieur de Puyange. She was coerced; she discovered it too late; and a sufficiency of tears and pious protestations will attest her innocence. It is all one." I winked my eye sagely.

"Your jesting is tedious," my cousin said. "Come, Adeliza!"

Blaise, my lord marquis's French servant, held three horses in the shadow, so close that it was incredible I had not heard their trampling. They mounted and were off



The Castle of Content

like thistledown ere Blaise put foot to stirrup.

"Blaise," said I.

"Ohé!" said he, pausing.

"—if, upon this pleasurable occasion, I were to borrow your horse—"

"Impossible!"

"If I were to take it by force—" I exhibited my coin.

"Eh?"

"—no one could blame you."

"And yet perhaps—"

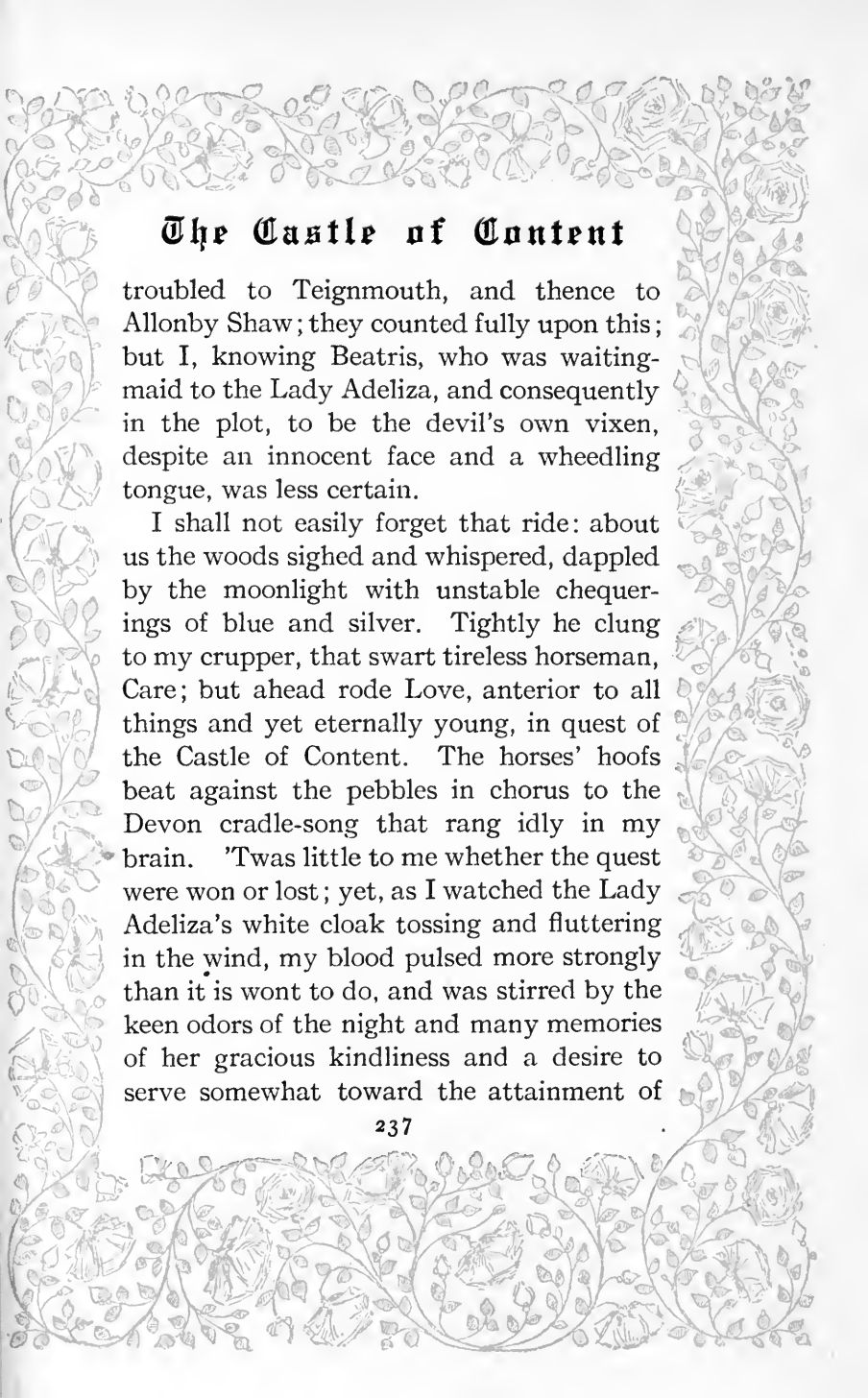
"The deduction is quite illogical," said I. And pushing him aside, a trifle uncertain, I mounted and set out into the night after my cousin and the Lady Adeliza.

IV

All Ends in a Puff of Smoke

THEY rode leisurely enough along the winding highway that lay in the moonlight like a white ribbon in a pedlar's box; and keeping as I did some hundred yards behind, they thought me no other than Blaise, being indeed, too much engrossed with one another to regard the outer world very strictly. So we rode a matter of three miles in the whispering, moonlit woods, they prattling and laughing as though there were no such monster in all the universe as an irate father, I brooding of many things and with an ear cocked backward for possible pursuit.

In most cases they might escape un-



The Castle of Content

troubled to Teignmouth, and thence to Allonby Shaw; they counted fully upon this; but I, knowing Beatris, who was waiting-maid to the Lady Adeliza, and consequently in the plot, to be the devil's own vixen, despite an innocent face and a wheedling tongue, was less certain.

I shall not easily forget that ride: about us the woods sighed and whispered, dappled by the moonlight with unstable chequerings of blue and silver. Tightly he clung to my crupper, that swart tireless horseman, Care; but ahead rode Love, anterior to all things and yet eternally young, in quest of the Castle of Content. The horses' hoofs beat against the pebbles in chorus to the Devon cradle-song that rang idly in my brain. 'Twas little to me whether the quest were won or lost; yet, as I watched the Lady Adeliza's white cloak tossing and fluttering in the wind, my blood pulsed more strongly than it is wont to do, and was stirred by the keen odors of the night and many memories of her gracious kindness and a desire to serve somewhat toward the attainment of



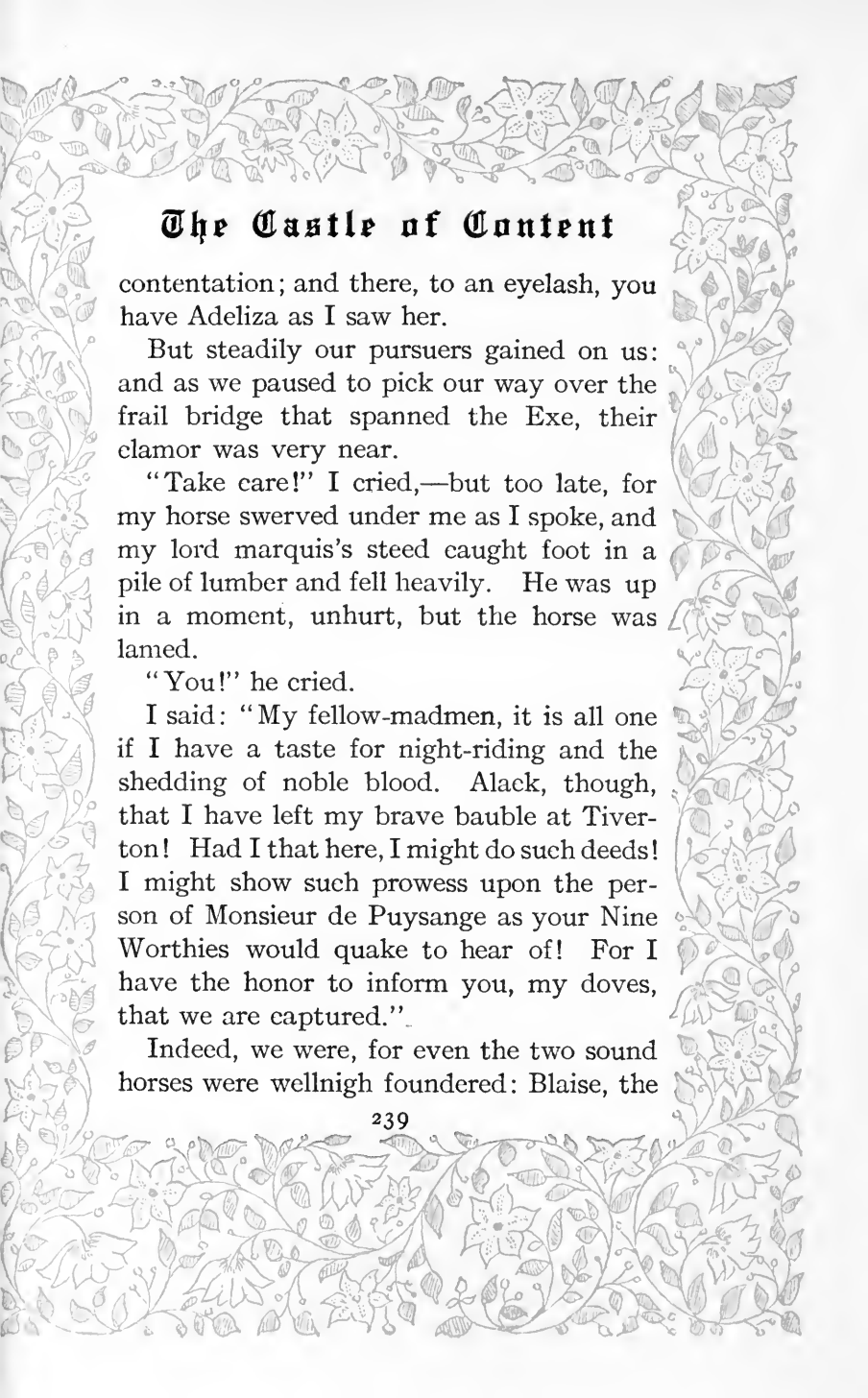
The Line of Love

her happiness. Thus it was that my teeth clinched, and a dog howled in the distance, and the world seemed very old and very incurious of our mortal woes and joys.

Then that befell which I had looked for, and I heard the clatter of horses' hoofs behind us, and knew that Monsieur de Puy-sange and his men were come hastily to rescue the Lady Adeliza from my cousin, that she might be my bride. I essayed a gallop.

"Spur!" I cried;—"in the name of Saint Cupid!"

With a little gasp, she bent forward over her horse's mane, urging him onward with every nerve and muscle of her tender body. I could not keep my gaze from her face as we swept through the night. Picture Europa in her traverse, bull-borne, through the Summer sea, the depths giving up their misshapen deities, and the blind sea-snakes writhing about her in hideous homage, yet cognizant of Crete beyond these unaccustomed horrors and the god desirous of her

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are five-petaled and have small dots in their centers. The leaves are simple, pointed shapes. The border is composed of a repeating pattern of these elements, creating a delicate, lace-like frame.

The Castle of Content

contentation; and there, to an eyelash, you have Adeliza as I saw her.

But steadily our pursuers gained on us: and as we paused to pick our way over the frail bridge that spanned the Exe, their clamor was very near.

“Take care!” I cried,—but too late, for my horse swerved under me as I spoke, and my lord marquis’s steed caught foot in a pile of lumber and fell heavily. He was up in a moment, unhurt, but the horse was lamed.

“You!” he cried.

I said: “My fellow-madmen, it is all one if I have a taste for night-riding and the shedding of noble blood. Alack, though, that I have left my brave bauble at Tiverton! Had I that here, I might do such deeds! I might show such prowess upon the person of Monsieur de Puyssange as your Nine Worthies would quake to hear of! For I have the honor to inform you, my doves, that we are captured.”

Indeed, we were, for even the two sound horses were wellnigh foundered: Blaise, the

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including large five-petaled flowers and smaller buds, connected by a delicate vine with leaves. The design is symmetrical and fills the top, bottom, and side margins of the page.

The Line of Love

idle rogue, had not troubled to provide fresh ones, so easy had the flitting seemed; and it was conspicuous that we would be overtaken in half an hour.

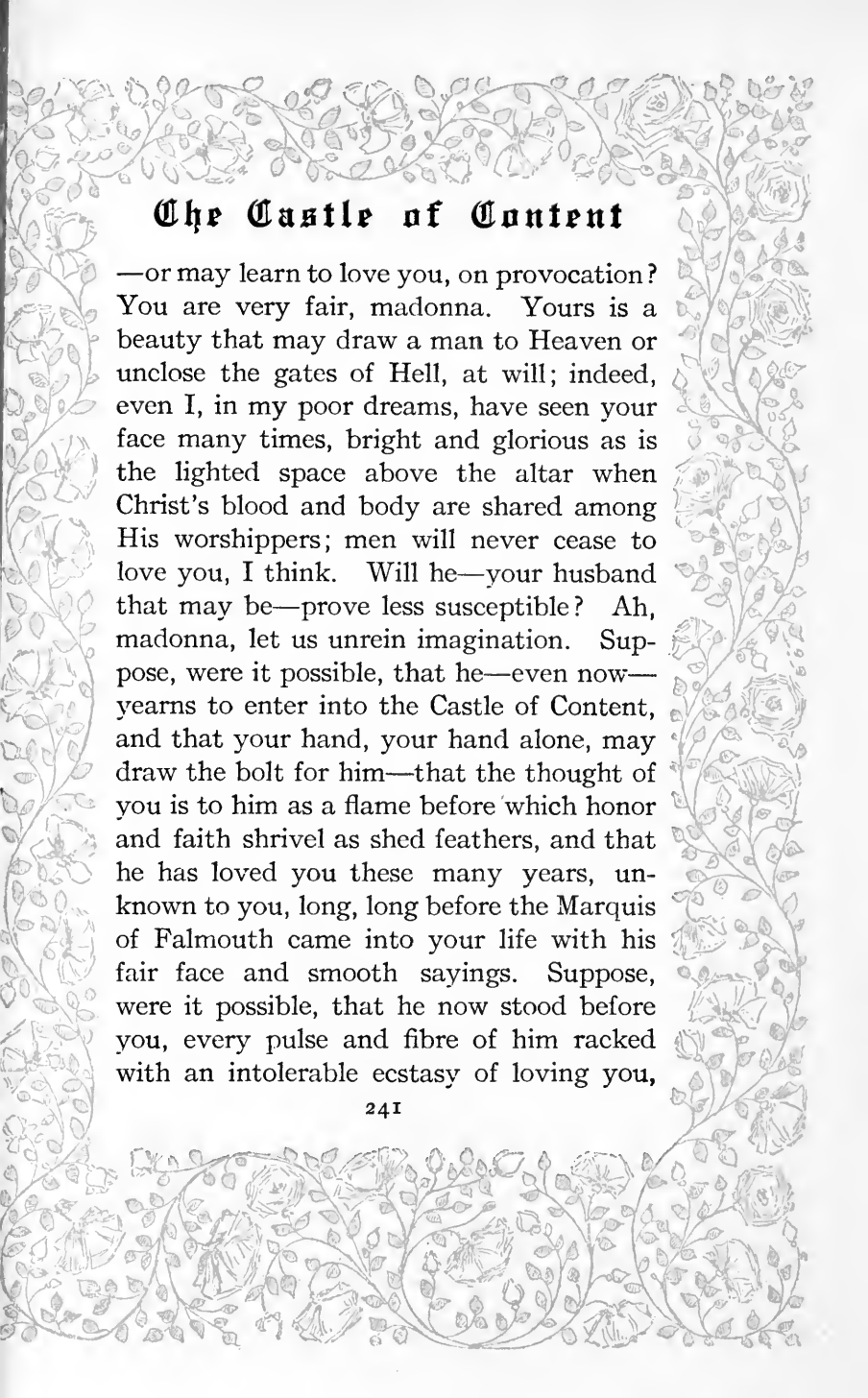
“So it seems,” said he. “Well! one can die but once.” Thus speaking, he drew his sword with an air Captain Leonidas, at Thermopylæ, might have envied.

“Together, my heart!” she cried.

“Madonna,” said I, dismounting as I spoke, “pray you consider! With neither of you, is there any question of death; 'tis but that Monsieur de Puyssange desires you to make a suitable match. It is not yet too late; his heart is very kindly, and he hath no malice toward—toward my lord marquis. Yield, then, to his wishes, since there is no choice.”

She stared at me, in amazement at this sensible advice. “And you—is it you that would enter into the Castle of Content?” she cried, with a scorn that lashed.

I said: “Madonna, bethink you, you know naught of this man your father desires you to wed. Is it not possible that he, too, may love



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—or may learn to love you, on provocation? You are very fair, madonna. Yours is a beauty that may draw a man to Heaven or unclosethe the gates of Hell, at will; indeed, even I, in my poor dreams, have seen your face many times, bright and glorious as is the lighted space above the altar when Christ's blood and body are shared among His worshippers; men will never cease to love you, I think. Will he—your husband that may be—prove less susceptible? Ah, madonna, let us unrein imagination. Suppose, were it possible, that he—even now—yearns to enter into the Castle of Content, and that your hand, your hand alone, may draw the bolt for him—that the thought of you is to him as a flame before which honor and faith shrivel as shed feathers, and that he has loved you these many years, unknown to you, long, long before the Marquis of Falmouth came into your life with his fair face and smooth sayings. Suppose, were it possible, that he now stood before you, every pulse and fibre of him racked with an intolerable ecstasy of loving you,



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his heart one vast hunger for you, Adeliza, and his voice shaking as my voice shakes, and his hands trembling as my hands tremble,—ah, see how they tremble, madonna, the poor foolish hands! Suppose, were it possible,—”

“Fool! O, treacherous fool!” my cousin cried, in a rage.

She rested her finger-tips upon his arm. “Hush!” she bade him; then turned to me an uncertain countenance that was half pity, half wonder. “Dear Will,” said she, “if you have ever known aught of love, do you not understand that I love Stephen here?” A tear stole down her cheek, in which the Marquis of Falmouth had no share. At last—at last, praise God!—she saw and read the message my eyes had borne these two years past.

“In that case,” said I,—my voice played me strange tricks,—“in that case, may I request that you assist me in gathering such brushwood as we may find hereabout?”

They both stared at me now. “My lord,” I said, “the Exe is high, the bridge is of

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and various leaf shapes, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

The Castle of Content

wood, and I have flint and steel in my pocket. The ford is five miles above and quite impassable. Do you understand me, my lord?"

He clapped his hands. "Excellent!" he cried.

Then, they having caught my drift, we heaped up a pile of broken boughs and twigs and brushwood on the bridge, all three gathering it together. I doubt if the moon, that is co-partner in the antics of most rogues and lovers, ever saw a stranger sight than that of a marquis, a peer's daughter, and a fool met at dead of night to make fagots.

When we had done I handed him the flint and steel. "My lord," said I, "the honor is yours."

"Udsfoot!" he murmured, in a moment, swearing and striking futile sparks, "last night's rain has wet the wood through. It will not kindle."

I said: "Assuredly, in such matters a fool is indispensable." I heaped before him the papers that made an honest woman of my mother and a marquis of me, and seizing

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The Line of Love

the flint, cast a spark among them that set them crackling cheerily. Then we three drew back upon the western bank and watched the writhing twigs splutter and snap and burn.

The bridge caught apace and in ten minutes afforded passage to nothing short of the ardent equipage of the prophet Elias. In twenty minutes it did not exist: only the stone arches towered above the roaring waters that glistened in the light of the fire, which had, by this, reached the other side to find quick employment in the woods of Tiverton. Our pursuers rode through a glare which was that of Hell's kitchen on baking-day, and reached the Exe only to curse vainly and shriek idle imprecations at us, who were as immune from their anger as though the severing river had been Pyriphlegethon.

"My lord," I presently suggested, "it may be that your priest expects you?"

"Indeed," said he, laughing, "it is possible. Let us go." Thereupon they mounted the two sound horses. "My man," said



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he, "follow on foot to Teignmouth; and there—"

"Sir," said I, "my home is at Tiverton."

He wheeled about. "Do you not fear—?"

"The whip?" said I. "Ah, my lord, I have been whipped ere this. It is not the greatest ill in life to be whipped."

He began to protest.

"But, indeed, I am resolved," said I. "Farewell!"

He tossed me his purse. "As you will," he retorted, shortly. "We thank you for your aid; and if I am still master of Allonby—"

"No fear of that!" I said. "Farewell, cousin Marquis! I cannot weep at your going, since it brings you happiness. And we have it on excellent authority that the laughter of fools is as the crackling of thorns under a pot. Accordingly, I bid you God-speed in a discreet silence."

I stood fumbling my cousin's gold as he cantered forward into the night; but she did not follow.

"I am sorry—" she began. She paused,



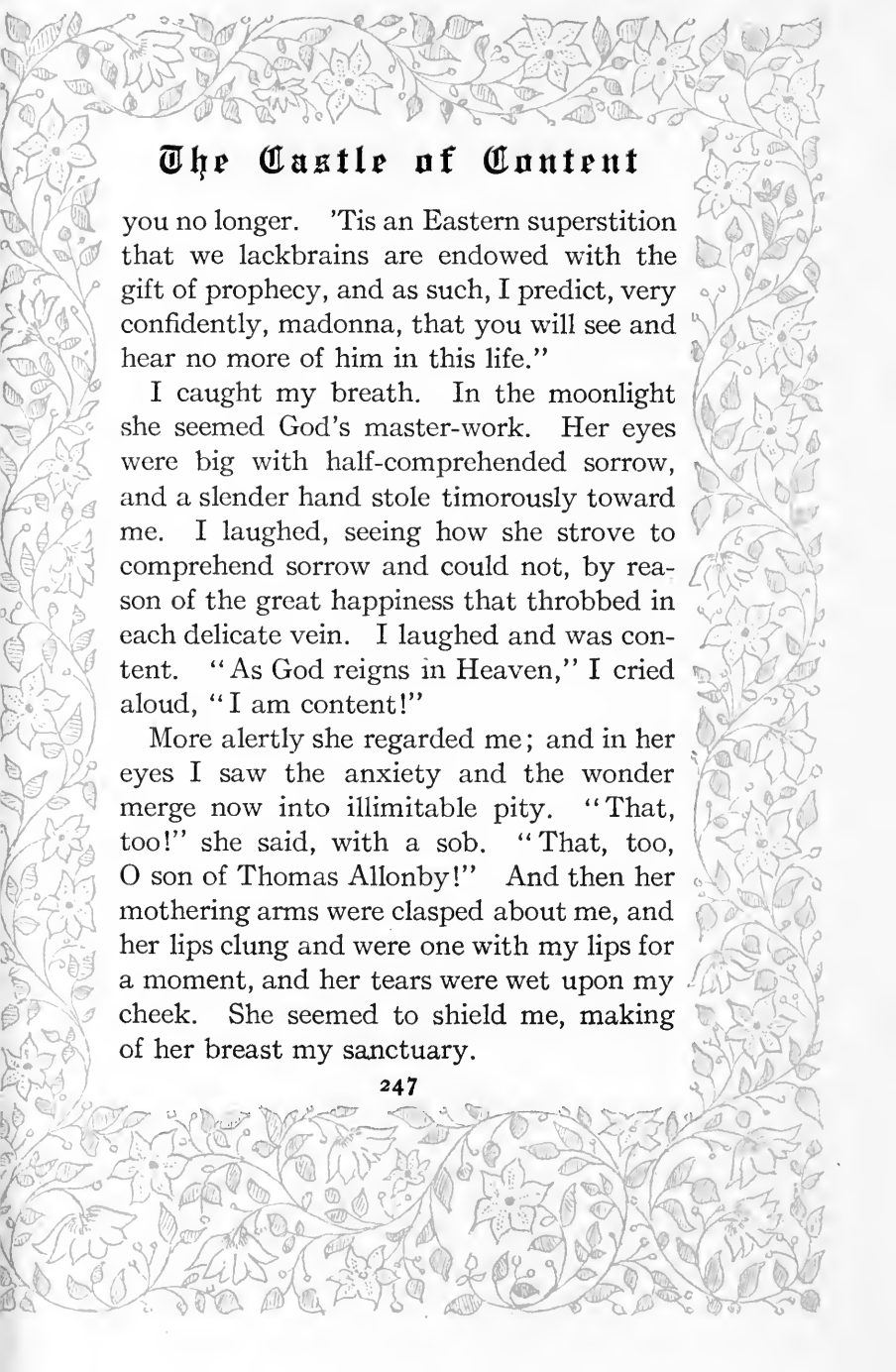
The Line of Love

and the lithe fingers fretted with her horse's mane.

I said: "Madonna, you have told me of love's nature: must my halting commentary prove the glose upon your text? Look, then, to be edified while the fool is delivered of his folly. Love was born of the ocean, madonna, and the ocean is but salt water, and salt water is but tears; and thus may love claim kin with sorrow,—ay, madonna, Fate hath ordained for her diversion that through sorrow alone we lovers may regain the Castle of Content."

There was a long silence, and the wind wailed among the falling, tattered leaves. "Had I but known—" Adeliza said, very sadly.

I said: "Madonna, go forward and God speed you! Yonder your lover waits for you, and the world is exceedingly fair; here there is only a fool who discourses tediously of matters his poor brain may not fathom, and whose rude tongue is likely to chaunt but an unmannerly marriage-song. As for this new Marquis of Falmouth, let him trouble

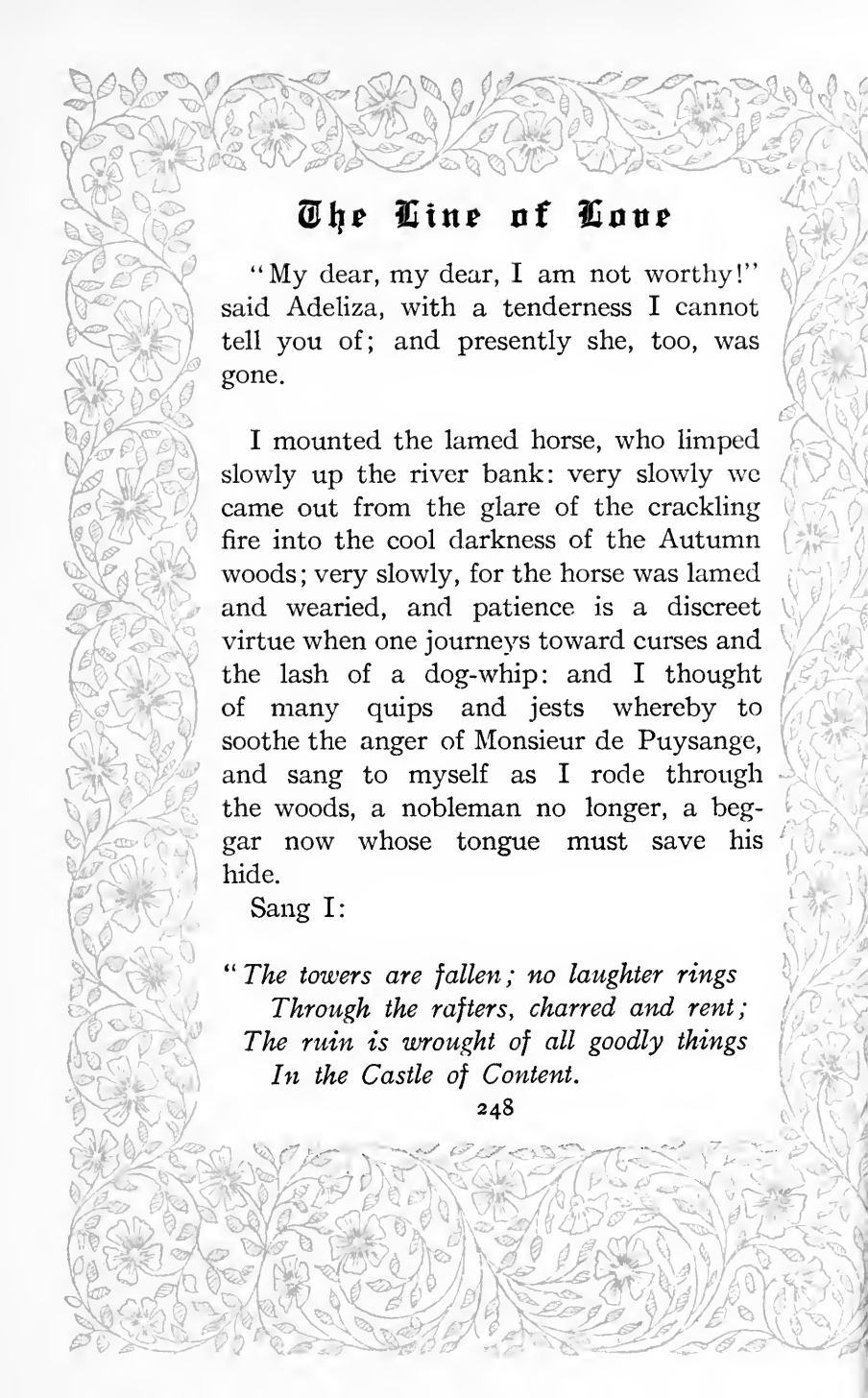
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you no longer. 'Tis an Eastern superstition that we lackbrains are endowed with the gift of prophecy, and as such, I predict, very confidently, madonna, that you will see and hear no more of him in this life."

I caught my breath. In the moonlight she seemed God's master-work. Her eyes were big with half-comprehended sorrow, and a slender hand stole timorously toward me. I laughed, seeing how she strove to comprehend sorrow and could not, by reason of the great happiness that throbbed in each delicate vein. I laughed and was content. "As God reigns in Heaven," I cried aloud, "I am content!"

More alertly she regarded me; and in her eyes I saw the anxiety and the wonder merge now into illimitable pity. "That, too!" she said, with a sob. "That, too, O son of Thomas Allonby!" And then her mothering arms were clasped about me, and her lips clung and were one with my lips for a moment, and her tears were wet upon my cheek. She seemed to shield me, making of her breast my sanctuary.



The Line of Love

“My dear, my dear, I am not worthy!” said Adeliza, with a tenderness I cannot tell you of; and presently she, too, was gone.

I mounted the lamed horse, who limped slowly up the river bank: very slowly we came out from the glare of the crackling fire into the cool darkness of the Autumn woods; very slowly, for the horse was lamed and wearied, and patience is a discreet virtue when one journeys toward curses and the lash of a dog-whip: and I thought of many quips and jests whereby to soothe the anger of Monsieur de Puitsange, and sang to myself as I rode through the woods, a nobleman no longer, a beggar now whose tongue must save his hide.

Sang I:

*“The towers are fallen; no laughter rings
Through the rafters, charred and rent;
The ruin is wrought of all goodly things
In the Castle of Content.”*



The Castle of Content

*"Ei ho! Ei ho! the Castle of Content,
Beyond the Land of Youth, where mirth was
meant!*

*The walls are ashes now, and all in vain
Hand-shadowed eyes turn backward and
regain*

Only the memory of that dear domain,—

Ei ho!

The vanished Castle of Content!"

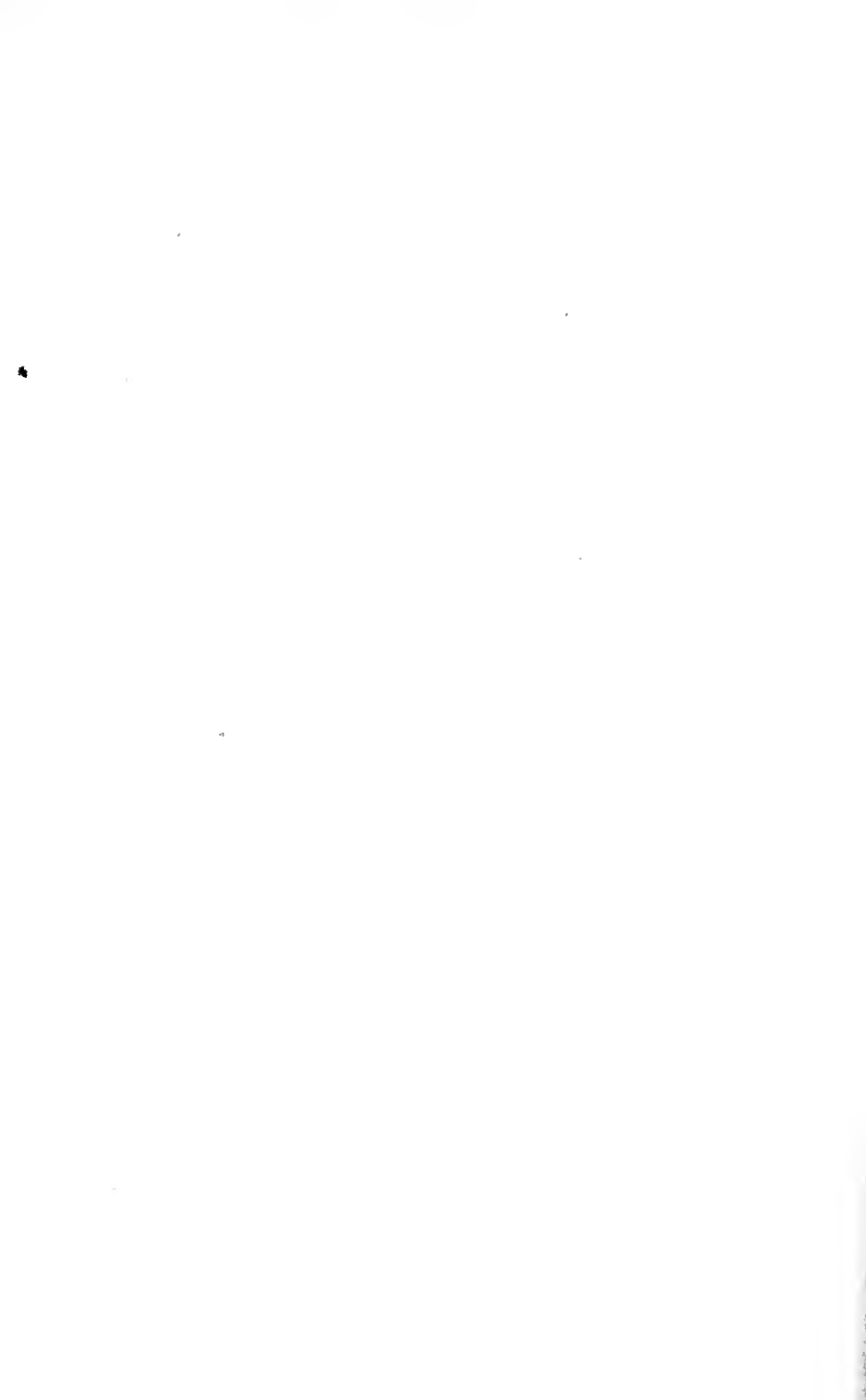


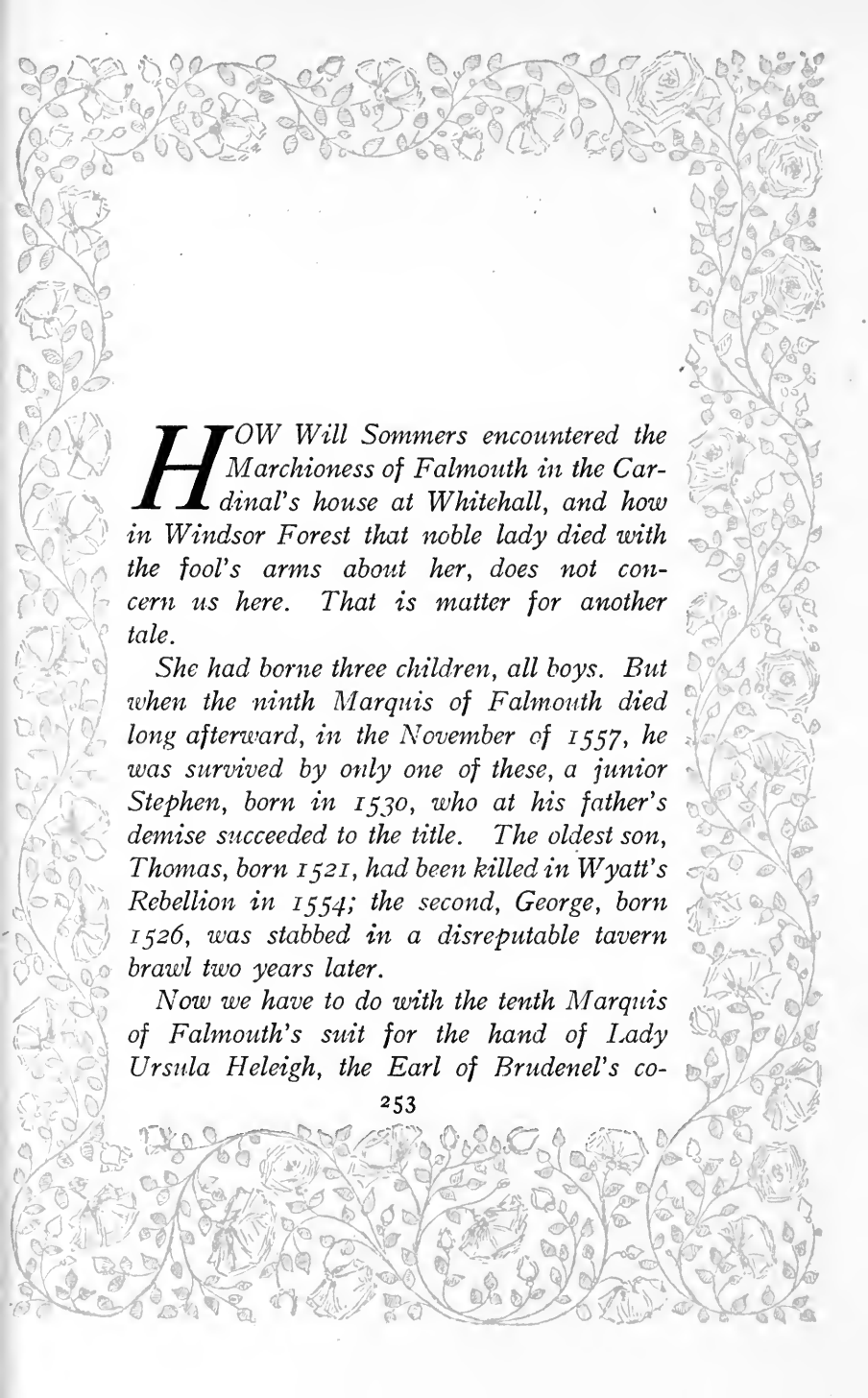


VII

MAY 27, 1559

*“O welladay!” said Beichan then,
‘That I so soon have married thee!
For it can be none but Susie Pie,
That sailed the sea for love of me!’”*

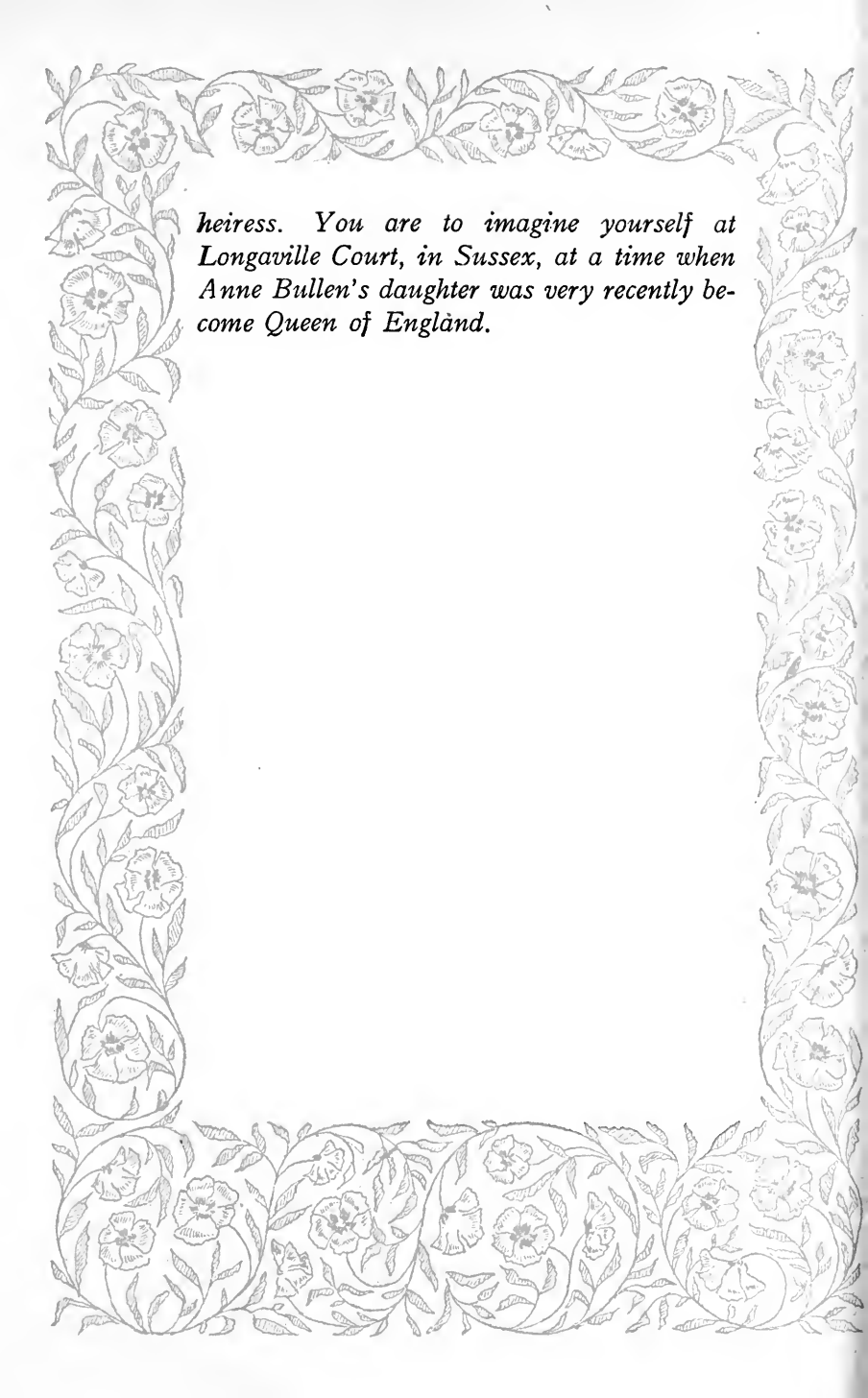




HOW Will Sommers encountered the Marchioness of Falmouth in the Cardinal's house at Whitehall, and how in Windsor Forest that noble lady died with the fool's arms about her, does not concern us here. That is matter for another tale.

She had borne three children, all boys. But when the ninth Marquis of Falmouth died long afterward, in the November of 1557, he was survived by only one of these, a junior Stephen, born in 1530, who at his father's demise succeeded to the title. The oldest son, Thomas, born 1521, had been killed in Wyatt's Rebellion in 1554; the second, George, born 1526, was stabbed in a disreputable tavern brawl two years later.

Now we have to do with the tenth Marquis of Falmouth's suit for the hand of Lady Ursula Heleigh, the Earl of Brudenel's co-



heiress. You are to imagine yourself at Longaville Court, in Sussex, at a time when Anne Bullen's daughter was very recently become Queen of England.

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The Episode Called In Ursula's Garden

I

Love—and Love's Mimic

HER three lovers had praised her with many canzonets and sonnets on that May morning as they sat in the rose-garden at Longaville, and the sun-steeped leaves made a tempered aromatic shade about them. Afterward they had drawn grass-blades to decide who should accompany the Lady Ursula to the Summer pavilion, that she might fetch her viol and sing them a song of love, and in the sylvan lottery chance had favored the Earl of Pevensy.



The Line of Love

Left to themselves, the Marquis of Falmouth and Master Kit Mervale regarded each the other, irresolutely, like strange curs uncertain whether to fraternize or to fly at one another's throat. Then Master Mervale lay down in the young grass, stretched himself, twirled his thin black mustachios, and chuckled in luxurious content.

"Decidedly," said he, "your lordship is past master in the art of wooing; no university in the world would refuse you a degree."

The marquis frowned. He was a great bluff man, with wheat-colored hair, and was somewhat slow-witted. After a little he found the quizzical, boyish face that mocked him irresistible, and laughed, and unbent from the dignified reserve he had firmly intended to maintain.

"Master Mervale," he said, "I will be frank with you, for you appear a lad of good bearing, as lads go, barring a trifle of affectation and a certain squeamishness in speech. When I seek my way to a woman's heart, I am as any other explorer venturing into a



In Ursula's Garden

strange country; as he takes with him beads and mirrors to placate the inhabitants, so do I fetch with me sonnets and such-like gewgaws to please her fancies; only when I find a glut of them left by previous adventurers must I pay my way with pure gold. And truth, Master Mervale, is a jewel."

Master Mervale raised his eyebrows. "Truth?" he queried, gently. And beyond doubt Lord Falmouth's wooing was of a rather florid sort.

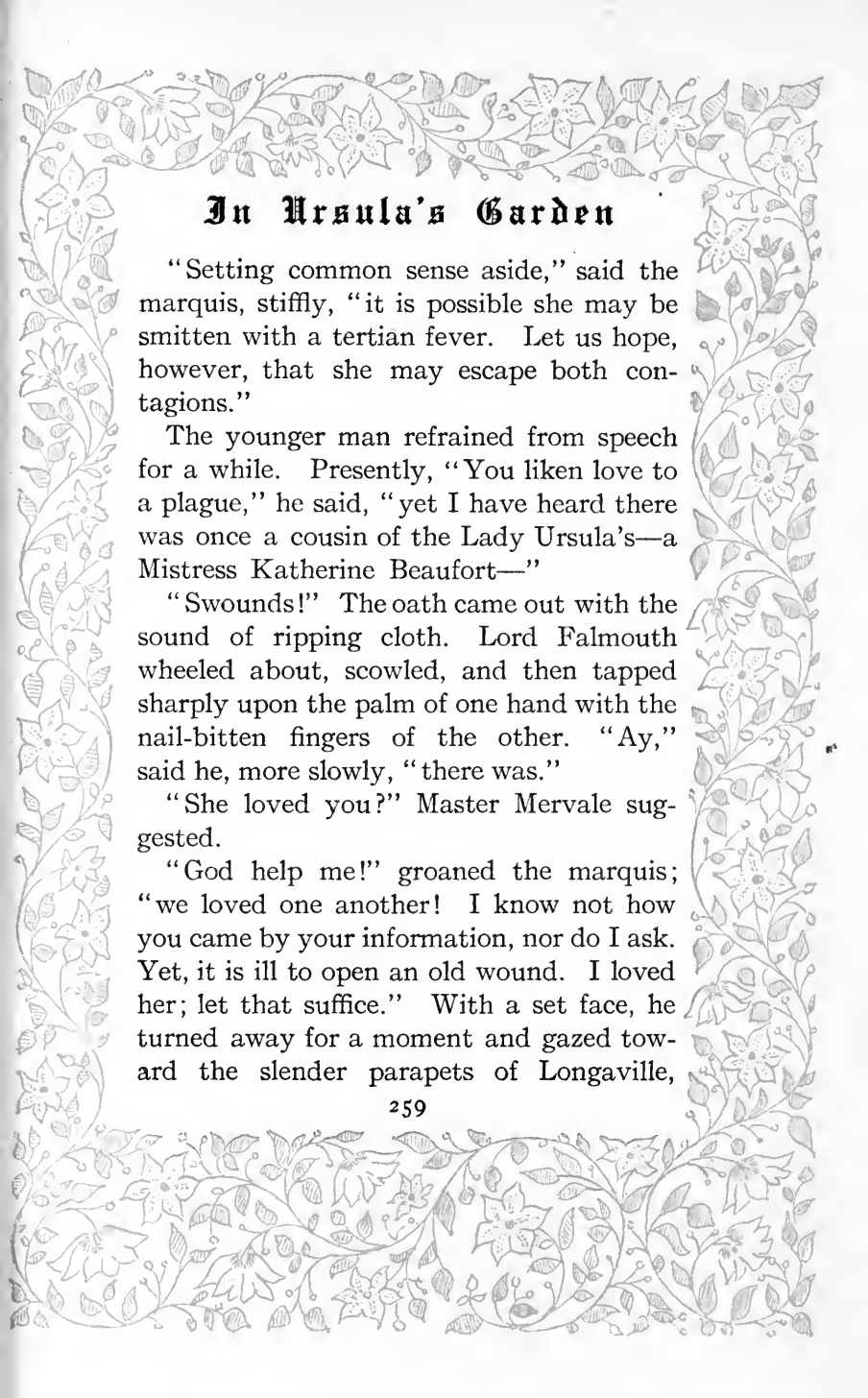
However, "It would surely be indelicate," the marquis suggested, "to allow even truth to appear quite unclothed in the presence of a lady?" He smiled and took a short turn on the grass. "Look you, Master Mervale," said he, narrowing his pale-blue eyes to mere slits, "I have, somehow, a great disposition to confidence come upon me. Frankly, my passion for the Lady Ursula burns more mildly than that which Antony bore the Egyptian; it is less a fire whereby to consume kingdoms than a candle wherewith to light a contented home; and quite frankly, I mean to have



The Line of Love

her. The estates lie convenient, the families are of equal rank, her father is agreed, and she has a sufficiency of beauty; there are, in short, no obstacles to our union save you and my lord of Pevensey, and these, I confess, I do not fear. I can wait, Master Mervale. O, I am patient, Master Mervale, but, I own, I cannot brook denial. It is I, or no one. By Saint Gregory! I wear steel at my side, Master Mervale, that will serve for other purposes save that of opening oysters!" So he blustered in the Spring sunlight, and frowned darkly as Master Mervale, after a hopeless attempt at gravity, lay flat upon his back and crowed like a cock in irrepressible laughter.

"Your patience shames Job the Patriarch," said he, when he had ended and had wiped away his tears; "yet, it seems to me, my lord, you do not consider one thing. I grant you that Pevensey and I are your equals neither in estate nor reputation; still, setting modesty aside, is it not possible the Lady Ursula may come, in time, to love one of us?"

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

In Ursula's Garden

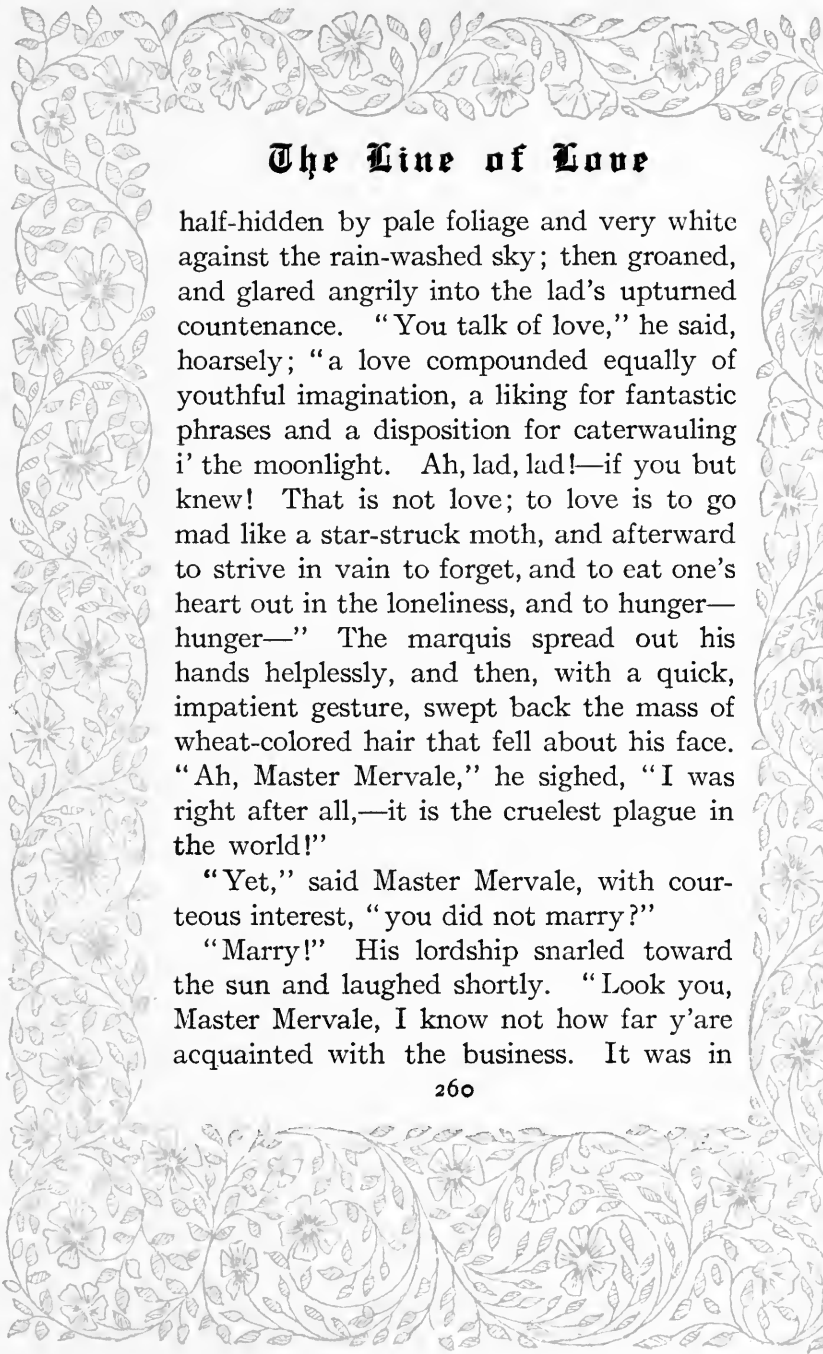
"Setting common sense aside," said the marquis, stiffly, "it is possible she may be smitten with a tertian fever. Let us hope, however, that she may escape both contagions."

The younger man refrained from speech for a while. Presently, "You liken love to a plague," he said, "yet I have heard there was once a cousin of the Lady Ursula's—a Mistress Katherine Beaufort—"

"Swounds!" The oath came out with the sound of ripping cloth. Lord Falmouth wheeled about, scowled, and then tapped sharply upon the palm of one hand with the nail-bitten fingers of the other. "Ay," said he, more slowly, "there was."

"She loved you?" Master Mervale suggested.

"God help me!" groaned the marquis; "we loved one another! I know not how you came by your information, nor do I ask. Yet, it is ill to open an old wound. I loved her; let that suffice." With a set face, he turned away for a moment and gazed toward the slender parapets of Longaville,

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of a repeating pattern of five-petaled flowers on a vine with small leaves, framing the central text.

The Line of Love

half-hidden by pale foliage and very white against the rain-washed sky; then groaned, and glared angrily into the lad's upturned countenance. "You talk of love," he said, hoarsely; "a love compounded equally of youthful imagination, a liking for fantastic phrases and a disposition for caterwauling i' the moonlight. Ah, lad, lad!—if you but knew! That is not love; to love is to go mad like a star-struck moth, and afterward to strive in vain to forget, and to eat one's heart out in the loneliness, and to hunger—hunger—" The marquis spread out his hands helplessly, and then, with a quick, impatient gesture, swept back the mass of wheat-colored hair that fell about his face. "Ah, Master Mervale," he sighed, "I was right after all,—it is the cruelest plague in the world!"

"Yet," said Master Mervale, with courteous interest, "you did not marry?"

"Marry!" His lordship snarled toward the sun and laughed shortly. "Look you, Master Mervale, I know not how far y'are acquainted with the business. It was in



In Ursula's Garden

Cornwall yonder years since; I was but a lad, and she a wench,—O, such a wench, with tender blue eyes, and a faint, sweet voice that could deny me nothing! God does not fashion her like every day,—*Dieu qui la fist de ses deux mains*, saith the Frenchman.” The marquis paced the grass, gnawing his lip and debating with himself in stifled tones. “Marry? Her family was good, but their deserts outranked their fortunes; their crest was not the topmost feather in Fortune’s cap, you understand; somewhat sunken i’ the world, Master Mervale, somewhat sunken. And I? My father—God rest his bones!—was a cold, hard man, and my two elder brothers—Holy Virgin, pray for them!—loved me none too well. I was the cadet then: Heaven helps them that help themselves, says my father, and I haven’t a penny for you. My way was yet to make in the world; to saddle myself with a dowerless wench—even a wench whose voice set a man’s heart hammering at his ribs—was folly, Master Mervale. Utter, improvident, shiftless, bedlamite folly, lad!”

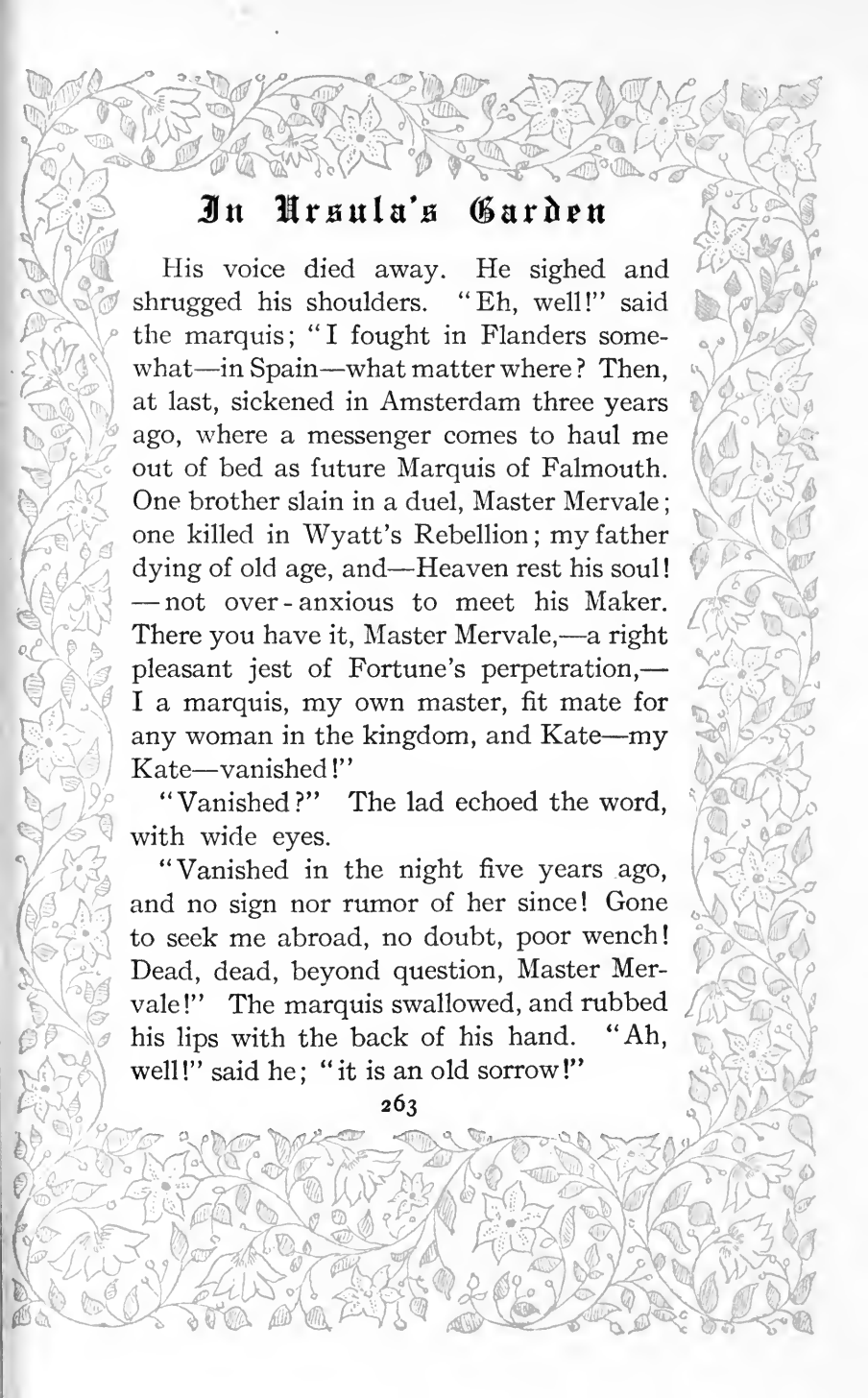


The Line of Love

“H'm!” Master Mervale cleared his throat, twirled his mustachios, and smiled at some unspoken thought. “Was it?” he queried, after an interval of meditation.

“Ah, lad, lad!” the marquis cried, in a sudden gust of anger; “I dare say, as your smirking hints, it was a coward’s act not to snap fingers at fate and fathers and dare all! Well! I did not dare. We parted—in what lamentable fashion is now of little import—and I set forth to seek my fortune. Ho, it was a brave world then, Master Mervale, for all the tears that were scarce dried on my cheeks! A world wherein the heavens were as blue as a certain woman’s eyes,—a world wherein a likely lad might see far countries, waggle a good sword in Babylon and Tripolis and other ultimate kingdoms, beard the Mussulman in his mosque, and at last fetch home—though he might never love her, you understand—an Emir’s daughter for his wife,—

*“With more gay gold about her middle
Than would buy half Northumberlee.”*

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In Ursula's Garden

His voice died away. He sighed and shrugged his shoulders. "Eh, well!" said the marquis; "I fought in Flanders somewhat—in Spain—what matter where? Then, at last, sickened in Amsterdam three years ago, where a messenger comes to haul me out of bed as future Marquis of Falmouth. One brother slain in a duel, Master Mervale; one killed in Wyatt's Rebellion; my father dying of old age, and—Heaven rest his soul!—not over-anxious to meet his Maker. There you have it, Master Mervale,—a right pleasant jest of Fortune's perpetration,—I a marquis, my own master, fit mate for any woman in the kingdom, and Kate—my Kate—vanished!"

"Vanished?" The lad echoed the word, with wide eyes.

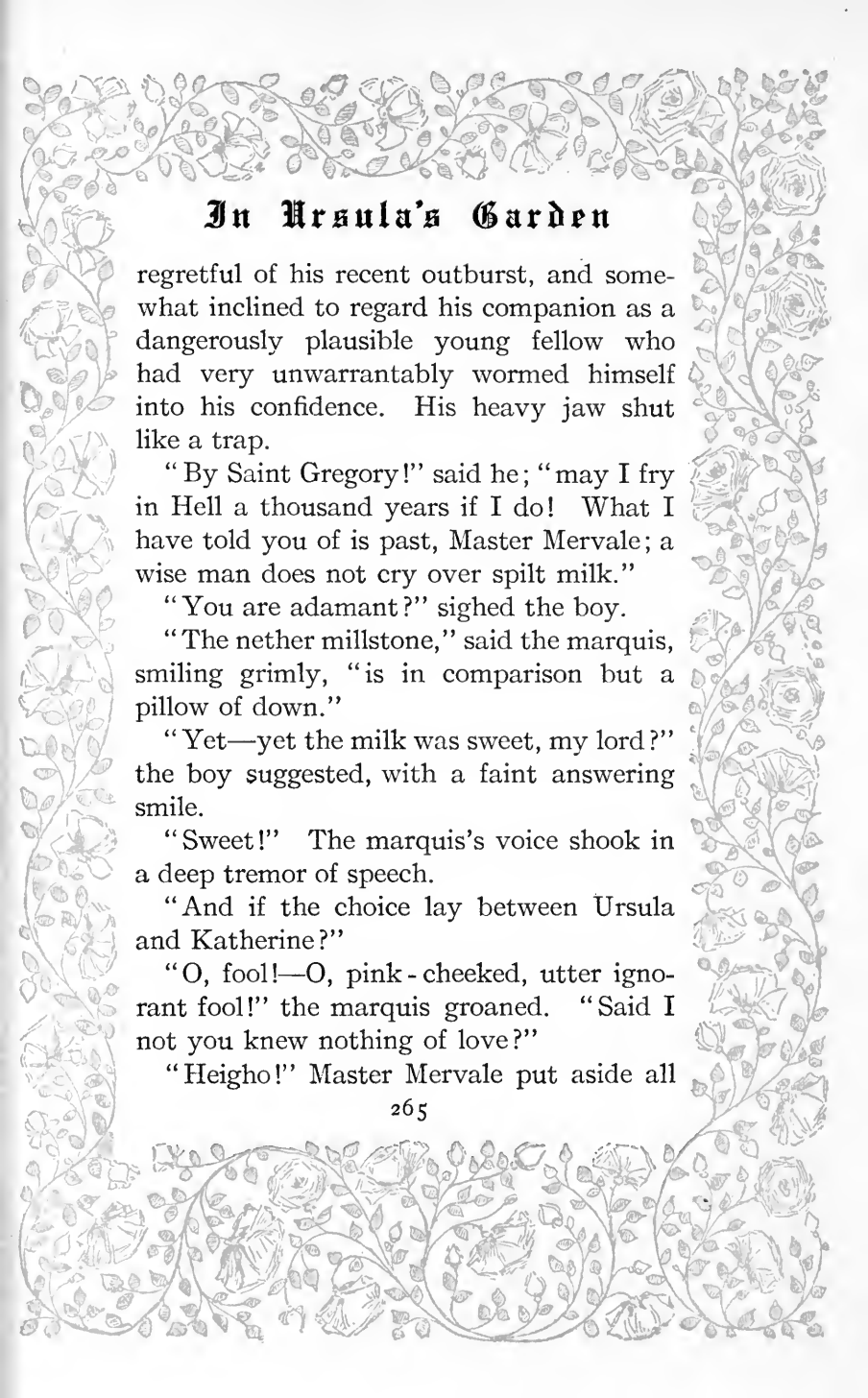
"Vanished in the night five years ago, and no sign nor rumor of her since! Gone to seek me abroad, no doubt, poor wench! Dead, dead, beyond question, Master Mervale!" The marquis swallowed, and rubbed his lips with the back of his hand. "Ah, well!" said he; "it is an old sorrow!"

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of a repeating pattern of five-petaled flowers on a vine with small leaves, framing the central text.

The Line of Love

The male animal shaken by some strong emotion is to his brothers an embarrassing rather than a pathetic sight. Master Mer-vale, lowering his eyes discreetly, rooted up several tufts of grass before he spoke. Then, "My lord, you have known of love," said he, very slowly; "have you no kindness for aspiring lovers who have been one of us? My lord of Pevensey, I think, loves the Lady Ursula, at least, as much as you ever loved this Mistress Katherine; of my own adoration I do not speak, save to say that I have sworn never to marry any other woman. Her father favors you, for you are a match in a thousand; but you do not love her. It matters little to you, my lord, whom she may wed; to us it signifies a life's happiness. Will not the memory of that Cornish lass—the memory of moonlit nights, and of those sweet, vain aspirations and foiled day-dreams that in boyhood waked your blood even to that brave folly which now possesses us—will not the memory of these things soften you, my lord?"

But Lord Falmouth was by this time half



In Ursula's Garden

regretful of his recent outburst, and somewhat inclined to regard his companion as a dangerously plausible young fellow who had very unwarrantably wormed himself into his confidence. His heavy jaw shut like a trap.

"By Saint Gregory!" said he; "may I fry in Hell a thousand years if I do! What I have told you of is past, Master Mervale; a wise man does not cry over spilt milk."

"You are adamant?" sighed the boy.

"The nether millstone," said the marquis, smiling grimly, "is in comparison but a pillow of down."

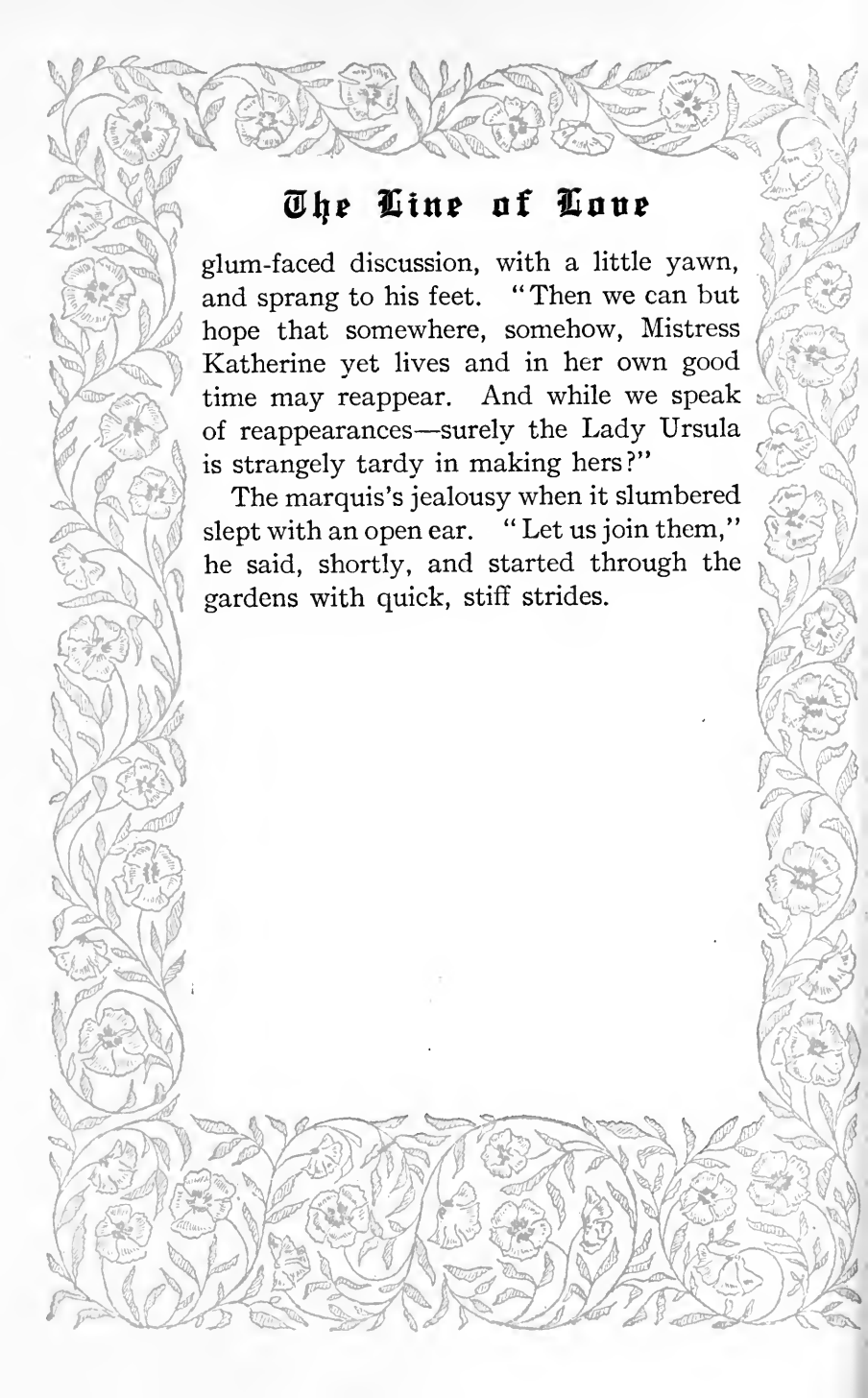
"Yet—yet the milk was sweet, my lord?" the boy suggested, with a faint answering smile.

"Sweet!" The marquis's voice shook in a deep tremor of speech.

"And if the choice lay between Ursula and Katherine?"

"O, fool!—O, pink-cheeked, utter ignorant fool!" the marquis groaned. "Said I not you knew nothing of love?"

"Heigho!" Master Mervale put aside all



The Line of Love

glum-faced discussion, with a little yawn, and sprang to his feet. "Then we can but hope that somewhere, somehow, Mistress Katherine yet lives and in her own good time may reappear. And while we speak of reappearances—surely the Lady Ursula is strangely tardy in making hers?"

The marquis's jealousy when it slumbered slept with an open ear. "Let us join them," he said, shortly, and started through the gardens with quick, stiff strides.

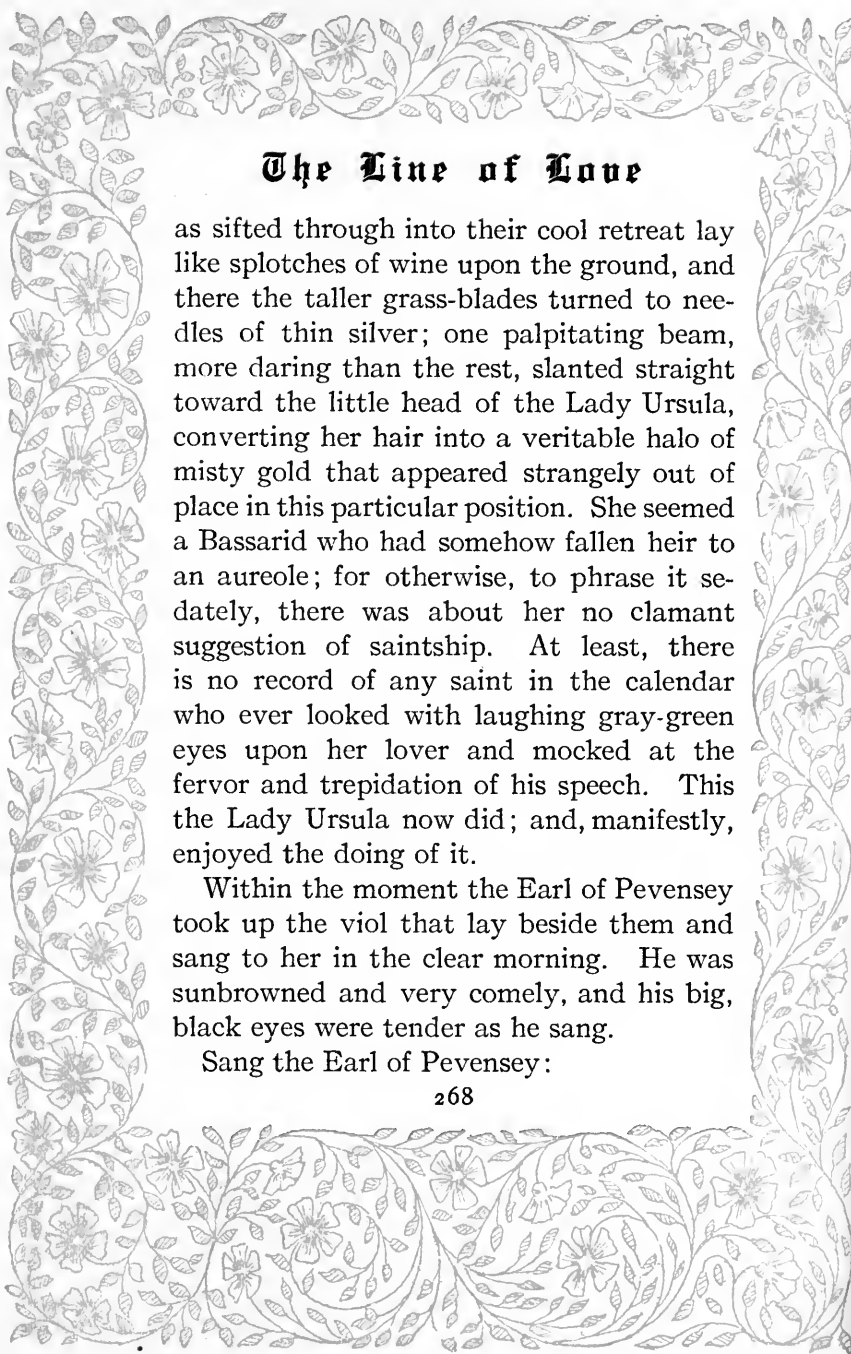
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II

Song—Guerdon

THEY went westward toward the Summer pavilion. Presently the marquis blundered into the green gloom of the maze, laid out in the Italian fashion, and was extricated only by the superior knowledge of Master Mervale, who guided him skilfully and surely through the manifold intricacies to open daylight.

Afterward they came to a close-shaven lawn, where the Summer pavilion stood beside the brook that widened here into an artificial pond, spread with lily-pads and fringed with lustreless rushes. The Lady Ursula sat with the Earl of Pevensey beneath a burgeoning maple-tree. Such rays

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The Line of Love

as sifted through into their cool retreat lay like splotches of wine upon the ground, and there the taller grass-blades turned to needles of thin silver; one palpitating beam, more daring than the rest, slanted straight toward the little head of the Lady Ursula, converting her hair into a veritable halo of misty gold that appeared strangely out of place in this particular position. She seemed a Bassarid who had somehow fallen heir to an aureole; for otherwise, to phrase it sedately, there was about her no clamant suggestion of saintship. At least, there is no record of any saint in the calendar who ever looked with laughing gray-green eyes upon her lover and mocked at the fervor and trepidation of his speech. This the Lady Ursula now did; and, manifestly, enjoyed the doing of it.

Within the moment the Earl of Pevensey took up the viol that lay beside them and sang to her in the clear morning. He was sunbrowned and very comely, and his big, black eyes were tender as he sang.

Sang the Earl of Pevensey:



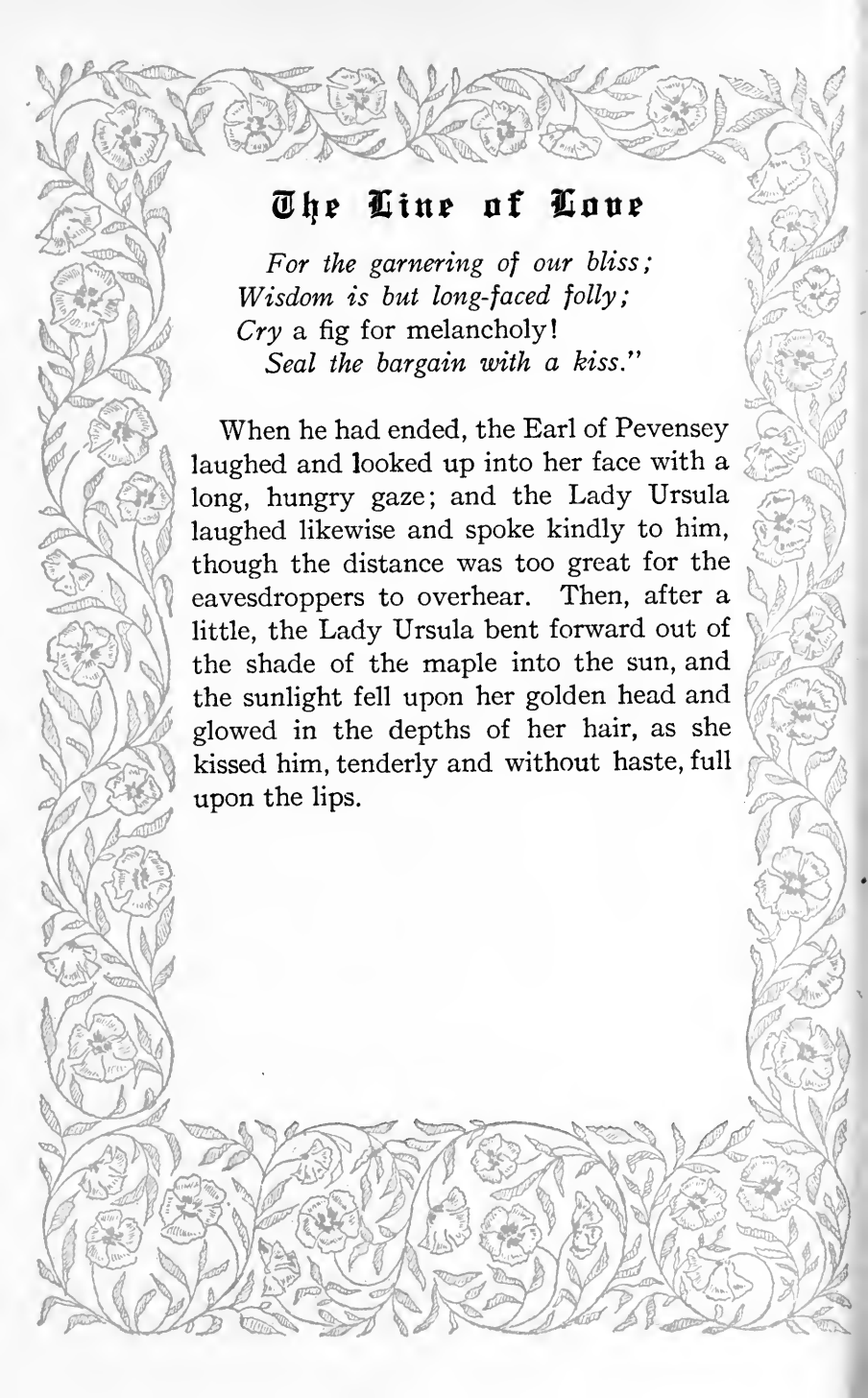
In Ursula's Garden

*"Mistress mine, the Spring about us
Now doth mock at us and flout us
That so coldly do delay:
When the very birds are mating,
Pr'ythee, why should we be waiting—
We that might be wed to-day?"*

*"Life is short, the wise men tell us;—
Even those dusty, musty fellows
That have done with life,—alas!
Do the bones of Aristotle
Never hunger for a bottle,
Youth and some frank Grecian lass?"*

*"Ah, I warrant you;—and Zeno
Would not reason now, could he know
One more chance to live and love:
For, at best, the merry May-time
Is a very fleeting play-time;—
Why, then, waste an hour thereof?"*

*"Thus, I demonstrate by reason
Youth's for love, and Spring's the season*

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The Line of Love


*For the garnering of our bliss;
Wisdom is but long-faced folly;
Cry a fig for melancholy!
Seal the bargain with a kiss."*

When he had ended, the Earl of Pevensey laughed and looked up into her face with a long, hungry gaze; and the Lady Ursula laughed likewise and spoke kindly to him, though the distance was too great for the eavesdroppers to overhear. Then, after a little, the Lady Ursula bent forward out of the shade of the maple into the sun, and the sunlight fell upon her golden head and glowed in the depths of her hair, as she kissed him, tenderly and without haste, full upon the lips.

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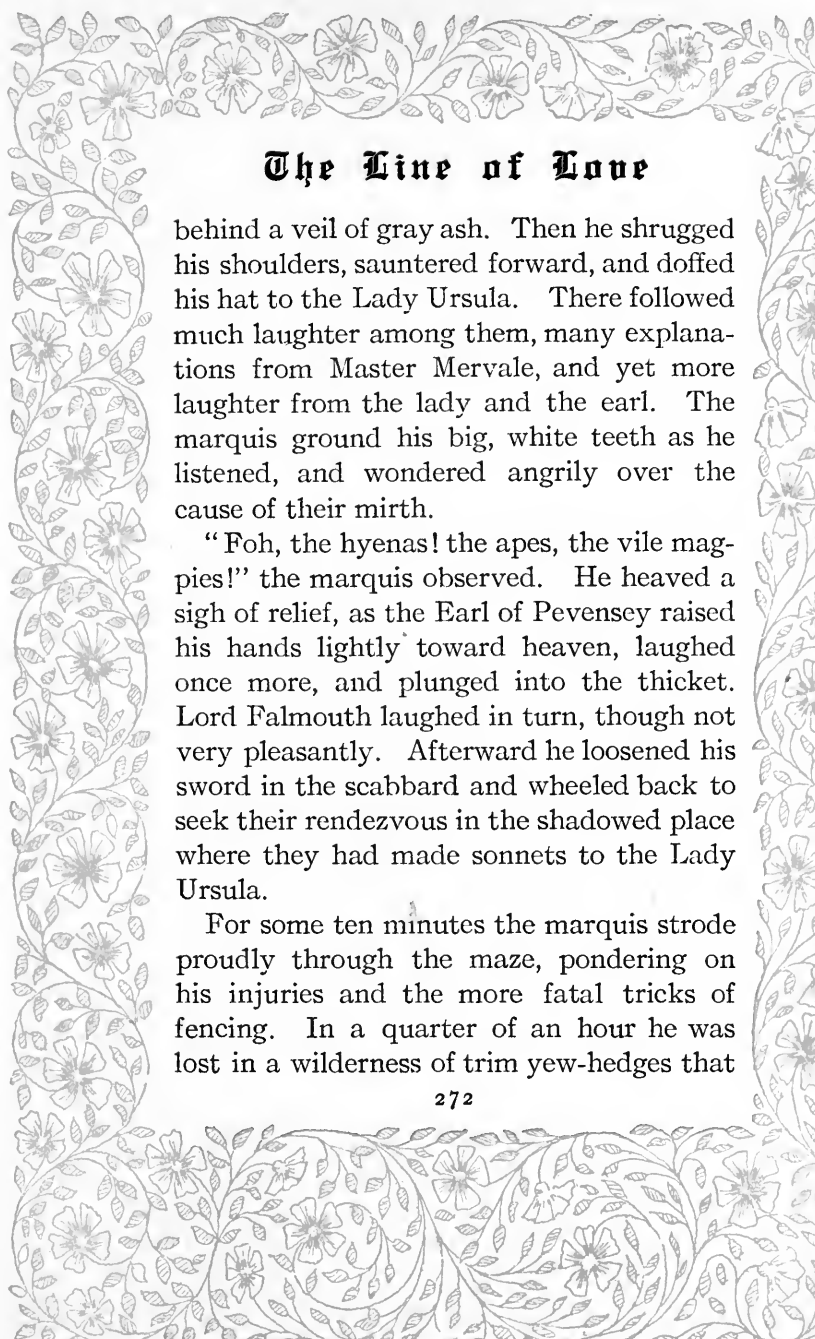
III

Falmouth Furens

HE Marquis of Falmouth caught Master Mervale's arm in a grip that made the boy wince. His look was murderous, as he turned in the shadow of a white-lilac bush and spoke carefully through sharp breaths that shook his great body.

"There are," said he, "certain matters I must immediately discuss with my lord of Pevensey. I desire you, Master Mervale, to fetch him to the spot where we parted last, that we may finish our debate, quietly and undisturbed. Else — Go, lad, and fetch him!"

For a moment the boy faced the half-shut pale eyes that were like coals smouldering

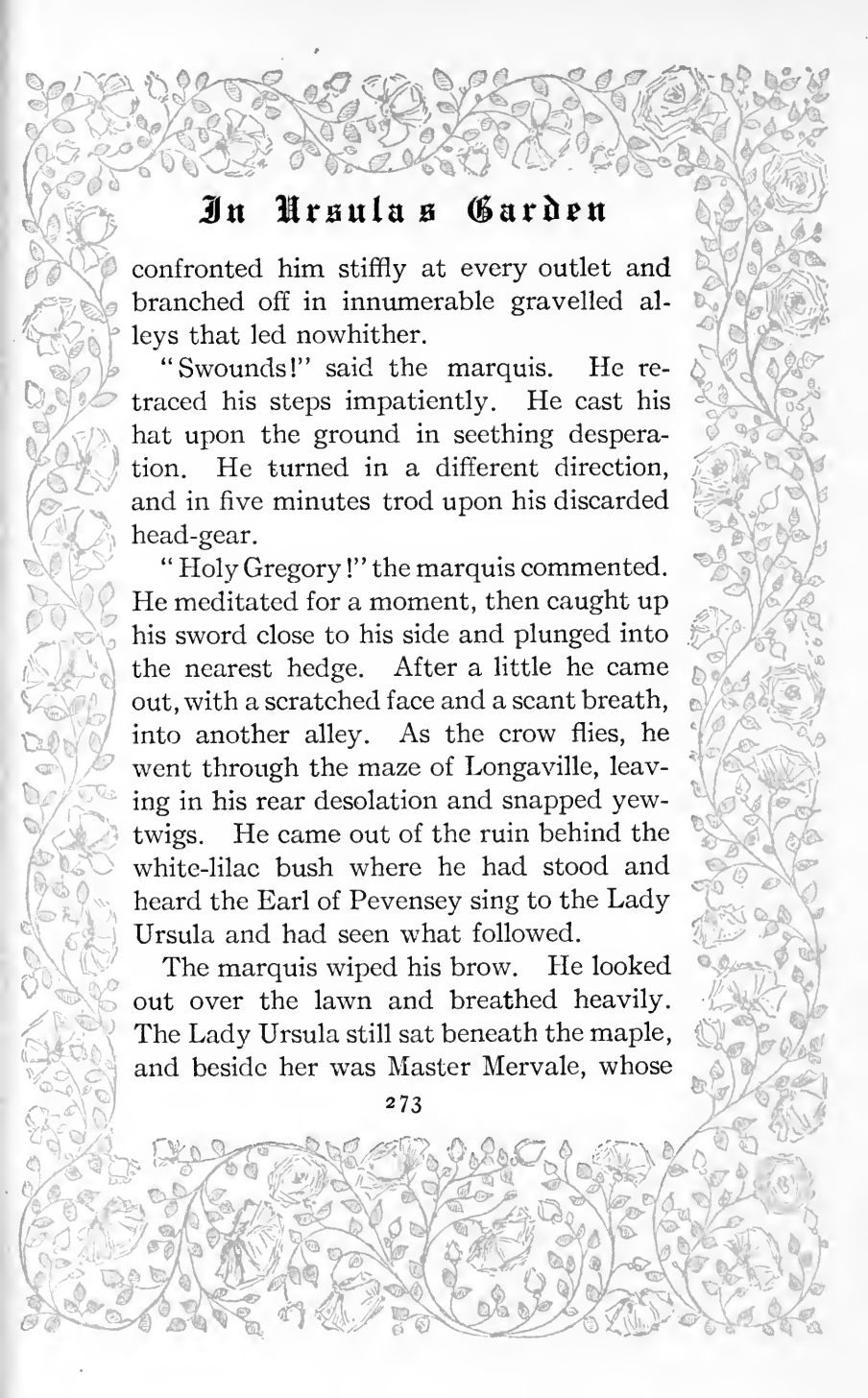
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The Line of Love

behind a veil of gray ash. Then he shrugged his shoulders, sauntered forward, and doffed his hat to the Lady Ursula. There followed much laughter among them, many explanations from Master Mervale, and yet more laughter from the lady and the earl. The marquis ground his big, white teeth as he listened, and wondered angrily over the cause of their mirth.

“Foh, the hyenas! the apes, the vile magpies!” the marquis observed. He heaved a sigh of relief, as the Earl of Pevensey raised his hands lightly toward heaven, laughed once more, and plunged into the thicket. Lord Falmouth laughed in turn, though not very pleasantly. Afterward he loosened his sword in the scabbard and wheeled back to seek their rendezvous in the shadowed place where they had made sonnets to the Lady Ursula.

For some ten minutes the marquis strode proudly through the maze, pondering on his injuries and the more fatal tricks of fencing. In a quarter of an hour he was lost in a wilderness of trim yew-hedges that



In Ursula's Garden

confronted him stiffly at every outlet and branched off in innumerable gravelled alleys that led nowhither.

"Swounds!" said the marquis. He retraced his steps impatiently. He cast his hat upon the ground in seething desperation. He turned in a different direction, and in five minutes trod upon his discarded head-gear.

"Holy Gregory!" the marquis commented. He meditated for a moment, then caught up his sword close to his side and plunged into the nearest hedge. After a little he came out, with a scratched face and a scant breath, into another alley. As the crow flies, he went through the maze of Longaville, leaving in his rear desolation and snapped yew-twigs. He came out of the ruin behind the white-lilac bush where he had stood and heard the Earl of Pevensey sing to the Lady Ursula and had seen what followed.

The marquis wiped his brow. He looked out over the lawn and breathed heavily. The Lady Ursula still sat beneath the maple, and beside her was Master Mervale, whose



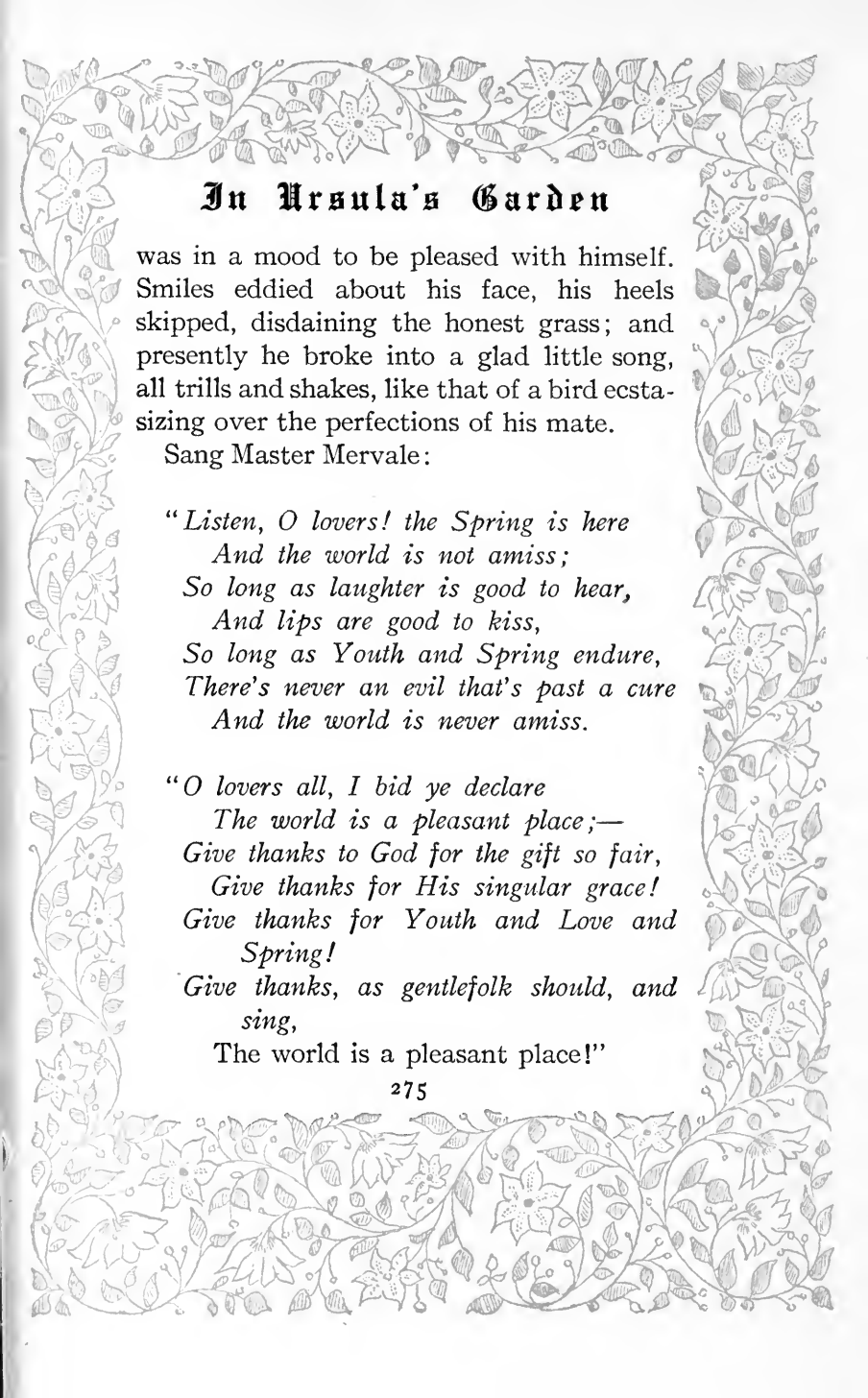
The Line of Love

arm girdled her waist. Her arm was about his neck, and she listened as he talked eagerly and with many gestures. Then they both laughed and kissed one another.

“O, defend me!” groaned the marquis. Once more he wiped his brow, with a shaking hand, as he crouched behind the white-lilac bush. “Why, the woman is a second Messalina!” he gasped. “O, the trollop! the wanton! O, holy Gregory! Yet I must be quiet—quiet as a sucking lamb, that I may strike as a roaring lion afterward! Is this your innocence, Mistress Ursula, that cannot endure the spoken name of a spade? O, splendor of God!”

Thus he raged behind the white-lilac bush while they laughed and kissed in the sunlight. After a space they parted. The Lady Ursula, still laughing, lifted the branches of the rearward thicket and disappeared in the path which the Earl of Pevensey had taken. Master Mervale, kissing his hand and laughing yet more loudly, lounged toward the entrance of the maze.

The jackanapes (observed the marquis),



In Ursula's Garden

was in a mood to be pleased with himself. Smiles eddied about his face, his heels skipped, disdaining the honest grass; and presently he broke into a glad little song, all trills and shakes, like that of a bird ecstasizing over the perfections of his mate.

Sang Master Mervale:

*"Listen, O lovers! the Spring is here
And the world is not amiss;
So long as laughter is good to hear,
And lips are good to kiss,
So long as Youth and Spring endure,
There's never an evil that's past a cure
And the world is never amiss.*

*"O lovers all, I bid ye declare
The world is a pleasant place;—
Give thanks to God for the gift so fair,
Give thanks for His singular grace!
Give thanks for Youth and Love and
Spring!
Give thanks, as gentlefolk should, and
sing,
The world is a pleasant place!"*

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and small leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern that frames the central text.

The Line of Love

In mid-skip he desisted, his voice trailing into inarticulate vowels. After many angry throes, a white-lilac bush had been delivered of the Marquis of Falmouth, who now confronted him, furiously moved.



IV

Love Rises from Waters not
Cytherean

“**H**AVE heard, Master Mervale,” said the marquis, gently, “that love is blind?”

The boy stared at the white face, that had before his eyes veiled rage with a crooked smile. So you may see the cat, tense for the fatal spring, relax and with one paw indolently flip the mouse.

“It is an ancient fable, my lord,” he said, smiling, and made as though to pass.

“Indeed,” said the marquis, courteously, but without yielding an inch, “it is a very reassuring one; for,” he continued, meditatively, “were the eyes of all lovers suddenly

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are arranged in a repeating pattern, with some larger and more prominent than others. The leaves are simple and pointed, interspersed with the flowers. The overall style is reminiscent of early 20th-century book design.

The Line of Love

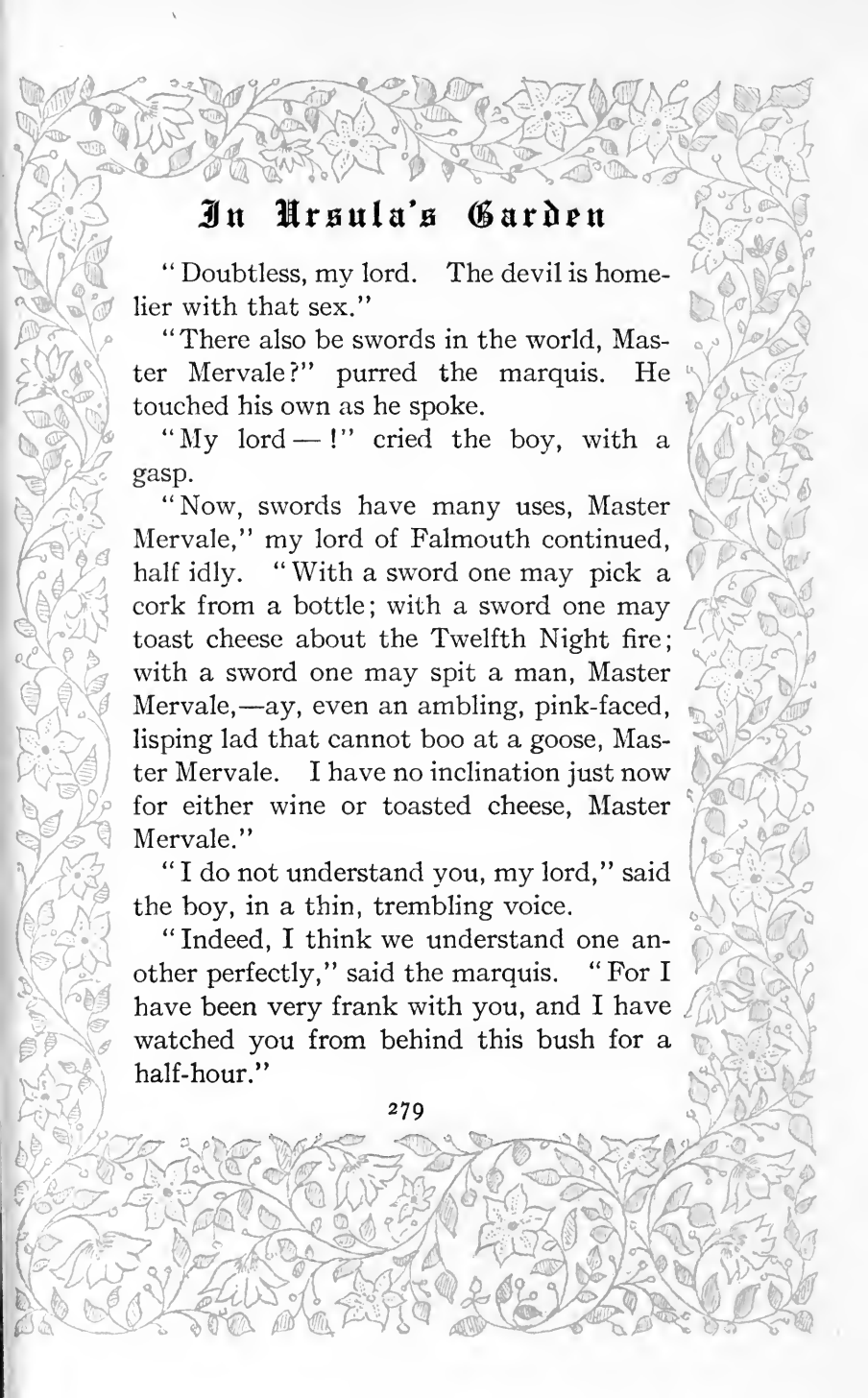
opened, Master Mervale, I suspect it would prove a red hour for the world. There would be both tempers and reputations lost, Master Mervale; there would be sword-thrusts; there would be corpses, Master Mervale."

"Doubtless, my lord," the lad assented, striving to jest and have done; "for the flesh is frail, and as the flesh of woman is frailer than that of man, so is it the more easily entrapped by the gross snares of the devil,—as was over-well proven by the serpent's betrayal of Eve at the beginning."

"Yet, Master Mervale," pursued the marquis, equably, but without smiling, "there be lovers in the world that have eyes?"

"Doubtless, my lord," said the boy.

"There also be women in the world, Master Mervale," Lord Falmouth suggested, with a deeper gravity, "that are but the handsome sepulchres of iniquity,—ay, and for the major part of women, those miracles that are their bodies, compact of white and gold and sprightly color though they be, are but the lovely cerements of corruption."



In Ursula's Garden

"Doubtless, my lord. The devil is homelier with that sex."

"There also be swords in the world, Master Mervale?" purred the marquis. He touched his own as he spoke.

"My lord—!" cried the boy, with a gasp.

"Now, swords have many uses, Master Mervale," my lord of Falmouth continued, half idly. "With a sword one may pick a cork from a bottle; with a sword one may toast cheese about the Twelfth Night fire; with a sword one may spit a man, Master Mervale,—ay, even an ambling, pink-faced, lisping lad that cannot boo at a goose, Master Mervale. I have no inclination just now for either wine or toasted cheese, Master Mervale."

"I do not understand you, my lord," said the boy, in a thin, trembling voice.

"Indeed, I think we understand one another perfectly," said the marquis. "For I have been very frank with you, and I have watched you from behind this bush for a half-hour."



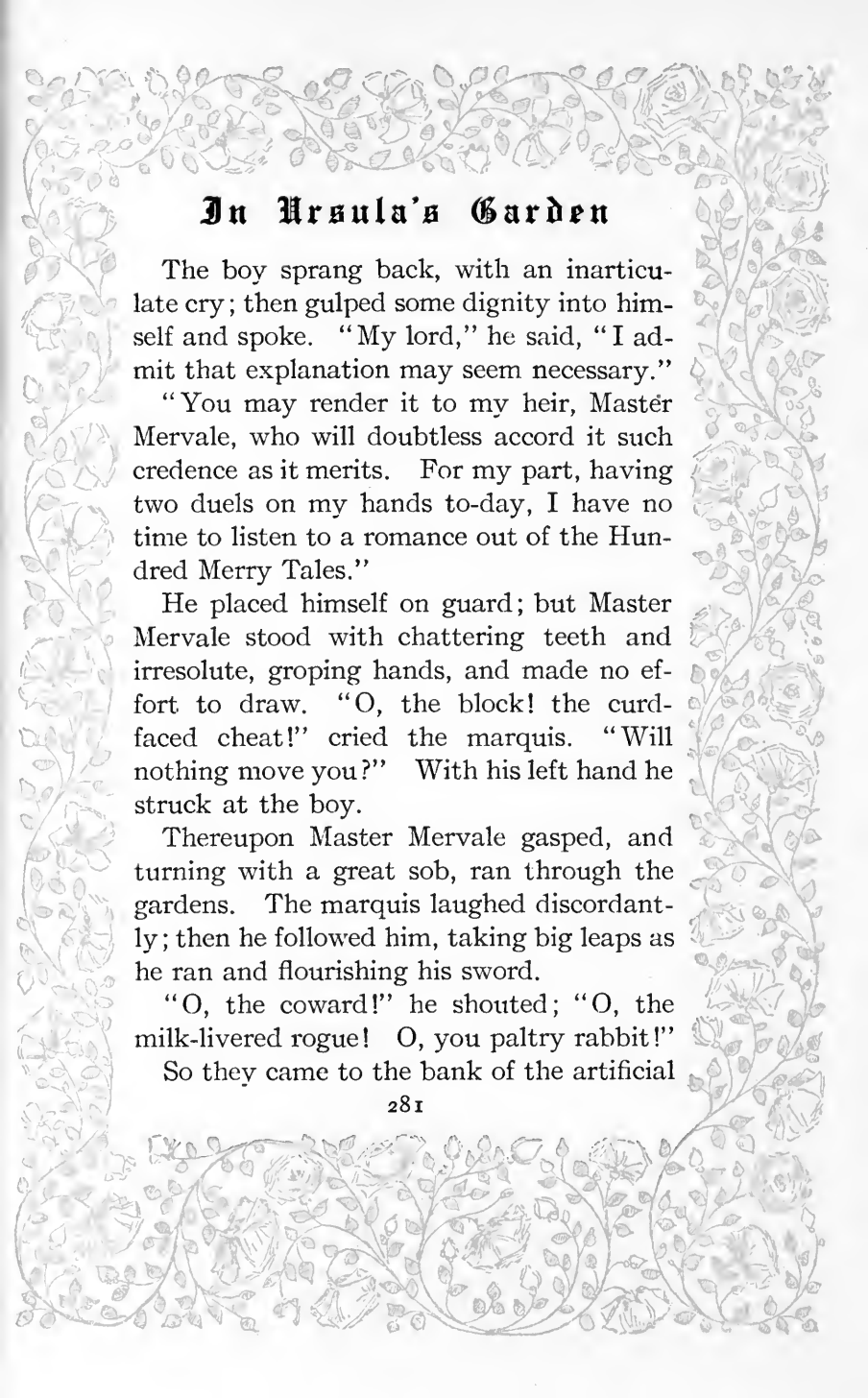
The Line of Love

The boy raised his hand as though to speak.

“Look you, Master Mervale,” the Marquis argued, “you and my lord of Pevensey and I be brave fellows; we need a wide world to bustle in. Now, the thought has come to me that this narrow continent of ours is scarcely commodious enough for all three. There be Purgatory and Heaven, and yet another place, Master Mervale; why, then, crowd one another?”

“My lord,” said the boy, dully, “I do not understand you.”

“Holy Gregory!” scoffed the marquis; “surely my meaning is plain enough! it is to kill you first, and my lord of Pevensey afterward! Y’are phoenixes, Master Mervale, Arabian birds! Y’are too good for this world. Longaville is not fit to be trodden under your feet; and therefore it is my intention that you leave Longaville feet first. Draw, Master Mervale!” cried the marquis, his light hair falling about his flushed, handsome face as he laughed joyously and flashed his sword in the Spring sunshine.



In Ursula's Garden

The boy sprang back, with an inarticulate cry; then gulped some dignity into himself and spoke. "My lord," he said, "I admit that explanation may seem necessary."

"You may render it to my heir, Master Mervale, who will doubtless accord it such credence as it merits. For my part, having two duels on my hands to-day, I have no time to listen to a romance out of the Hundred Merry Tales."

He placed himself on guard; but Master Mervale stood with chattering teeth and irresolute, groping hands, and made no effort to draw. "O, the block! the curd-faced cheat!" cried the marquis. "Will nothing move you?" With his left hand he struck at the boy.

Thereupon Master Mervale gasped, and turning with a great sob, ran through the gardens. The marquis laughed discordantly; then he followed him, taking big leaps as he ran and flourishing his sword.

"O, the coward!" he shouted; "O, the milk-livered rogue! O, you paltry rabbit!"

So they came to the bank of the artificial

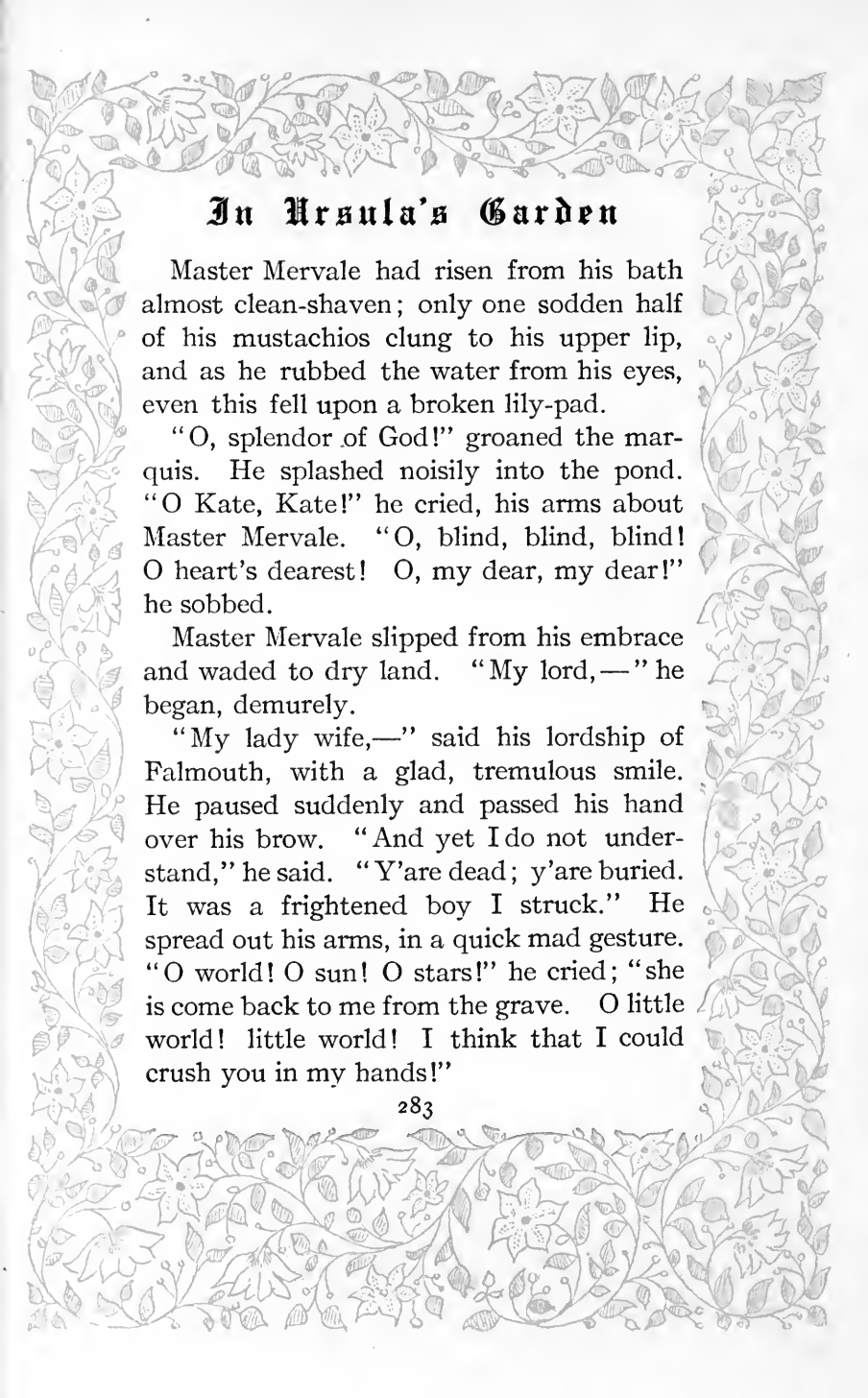


The Line of Love

pond. Master Mervale swerved as with a grim oath the marquis pounced upon him. Master Mervale's foot caught in the root of a great willow, and Master Mervale splashed into ten feet of still water, that splurged like quicksilver in the sunlight:

"O, Saint Gregory!" the marquis cried, and clasped his sides in noisy mirth; "was there no other way to cool your courage? Paddle out and be flogged, Master Hare-heels!" he called. The boy had come to the surface and was swimming aimlessly, parallel to the bank. "Now I have heard," said the marquis, as he walked beside him, "that water swells a man. Pray Heaven, it may swell his heart a thousandfold or so, and thus hearten him for wholesome exercise after his ducking—a friendly thrust or two, a little judicious blood-letting to ward off the effects of the damp."

The marquis started as Master Mervale grounded on a shallow and rose, dripping, knee-deep among the lily-pads. "O, splendor of God!" cried the marquis, in a shaking voice.



In Ursula's Garden

Master Mervale had risen from his bath almost clean-shaven; only one sodden half of his mustachios clung to his upper lip, and as he rubbed the water from his eyes, even this fell upon a broken lily-pad.

"O, splendor of God!" groaned the marquis. He splashed noisily into the pond. "O Kate, Kate!" he cried, his arms about Master Mervale. "O, blind, blind, blind! O heart's dearest! O, my dear, my dear!" he sobbed.

Master Mervale slipped from his embrace and waded to dry land. "My lord,—" he began, demurely.

"My lady wife,—" said his lordship of Falmouth, with a glad, tremulous smile. He paused suddenly and passed his hand over his brow. "And yet I do not understand," he said. "Y'are dead; y'are buried. It was a frightened boy I struck." He spread out his arms, in a quick mad gesture. "O world! O sun! O stars!" he cried; "she is come back to me from the grave. O little world! little world! I think that I could crush you in my hands!"

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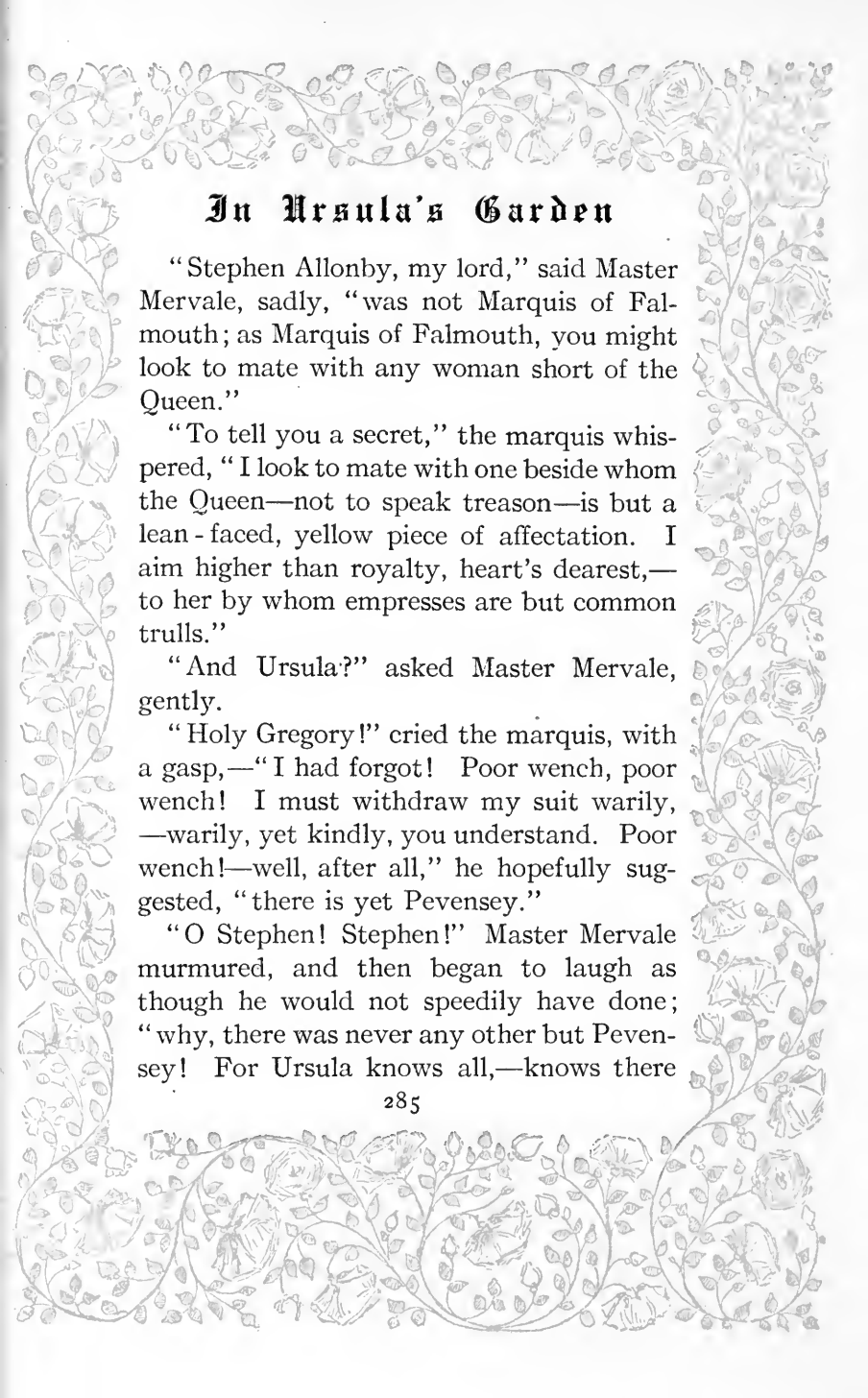
The Line of Love

“Meanwhile,” Master Mervale suggested, after an interval, “it is I that you are crushing.” He sighed,—though not very deeply,—and continued, with a slight hiatus: “They would have wedded me to Lucius Rossmore, and I could not—I could not—”

“That skinflint! that palsied goat!” the marquis growled.

“He was wealthy,” said Master Mervale. Then he sighed once more. “There seemed only you,—only you in all the world. A man might come to you in those far-off countries: a woman might not. I fled by night, my lord, by the aid of a waiting-woman; became a man by the aid of a tailor; and set out to find you by the aid of such impudence as I might muster. But I could not. I followed you through Flanders, Italy, Spain,—always just too late; always finding the bird flown, the nest yet warm. Presently I heard you were become Marquis of Falmouth; then I gave up the quest, my lord.”

“I would suggest,” said the marquis, “that my name is Stephen;—but why?”



In Ursula's Garden

"Stephen Allonby, my lord," said Master Mervale, sadly, "was not Marquis of Falmouth; as Marquis of Falmouth, you might look to mate with any woman short of the Queen."

"To tell you a secret," the marquis whispered, "I look to mate with one beside whom the Queen—not to speak treason—is but a lean-faced, yellow piece of affectation. I aim higher than royalty, heart's dearest,—to her by whom empresses are but common trulls."

"And Ursula?" asked Master Mervale, gently.

"Holy Gregory!" cried the marquis, with a gasp,— "I had forgot! Poor wench, poor wench! I must withdraw my suit warily, —warily, yet kindly, you understand. Poor wench!—well, after all," he hopefully suggested, "there is yet Pevensey."

"O Stephen! Stephen!" Master Mervale murmured, and then began to laugh as though he would not speedily have done; "why, there was never any other but Pevensey! For Ursula knows all,—knows there



The Line of Love

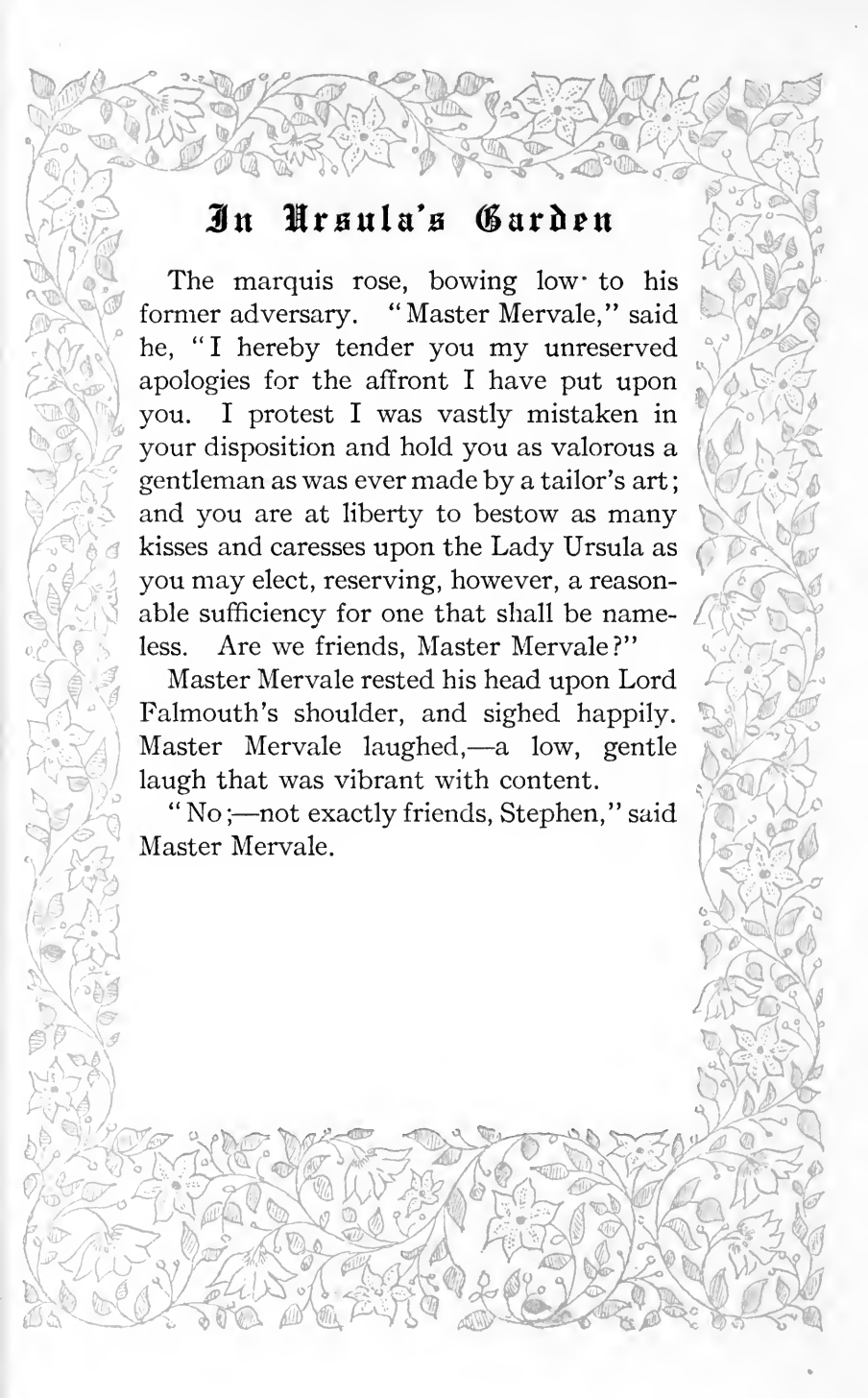
was never so much manhood in Master Mervale's disposition as might not be picked up on the point of a pin! Why, she is my cousin, Stephen, — my cousin and good friend, to whom I came at once on reaching England, to find you, favored by her father, pestering her with your suit, and the poor girl wellnigh at her wits' end because she might not have Pevensey. So," said Master Mervale, "we put our heads together, Stephen, as you observe."

"Indeed," my lord of Falmouth said, slowly, "it would seem that you two wenches have, between you, concocted a very pleasant comedy."

"It was not all a comedy," sighed Master Mervale—"not all a comedy, Stephen, until to-day when you told Master Mervale the story of Katherine Beaufort. For I did not know—I could not know—"

"And now?" my lord of Falmouth queried.

"H'm!" cried Master Mervale, and tossed his head. "You are very unreasonable in anger! you are a veritable Turk! you struck me!"

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

In Ursula's Garden

The marquis rose, bowing low to his former adversary. "Master Mervale," said he, "I hereby tender you my unreserved apologies for the affront I have put upon you. I protest I was vastly mistaken in your disposition and hold you as valorous a gentleman as was ever made by a tailor's art; and you are at liberty to bestow as many kisses and caresses upon the Lady Ursula as you may elect, reserving, however, a reasonable sufficiency for one that shall be nameless. Are we friends, Master Mervale?"

Master Mervale rested his head upon Lord Falmouth's shoulder, and sighed happily. Master Mervale laughed,—a low, gentle laugh that was vibrant with content.

"No;—not exactly friends, Stephen," said Master Mervale.

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of a repeating pattern of five-petaled flowers and leaves, arranged in a slightly irregular, hand-drawn style. The flowers are simple in design, with five petals and a central stem. The leaves are small and pointed, interspersed among the flowers. The entire border is rendered in a light, sketchy line-art style.

Envoi

AND here let us leave the re-united lovers. There was a double wedding some two weeks later in the chapel at Longaville; and from either marriage sprang brave gentlemen and gracious ladies who in due course achieved their allotted portion of laughter and anguish and love, as their fathers had done aforetime. But for the while at least, let us put aside these chronicles. My pen flags, my ink runs low, and the book is made.

I have bound up my gleanings from the fields of old years into a modest sheaf; and if it be so fortunate as to please you, my dear Mrs. Grundy,—if it so come about that your ladyship be moved in time to desire another



Envoi

sheaf such as this,—why, assuredly, my surprise will be untempered with obduracy. The legends of Allonby have been but lightly touched upon; and apart from the *Aventures d'Adhelmar*, Nicolas de Caen as yet lacks an English editor for his *Roman de Lusignan* and his curious *Dizain des Reines*,—those not unhandsome pieces, latterly included and annotated in the *Bibliotheca Abscondita*.

But you, madam, are not Schahriah to give respite for the sake of an unnarrated tale. So without further peroration I make an end. Through the monstrous tapestry I have traced out for you the windings of a single thread, and I entreat you, dear lady, to accept it with assurances of my most distinguished regard.

The gift is not a great one. But this lack of greatness, believe me, is due to the errors and limitations of the transcriber alone.

For they loved very greatly, these men and women of the past. Nature tricked them to noble ends, lured them to skyey heights of adoration and sacrifice. At bot-

A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border consists of a repeating pattern of five-petaled flowers on a vine with leaves, framing the central text.

The Line of Love

tom they were, perhaps, no more heroical than you or I: indeed, Mélite was a light woman, and Falstaff is scarcely describable as immaculate; Villon thieved, and Will Sommers was but a fool; Matthiette was vain, and Adalais self-seeking, and the tenth Marquis of Falmouth, if you press me, rather a stupid and pompous ass: and yet to each in turn it was granted to love greatly, to know at least one hour of pure magnanimity.

Ah, yes, this love is an illusion, if you will. Wise men have protested that vehemently enough in all conscience. But there are two ends to every stick. You may see in love the man's spark of divinity flaring in momentary splendor—a tragic candle, with divinity guttering and half-choked among the drossier particles—and with momentary splendor lighting man's similitude to Him in Whose likeness man was created. Or you may see in love only Nature in the Prince of Lycia's rôle, and mankind by her allured and hoodwinked and bullied and cajoled into perpetuation of itself. But in either event you have conceded that life void of love is

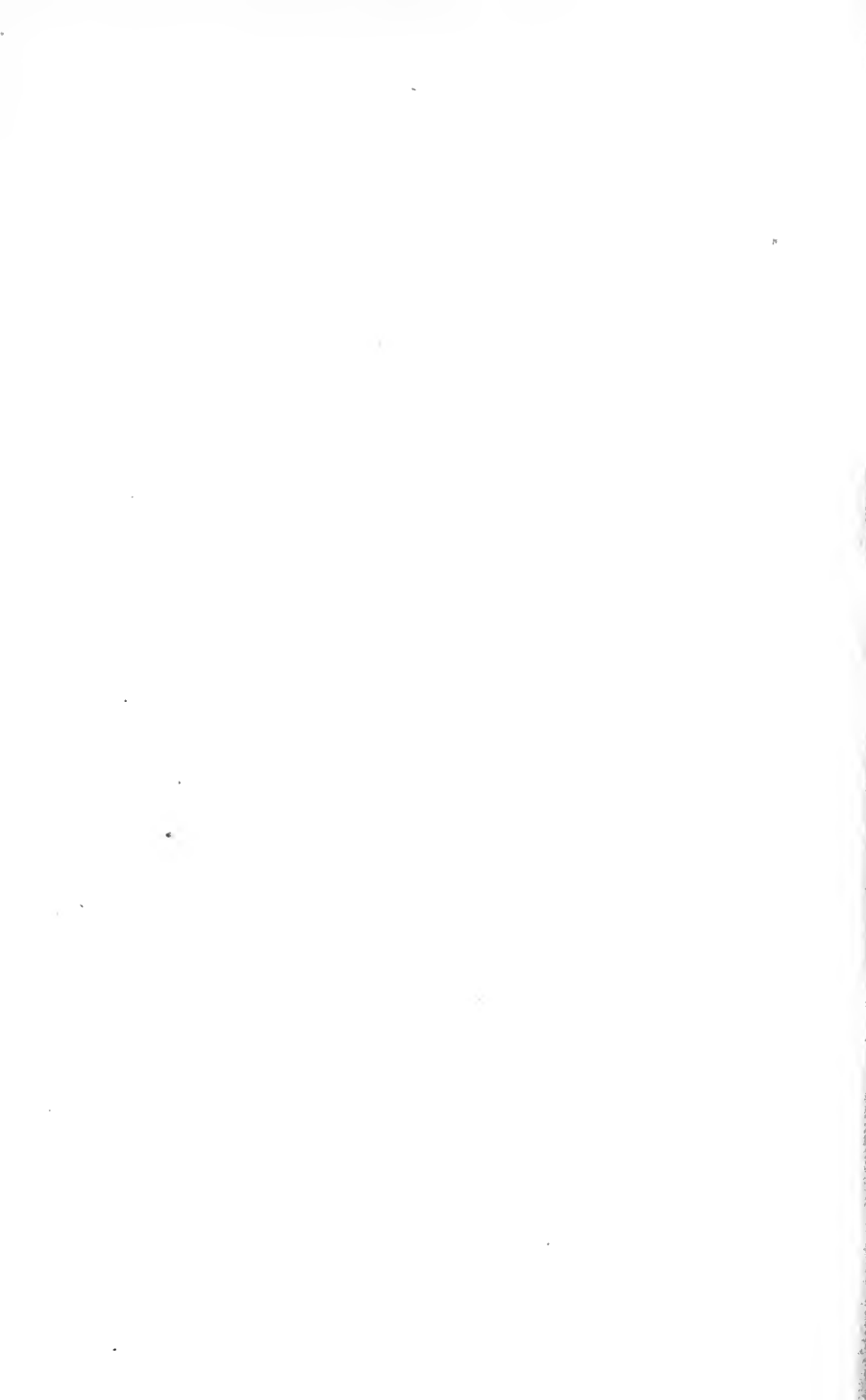
A decorative border of stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating floral motifs, including five-petaled flowers and clusters of leaves, arranged in a continuous, flowing pattern.

Envoi

at best a shuffling and poltroonish business, a genteel waiving, in effect, of any especial reason for your own existence; and in either event you have granted it the most important and requisite thing that life affords.

And beyond that is silence. If you succeed in proving love a species of madness, you have merely demonstrated that there is something more pivotal than sanity, and for the sanest logician this is a disastrous gambit: and if, in wellnigh obsolete fashion, you confess the universe to be a weightier matter than the contents of your skull, and your wits a somewhat slender instrument wherewith to plumb infinity—why, then, you will recall that it is written *God is love*, and this recollection, too, is conducive to a fine taciturnity.

EXPLICIT LINEA AMORIS





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