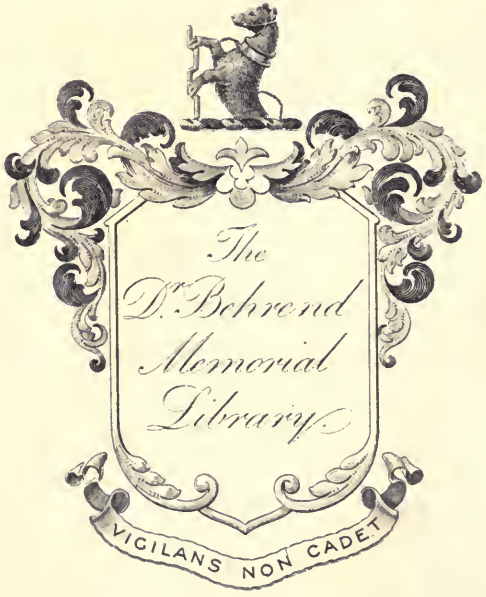
TOIL ··· WEARINESS

LET ··· US ··· GO ··· AND ··· DWELL ··· IN ··· THE ··· SKIES

LOVE ··· SADNESS

FLOWERET ··· OF ··· LOVE ··· LET ··· US ··· GO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A Mediæval Garland

A Mediæval Garland: By Madame James Darmesteter. Translated into English by May Tomlinson.

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It is with an apology that I introduce Madame Darmesteter's stories to English readers. To offer a translation of the work of a writer who herself could have written the same in admirable English, had she been so minded, may seem superfluous. But Madame Darmesteter having written her book in French, and given no English replica, I have translated it in the wish to make known, even through the half-light of translation, these charming old-world stories, gathered in that garden of romance, the Middle Ages. Perhaps—I hope it may be so—something of that individual association with mediæval life and romance which marks Madame Darmesteter's writing, may filter through the medium of the English version.

My small share in this book I give to the memory of my uncle, Colonel Frederick Mackenzie Fraser. Much of my childhood was spent in his house of Castle Fraser, the first stones of which were laid in the early part of the Middle Ages, and there I learnt to love the romantic legends of the past. Just as this translation was completed, my uncle died at Castle Fraser. So the beautiful old Scottish house, and its laird, and these mediæval tales are all bound together in my thoughts—bound with heart-strings.

MAY TOMLINSON.

London, 1897.

*

I DEDICATE

TO MY HUSBAND

THESE FLOWERS

FOUND

BETWEEN THE LEAVES OF OLD BOOKS

THE STORY OF ANTONIO

TO

THE BLESSÉD SAINT FRANCIS

THE STORY OF ANTONIO

I

Assisi, 1290.

THE opal tints of an April dawn shone on the Umbrian mountains. Their summits glittered vaguely through the star-pierced mist. Through the still darksome valley, the goatherd of Messer Astolfo was wending his way with difficulty towards those dim heights. At every step, he knocked himself against the great roots of oak-trees, and stunted olive-branches, which obstructed the path. He was tired, for he had already been walking for two hours; he was taking two goats as a present from his master to the good brothers of Assisi; and the previous Friday, at the fair of Spoleto, in a brawl with Ser Alvisio's Gino, he had received a long cut on his right arm, which the restlessness of his burden made more and more painful.

Meanwhile, the light spread clear and

roseate in the sky, and suddenly in the trees anigh Antonio, there woke an infinite chant of birds. The colours of the field-flowers began to appear through a veil of dew; nests of pale primroses, sheaves of white jonquils, packed into the hollow trunk of an olive-tree,—or a blue and pink dream of mingled periwinkles and cyclamens, in the depth of the wood. At last, the first white rays of light fell across the olive leaves: a virginal rustling stirred all the silvery branches; a little wind fluttered . . . was stilled; and day broke.

The white houses of Assisi could now be seen half-way up the mountain, shadowed by enormous olive-trees. Antonio, like the birds, began to sing his little greeting to the morning:

> 'Fiorin d'amore!
> Andiamo adesso in cielo ad abitare!'

'Floweret of love! Let us go, let us go and dwell in the skies!' But the sound of his voice, too coarse for the ineffable sweetness and charm of this spring dawn,

made him ashamed, and he envied the echoes that brought him back the notes of his love-song.

Antonio was a fine fellow of that type so frequently seen in Umbria, that in every farm you will find one of Perugino's saints. He had the peculiar oval frame of face, with flat cheek-bones, where a feverish pink stains the too delicate skin; he had large, vague, blue eyes; and albeit he had not passed his twenty-fifth year, his fair silky hair was already thin on the temples.

'Good God!' said Antonio, 'these beasts are the devil to carry!'

And whilst changing their position on his injured arm, instead of singing, he began to think:

'How beautiful the mountains are at this season! That might be the City of God up there! It seems to me that I have never seen so bright a morning: when one is tired, one allows one's self to look at these sort of things. . . . Holy Body

of Bacchus, how my cursed arm hurts me! Who would ever have thought that idiot Gino knew how to handle a knife so well! But all the same I deem he will not begin that game again! What a fine crack I gave him in the ribs! . . . Hi! Beast! Hey! Beast! Thou wouldst escape, wouldst thou?' and he dealt the elder of the two goats a sharp little blow on the ears; it uttered a faint cry and became silent.

'There, at last, thou'rt quiet, beast. It is well that Messer Astolfo was not here! He is one who loves the beasts. Heavens! if I was a great lord, I should not spend all my time in preaching to the birds, and healing the sick. What is the use of being rich if it leads only to that?'

Antonio raised his head and looked at the mountain as if it had been his interlocutor. It was divinely beautiful this morning. A skylark, mad with ecstasy, was trilling its rapture far away in the blue. From the ground, a whiff of primroses

crushed by the feet of Antonio rose up to him.

'These flowers smell too strong!' he said, vaguely cross. And he sat down for an instant at the edge of a field. 'I feel quite odd and shaky . . . One might think there were only good people in the world on such a morning! I deem Paradise must be like this . . . . My master and the good brothers would be as happy there as fish in a pond! As for me, indeed . . . . !'

And a mocking smile parted the delicate lips of Antonio.

At that moment one of the goats escaped. Antonio had a long chase ere he could recapture it. It was nigh ten o'clock when he at last arrived at the gates of Assisi. The little town lay spread out, terrace after terrace, in the sun. The Sabbath Mass was being sung in some church: the voices of the choir-boys floated out into the country, and the perfume of the incense passed over the city-walls.

'In sooth, it is the City of God,' said Antonio. 'I too, oh gentle Jesus—I too should have liked to be good! But, thank Heaven, I am not made for that trade. I am too fond of fighting, and wine, and women! To think that Gino tried to kiss Lisa!'

Antonio drew his eyebrows together, which gave his fair face a strangely hard and wicked expression:

'Great God, who changes the hearts of men, I defy Thee to make a saint of me!'

And he entered the gates of Assisi.

II

The great courtyard of the monastery was transfigured. An altar was set up in the centre, and tapers were burning in broad daylight. On a litter, before the altar, the Prior lay at the point of death. All around him knelt, with clasped hands, the Franciscan Brothers, and the Sisters of the Order of the Poor Clares.

This Prior, Brother Egidio, was revered like unto a saint in all the country ; he was the last surviving companion of Saint Francis. At the news of his illness, the faithful had flocked in crowds from all the neighbouring villages, and, ere he crossed the threshold of the monastery, Antonio already heard sounds of lamentation.

The goatherd, as has been aforesaid, was a fine well-built fellow, and it was not difficult for him to make a path betwixt those who prayed and those who wept. Suddenly, he turned scarlet : twenty paces off, he saw Ser Alvisio's Gino, talking to a pretty brunette. If it had not been for the crowd and the two goats with which he was encumbered, Antonio would have bounded upon his rival and stabbed him to the heart on the spot, despite the presence of the Host. Finding it impossible to reach him, Antonio contented himself with a look, and was a little consoled by seeing that at his approach

the wretched Gino turned pale as though faint, and quitted his neighbour promptly.

A voice from an upper window questioned the new-comer: 'Who goes there?'

'It is Antonaccio, the goatherd of Messer Astolfo,' replied other voices in the crowd.

The monk shrugged his shoulders and returned to his watch, saying—'Ah!' with such an accent of disappointment that Antonio cried—

'He is not very polite!'

One of the peasants jostling him explained, that the Prior had been in his death agony since the preceding day, but that he could not and would not die, so long as the King of France, Saint Louis, had not come to receive his benediction. These things had been revealed to him in a dream, the very night he had fallen ill, wherefore the monks were day and night on the watch, awaiting the arrival of the King of France, who had not yet appeared.

'My master, Messer Astolfo, will be

vexed,' cried Antonio; 'I have just come from him, bringing two goats for the Prior, who, poor man, I fear will scarce eat them.'

Antonio was still angry, for he was thinking much more of Gino than the Prior, and his young voice rang clear and strong amidst the agonized whispers which filled the courtyard. It even penetrated the collapse of the dying man, who suddenly raised his hand and made a sign to Antonio to come forward.

The goatherd advanced slowly, quite abashed, wondering whether he ought to present the goats that were much in his way, or ask for a blessing. Meanwhile, the large dim eyes of the dying man suddenly lighted up, fixed themselves on the herdsman, and supporting himself by the palms of both hands on the edge of the litter, he managed by an immense effort to sit up. Then, in a strange, very loud voice, he cried—'*Nunc dimittis!* for mine eyes have seen the Lord's elect!' And,

casting his hands to the sky in a supreme gesture of farewell, of agony, and benediction, he fell back dead on his couch.

III

The whole crowd had fallen on their knees, weeping, singing the *Nunc Dimittis*, and exclaiming at the miracle. Women swooned. An old knight, who in his youth had witnessed the conversion of the Wolf of Gubbio, and was a judge of miracles, fell into an ecstasy, and described to the audience how he had seen in the skies, a multitude of souls just released from Purgatory, and, in the midst of this white and jubilant assembly, God the Father with arms outstretched, to welcome the last of the companions of Saint Francis. The company listened, open-mouthed, drinking in his words. But, at the end of his tale, a woman called out—'And what has become of the King, Saint Louis?'

Then the brothers and sisters who knelt around the bier, raised their eyes and gazed at one another. And a great sadness possessed their souls. Where was he, this almost god-like King, the most holy of living saints, who had come so far over seas and mountains, in order to receive the blessing of an old man? Without a word of thanks from them, he had disappeared, and remorse darkened their hearts and brought to their eyes still more bitter tears.

'I saw him,' said the porter; 'he was a pilgrim clothed all in brown like the most simple of our mountain goatherds. But I much doubted he was other, when at the selfsame moment as the Prior died, he melted into the air like smoke.'

'It was easy to see,' said a woman, 'that he was a king. Beneath his hood he wore a golden crown which shone like the midday sun.'

'And under his cloak,' added a third, 'he was dressed in cloth of silver, broid-

ered with golden roses, just like the youngest of the Three Kings on the chapel walls!'

IV

Antonio had indeed fled, quite stunned by the death of Brother Egidio. For, he well knew in his own heart that he was still Antonio, and not the King of France. Nevertheless, the blessing, given to a saintly King and received by him, began to work strangely on his feelings. He thought no more of Gino, nor of his mistress. He thought only of this noble man dying in error, through his blunder, and guilelessly betraying the divine mission. . . . Brother Egidio now knew upon what a worthless object the divine benediction reserved for God's Elect had gone astray! Never in his life had the goatherd felt so small or so unworthy. The bright midday light, like unto the eye of God, made him afraid. No shade, no refuge. Absolute silence reigned in the deserted streets.

Nothing but light, and an offended God, and he, the sinner, who knew not where to hide himself from his judge.

Antonio threw himself on the ground, covered himself with his cloak, and wept bitterly. Meanwhile, the sun at its zenith darted its fiery rays upon him. He was obliged to get up, and seek shelter. Afar off, at the end of the road, the gates of the town opened like a cavern of shade and coolness. Antonio bent his steps thither, and, as he went, he remembered the impious words he had thrown to the skies, as he crossed the threshold of that gate: 'Great God, who changes the hearts of men, I defy Thee to make a saint of me!'

Had God taken up the challenge?

Little by little, an ineffable, mystic certitude dawned in the heart of Antonio. God, in His mysterious celestial way, had used him, the paltry goatherd, for an instant, in order to pour into him—as a very precious balm is poured into an earthen vessel—the resplendent soul of a

saint. Antonio always remained Antonio; but, for the space of the twinkling of an eye, the goatherd and Saint Louis were made one in God.

V

Antonio stood upright in the sunny road, looking into the shadow of the gate with dazzled eyes. God was indeed God! And he, the meanest of the goatherds on the mountain, who was he to measure himself against this divinely gracious omnipotence? For God, instead of crushing the sinner's pride with a thunderbolt, or swallowing him in an earthquake, had loaded him with divine gifts and ineffable hopes. Was it not told that the Lord Jesus Christ, always humble and courteous, did not forget to invite the dying thief at His side to share the feasts of Heaven with Him?

Should he not follow this sacred Hand which opened the gates of Paradise to him likewise? Could he go back to the plain, and make love, gamble, sin, and forget?

All the semblance of his life met together in one instant before the eyes of Antonio: Gino, the Friday fair, where fine cattle are sold; the tavern, where they sing at evening; the vainglory of his former prowess; and Lisa, with the hazel eyes, in her myrtle-scented chamber.

'Let Gino take her,' he murmured, his voice suddenly growing hoarse; 'let him take all. . . I—I take the Cross!'

The self-same evening, Antonio was received into the Order of the Glorious Poor of God. Later on, he likewise became a saint, performed miracles, and, during a pilgrimage to Palestine, like Saint Louis erewhile, he almost persuaded to the faith the Emir of Babylon.

ALIPZ

TO

M. DOUËT D'ARCQ

I

Lumeau-en-Beauce, 1382.

THE little town of Boigneaux-en-Beauce was bathed in the white radiance of the moon. All around, the immense plain spread its delicate undulating harvest like a milky sea. Birch-trees quivered in the breeze; in the midst of the young corn the first poppies of summer waved their corollas, discoloured by the night dew. Above all this pale rural peace, the shadow of the fortifications of Boigneaux stood out like a menace; and further on, towards the horizon, there rose other walls, the huge battlemented tower of the fortified church of the hamlet of Lumeau.

Near the walls of Boigneaux, under one of its sculptured gables, which threw on the whiteness of the pavement an enormous fantastic shadow, slept the captain of Lumeau. Messire Mathieu de Marquivilliers, like all castellans and country guards,

reserved a room for himself in the town whither he came somewhat often to repose from the cares of his office. On account of the heat of the May night he had left the shutters open; the air came in freely, and the moon illumined the bony head of the old soldier, his receding forehead and reddish-grey hair. Suddenly the sound of horses' hoofs, the clash of steel, a long-drawn cry of 'Haro!' and the furious barking of watch-dogs awoke all the echoes of the street. The captain sat up quickly and listened; he heard nothing more save the trees rustling in the night wind. Messire Mathieu heaved a sigh of relief.

'At last,' he muttered, 'I can go to sleep! I thought I heard a sound of armed men; but when I am out of Lumeau I dream of nothing but bandits and marauders. Nevertheless, God knows whether I have earned my sleep! Keeping watch until midnight with the sergeant of Boigneaux! Ouf!' and he buried his head in

the pillows, when the cries began louder than ever— Alipz.

'Haro! Haro! Captain! The raiders are out!'

'Help, for God's sake! The false traitors are in our houses and will carry off our cattle!'

'They are soldiers from the garrison of Orleans out on the forage!'

'They have taken robes and linen from the priest at Ligny!'

'They have stolen the miller's horse!'

'And Colin Vivier's three pigs!'

The little room of the captain was ere long filled by peasants with scared eyes showing under their frieze hoods. Some held in their hands pitchforks, and others sickles.

'Come then, Messire Mathieu,' said the miller of Lumeau; 'these said soldiers are all feasting in the tavern at Boigneaux. You will easily make terms with them, seeing they are after all soldiers like yourselves, and not common thieves!'

So saying, the miller handed Messire Mathieu his worn coat of mail, another peasant put on his helmet, an unknown hand gave him his sword and his steel gauntlets, and before the captain knew if all that passed was truth or dreaming, he found himself before the door of the Pot d'Etain.

II

Within was much good cheer, eating, drinking, and head-splitting singing of war-songs. A great wood fire and five or six pine torches lighted up the heads of half-a-score of fully-armed young marauders and troopers, and their glittering armour, as well as the red wine which flowed in torrents, and the contrite face of their landlord. A young maid sat in the midst of them, her head falling over the back of the chair, her eyes closed, her mouth half-open, sleeping despite the uproar of her companions.

'She must be thoroughly accustomed

thereto,' mused the captain of Lumeau; 'it is beginning early. Only fifteen!' Alipz.

He turned to arrange with the leader of the band for the restitution of the horses and goods they had carried off. Things dragged for a long time, for they were not only arranged betwixt Messire Mathieu and the captain of the raiders, but every peasant and every soldier joined therein, adding to the greater confusion of the affair. The east was touched with the grey of dawn, and the stars were paling in the sky when Mathieu de Marquivilliers thought he could at last take leave. On both sides a last bumper was drunk to the health of the old Duchess of Orleans, strange patron for negotiations of such a nature. When Mathieu and his peasants were already in the road, disputing amongst themselves if it would be better to finish the night at Boigneaux or go on to Lumeau, they heard a great outburst of voices from the interior of the inn.

'Alipz!' shouted the raiders together,

'where is Alipz? She must also drink the health of Madame? Alipz! where art thou?'

The captain turned, and saw in the lighted room the marauders, excited by drink, jostling each other as they came and went seeking the young maid, and furious with a drunken fury at not finding her.

'They are getting heated,' said Messire Mathieu to his men. 'We must make for Lumeau, my lads, for I greatly fear we have not seen the end of this brawl! It is well that we have recovered our good beasts and our belongings, for it is scarce easy to make agreement with raiders drunk with wine and still athirst for plunder.'

III

Meanwhile the young girl was running —running with all the force of youth and country-breeding—through the gloomy dawn. The moon foundered in a sea of clouds, the weather inclined to rain.

Nevertheless a glimmer of light showed the roads a little paler in colour than the fields and the trees standing out black against a rather lighter sky. At the end of the road, the solid battlements of the fortified church rose dark and huge in the still uncertain light. It was towards this double sanctuary that the maiden hurried, barely escaped from the hands of the marauders. Alipz.

Lumeau is not more than a short half-league from Boigneaux across a plain as even as the surface of a lake; long before the brigands had discovered the absence of their victim, she stood before the wide trenches of the monastery. She did not even need to ring the great bell which hung above the drawbridge, for it was already known that the raiders were in the country; the sergeant and his little garrison expected to see women coming for refuge to the fortress, and, indeed, several were already gathered in the guard-house. Before Alipz could cry 'Refuge!' she

was surrounded with soldiers, who plied her with questions.

'She is a maiden whom they kidnapped yesterday at Ligny,' explained the good-natured, loquacious sergeant, who alone understood the poor child's broken words. 'The ruffians are now at Boigneaux, where they are settling as best they can with our captain. Tell that to the widow of Paupin Vivier, who does nothing but whine and threaten me on account of two copper saucepans stolen from her by these miscreants. . . . Holloa, there, Mother Vivier! You will get your saucepans, do you hear? . . . . . And now take this poor child to the barn that she may rest and sleep a little. Give her a hunch of bread and a good glass of milk. Good-night, little one; you look half-dead. Fear naught; here you are at the end of your misfortunes.'

Lying on the straw, exhausted and reassured, Alipz nevertheless could not sleep, despite the delicious security enveloping her like a mantle. . . To think that a horror of which yesterday she did not even dream, should already be a terrible recollection! Alipz saw herself as she was yesterday—as she had been all her short life until yesterday—a frank, joyous child, living with her mother and her uncle, the priest to whom she gave her best service. Yesterday morning, as usual on the last Monday of the month, she was washing the surplice of the good priest in the stream. Suddenly the water was troubled, and, as she bent over her task, she did not see half-a-dozen troopers who swooped down upon her from the outskirts of the wood, attracted no doubt by the song trilled from her lark's throat. Before she could even utter a cry of distress, one of them had enveloped her head in a cloak, and thrown her across

his horse. 'We are going to take you to play in the fields, my lovely child!' he said to her. God knows what frantic terror that innocent heart felt during that dark and interminable journey! And yet it seemed to her that her worst presentiments could not have foreseen a torture so coarse, so shameful, and so cruel as that which awaited her in the midst of the laughter of the captain of the raiders.

'Ah! my God, how could I survive it!' thought poor Alipz, sitting up suddenly, quite reconquered by the horror of her torture. 'Oh, what will mother say? What will mother and the reverend father say?' She hid her face in her little hands, red with sunburn and youth. Bitter sobs shook her unformed childish figure. 'Mother!' she sobbed, and her tears flowed more gently; 'Mother! Mother!' She lay down full length on the straw, her face still hidden in her hands, which streamed with tears.

In time she wept less. Her poor

trembling lips muttered a prayer—a Latin prayer taught her by her uncle. '*Ora pro nobis peccatoribus*,' said she;—'*peccatoribus*,' she repeated, with a new perception, a revelation of that mysterious thing, sin. She had always known that it must be something more than sometimes sleeping too late in the morning, or even answering her mother too sharply. . . . '*Peccatoribus*.'—Ah! how could any one sin of free-will? Perhaps the Holy Virgin would forgive her, Alipz, because it had not been her free-will. '*Ora pro nobis*,' said she, with an outburst of new confidence, '*et in hora mortis nostræ. Amen!*'

Alipz.

She went to sleep.

V

A few minutes later the fortress resounded with the voices and heavy steps of soldiers. Mathieu de Marquivilliers came back to the fort to the great joy of the garrison. The peasants crowded

around him. Some brought their recovered goods to the fort, others brought to a place of safety their cows, horses, clothes, coffers of linen; in short, all there was of value in the village of Lumeau. Meanwhile, on the patrol path, the captain explained to the crowd that new excesses on the part of the raiders were to be feared.

'I left them,' he said, 'in a very bad humour. They were vainly seeking one of their women, who had escaped during our discussion.'

'A woman,' said the sergeant. 'Just now a maiden came running to ask us for protection against the marauders.'

'A maid of about fifteen? Fair, rather pretty, dressed in a white skirt and long red sleeves to her bodice?'

'The very she. Poor child, I sent her to rest in the barn: she was tottering with fatigue and hunger.'

'Hunger!' exclaimed the captain, with a jeering laugh. 'If you had seen her

just now, old fellow, in the tap-room of the Pot d'Etain, singing, eating, and making good cheer with her comrades! Ah, she's a sly one!'

Foreseeing that the arrival of Alipz would raise up new cares for him, the worthy captain had instantly persuaded himself that he had really seen her conducting herself in a very disorderly manner. 'The baggage!' he repeated. 'But, bah! she has taken refuge here, we must defend her as if she were a princess.'

The sergeant looked a little surprised.

'She looks very young,' he murmured.

'Oh! for that sort!' said the captain, with a vague gesture, and the two men kept silence for some moments.

'But, look, here they are, these marauders. They are coming across the plain! Put yourselves on the defensive! Ring the great bell, so that the people of the village may come to the fortress! That's it! Ring loudly! Again!'

VI

Nevertheless none hastened from the menaced village, save one or two small children, who muttered a piece of news that no one understood.

'But, look!' cried one of the soldiers, 'there are the marauders coming from the other side now! What the devil are they dragging after them? They look like prisoners.'

'Indeed, they are prisoners,' interrupted the sergeant. 'Good God! They are the women of Lumeau!'

A strange sight displayed itself on the other side of the trenches of the church. The raiders, armed from head to foot, splendid in their youth and fury, sat proudly in their saddles. Each of them held in leash a cluster of prisoners, tied together, young, old, lovely, and ugly; in a word, all the women of Lumeau. Not a soldier in the fortress but saw some old acquaintance there; not one of the peasants who surrounded Marquivilliers but recog-

nized either wife, daughter, or daughter-in-law, affianced wife, sister, or sister-in-law, opposite him. All these women were in tears, and holding out their bound hands towards the garrison of the fortified monastery. Behind them the few men of the country who had not accompanied Messire Mathieu to the fort, yelled for mercy, help, and vengeance with all the force of their lungs, their faces scarlet with rage. Alipz.

The raiders made signs for silence. Then, 'Alipz' they shouted all together.

'My God!' said Marquivilliers, turning towards the sergeant, 'did I not tell you so? You have put a fine quarrel on our backs in receiving this precious piece of goods like a saint.'

'Alipz!' holloaed the raiders, in their strong sonorous voices.

'Alipz!' repeated the weeping women.

'Give them their beautiful Alipz,' cried one of the soldiers, brutally, who saw on the other side of the trenches his betrothed

in tears. 'It is better than frightening these honest women.'

'Alipz!' resumed the raiders.

Marquivilliers and the sergeant looked at each other with perplexed, unhappy eyes. At this moment the chief of the brigands advanced to the extreme edge of the moat.

'Listen!' he cried, and he raised his head, the better to see Marquivilliers and his men.

'Listen, good people! This Alipz is our property. We took her and we brought her with us. And, by God! if you keep her for yourselves, we shall take away in her stead the women we hold prisoners here, and every other in the land that we can find and take. Choose, your women or her!'

A frightful clamour arose from the patrol path: 'Alipz!'

The women on the other side of the water raised their lamentations anew; with harrowing cries they besought their hus-

bands not to allow them to be dishoured for the sake of a good-for-nothing girl. Marquivilliers turned for a moment to the sergeant. Alipz.

'By the way now, who is this Alipz?' said he.

'She is a girl that the ruffians have carried off from her uncle the priest of Ligny.'

The captain sneered.

Meantime the cries down below burst out anew: 'Alipz! or we will carry off your women!'

On their side, the peasants on the patrol path began to brandish their pitchforks. They were really alarming. They spoke amongst themselves of overwhelming Messire Mathieu with the garrison and surrendering Alipz to the marauders. Ten or twelve of the boldest of these blades advanced towards him.

'My word!' cried the captain, shortly, 'I can do naught therein. Let this Alipz be fetched, and they can come to an understanding amongst themselves.'

Some of the soldiers rushed to the barn where the child was sleeping, so crushed by weariness that the outside clamour had not awakened her. A soldier took her up in his arms like a feather.

'What is it? What is it? Oh, more soldiers!' cried the poor child, waking with a start as she was carried away.

'Oh, yes! You shall have plenty more soldiers if that is your taste,' answered the soldier. 'To think that all the honest women in Lumeau have been disturbed for such a creature!'

Alipz, half-dead with terror, struggled in the arms of her captor like a lamb who is aware it is being led to the slaughter.

But as they emerged on to the patrol path, she saw the good-natured sergeant who had received her so kindly, and with an invincible effort tearing herself from the clasp of the soldier, she flung herself at his feet crying, 'Mercy!' and conjuring

him not to abandon her through weakness to her persecutors.

'You gave me refuge,' she entreated in her plaintive voice. 'Giving refuge or sanctuary is sworn faith or equal to it.'

'Alipz!' clamoured the raiders in the meadows, full of joy at the sight of their victim.

'It is not only refuge!' continued the girl. 'This is a church; it is a sanctuary. I am under the wing of God. What will He say to you if you turn me away?' . . . She fixed her eyes full of anguish on the sergeant; but immediately burst into tears and sobbed in a childish voice: 'Ah! I thought you were so kind!'

The sergeant turned pale. . . . 'Indeed,' said he. . . . He looked for an instant into space. 'Be calm,' he resumed, 'we are not going to abandon you.' He turned toward the captain:

'If we made a sally? We are full six men, armed, and a score of peasants.'

'Well!' cried the raiders down below.

'That's settled, you know! We take your women. It is a good bargain for us; there are eighteen of them!'

'Cowards!' shrieked the women prisoners to the fortress. 'Do you think then the niece of the priest of Ligny is worth more than your own daughters?'

At this moment a movement took place in the ranks of the raiders. The captain looked at them. 'They are going away,' he said; 'we shall never have time to overtake them. . . .' 'Go, my dear,'—and he put his hand on the shoulder of Alipz; 'get up; do not let them drag you.' And, putting his hands like a trumpet to his mouth, he shouted with all the force of his lungs to the raiders.

'Hey, what are you doing, friends? We are going to give you back your Alipz!'

'No! no! no!' moaned the maiden, clinging to the wall with a power of resistance surprising in so fragile a being. 'No, I will not—I cannot. You are going to

throw me alive into hell! Help! Help me, sergeant! Oh, God! Holy Mary! Have mercy! Help me. . . . Mother!' Alipz.

The sergeant advanced and said:

'Captain, we really cannot do this! We are committing a great fault.'

The captain turned furiously:

'You make me think you are in love with the creature! There is plenty of that trash! A young saint of fifteen, whom we find living in a camp of free-booters! And you allow yourself to be worked upon by a pack of nonsense! . . . Come, my beauty! We all have our path in life, and, once chosen, we must follow it without reluctance. Go!'

So saying, he seized the girl round the waist and bent his way through the peasants to the staircase. But Alipz writhed in such lamentable anguish that the sergeant threw himself towards her, impelled by an instinct of pity and remorse.

'Swear to me that he lies,' said he;

'swear to me that you are still an honest maid, and I will save you, cost me what it may!'

For all reply the maiden hid her face in her hands, the image of shame and despair.

A long soldierly laugh greeted this mute avowal.

VIII

From that day forward the sergeant of Lumeau had a bad reputation in the country. The women owed him a grudge for having held their honour more cheaply than that of a disreputable wench whose lover he had wished to be. The soldiers jeered and looked at him askance. The captain treated him from a height of conscious virtue. Indeed Mathieu de Marquivilliers enjoyed great popularity in Beauce until the day when the Governor of the tribunal of Orleans went to Lumeau in quest of the said Mathieu to arrest him on charge of the cowardly abandonment

of a woman who had taken refuge in his fort. Alipz.

This proceeding on the part of the Governor confused all the moral ideas of the good folk of Boigneaux and Lumeau.

PHILIP THE CAT

TO

M. SIMÉON LUCE

PHILIP THE CAT

I

Cherbourg, July 1429.

The Castle of Cherbourg was a sinister-looking building, flanked by sixteen towers, solidly placed round the vast keep, and crowned with enormous battlements, where the soldiers of the English guard patrolled day and night. Nevertheless, one summer evening in the year 1429, the heart of this immense fortress beat in the room of a little child. This room, the only bright one in the Castle, looked on to a small terrace, where blossomed red and white roses. The open shutters let in the breath of flowers; and a light sea-breeze swayed the great tapestries, embellished with the adventures of Richard Cœur de Lion, which hung on the stone walls. But neither the scent of flowers, nor the sea-breeze, succeeded in refreshing the sick child, sleeping on a pile of cushions embroidered with roses and leopards, in

the great stone window-seat. Five or six English doctors hedged around her couch, murmuring amongst themselves words incomprehensible to the French nurse, a woman from Cherbourg, white with grief.

'The only remedy left to try,' said one, 'is the theriac of Nero.'

'It is a very strong measure,' said another, 'for a child of scarce nine years. I should rather advise giving her a pinch of crushed pearls in a tisane of lime-leaves and violets.'

A young man with red hair took up the thread:

'We might try the fashionable treatment of hanging the room of the patient with scarlet silk, and playing the clarion to raise her spirits.'

'All that is foolery,' grumbled an old man; 'there is nothing for it but bleeding; but I have bled her five times already, and the child has only a few ounces in her veins.'

Nevertheless, he drew a lancet from his pocket, making a sign to the nurse to bring the basin.

But she, understanding his gesture better than his words, threw herself in a frenzy at the feet of the astonished doctors, and murmured in a distracted, imploring manner:

'Ah! as she is going to die, wherefore torment her, my dove, my Antigone?—as she is going to die, leave her to me, sirs, at least during her last agony! You have already done her so much harm, and yet she does not recover. She is as weak as a young bird. She will die whilst you are bleeding her.'

'There is some truth in what she says,' said the youngest of the doctors.

'Pooh,' said the old man; 'always this French woman with her tales.'

'And the Duke!' cried another. 'What will good Duke Humphrey say if his child dies in our hands, without our doing our duty to the end?'

'The Duke is in England,' said the nurse; 'he will know nothing.'

The doctors, certain of the coming death of their patient, and enchanted in reality at freeing themselves from their responsibility, muttered more English in low voices; at the end of a few minutes, they made up their minds and went solemnly away, as if against their feelings, and at the door the old man said with marked emphasis:

'May the blood of this child be upon your head, nurse!'

II

Three weeks later, the good town of Cherbourg resounded with the miraculous cure wrought upon the little person of Madame Antigone, daughter of the Duke of Gloucester, uncle of the King and Governor of Cherbourg;—'cure made entirely,' said her nurse Marion, 'by fresh air, rest, and harmless hot drinks,'

but attributed nevertheless by the people to occult powers, even superior to those which had earned for old Nora, the Irish bone-setter, the superstitious respect of the whole of Cotentin. The doctors, a little distrustful of this unexpected resurrection, drew attention to the fact that the child was not yet really strong. Indeed, she wandered about the Castle, tottering, and feeble—a little phantom, white as snow, under her magnificent Saxon mane of fair hair, only half-returned from the pale, far-off garden of Death.

Philip the Cat.

Marion was in despair at this anæmia. Her songs could no longer make the child sleep. She smiled with wide-opened eyes. All the birds of the air, and all the fish of the sea, died in vain to tempt the appetite of the infant princess.

'Taste it, my darling, I beg,' implored Marion, for the hundredth time perhaps, one evening, cutting a jelly of smelts in aspic.

'I cannot,' repeated the child as usual.

But, seeing the tears come into Marion's eyes:

'I will try,' said she—'I will try, if you will send for Captain Hungerford, to tell me stories.'

'Captain Hungerford?' said Marion with a shade of displeasure. 'You are still fond of that great man?'

'Yes, I love him very much,' replied the child.

'And wherefore then?' asked the other.

'Oh! I love—I love—I love him, because he is so strong!'

Marion drew a long sigh.

'Ah! you are very English! The two things I love best in the world, I love a thousand times more because they are so weak!—do you see, my darling?'

'And what are those two things?' asked the child, quite interested.

'You, my Antigone,—and France, my country.'

The little girl threw her arms round the neck of her nurse.

'I too,' she cried—'I too love France! and I love you likewise, and I love Philippon.'

Philip the Cat.

And she began to chatter so merrily that her smiles dissipated the fears of Marion. Nevertheless the fish still lay untouched in their jelly. In a few minutes the nurse noticed them.

'Come!' she said, 'we are forgetting to have supper. I am going this instant to look for your great captain, since needs must.'

'Yes! yes! Hungerford! Hungerford!' exclaimed the little girl, clapping her hands.

III

With a heavy step, Captain Hungerford followed Marion to the chair of the sick child. He was a tall, handsome man, with reddish hair, marked features, and steel-grey eyes. He looked anxious at that moment, despite the kind smile reserved

solely for his little friend. He was a hard, strong-minded man, who had no weakness in his own life with which to reproach himself, and who had never forgiven any weakness in others. He was much feared and respected;—no one loved him, save the child of his master.

'Hungerford! Hungerford!' cried the little maiden, gayer than ever at the coming of her favourite. 'Sit there, my dear Hungerford, and tell me the story of King Renaud at once.'

'Ah! no, Madam,' said the Captain, taking the tiny feverish hands of the child in his large cool grasp. 'If I tell you something this evening, it will not be the good old stories of other times, but a true, sad story of to-day, which concerns you, Madam.'

'I like that a thousand times better,' cried the little maiden. 'Oh, Hungerford, you are so good! You will see, nurse, how much I shall eat.'

The Captain smiled a moment under his

beard; but his face quickly darkened, and he began in a grave, sad voice— Philip the Cat.

'Once upon a time, there was a king, who was perfectly noble, upright and brave. And this king had the right to possess a neighbouring country that robbers sought to take from him. The king knew it was the will of God he should reign over this country, where the wretched people suffered a thousand ills at the hands of those who governed it, without laws, and without faith. Therefore he assembled his knights, and went to war against the ungodly. And he vanquished them three times: at Cressy, at Poictiers, and at Agincourt. And God gave power into his hands.'

A murmur of dumb rage escaped Marion's lips.

The Captain went on—

'And for a time the people blessed the yoke that led them in the track. But there were traitors in the country, and the ringleaders roused the people against the

king. And the people bit the hand that nourished them.

'Nevertheless, Madam, young though you are, you can see what peace and abundance we have brought back into this poor neglected country. All round Cherbourg, you have ofttimes seen the well-to-do farms, which give to our colonists a harvest twice as rich as in the time of former farmers. In Humphrey Street and Gloucester Street, you must have noticed the beautiful stone houses occupied by Highway, Cobham, and other London merchants, where in the time of the French there were only a few hovels. And you know that we who live here give ourselves entirely, heart and soul, to the greatest good of our fair province, France.'

'France! France!' shrieked the nurse, beside herself.

The Captain looked at her for an instant vacantly, and turning to the child, continued—

'Well, then, you must know that all our efforts have been of no avail in the eyes of this ungrateful people. Madam, France is rising against us!' Philip the Cat.

'I know it,' said Antigone, with a little air of understanding.

'What, you know it?' cried the Captain; 'then you know the shame that whitens the hair of your young father? You know that this foolish, inconstant, and light-hearted nation has made a god after her own image—a woman like herself; a child like herself; and, like herself—I cannot utter the word to you—a sorceress, and worse still! Have they told you that we have been beaten three times by this devil's offspring—*We!*—that our gallant knights have succumbed to the enchanted distaff of this vile woman? Ah! you have been well taught, and by God! I should like to know the source from which your news comes! But I warn you, Madam, that it will not last long, and these rides on the broomstick of the cajoler

of a little town will end badly. We shall ere long get hold of their Jeanne, and we shall tie her firmly to a strong stack of fagots. We shall burn her, as is right, and from her mouth will be seen to come forth a swarm of lies, of sorceries, and other hideous devilries, which will roast with her in the all-cleansing fire.'

'But,' said Antigone, 'that is not the way that Philippon tells me the story of the Maid of Orleans.'

'The story of the *Maid of Orleans!*' thundered the Captain at the top of his voice. '*The Maid of Orleans!* Tell me the story then, Madam, for I would give half my worldly goods to hear how they tell it to the niece of the King of England.'

'Well, then!' . . . began the child——

'No! no!' cried Marion, 'do not make her chatter. She has fever already. She will be ill the whole night. Go away, for God's sake, Captain, for, without wishing to reproach you, it does not seem to me that

you in the least understand how to soothe sick children!'

'I know what I am about,' said Hungerford, fixing his piercing eyes on her, 'and I shall go away as soon as my mind is clear on certain important subjects. For that result, I must hear the story of this child. Begin, Madam.'

'Antigone!' cried Marion, 'I forbid you to speak.'

'Mistress Marion,' answered the Captain, 'I arrest you in the name of the King.'

IV

'It is only a game, Madam, my sweet,' said the big Captain, when the archers had taken away Marion. And he pressed the hand of the weeping child. 'It is only a game of hide-and-seek. I swear to you she will come back directly. You will tell me your pretty story, and then, I assure you, I will at once give Marion back to you.'

'Truly?' asked the child. 'It is really only a game? I shall see her again directly?'

'Yes, my darling! Only tell me the story of the Maid of Orleans.'

'Once upon a time,' began the little maiden——

But she hesitated, and looked at Hungerford in a curious, undecided way.

'What is it?' said the soldier.

'Marion forbade me to tell my story.'

Hungerford's brow darkened with impatience.

'And I order you to tell it me,' said he. 'I am your governor, and Marion is only your servant. Therefore, to punish her for her insolence, she will not come back here till you have told me your story.'

Tears came into the eyes of the child.

'I thought it was a game,' said she.

'It is a game indeed, and one played far too well it seems to me.'

Hungerford looked so gloomy, that the little maiden, seized with respect and terror,

began to tell her story, very quickly, in a clear, tired little voice. Philip the Cat.

'Once upon a time,' said she, 'there was a fair country—that's France—and the English took it and kept it. And then God was angry with the English, who are the strongest people of all, because they waged war against the French instead of waging war against the Turk. And then there was a beautiful maiden, and God told her to go and drive out the English, and that He would give her half His kingdom in the skies. Behold, she takes a sword, and a banner, and mounts a horse to go to the war. As she is a pure maiden, weapons have no power against her: thus she goes always triumphing. Besides, you know, God protects her. And, whilst she walks through the thicket, she chases the English far far away, right down to the sea! And when she has chased them as far as the sea, she will put on a beautiful robe the colour of fine weather, she will reach out her fair saintly hand to the King

of England, she will offer him peace in her sweet, loving voice, and she will marry the handsomest prince in the land. Then the two nations will be like two sisters. They will wage war against the Turk, and imprison him in a dark dungeon. They will deliver the Holy Sepulchre. Every one will be pleased, and the French and English will both be happy . . .

'I have not told it quite as prettily as Philippon tells it me, because I am so tired this evening. But that was the sense, I think.'

'Who is Philippon?' said the Captain, gnawing his beard.

'Oh, you know quite well, Hungerford! My good Philippon, the harper. Philip the Cat . . . *Philip the Cat!*'

And the child laughed, a little sharp, sickly laugh.

'You know, the man with blue eyes, who lives at the corner of the Quay St. Louis!'

'Humphrey Street!' said the Captain, despite himself.

'Oh, *here* we always say Quay St. Louis!' Philip the Cat.

The Captain repressed a wrathful impulse. He got up and said—

'I promised you your nurse, Princess; I am going to send her back to you, for I see you can scarce do without her services. But, whatever you hear, when your old Hungerford is not there, do not forget, Madam, that you are of the blood royal of England. Pray for your father in order that he may vanquish his enemies. God guard you, my sweet Madam! May He keep you free from all treason and all infamy! May He keep you even as Daniel was kept in the den of lions! Adieu!'

And the Captain went out abruptly.

V

Two men-at-arms accompanied Marion as far as the door of the room. She came in alone, and kneeling down quickly beside Antigone, murmured in her ear—

'You told him naught?'

'Oh, yes,' said the child, 'I was obliged to tell him everything. He said that I should not see you again until I had told my story, so you may think how quickly I told him.'

Marion clasped the little girl in her arms, and embraced her with a stifled sob.

'Child, child, must I regret having brought you back from the jaws of death?'

The little maiden, worn out by so many emotions, began to cry in the despairing way of a suffering child. For the first time, Marion did not lavish consolations upon her. Standing up in the embrasure of the window, she concentrated her thoughts on what had happened. She tried to reassure herself by saying that the child really knew nothing of the plot. How could she know that—profiting by the reduction of the garrison, of which part had been called to the relief of the English army in the centre—the French defenders

of Mont St. Michel were to be introduced into the fortress of Cherbourg ? Philip the Cat.

But what a fatality that the words of Antigone had given Hungerford the name of the harper, who was the soul of the plot. For he it was who, by his patriotic songs, stimulated the insurrection of the peasants of Cotentin. He it was who took charge of the correspondence exchanged between the few remaining Norman barons in Cherbourg and the heroic defenders of Mont St. Michel—he who carried from farm to farm, from house to house, the tidings of the miraculous successes of Joan of Arc. If it occurred to Hungerford to search the house of the harper? Marion started. How many noble, innocent lives would pay for the indiscretion of a child! She felt she must —yes, she must—certainly destroy as soon as possible the fatal document, hidden in the too accessible retreat of the harper ; he must be warned of the danger hanging over his head.

She looked at the dim twilight: the Castle gates must be shut. How could she get out? How give the alarm? To-morrow morning would perhaps be too late. Moreover, to-morrow morning she would be suspected by the whole garrison, for the soldiers who had such a short time ago so quickly imprisoned, and as promptly released her, would not keep their secret to themselves. She must profit by the last moments of her incontestable authority as chief attendant of the daughter of the Duke. She enveloped herself in her cloak, went out, and descended the stairs. The gate of the first courtyard of the Castle was still open; the second was being closed, and they let her pass without challenge. But the third gate was already barred, the drawbridges up, and the guard called out for the night. Marion approached the sergeant in command.

'The child is not so well,' she said; 'I want to go and fetch a drug from Nora, the bone-setter; but the drawbridges are

up. Will you take it on yourself to let me pass? For I fear the child will die in the night for want of aid.'

Philip the Cat.

'You ought to have thought of it sooner,' grumbled the man.

'She was quite well until this evening,' said Marion. 'She has been laughing too much with the Captain; she was seized with faintness as soon as he left.'

'Very well! Show me a pass from the Captain.'

'Oh, no, indeed!' cried the nurse. 'He would send for his six doctors from beyond the seas. You well know he will not hear the name of the bone-setter, who, nevertheless, fully, fairly saved the life of the little one.'

'That is true,' said the other, and he took several steps in silence. 'After all, she is the daughter of the Duke . . . and I have known you for full nine years, Dame Marion. Otherwise——'

He began slowly to undo the heavy chains.

'What I am doing would almost be a case for hanging. You will keep it a secret, I hope, nurse?'

'Oh, as for that!' said Marion, laughing, 'I promise you I will. And you will not tell any one either, will you?'

And she laughed nervously.

'Thank you for your kindness.'

She was already outside the Castle gates.

She went into the road almost smiling. She was not fond of telling lies, but she was a woman, and it pleased her to trick the artless despot. Thanks to her astuteness, the lives of many people would be saved. She walked quickly along the quays, as far as the corner where stood the old house belonging to Philip the Cat.

All within was dark and deserted. Marion called softly three times; no one answered. She pushed open the oaken door, and went into a large hall, absolutely empty, faintly lighted by the setting sun. She looked at the corner; the harp was

not there. Philip, therefore, had gone a long way off, perhaps as far as Cotentin. She heaved a sigh of relief. Then, remembering the real object of her visit, she went swiftly to the fire-place, knelt down, lifted up one of the bricks from the hearth, and took out a dozen sheets of paper hidden beneath it. There were lists of men's names, inventories of arms, indications of times and places of meeting, and all the correspondence between the conspirators of Cherbourg and the defenders of Mont St. Michel. Marion hid these life and death-dealing papers in her bosom, carefully replaced the brick which had hidden them, went out silently, and continued her walk in the direction of the sea. It was high tide, and great waves beat against the sea-wall. She looked hastily round on all sides. There was no one to be seen. She stooped, picked up a heavy pebble, tied it to the papers with the ribbon from her hair, and, with more than the ordinary force of a woman's

arm, she threw the secret of the rising country into the rough waters of the Channel.

VI

On her return to the Castle, the kind of alleviation from anxiety which had as it were flooded the mind of Marion during her dangerous expedition, suddenly subsided; she again became anxious and unhappy, and filled with anguish.

Most of the conspirators were now shielded from conviction, but she had not been able to warn Philip. The thought of his danger distracted her; she had really done nothing since she had not saved him. Where was he? And how could she reach him in the heart of the country? How could she let him know that at all costs he must remain as far as possible from Cherbourg? In what direction was she to look for him? Towards Caen, or Granville, or St. Lo?

Marion shut her eyes sadly, in the effort

to think clearly. She only saw through her closed lids Philip himself, with his halting walk, a little heavy-footed from carrying the harp, his sad dreamy face, his pale blue eyes looking into the beyond, his shy, sweet smile. She saw his noble features, contorted as if by thought, beneath his thick dark curling Celtic hair. For the first time she deemed him beautiful, and inmostly dear to her, every detail of his face sharply graved on her woman's heart.

Then, in her imagination, she saw him in some out-of-the-way barn, in the midst of a hundred peasants called to the place of meeting—at what risk they well knew—to discuss the details of the approaching rising. Oh, God! how would this man defend himself, whose mere simplicity had hitherto been his protection? Ah, he knew no guile, nor how to hide his feelings. He only knew how to sing one or two compromising songs, tell a few stories, each of which was deserving of death; to

mark the lintels of friendly houses with the mysterious French cross, and hide in his wandering bird's breast the most secret and dangerous correspondence in the world.

She threw herself distractedly before the enormous silver-gilt crucifix watching over the bed of the little princess. 'Jesus, Christ Jesus, how can I protect this man, whose only armour—his innocent, child-like looks—has been pierced through and through by an unwitting child? How can I fight against Hungerford for the life of the poor singer?'

Marion wept bitterly. Suddenly, it seemed to her as if a name was whispered in her ear—'Dimenche Martin.' It was the name of a pedlar of theriac, the son of one of those numerous Irish emigrants who made up so large a portion of the population of Cherbourg.

Being from beyond the seas, he passed as faithful to the English; but Marion knew he was well versed in the secrets of

Philip, a born conspirator, and very ready and audacious. She decided to send him to warn the harper on the morrow. Philip the Cat.

'He can go all through the country without being suspected,' she thought. 'He will know where to find Philip. I shall go to him to-morrow on my way to Mass.'

Suddenly comforted by the thought of possible aid, Marion sank down on the silver steps of the crucifix. She fell asleep; but in her dreams it seemed to her that the head of Christ became human, that the eyes grew larger, more vague and abstracted, the features contorted by pain, the mouth alone still preserving its smile of loving compassion. It was the head of Philip the Harper, which bent for an instant from the Cross, and bore for an hour on its brow the immortal thorns of the sacrificed God.

Whilst Marion dreamt of the harper, the Captain of the Castle was working out his arrest. For ten days previously he had been on the traces of a vast conspiracy hatched against the English. But his suspicions had never dreamt of touching the timid, awkward harper, with his sweet smile. Philip had a free pass of the fortress, and came and went as he would. The words of Antigone had suddenly enlightened Hungerford as to the part played by this insignificant rhymster.

'Spy!' he murmured, 'the plan of the Castle has been for months in the possession of the defenders of Mont St. Michel!'

These thoughts had beset him as soon as he left the room of the child. Later on, in the evening, he sent his archers to arrest Philip the Cat. But the bird had flown, and they only caught a young Irishman in the act of placing a paper under a brick on the hearth.

The young man had time to swallow

the letter, the hiding-place was empty, and the soldiers, abashed by their discomfiture, brought their prisoner before the Captain.

The Irishman trembled in every limb; but he looked at Hungerford with an almost impertinent light in his eyes, like those of a captured deer.

'Ah!' said the Captain, 'it is the pedlar of theriac. I have had my eye on you, my friend, for a long time. . . . Good,' he added, making a sign to the soldiers, 'wait for me in the hall. If I want you, I will strike the flags thrice with my sword. You will come immediately.'

The soldiers went away. Dimenche Martin smiled, and in a voice of mingled audacity and servility, said—

'So your Honour deigns to buy something from my modest pack?' and he knelt down as if to undo his parcel.

'Yes,' answered Hungerford, unmoved. 'I want to buy from you the address of your friend, Philip the Cat.'

Dimenche started.

'Philippon?' he stammered.

'Yes,' said Hungerford. 'In order to hang him to-morrow morning.'

'But I know nothing about him!' cried the Irishman.

'Then we will make you know.'

The pedlar looked at the room, from floor to ceiling, like a stag at bay. He saw no hope of escape. Then, as if crushed by shame, he said very low—

'He is on the road to Granville, at the farm of Serizy, near the Abbey.'

Hungerford probed him an instant with his penetrating glance.

'Good,' he said; 'you will lead my men there at daybreak.'

The pedlar hid his face in his hands.

'And if he is not there, your harper,' continued the Englishman in measured tones, 'you will be hanged in his stead in front of the Abbey.'

Dimenche fell on his knees again suddenly, uttering a long wail.

'You have no heart then, you English?'

Hungerford laughed shortly, and proudly.

'For traitors? Nay, my friend, neither for you nor for your damned Philippon, indeed!'

There was silence for an instant. The Englishman spoke again.

'Why should you prefer the life of the harper to your own life? You have no honour, you. . . Speak, and I will pardon you,' he said, raising his sword; 'and if you do not speak, hell shall make you speak.'

Dimenche was still silent.

'I call!' said the Captain; and he let his sword fall with a crash on the flagstones.

A strong shudder shook the unhappy pedlar.

The Englishman smiled. He raised the sword for the second time. Then, grey as ashes, the other cried—

'He is with Colin Cadet, at Gros-Quesnoy, near Caen.'

VIII

On the morrow, when Marion wished to leave the Castle, she was informed that, by order of the Captain, she was to remain shut up in the tower with Madame Antigone. There, she was mistress; outside, she immediately became an escaping prisoner. The poor woman eat her heart out within her tower. The interminable days rolled by, without bringing her any news from the outside world. Her only distraction was to walk on the roof of the tower, towards dawn, in the heat of the afternoon, or again in the evening, whilst the child slept in her new convalescence. Marion then saw at her feet—but how changed and almost unrecognizable from that altitude!—the quays and streets of Cherbourg. People came and went, stopped and formed groups; but all this population of unknown and tiny shadows became like strangers to Marion, who could not distinguish a feature, exchange a thought, or even hear a cry. What bound her to this tribe of

black atoms? All community of feeling died little by little within her heart; the thought of her country, of action, of deliverance, paled and became uncertain, and slow of accomplishment, whereas another feeling, so far unconscious, took shape daily, expanding mysteriously and filling her solitude. She was absorbed by a human, ardent passion for Philip the Harper. It was no longer to France that she yearned to devote herself; if Philip lived, what mattered ought beside? Ah! she had been mad—how mad—to encourage him, almost to drive him into such peril! If he died . . . . . She could not complete her thought. She was frozen with terror: it seemed to her that Philip was already dead. But she could not believe it, and hope renewed itself unceasingly, even in the midst of her anguish. For it seemed to her that the force and reality of the passion she felt were like a keen proof of the existence of its object.

One day, as she looked from the window

of Antigone's room, into the courtyard of the Castle, she saw Dimenche Martin strolling about and talking to two soldiers. She made him an imperious sign; but he did not look in her direction. Then, wild with anxiety, she put both her hands to her mouth as if they were a trumpet, and called through them—

'Is he still alive?'

Dimenche turned round and looked at her sadly. He put his finger on his lips, shook his head sadly, and went reluctantly away.

Three days later, when she went on to the roof of the tower, just before dawn, she saw, opposite her, on the central tower, a lance on which was impaled the blood-stained scalp of some Frenchman. She shaded her eyes with one hand, looked at it long and intently . . . . and then fell down fainting. However, the fresh morning air soon restored her senses; the blood again began to circulate through her paralyzed veins. . . . . She seemed to see, as

in a vision, the pale bloodstained head of Christ, leaning towards her. The sad eyes were wide open, and looked far, far across the plains of France which he had failed to set free. The mouth gaped. She opened her eyes completely, saw the long hair and bloodstained scalp speared upon the lance, and laughed aloud—the awful laugh of madness. It was the head of Philip the Cat.

Philip the Cat.

IX

The self-same day Captain Hungerford went with the officials of the law to the sale of the goods of the executed prisoner. What was the astonishment of these functionaries when they found a harp to be the only furniture in the haunt of the chief of the conspiracy! It was the whole fortune of this revolutionary. They nevertheless put up this redoubtable harp to auction. But, either out of pity for the dead, or fear of the master, no one offered to purchase it. At last a priest from the country asked

that it might be given to him, in order that he might in return pray for the soul of the deceased.

The instrument was given to the old priest. Both were already worn in years and much broken down. Still both contained the principle of a strong vitality. . . . . For, twenty years later, on the 12th August, 1450, when the anthem of deliverance, sung to this day once a year in all the churches of Normandy, was sung for the first time in an old chapel—an aged priest chanted the song of triumph to the sounds of the worn harp of Philip the Cat.

Hæreditas patrum nostrorum injuste ab inimicis nostris aliquo possessa est. Nos vero, tempus habentes, vindicamus hæreditatem patrum nostrorum.

THE BALLADS OF THE DAUPHINE

TO

M. C.-P. DUCLOS

THE BALLADS OF THE DAUPHINE

I

Châlons, 1446.

I, Perette de Villequier, aged fifteen years, or thereabouts, interrogated by the King's Judges, touching the sickness and death of the late Madame La Dauphine, on whom I was in waiting, put down here in writing all that I have in remembrance.

Now all about the Court wot well that my elder sister, Marguerite de Villequier, was Maid of Honour to the Dauphine from the time that, at the age of twelve years, my said lady came to France from her own country, Scotland. But despite the similitude of their age and name, never did they become friends. And they had so much strife and evil-speaking betwixt them, that in the year one thousand four hundred and forty-five (which was last

year), my said sister Marguerite left the abode of Madame La Dauphine. And because the King would not offend his good servitor, my brother, André de Villequier ; and since Madame la Dauphine had heard it said that I made ballads and rondels to pass the time in our manor-house, it was ordered that, despite my youth, I should come to the Court in the room of my sister, Marguerite.

It was on the first of June I began my journey ; and we were three days on the road. And on the third night towards dawn, I saw before me something large and indistinct, which they told me was the Castle of Sarry, hard by Châlons, where were the King, the Queen, and the whole Court.

And I do not remember how we came into the Castle, which was very gloomy and full of sleeping men-at-arms. But as we went up the stairs, I saw a lady, clad all in green, who came towards me and said—

'Come, little one, for Madame awaits you.'

She took my hand and led me through a long corridor to a door, which she opened. And there, in a vast, high hall, painted in fair colours, I saw three ladies, quite young and all very pale, writing, by the light of torches and candles, at a table covered with papers and books. Then said my companion: 'The tallest is the Dauphine; the little dark one is Jeanne Filloque; and she who has her nose a little on one side is Marguerite de Saligñac. And I,' said she, making a mocking curtsey, 'am your servant, Prégente de Melun.'

Then a mist rose before my eyes, and I felt the floor slipping from beneath my feet. Not so much from being in the presence of my sovereign lady, but that I loved poetry so much. Now all these ladies were very great and noble poets, whose ballads were known as far as Anjou.

And as I tottered, I felt an arm around

me, a kiss on my hair, and a beautiful strange voice said—

'Welcome, little nightingale, who comes by night!'

And, opening my eyes, I saw that Madame la Dauphine held me in her arms.

Tall she was, and fresh and fair of face, with hair like threads of gold, and of all these poets the only one who was not wan with midnight watching. Pale she was, but underneath her eyes, where the cheek-bones were a little high, she had a colour like two wild roses; and her large shining eyes seemed full of life and imagination.

She was slender and delicate as the stalk of a lily, and never since have I seen great lady who wore such an air of distinction. For, despite all her caprices, it could well be seen that she was the daughter of a king. And of a verity, her father, even as King David, ancestor of our Lord Jesus Christ, governed his heart

by song and his vassals by the charm of his heart.

Now as I stood there blushing with confusion at so much honour, and such fine company, my said lady the Dauphine went to the window, which she opened, and said—

'Let us salute the dawn, and read the little rising god the fruits of our night watches.'

Holding my hand, she made me sit on a seat in the window, and—

'Prégente,' said she, eldest of us all, 'begin this pretty round.'

Then these ladies read in turn many beautiful things; and their voices filled the hall, like spring come out of season, and birds chanting love-songs. And all the while they read, my said lady the Dauphine laughed, a gay, clear little laugh, which made her cough from the cold of the window. And of a sudden, I remembered no more of the ballads read by these said ladies; for, Madame la Dau-

phine held her peace from laughing and amusing herself, and read the verses written below that none will ever forget—

'Alas, upon my soul, my friend,
Without an end
So much woman's sorrow lies,
That in nowise
Will soul's ease on me descend!

'My heart is sadder than I say;
And far away
Are my old mirth and joyance fled;
For, when you left me, on that day,
Alone, astray,
Was all my dearest pleasure dead.'

Then all there present looked at her with compassion, as for a sorrow well known. And whilst I marvelled that so gay a princess was likewise so unhappy, I fell asleep on the bench with my head against the wall.

II

I must have slept nigh an hour, for when I awoke day had already dawned, and the sun shone through the morning

dew and mist. And quite near me in the window the Dauphine and her ladies were standing, laughing smothered little laughs and whispering together. Clearly they were watching something. And it seemed to me I heard other voices: men's voices speaking outside, down below, in the mist.

And scarce raising myself, I saw out in the fields two men mounted on the same steed, riding slowly to and fro beneath the Castle windows. And he who rode behind held in his hand a great sword, which he bore pointed toward the head of his horse, which I learnt after was the sword of the King. This man was clad all in brown, and was strong and thick-set, with a receding chin and long pale eyes. But all this I have seen much better, and many a time since, for, by the will of God, I had to see Messire Jamet du Tillay far more often than I would.

Then quoth the other—

'Would to God she had never had such a woman in her train!'

'The which?' said Jamet.

'Marguerite de Salignac,' made answer the other.

And Jamet said—

'Would to God she likewise had neither Prégente nor Jeanne Filloque, who keep her watching all night with their accursed poetry!'

And at this moment all my said ladies began to laugh and frolic in the window.

'What is that?' asked Jamet, yonder in the mist.

'Morning birds,' muttered the other.

Then they rode on a pace or two, where we could hear no more.

But ere long, going and coming, they returned on their steps, and Jamet spake and said—

'Nay; she has never had children, and never will by what they say. She eats too many sour apples, laces too tight, sits up too late, and writes too many rondels and ballads, which things prevent child-bearing.'

'Likewise, has not the love of her husband!' said the other.

'Hey, no!' made answer Jamet. 'Do you expect him to love a woman who is ofttimes employed in writing ballads till sunrise? And the Dauphin has already slept an hour or two ere she comes to rest.'

Then the foremost rider made answer that I heard not, for the steed was already far away on the hither side.

And Madame began to speak very loud.

'Do you see that man, that honest Jamet du Tillay? He is the one man in the world I ought to hate! It will be no fault of his if he does not put me in the bad graces of the King just as he has taken away the love of my lord.'

And she talked much after this manner, being full of wrath. But of a sudden she said, 'Hush!' And I saw down below the two men coming back on their steed, and with them another knight mounted on a light sorrel, more beautiful than the steed

they bestrode. And Jamet carried the sword with the point aloft. Now I looked at this new knight who was bald, and had neither beard nor eyebrows; had little dull grey eyes beneath a white felt hat; and had in his face something gentle, sad and restless, as if he saw dimly, beautiful things in which he scarce believed.

'Hush! the King!' said the ladies of the Dauphine.

Now I set myself to listen and look more attentively than ever; and heard Jamet begin his litany of the ballads of the Dauphine again.

'And she watches so late,' said he, 'that she ofttimes writeth twelve ballads in a night.'

'And from that comes her sickness? That gives her the megrim?' said the King, surprised.

'Yea, she suffereth for misusing the gift,' made answer Jamet. 'Nevertheless ballads are things of pleasure.'

Then sighed the King.

'Ah! pleasure! pleasure! There is no more pleasure in this country; and in a short while there is come more sadness to it than ever came to a country in the world! All these lords have been embroiled one with another . . . and now if this lady . . .'

He ended not, but all understood too well.

'Eh, pardi, sire!' said Jamet, 'if it should happen that Madame went from life to death, we should have to marry Monsieur le Dauphin to one more to his pleasure, and more prone to bear children.'

But he had not ended speaking ere the King cried shame upon him, manifesting much wrath, and treating the said Jamet as a cruel and detestable councillor.

'For,' cried he, 'rather would we have the English in the land than lose that lady, who is the pearl of our kingdom: no greater misfortune could befall us!'

Then Madame la Dauphine, who had never flinched under all the hard things she had overheard, began to weep, and

wept and wept, as though life itself would flow from her eyes.

'The good King!' she cried.

Then she uplifted her fair head, and smiled, and at last fell a-laughing with all her heart.

'Do you see,' said she, 'our honest Jamet is quite abashed. Ah! he feels that his case totters!'

III

From that moment I greatly longed to see that noble lord the Dauphin, who used such a beautiful princess so harshly. But they were but little together; Monseigneur and his suite never coming to the Court of the Dauphine.

Nevertheless, one Sunday, as I went to vespers in the Queen's oratory, I met Jamet du Tillay, who talked with a young man I had never seen before. This young man was dark and thin, with large fiery eyes, a twisted mouth, and a bitter ex-

pression. Now behind me there passed three Scottish archers of the Guard in the uniform of the King, their feather bonnets on their heads and girded with their swords. Then said the young lord—

'See, there are they who hold the kingdom of France in subjection.'

'Who are they?' said Jamet du Tillay.

'Those Scots,' made answer the Dauphin —for he it was—and stealing a sidelong glance, he went on in a lower voice—

'Come now! There is nothing to be done but to put these folks away. A very small opportunity will bring it to the point. I have thirty archers or thereabouts, you must give me five or six, and I have the same pledged me secretly by several knights. I cannot fail to be the strongest here . . .'

And he would have gone farther, but Jamet, who had seen me, gave him to understand that one of the ladies of the Dauphine was close at hand.

'What?' said he, 'here, at my heels?

These Scots are even before the throne of God, then?' And he seized me by the sleeve and shook me rather roughly.

'I do not ask you what you are doing here, fair lady. Go and tell your mistress all that you have overheard! And tell her there are as many Scots at her Court as there are rats; too many for our good pleasure, and too near our royal person, but, nevertheless, we will soon make an end of them.'

And of a sudden he loosed me, and I went away weeping. Now as I went, there came by Madame la Dauphine, who went within the said oratory. And when she had scarce entered, saw Monseigneur with Jamet du Tillay, and stopped short forthwith, and turned away without a word, and left the said oratory. And at the door called me, and asked—

'What said Monseigneur to you?'

'He was saying no evil,' I made answer, 'but making sport with me after his wont.'

But she did not believe me; and of a

sudden, hiding her face in her hands, she fell on her knees before the huge black crucifix which is in the corridor leading to the said oratory, and cried—

'God of the sorrowful, take and give me the heart of my husband!'

Then we heard the voice of Jamet, far off the other side of the door, talking with the Count de Dammartin, and saying—

'He was married against his pleasure, and as long as he lives he will regret it.'

IV

It was at this time that there came to the Court of Sarry, the Duchess of Burgundy. This Duchess was of the Portuguese nation; short of stature, brown and fat, as the women of her race are wont to be. Her eyes were black, and meseemed there was a scent of garlic about her. Much I misliked her; but at the Court she was received with great favour and familiarity, and I had never yet seen

any in the kingdom come to the Court to whom the Queen paid so much honour as to this Duchess Isabel. But for once that the said Duchess went to the apartments of the Queen, came three or four times to the Court of the Dauphine ; for they were both (and, for the matter of that, the Queen likewise) forsaken and deserted by their husbands. They dined together many a time, and were never more than two or three days without meeting. Nevertheless the Duchess Isabel was a woman of forty, lived out of the world, and Madame la Dauphine was scarce twenty. But I trow they had a common dolor, a malady called jealousy, and that many a time in secret they talked of the neglect of their husbands, which was the cause of their fellowship.

It befell that one day after supper, the two princesses went out to play on the grass in the meadows and prairies, and were gathering grasses and flowers, and devising the most charming conceits. And I and all the ladies of the Dauphine were

with them. And whenas we played at ball and sang and danced, the Duchess and Madame withdrew apart, and being sat upon the grass began to talk and tell each other their news. That day, perchance, it was Madame who talked. And I heard across the noise of our games and songs, her long sighs, and felt that her tears were flowing. And I had so great pity for my beautiful young princess, sitting apart with no pastime to divert her, that I could scarce play with my gentle companions.

And as we played and sported in the meadows, came by the Dauphin with the Count de Dammartin, Jamet du Tillay, and others of his train, and they looked at us, sneering and mocking amongst themselves. Then said the Dauphin a word which none heard; but, with one bound, the Duchess of Burgundy got upon her feet, and ran as lightly as a cat across the grass towards the Dauphin. Then she drew him apart quickly and brusquely, shrieking violent insults at him. Meantime we and all

present were so amazed that we said no word. And we thought that she did thus from joyance which had led her to this deed. But then we heard her calling out even louder, and saying—

'And that creature has better linen and better plate than Madame; has better hangings to her bed, better tapestry, better rings, better jewels, everything better! Oh, cruel and wicked prince! Most horrible and detestable husband! Thou art then thoroughly befooled, since thou preferrest that rubbish to the real pearl of this kingdom?'

'Hold thy tongue, madwoman!' said Monseigneur, shrugging his shoulders.

But she went on.

'Knave!' quoth she; 'assassin! coward!' and a thousand other evil names, of which I cannot remember other than: 'Monster! traitor! heretic!'

And standing up high as she could, she succeeded, small as she was, in hitting the cheek of Monseigneur. And with the

blow her rage vanished. She became quite calm, and threw herself on the ground weeping.

Now the Dauphine, who all this while had stood apart, seeing her friend so troubled, came towards her. And as she went, the wind took from her hands the paper she was holding, and threw it at the feet of Monseigneur. He, stooping, picked it up, and said, half mocking, half otherwise—

'Let us read the love-letters of Madame!' and looked at the paper, where were the verses that follow—

'In the sea of sorrows deep,
There where dolent hearts do steep,
I die, I weep!
No more am I or fresh or fair,
And would to God that dead I were,
Than in such languor, here to sleep,
To die, to weep,
In the sea of sorrows deep!'

The which verses he read aloud with singular displeasure and prejudice, and then said—

'See there, what a beautiful rhymster is she who will be Queen of France! By God! I shall put a stop to all these follies some day, and then things will go far better than they do now! Now, come hither, Madame,' he said (and reached forth his hand to the Duchess of Burgundy). 'You and I have not quarrelled. Console yourself, Madame: to talk nonsense and bear children is the act alike of woman and princess. Had I a wife like you, by the Risen Christ, I should not pursue other women after the fashion of your husband . . . but my father married me to his liking, to a barren minstrel!'

V

After these strange things, the Dauphin went away from the Court with the Count de Dammartin, and others of his train; but left in his stead Jamet du Tillay, who watched all that passed and made it known to his master. And it was said by some

that the Dauphin was never so constant at the Court, whenas he was a hundred leagues away. He wotted all and suspected more; for he was the most double-faced man on earth, and his dissimulation was so marvellous, that during the eight years he was in Savoy, he seemed to me to be more to be feared than ever, and I always doubted his return for the morrow. For never was there a prince so strange nor so secret, being as hidden in his conduct as imprudent in his words.

Now, from the time of the departure of my said Lord the Dauphin, Madame fell into a state of languor. She was pitiful to see, her heart troubled, her wits a-wandering, roaming from room to room all day long. For time passed and brought no tidings of Monseigneur. Now one morning Madame called me and bade me attend her on foot on a pilgrimage to the church of Our Lady of the Thorn. It began to rain hard, whereby I deemed I should be excused; but it nought availed me, and we

hasted to the said church, the which is several miles from Sarry. And when we were come thither, Madame tarried a great while, all wet as she was, saying prayers and orisons before the altar of the Virgin. And as we came back the sun shone, and it was very hot; and Madame said: 'See, Perette, it is a sign; now I wot Our Lady grants my prayer!'

But neither letters nor news of Monseigneur came to Sarry. The winter began, and Madame was ill from fever and restlessness. And most part of the time she lay on a little couch near the fire, in her chamber. Now it befell once, towards the close of day, she was diverting herself by composing ballads and rondels. And I, sitting on a settle which was under the chimney-mantel, beheld the fair face and gracious bearing of my said lady, and could not sufficiently marvel that one so fair and sweet, loved and yet was forsaken.

Now, as I sat in my corner, there came into the chamber Messire Jean d'Estoute-

ville, lord of Blainville and de Torcy, and the old Viscount de Blosseville, still in love with Madame Valentine of Milan, dead forty years agone. I rejoiced to see them thus nigh, for both were great poets, and I knew many of their songs by heart.

Monsieur de Blainville sat down on the edge of the couch of Madame, and Monsieur de Blosseville in a high carved chair anigh the fire. I remained quietly on my bench, for the Dauphine had several of her women about her. And I was weary with the day's doings, not being accustomed to this Court life, where folk came and went all day, and danced and wrote poetry all night. So it happened that, despite the singular joyance and ease I had in such distinguished company, my eyes closed in sleep.

When I awoke, the torches and candles were not yet lighted, and the hall was all dark, save for a great fire on the hearth. And the women of the Dauphine were in the little chamber next door, preparing her

bed for the night. But by the glimmer of the flames I saw Madame, sitting up, smiling and lively ; and saw likewise Monsieur de Blainville, who was still leaning on the couch of my said lady. And Monsieur de Blosseville, asleep in his high chair, was nodding his white head, and the shadow on the wall made me laugh.

And Madame la Dauphine, who heard me laugh, turned quickly towards me and said—

'Hey, Perette! come hither, for we speak of things of your understanding. Here is Monsieur de Blainville who tells us that the Rondel Sangle of Guillaume d'Amiens is more beautiful than our best rondels!'

I rubbed my eyes and forced myself to understand, and saw Monsieur de Blainville leaning towards Madame, who hummed—

> 'I will ask counsel of my lady,
> For she will give me answer meet,'

when the door opened with a crash, and

there came in Messire Regnault, the Master of the Ceremonies, with Messire Jamet du Tillay, who held up a candle high in his hand, and looked straight at Madame. And whenas he saw her on the couch, and at her side Monsieur de Blainville leaning on his elbow, the said Jamet turned quickly, and went from the hall, disputing aloud with the said Messire Regnault.

Then Madame called to me.

'Run swiftly, Perette, run after them! Hearken what that courteous du Tillay says of us!'

And without thinking if it was well or ill, I ran after them and heard my said Lord Jamet du Tillay, who said to Messire Regnault that there were neither torches nor candles lighted in the chamber of Madame, and that it was a most ribald scene. And Messire Regnault made wise and sensible answer. But the said Jamet cried out louder—

'I tell you it shamed me, and still shames

me! Did you not see that lady there? She has the manners of a courtesan rather than a great lady!'

And Messire Regnault, who pleaded for Madame, made reply that she was sick.

'They are her lovers, I tell you. She is sick with love—she is sick with love and fancies. It would be honour and blessing for this country if she were dead!'

Then behind the door saw Prégente, who had heard all. And, out of ill-will to Jamet, she went back to the Dauphine, and made known unto her all his words.

VI

Now, the said Jamet went forthwith from the Court to the place where the Dauphin was hid, and told him all that he wotted or suspected on the count of Madame.

And wot not what Monseigneur wrote of it to his wife, but wot well that from

the hour she received his letter, Madame fell into very grievous sickness.

She took no more pleasure in life, sat the livelong day on her couch, looking at her hands, shaking her head, and sighing from time to time.

Now one day when I saw her sitting thus, pensive, in the midst of her court, I asked her what ailed her, and wherefore she was not of better cheer, and said unto her that she should not grieve thus.

But she made answer—

'Ah! Perette! it is well that I should be melancholy and grieve over the words which have been said of me! For it would be impossible to speak more evil of any woman in France than hath been spoken of me!'

Now I wotted not what these words were, whether they were those I had overheard Jamet say, or those which had been written in the letter of Monseigneur.

But I said fearfully—

'Peradventure they are but sayings that have been repeated?'

'You speak very lightly,' she said.

And she shook her head all dolent and ireful. Then, for a time, she said nothing more.

But towards the hour of vespers, she opened her eyes wide, and a spasm seized her. She sat up and called aloud—

'Ah, Jamet! Jamet! You have accomplished your purpose! If I die, it is through you, and the kind words you have said of me, without cause or reason.'

Then my said lady lifted her hands and struck herself on the breast and the heart, saying these words—

'I take God to witness, on my soul, on the sacrament of my baptism, may I die eternally, if it is not true!—that I have never wronged Monseigneur!'

And spoke with great courage, dolent and wrathful, saying: 'Hey, Louis! Ha, Louis!' until she fell swooning into my arms.

The eyes of all those present were filled with tears. And the old seneschal of Poitou, who was there, went from the chamber much grieved and dolent, saying—

'It is sad to see the pain and ire suffered by this lady!'

Now, in the doorway he saw the said Jamet du Tillay. Then my said lord the seneschal looked at him boldly, and said—

'Ha! false and cruel villain! she dies through thee!'

VII

After these events the fever fell more grievously upon Madame. She lay quietly in her bed, not stirring; but for hours she talked, talked, talked, and always of her own country and her youth.

And she said—

'My father, your songs are very beautiful; in our kingdom there is no greater poet than the King. I too, my father,

will write songs. But, to make myself more beloved by my handsome husband, I will write them in his own tongue.'

And she began to sing—

'In the fort of heaviness,
Chained with fetters that oppress,
I am captive day by day.
Listen; it is truth I say,
Speaking of my great distress.'

And again—

'How long would Time's glass turn its sand
Whilst I should tell my woes and tears?
Till lands are seas and seas are land,
Or at the least full eighty years.'

Then she fell back on the bed as one dead.

But, twenty minutes later, she recovered her speech, and it was of Maître Alain Chartier, the Virgil of our day, who, long while ago, had gone yonder to the kingdom of Scotland, to the father of the Dauphine.

'Pah!' she said, 'how ugly he is! sleeping thus in the sun, all unshaven at mid-

day! Never have I seen one so awkward. . . . And nevertheless out of this dear mouth have come forth many beautiful words, and much virtuous wisdom!'

Then she took her own hand, lying on the quilt, carried it to her lips and kissed it. And when she had kissed it once with singular grace and ceremony, she began hastily to kiss it passionately, sobbing the name of Monseigneur.

But a fresh access of delirium turned her thoughts.

'Jamet! Jamet!' she cried. 'Never have I done that which you put upon me—not even have I thought of it! Ah! I fear you! Ah! I hate you! . . . My ladies, do not try to console me! A kiss from Maître Alain Chartier has lost me the love of Monseigneur. . . . Ah! I am lost—lost—lost!'

* * * * *

After a long while she looked at me with her clear shining eyes, and said in a very distinct voice—

'Almost I rue having come to this fair country of France. . . .'

Then she sighed.

'Were it not for my love!'

VIII

Now we, who watched her, had but one hope. For we wotted well that long ere the sickness of the said Dauphine, the King had sent ambassadors to the King of Scotland, praying him to send his younger daughters in order to marry them according to his will and good pleasure. And every day we hoped for the coming of the two princesses, thinking that the sight of their faces might restore reason to Madame. And we wotted that these said princesses journeyed towards the country of France, but were detained by many inconveniences and dangerous seas. Now were we seized with great fear that, if they did not ere long arrive, they would find Madame cold in her grave.

And they delayed too long; for late on the Monday, we looked at the Dauphine, and knew that passing of her spirit was at hand.

Now we sent for her confessor; and he anointed her for the last sacrament. And, whilst they sang Mass in her chamber, there came Marguerite de Salignac and said out loud to the father confessor—

'Madame should be made to pardon Jamet.'

And he made answer—

'You come too late, my damsel; Madame has already pardoned all.'

But she, lying stiff in her bed as though dead, said—

'Nay!'

Now the said father confessor said to her—

'Save your grace, Madame! you have pardoned him.'

And she—

'Nay!'

Then he replied—

'You have pardoned him, for in your prayer you have required of God to pardon you, as you pardon others.'

And Madame reiterated—

'Nay!'

Then the father raising his arms—

'Woman, God will pardon you in the measure you pardon others!'

And she, quickly—

'He is the one man in the world I ought to hate!'

And my said father made answer—

'Jesus Christ forgave.'

And she—

'I swear, on my soul, that I have never done wrong to my lord!'

And he—

'Madame, Jesus Christ forgave.'

Then we, and all others who were there present, knelt down around the bed, weeping and praying her out of mercy to her soul to pardon the said Jamet du Tillay.

And she lay on her bed with clenched teeth as though dead.

But at last, as if weary, she took in her hands a Book of Hours, the which she had on her marriage, and in this book was a picture of Monseigneur le Dauphin. Now she looked at it awhile, and said—

'I pardon him then, and with all my heart!'

But it is only now I remember that Madame never named him whom she pardoned. So it is always on my mind that it was not Jamet, but Monseigneur she forgave. But, as to this, I can say nothing for surety.

And anon my said lady passed into her death agony. And as we tried to soothe her, she turned her head on the pillow and said—

'A fig for life! Do not speak of it any more!'

Thereupon she lost consciousness, then her spirit parted from her body.

IX

Now it came to pass that our Sovereign Lady the Queen, from the grief and dolor she had at the sickness and death of my said lady the Dauphine, fell ill. And we feared it might be serious, seeing she was in delicate health. And as she had with her at Sarry but a small Court, several of the ladies of the late Dauphine went to tend her. Others, who had kept vigil all night, lay down to rest. Thus it happened that the day after the death of my said lady, I was alone watching her between three in the afternoon and curfew bell.

And whilst I was alone there, praying in love and terror for her soul, the door opened, and came in Monseigneur, booted and spurred. He saw me not for the black curtains we had draped round the bed of Madame. Likewise he did not look that side, but drew away as if fearful of something unclean. And he went to the chest, where it was the wont of

Madame to keep her papers, and broke the lock with his poignard. Then he began to forage, and look amongst these said papers, as one who seeks something touching his honour, and little by little the thought came to my mind, that he was looking for letters; now I knew that in this chest there was naught save his own letters and the ballads of Madame. He sought a long time, with much ill-will and melancholy, but found naught save a packet containing the letters of his youth —with that last letter which had made my dead lady weep so bitterly. Now, with great suspicion, Monseigneur untied the ribbon that bound them, but when he recognized the contents for that they were, got up with singular impatience, and threw the whole on to the hearth, where, despite the season, there burned a great wood fire, perfumed with healthful herbs and incense. And then he took up in great armfuls the ballads and rondels of Madame, which were all in the said chest, and threw them

on to the fire. And as the flames seized them, he stood there on the hearth, his arms crossed, smiling. He watched them burning one by one. And I likewise, in my corner, saw the long beautiful papers writhing and twisting in the flames; and saw, between my tears, here and there, a word very large and distinct in the fire-light. I read—

Toil . . .
Weariness . . .
Love . . .
Sadness . . .

And, at last, in a great jet of flame, a whole line—

'There is nothing truer than death.'

It was the beginning of a rondel.

Then the flames went out, gorged with their prey, the fire itself buried and stifled by the fragments. And it seemed for a moment that the soul of Madame was likewise a dead thing, grey and dusty, like the ashes on the hearth, like the fair body I watched.

And, at this thought, I prayed to God more earnestly than before.

X

Monseigneur, having destroyed all that remained to him of his wife, prepared to quit her chamber, without even uttering a prayer for her soul. But the fire in going out had left the room in darkness, save for the candles burning at the head and feet of Madame. So it happened that Monseigneur did not at once find the door, hid behind the black curtains, and went some time knocking himself against the furniture, swearing and praying. And my heart almost ceased to beat, so fearful was I that he would see me by the light of the candles. But at this moment the door opened a second time, and there came in the seneschal of Poitou and Messire Regnault, with several of the ladies of the Dauphine, accompanying two weeping maidens. And one of them had the long

neck and the same walk as Madame. By this I knew them for her younger sisters, come at last and from far, to find their sister and protectress dead, to live as she had done in a foreign land, there to marry, to write ballads, and break their hearts.

THE COUNTESS OF DAMMARTIN

TO

MM. CIMBER ET DANJOU

THE COUNTESS OF DAMMARTIN

I

Dammartin, 1464.

TWILIGHT was slowly falling, like fine rain, across the branches of the orchard, where the last apples still glistened red at the end of their invisible stalks. Beneath them on the pathway, something shone as brightly as they: it was golden embroidery and fiery balas rubies.

A woman was painfully advancing through the darkness on the muddy road. All that could be discerned of her, was the weight and length of her stiff heavy velvet mantle, richly embroidered with precious stones; her faltering steps, and in her arms an undefined burden over which she bent. It could be seen from something in the tenderly awkward manner of her walk that she had hitherto always had pages to hold up her heavy

train, and that it was the first time she had carried her child herself.

It was pitiful to see the difficulty she had in walking, for at every step the thick folds of her gown and cloak slipped out of her numbed hands, and the child wept in her arms, whose feverish clasp embraced him without security. She went on bravely nevertheless towards the mossy roofs of the village, which rose into view, low and green, at the end of the orchard. Through several windows there already shone a glow of fire or a gleam of candle. At last she reached them, and, passing through a little garden, knocked cautiously at the first door.

'Who is there?' cried a sharp voice.

The young dame opened the door. The oaken fagot on the hearth awoke all the fires of the jewels, and softly irradiated her tall slender figure, her fair face, and the child she held in her arms.

'I am the Countess of Dammartin. King Louis' soldiers have turned me out

of my Castle; my husband has fled. I have no longer anywhere to sleep nor aught to eat. Make room for me in your house.'

The wrinkled face of the old woman flashed with hatred and derision.

'Ha!' said she, 'it is you, my lady? It makes me young again to see you thus!'

'What have I done to you?' said the Countess, drawing back.

'What have you done to me? . . . I had a lovely daughter, about thine own age, who went into service at the Castle. She was beautiful, madam, more beautiful than you are. Your husband perceived it and ruined her. And you turned her out at night, in the snow on to the high-roads, with her child at her breast, as you are now turned out with your child in your arms. Die then as she did!'

Large tears rolled down the frozen cheeks of the Countess. She did not know that she had been so cruel of yore.

She shut the door, and found herself again out in the night, where the child began its frightened wail once more.

She dragged herself as far as the next cottage.

'Who is that begging?' said the rough voice of a man. 'Come in, there is always a cup of milk and a seat by the fire for the poor, here.'

But when he saw the splendid cloak flashing with precious stones—

'Begone!' he cried, 'begone, woman! The charity of the poor is not for the like of you. Good King Louis did well to turn you out of your house, shelterless in the winter, and treat you as you treated us! . . . Yes, I saw my old father dying in a ditch, when you turned us out of our cottage, because you wanted our garden for thy rosary. The cold night rain trickled from the forehead of my dying father; may it fall as cold and as heavy on your brow!'

He rose as he spoke, and now that he

was silent he advanced rapidly towards her, with his hand outspread as if to strike her on the face. The poor woman fled, tottering and stumbling over the folds of her long gown, distracted by fear, and by the strange fact that she who had always been worshipped like some sacred thing, should at length find herself despised and looked upon as wicked. She fled afar off, without daring to stop, and at last found herself at the entrance of the forest, where it was quite dark. She had never been out at night, alone in the open country; and she was afraid. Far away, in the forest, was not that the roaring of wild beasts which she heard? And would the wolves and the bears on whom her husband had made such war, have more pity on her than her own vassals? Her large light eyes slowly filled with tears, for she saw herself rejected by men, and abandoned to the beasts; and she was surprised to discover, that she had no claim on the pity of either.

Meanwhile, the child still cried, for he was hungry. He was a great boy of eighteen months, whose mother had never nursed him. Hearing him cry thus, she felt as it were some new thing awaken in her heart. And she held him to her breast and tried to feed him. But she could not, and the child sobbed with rage. Then she saw, on the outskirts of the forest, the little hut of a charcoal burner. She knocked at the door ; but none answered ; she went in, and saw on the ground a young man and a young woman, dead, buried in each other's arms. Near them lay an empty pitcher. And as they were horribly thin, she divined that they had died of hunger, and remembered that she had been told there was a famine in the country, and that there were folk that died thus. . . . .

She shut the door gently and went away, and the mute reproach of the dead lovers weighed so heavily on her heart that she scarce heard the wailing of her child. In

every ditch she thought she saw the dying old man; the ruined girl wandered in all the fields; but always close to her, at her feet, lay the lovers dead of hunger, and it seemed to her that at every step she set her foot upon their frozen hearts.

Nevertheless, despite all these spectres, she always returned upon her footsteps, and still dragged herself towards the village, for the sake of her child, thinking that if some good woman would receive him and rear him with her own, it mattered little what became of herself. But at last, one of her little shoes getting lost in the mud, she hobbled on a few steps, and then, worn out, sank down on a heap of stones at the roadside.

And as she lay there, the dying child in her arms, she heard the voice of a man singing afar off. Then she remembered some sorry tales that she had heard told at the Castle by the lords who laughed to themselves, whilst the ladies blushed. She got up, terrified of men, and ready to fly to

the beasts. But her poor feet were too swollen, and she fell back again on the stones.

The voice ceased however, and naught moved in the silence of the infinite night. She was afraid again, afraid that no one would come. But the voice rose anew, nearer, and the heart of the young dame leapt for joy, for, in her desolation, every human being seemed to her an aid.

'Ah!' she cried, 'for the love of Holy Mary, give me alms!'

She saw two people, one of whom held a lantern in his hand, advancing towards her. They were another man and woman, but these two were living, and of ripe age. And as the man raised the lantern to see who was addressing him, the woman cried—

'Eh! it is the Countess of Dammartin who sleeps in the open air to-night! I have often seen you in a carriage, when I was plunging through the mud, but now we are equal, as though we stood before

God. Ask for alms again, my lovely lady.'

'Of your charity!' repeated the Countess very humbly.

Then the other burst into rude laughter.

'It is good though to hear you begging and to refuse you alms!'

'What have I done to you of yore' asked Jeanne (that was the name of the Countess)—'what have I done to you?'

Her voice trembled. She searched her memory for some forgotten crime she might have committed. And the woman laughed again, a hard ferocious laugh.

'You were rich and we were poor! Is not that enough, tell me? Is not that enough?'

Meanwhile the man looked at Jeanne, and his eye kindled whilst an evil smile played about his coarse lips. Putting his wife aside, he put his arm round the Countess, and she felt his drunken breath in her face.

'She is pretty all the same!' said he;

and as the young woman, chilled with fear, hid her face against her child, he tried to lift it with his rough hands, and was going to put his lips to hers. But his wife, jealous, tore him away, reviling him. As she did so, she saw on the shoulder of Jeanne the great clasp of her cloak, all of gold and rubies, which shone in the flickering light of the lantern.

'Here is something worth more than any kisses!' she cried, and she tore the clasp off the cloak with such brutal force that the Countess fell like one dead on the heap of stones. When she opened her eyes, she saw the two beggars going away arm in arm, singing, laughing, and reeling along together.

A heavy sigh escaped her; for hope was dead within her heart.

Suddenly, the voice of a man asked from the road—

'Who are you, crying under the hedge?'

Jeanne, terrified, made no reply.

The man drew near. 'What art thou doing?' said he.

And she saw through the obscurity of the night, a thick-set man, with his face hidden by a fair beard. His voice was so gentle and frank that she gathered confidence.

'My child is dying,' she said.

'Come with me,' replied the man. And, seeing she hesitated—'Fear naught. I am Antoine the Strong, one of the workmen of the Count of Dammartin. I am an honest man, and, by the soul of my mother, you have naught to fear from me. You will find in my hut, fire, bread, milk, and a good bed of fern.'

Jeanne said naught.

'Come,' said he, and held out his hand to her.

She said—

'I cannot, I am too tired.'

Then he bore her away in his arms, far into the night, across the fields, until they came at last to a little hut, made of mud

and the trunks of trees, very small and very lowly placed on the ground in a corner of the field like the nest of a lark. He went in and laid down his burden on the heap of bracken which served him for a bed. He knew by the silence of the young dame, and the inertia of her body, that she had fainted. Meanwhile the sick child still went on crying.

Antoine had not yet seen the face of the woman whom he had carried across the wood in this way, for the moon had gone behind the clouds. When he had lighted the fagots on the hearth, he saw that she was young, slender, and sadly beautiful. To see her thus, she looked like a sleeping Madonna, with her pale golden hair spread out on the faded fern, and her great cloak stiff with precious stones, hiding all save the fair child, pressed to her bosom. Antoine gazed upon her as a most sweet and ephemeral vision. Suddenly, he recognized the Countess of Dammartin, the wife of his master, and this seemed to him

still more strange. But as the child went on crying, he ventured to take it in his arms, and wrapping it in his smock-frock, he took it near the fire and gave it a bowl of hot milk.

The child ceased crying, and the mother opened her eyes, which seemed to say, 'Where am I?' and then were reassured. She looked at the child eating, she looked long at the man sitting beside the hearth with the child on his knees. Then her glance grew troubled, and in an imploring voice she said—

'Do not send me away!'

Antoine got up.

'Madam, thirty years ago, when I was still a lad, I fought before Paris, under the Count of Dammartin, in the army of the glorious Maid, Joan of Arc. . . . . I am his liegeman for evermore.'

Jeanne smiled. It was sweet to feel that there were glorious things in their past, and not only cruelty and meanness. And she understood at this moment what

the souls of the dead feel when before the throne of God they hear, with boundless astonishment, the good and evil which they have done in their lives.

II

Antoine came and went about the hut. The Countess, seated on a bench by the fire, leant against the wall and watched her child playing.

She slowly dipped the black bread into the bowl of milk. The heat of the fire penetrated to her skin. She felt happy in no longer being cold, nor hungry, nor frightened, nor above all having the terrible grief of seeing her child dying in her arms. She hardly perceived the roughness of her shelter. It was Antoine who grieved thereover. There was nothing in the dwelling save the bed of ferns, and a chest which likewise served as a table, a shelf against the wall bearing some rough dishes, and lastly the seat beside the hearth, where

the Countess was sitting. Antoine noticed all this for the first time, and it all seemed to him hard, squalid, and barbarous. Alas! he could do naught thereunto. But as his eyes fell on the heap of ferns, a sweet solemn thought came to his mind. He opened the chest, and drew from it a coarse cotton sheet. There was but one therein, for the other had been used as a shroud for his mother; and this one, reserved for his own winding-sheet, still kept in its scented folds a few sprigs of lavender, which she must have placed there in some long-past summer.

He gathered up the fallen sprigs of flowers, and put them into the coffer. Then, he spread the sheet over the ferns, for he well understood that this divine and delicate creature could not sleep as he did, without sheets or coverlet. As a bed-quilt, there was only his smock-frock: he spread that likewise upon the bed. Then he went out and filled the pitcher with fresh water. Afterwards he lay down on

the threshold, like a faithful dog who guards his master.

All this Jeanne accepted as due service. And she slept soundly on her rustic couch. But Antoine watched over her, and his hard workman's body became suddenly sensitive by dint of thinking what the Countess must suffer from the sharp points and hardness of the ferns. He remembered having heard said that the rich slept on beds of down. On the morrow, he thought, I will go into the forest, and kill the King's birds for her food, and from their feathers I will make her a bed. Thus, through a thousand daring and dangerous projects, he spent a wakeful night. Then, as soon as the dawn came, he rose to spread snares for the birds.

Jeanne did not awake till late. Beside her, on the bench, she found a handful of late meadow daisies, some black bread and a jug of milk. The day passed slowly; she stayed alone with her child, alone in the field which skirted the forest. When

Antoine came in, he found her still sitting on the still unmade bed, weaving a daisy chain.

And in the evening, as the day before, he relighted the fire, made the bed, drew the water, cut the wood, prepared the meal, and went out to sleep in the freshness of the night. And for long days, every day, things befell thus.

And the winter began again for the second time.

III

The livelong day Antoine was away in the fields which he tilled. Jeanne stayed alone with her child. As she knew not how to sew, nor to cook, nor to wash the dishes, nor to do aught the women of the poorer classes can do, her clothes fell into disrepair, and the hut remained as rough and barbarous as ever. And, as she had neither book nor lute, nor page nor palfrey there, her days were long, albeit she

killed time the best she could by telling her child tales of the 'Four Sons of Aymon' and the 'Romaunt of the Rose.' And sometimes she made rondels and ballads; for, in her early youth, she had been maid of honour to the Dauphine Marguerite, who had taught her that gentle art.

IV

It was a November day. Jeanne and her child stayed in the hut, and the child played alone that day.

The Countess sat by the hearth, her chin resting on her hand.

She saw as pictures in the fire, all the beautiful dead past, and scarce heard the long story the child was babbling at her knees. Nothing is ever so beautiful as the past, and sadly the Countess evoked it from the flames.

And as she dreamt thus, a fanfare of clarions sounded through the wind and sun. Jeanne raised her head: was it still

part of her dream? But the child got up, and ran to the door, the noble child, who knew not fear. Wrapping herself and him in the faded cloak, they stood on the threshold together. Doubtless it was a royal hunt! The Countess resolved, if it was so, to throw herself at the feet of the King and ask for pardon for her husband.

As she sought for words that would touch him, the child uttered a cry of joy, and behold a cavalcade came riding gaily out of the wood, beautiful as the procession of the Magi. And the fifes and the clarions and trumpet blasts which sounded. In front walked the priests in their golden chasubles, singing the *Te Deum.* The standard of France, pierced by arrows, floated behind their heads.

'But,' said the Countess to herself, 'it is not thus that folk go a-hunting!'

Then she saw a second flag, which bore the blazon of her husband.

The Count of Dammartin, restored to his rights, having made a solemn proces-

sion to the altar of the Virgin in the village, had come to seek his wife and son in the hut of his vassal.

Great was the joy of Jeanne at leaving the dismal hut. And when the arms of her husband enfolded her—

'Oh! my beloved,' she cried, 'you take me away from here as our Lord Jesus Christ takes souls out of purgatory!'

V

When Antoine came back towards nightfall, he found the hut empty.

'They are belated in the wood,' he said to himself, and he took his lantern and went to seek them. But he sought an hour or two in vain. When he came back and found the hut still empty and silent, a great sadness took possession of him. And when he went to the chest to get a fresh candle for his lantern, he saw something shining. It was a great diamond ring, with the seal of the Count.

No smile from my lady, no babble of the little lord, naught save those cold stones. His hut seemed very empty.

One day, he found in a chink in the wall, some long silky hair ; he recognized the golden curls of the child. With tears in his eyes, he put them into the chest where he kept his mother's lavender.

As for the ring of the Count, being afraid of thieves, he gave it to the shrine of the Virgin at Dammartin. It was only the ring of his master. Of the Countess Jeanne there was left him—nothing.

THE WIFE OF LUDOVIC THE MOOR

TO

MESSER MARIN SANUDO

THE WIFE OF LUDOVIC THE MOOR

Milan, 1496.

I KNEW her as one can know a person of whom one has heard much, but never seen. She had been described to me as a haughty, ambitious woman, devoured by a passion for power. I knew that she it was who had caused the nephew of her husband, the handsome Giangaleazzo, too much beloved of the people, to be assassinated. I knew that she it was who invoked the invasion of Italy by the French. I knew her as some young and lovely Lady Macbeth of Lombardy, who accepted smiling the homage of so much crime, since the result was the placing of the crown of Milan on her charming head. I recognized in her, with a shudder, the exquisite and sinister type of Luini's Daughter of Herodias. And yet, I saw that she had been much beloved in her lifetime,

and long mourned for in her tomb. There are such heartless sirens, who receive a loyal love with the same hands that seize a blood-stained treasure, and I no longer marvelled as I read the fair pages in which old Marin Sanudo loses a little of his diplomate's impassibility in writing the news of her death.

'News of the Month, January 1496.'

'How in the Castle of Milan, on the third day of the month, the Duchess Beatrice, wife of Ludovic, the reigning Duke, and daughter of the Duke of Ferrara, gave birth to a dead child. She died herself five hours later. And when the Duke heard of her death, marvellously he mourned and deplored the loss of his wife. And he kept great mourning in one chamber with lighted candles and closed shutters. And to wit as I have seen in a letter that the said Duchess died the second day of the month of January at six

o'clock in the evening, and the selfsame day she had driven gaily in a coach through the town of Milan, and had danced at the Castle till two o'clock after mid-day. And dying, she left two children, Maximilian, who is Count of Pavia, and Sforza, aged three years. And the Duke Ludovic, for the great love he had for his wife, knew not how to endure her death, for very dearly did he love her, and said that he cared nothing more for his children, nor for the State, nor for aught on earth. And heart and life anigh left him. And he kept for greater grief in a chamber all hung with black cloth, and thus he kept for the space of fifteen days. And on the self-same night of the death of the Duchess, the walls of her garden fell in ruins, without either wind or earthquake, and from this there were some who predicted great disaster.'

The blood-cemented walls of the ducal garden were not rebuilt, and a few years after the death of Beatrice, her

husband left beautiful Milan, where she had danced so gaily, for ever; perhaps in his prison at Loches, he most regretted the tomb of Beatrice. I went to see this celebrated tomb, the adornment of the Certosa of Pavia, and whilst the wretched carriage dragged through the mud of the Lombard country, I forgot, as much as I could, the dulness of the road and the snowy weather, in thinking of all the Sforzas and Viscontis who exercised such fascination over me from beyond the grave. And, amidst this train of tragic shadows, the least sympathetic, the most unpardoned, was always the Duchess Beatrice.

Through the ill-fitting window of the carriage, whitened by frost, I could barely see the monotonous landscape. Nothing was visible but brown swamps, rice plantations whose vivid green was splashed with water, and across this desolate country the never-ending raised road with a canal on each side. Suddenly the

carriage stopped in the midst of the fields: to the right there rose an enormous half-Moorish building, composed of cupolas, spires, and minarets in beautiful rose-red brick, terra-cotta, and yellow marble. This was the Certosa.

The Wife of Ludovic the Moor.

Had I been less tired, and the weather finer, I should have appreciated the great court of the monastery and the strange *façade*, as fantastic as a Midsummer Night's Dream. Nothing could be more unexpected than this decoration, enlivened by Roman Emperors, knights paladin, eagles bearing kneeling angels on their immense pinions, young sirens suckling their supernatural children, hippogriffs, and the prophets of Israel. But I was alone and sad. I went, feeling rather cross, through the enormous icy halls of the Certosa, spoilt as much as possible by that fatal XVIIth century, which has spoilt so many things. . . And here I stood before the tomb Duke Ludovic had caused to be sculp-

tured to the memory of his dead young wife.

To think that she is dead, and to think that she is a woman! No! She is a delicious child who, even in sleep, is full of checked vivacity. Her long hair falls in disordered curls, spread over the pillow and on her lovely shoulders, and tiny little crisp curls hide her round infantine forehead. She has an admirable expression of candour—the candour of a child. She is graceful, with that irresistible grace which defies laws. Her eyebrows are scarcely marked; but her closed eyelids, curved like the petals of a thick white flower, are richly fringed. She has the small nose of a child, and this gives her a pathetic *naïveté*. Her cheeks also are rounder than those of a grown-up woman. The Herodias' daughter of Luini would find them entirely wanting in distinction; I find them charming. But about the enchantment of her little chin there is no doubt, nor about her mouth, that still fresh

mouth of a mischievous child feigning slumber, and whose sweet parted lips, smiling despite themselves, seem to say: 'I am not really asleep, you know; I shall spring into your arms without a word of warning; and who will be startled then?'

But the face is nothing. It is the attitude; it is that childish figure, so small and so full of life, so soft, so delicately supple and rounded beneath the sumptuous Court-gown of silk and embroidery, with its long train artistically arranged not to hide or impede the feet—those little feet which only ceased dancing four hours before death, and seem still so ready for the awakening.

This then is the famous Beatrice! Now I understand her, and also the love of Ludovic. 'Thou must have a crown then, my child. . . . Ah, well! what is murder, dishonour, or the ruin of my country to me? Thou wilt never understand aught of these sad things, and it is I

who shall pay for them. Ah! my God, how I thank Thee for Thy gift of an immortal soul, since I can lose it for this child!'

And he lost it.

THE TRUE STORY OF WHITE-ROSE AND THE FAIR SIBYL

TO

MAÎTRE PHILIPPE DE VIGNEULLES

THE TRUE STORY OF WHITE-ROSE AND THE FAIR SIBYL

I

Metz, 1518.

This Sibyl was then one of the fairest young women in the city of Metz; tall, straight, slender, and white as snow. She had a small mouth, a round throat, bright laughing eyes, a small ear set high and hid under her thick hair, the which was yellow like ripe corn waving in the sun. It seemed as if the said Sibyl was a goddess, so fair was she; there was not so fair a woman within the three bishoprics, so folk came from far to see her on feast and market days. And a marvellous thing it was when she went forth to church, dight like a queen, bedecked with many pearls, jewels, and a beautiful neck-chain. For her husband Maître Nicolas was a rich townsman, master of his art, which was that of a goldsmith, and much he loved his young wife Sibyl.

The summer of this said year was fine and hot, and supremely the month of June. And the Eve of St. John there came to our city a young lord, who was duke of the duchy of Suffolk in England. Now this beautiful young man was the rightful heir to the throne of England, and ought rather to be king, it was said, than Red-Rose, who was king. He was yclept White-Rose, and because he had been exiled from his own country, came, after passing from kingdom to kingdom, to seek refuge within the town of Metz.

The day on which he made his entry was a great feast-day in Metz; and all the women watched from their windows White-Rose passing. He was of a verity one of the handsomest, strongest men that it was possible to see, courteous and noble of bearing, with black curling hair, proud blue eyes, and so soft a voice that the sound of it seemed like an organ. Mounted on a white hackney, he rode through our old narrow streets, and the

townsfolk threw flowers and ribbons on his path. But he went sadly as one who dreams, and his beautiful eyes saw far away his lost kingdom.

The True Story of White-Rose and the Fair Sibyl.

Now when he came to the Square of the Fountain, there was the fair Sibyl, returned from the country, where she had been to seek flowers and herbs, as young women do on the Eve of St. John. She wore in her hair a chaplet of wild roses, and in her green robe were gathered up masses of grass and flowers. And when the said White-Rose passed by where she was, she held out to him smiling a handful of grass. And White-Rose raised his eyes, and looked at her a while in silence, as one who sees a celestial vision. Then he reeled in his saddle, and almost fell on the stones of the fountain anigh the fair Sibyl.

II

Whilst White-Rose, King of England, abode in the noble city of Metz, he dwelt with his suite in the palace of Haute-Pierre, hard by Saint Symphorien. And there he caused many ornaments and neck-chains to be fashioned for him by Nicolas, the husband of the fair Sibyl. But it profited him but little, for the goldsmith knew well how to keep his young wife.

Therefore little by little the thought of Sibyl went from the heart of White-Rose. For he daily frequented the society of the other lords of the town; they indulged in many games together, and not the least part of their time was spent in hunting and other sports. Now White-Rose had a steed he dearly loved, and he vaunted that neither in Metz nor for ten leagues around was there its equal for speed. And there was a young esquire, Philippe Dex, who likewise possessed a beautiful steed, which he

dearly prized. In such sort went words betwixt the two lords, that a wager was laid, how they should go amongst friends to race their steeds from the elm at Avigny unto the gate of St. Clement.

Therefore the following Sunday, these two lords, accompanied by several others, rose betimes in the morning, and sallied forth into the meadows to race, as had been agreed. Now the said lord, Philippe Dex, had during these two or three days treated his steed God knows how. I trow White-Rose had done the same; but, of Monseigneur Philippe it was said and certified to me, that he gave his horse no hay at all, and nourished it with white wine only. And he himself mounted his steed without saddle, scarce clothed, in a doublet and without shoes, like a young groom. But White-Rose had a saddle trapped with gold and jewels; and scarce smiled when he saw the attire of his rival. Nevertheless, when the steeds started away, the two ran with such speed that

it seemed as if the earth would melt beneath their feet; and for long the said White-Rose and his steed passed Messire Philippe. Notwithstanding, anigh the entrance of the city, there where there is a little rising in the ground, the steed of White-Rose could do no more, groaned like a man, stumbled in the road, and fell dead. And at that moment Messire Philippe reached the goal.

Then he who was styled White-Rose, seeing himself beaten, the race lost and his fame gone, became marvellously melancholy, beyond all reason, saying that he had killed his best and only friend for naught. He fain would quit the town of Metz and go away to France. Now it befell that three days after, towards the evening hour, the said White-Rose rode with his suite towards the gate of the city to leave it as has been aforesaid. And when he passed the hostel of Maître Nicolas, he raised his head to look up on high. Then he saw at the window the

fair Sibyl, who sang to the melody of a lute, and the song she sang melted into the evening air, more soft than her fair face, and without a word the said White-Rose rode back, followed by his amazed suite, and returned to his palace of Haute-Pierre.

Now in the selfsame month, a little later, Maître Nicolas went to Paris, in France, to fetch beautiful and costly ornaments and jewels for the said Lord White-Rose.

III

Meanwhile the fair Sibyl lived alone at Metz in her hostel with her young servant-maid. And the townsfolk had no suspicion that she had begun to be enamoured of the Duke White-Rose; forasmuch the thing was done secretly, and I trow would never have been known or seen, had it not been for the folly of the said servant-maid—God forgive her!

—who was the cause of many woful and cruel events.

This maid, who was held to be one of the fairest maidens in Metz and good withal, was quite young, simple, and virtuous. She thought night and day of paradise, and talked of naught save saints and visions, and wotted and suspected naught of the loves of her mistress. Now one night—it was very hot—and it was the night of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin—the said young maid fell asleep as she was telling her beads, anigh the window which is in the great hall of the house of Maître Nicolas. And in the middle of the night she awoke and saw a fair young man passing along the said hall, and thought forthwith that she had seen Monseigneur St. Michel.

On the morrow, as she talked with one of her companions, she said to her said companion as if in jest—

'Paradise is not so far off as we deem, for every evening the archangel

of God passes through the hall of my master.'

And the other—

'What is that you tell me?'

Then she related the story of Messire St. Michel. But made the maid promise never to say aught of it, who swore that as long as she lived she would keep it a secret thing. Nevertheless, betwixt one and the other, the thing was quickly known, and all the good women in the street gossiped over the adventure.

Now as women can usually keep naught to themselves, little by little they made it known to their husbands; who for the most part mocked and believed naught thereof. But the servant held to it, and swore that she spoke of a sure and certain matter.

And to tell you how it befell, after some days the maiden consented, with the best faith in the world, to receive in her little chamber (the which was a kind of wardrobe adjoining the great hall) eight of her

friends, a canon of the great church, and several of the merchants in the street.

Now, about an hour after midnight, they were all there in the said chamber, the door a little open, so that they might see the hall. And he who was hid in the house, deeming his hour come, and that all within the house slept, came secretly into the hall, where the light of the moon fell white as day. And when he came nigh the centre of the hall: 'It is he!' cried the servant-maid—'*ora pro nobis!*' and fell into a swoon.

And he who heard the noise of her fall, turned his face towards the little chamber. And forthwith all there recognized him, and first one, then another, cried 'White-Rose! White-Rose!' with such hooting and hissing, that the lady came forth from her chamber, and ran to his assistance. Whereby there was a great scandal and talk in all the city, so much so, that for this deed the said Sibyl fell into the cruel hatred of her neighbours and their wives.

Now, when these things came to the knowledge of the lords and sheriffs of the city, there was much wrath and annoyance. For Maître Nicolas was one of the leading men of Metz, who lived honestly according to his position, and was related to the best men of the city, who greatly wished to aid him. But his wife was born of poor folk; she owed him all, and notwithstanding deceived him with a man from beyond the seas. For these and many other reasons, the kinsfolk of Maître Nicolas banded themselves together against his wife, and went to complain in law before the Council. And it was decided that the Council should take the young woman into their custody until the return of her husband.

But when the day following, which was Sunday, the Judges and Guards went in the morning before the house of Maître Nicolas, in quest of the said Sibyl, to take her, they found the house empty. She

was gone, she and her lute, her rings, and her most beautiful jewels! Then you never heard such an uproar, and naught was talked of in the town save this woman, for none wotted whither she had fled. However, all cried out that she was at the palace of the Haute-Pierre with her lover; whereby the said kinsmen and neighbours of Maître Nicolas, aided by Guards and others, took the palace by assault, and thoroughly ransacked every room and corner; but found no trace of either White-Rose or Sibyl.

Meanwhile time passed, bringing the return of the goldsmith nearer and nearer; and it was not long ere he re-entered the city. As soon as his kinsfolk and neighbours saw him from afar on the road, they went to meet him, wailing much aloud and saying—

'Alas!'

'What is it?' asked the goldsmith, wonder-struck.

And the said neighbours wailed louder than ever, and said—

'Alas! very dear friend, we bring you no good news.'

Then the goldsmith, all white of visage, lighted down from his horse, and came nigh unto them, and sat down upon a milestone at the side of the road, without saying word. And at last—

'I wot not what trouble you have come to announce to me,' said he, 'but my heart tells me that it is on account of Sibyl my wife . . . . She is dead.'

'Hearken well,' said the neighbours, 'it is not that. Still I deem, if God does not aid you, you will have no less grief thereover. . . . Your wife has acted more shamefully and more treacherously towards you than ever woman did, quite contrary to her vows.'

And then they related the loves of Sibyl and White-Rose, and how they were God knew where. And all this while the poor man sat on the milestone, bowed down

like one in whom there is no joy. He was holding in his hands a jewel made in the form of a heart which he was bringing for his wife, and long he turned and twisted it in his fingers, looking earnestly thereat. But he said naught, and seemed not to hear the voice of his neighbours.

After much talking, one of those said neighbours, in speaking of his wife, called her by her name. And at the word 'Sibyl' the goldsmith at last understood the grief and shame which were come upon him; and began to moan like a wounded man, and said—

'Hey, friends! hey, friends! if only we could revive our yesterday! How can I wake myself from this dream, my good friends? For my heart burns at hearing so many evil words spoken of Sibyl, my wife. And I wot well that, could I but see her again, she would tell me that things are not so. Ah! bring Sibyl to me! Let me see my wife again, my good friends. For if you do not arrange for me to see her in

some way or another, I shall die of grief and rage.'

Thus spoke the poor man, and it was most piteous to see and hear him. And we all, who thought him strangely weak and sensitive notwithstanding, comforted him the best we could, by promising that within a short while he should again see her whom he had lost.

V

Nevertheless the days passed and brought no tidings of the lady. And during that week the goldsmith took courage and pride anew, and went several times before the magistrate in order to see his wife again, and went always armed. And on the Friday, the thirteenth day of the month, as the said Maître Nicolas worked at his trade, leaning on his stall, and talking with some of his neighbours, he whom they name White-Rose passed through the Fornerue, on horseback,

followed by his suite, and saw the said Nicolas, the goldsmith.

And he saw likewise that Maître Nicolas menaced him, shaking his head and saying —'Hey, traitor!' Then, without saying a word, White-Rose made sign to his people, who stood aside, and drawing his poignard he threw it with all his strength at the heart of the said Nicolas. But the jeweller wore a leather apron, such as farriers and smiths are wont to wear working at their trade, and the dagger slipping on the polished leather, fell to earth without wounding him in the least. And then White-Rose, seeing that he had missed his stroke, threw his riding-whip after, which was hard and heavy, and would well have killed a man. But the goldsmith, seeing the blow coming, put himself quickly into safety, within the house. And at once White-Rose and his suite decamped and fled full gallop, as if the earth would melt beneath their feet, throwing caltrops in the path. And on

account of these things there was great scandal and great talk in all the city.

And the same day, at evening, the said Maître Nicolas stood in front of the great church, fully armed, his sword on his thigh, and his halberd round his neck, and prayed the folk who kept him company to listen, and related to them all he had suffered in the way of many wrongs from a stranger. And taking off the leather apron he wore, he attached it to his sword in guise of a banner, and cried on the people to follow him before the sheriffs of Metz, that they might answer for this cruelty.

And the people cried — 'Hearken, hearken!' and assembled round the goldsmith, and there were as many as two hundred of the townsfolk of Metz, who made much riot. Then they went all together before the sheriffs of the city. And for this matter the Great Council was hastily assembled.

And when the said Nicolas came into

the room of the Seven Warriors before the sheriffs, he held up his head and said—

'I am Nicolas, a goldsmith, and a well-to-do man, a burgher of this city. Now a man from beyond the seas has taken my wife and other of my goods from me. Therefore, do me justice, ye who are sheriffs of Metz.'

And all the folk who were with him cried out—'Justice! Justice! Death!—Death to the stranger!'

Then, on account of his jeopardy, and the fury of the people, certain lords who then sat in Council sent secretly to the King of England not to come into the town, or anigh the church, for they feared murder and insurrection; and on the road the messengers met the said White-Rose, but at their words he returned quickly with his suite to a manor-house that he had in the parish of Vigneulles. And the said messengers, seeing the way he went, came back and told my lords of the Council

the place where they suspected that Sibyl was hid.

And all this time the goldsmith, standing before the Council, asked and required that justice should be done him, pleading so urgently and in such manner that at half-past ten at night he was still speaking. And when they saw that the hour of midnight approached, and that this man would not budge—seeing likewise that all the townsfolk of Metz were on his side—my said lords the sheriffs promised and ordained that his wife and goods should be restored to him; to wit, that the following day several lords of the Council should be commissioned to go before the said White-Rose and point out to him courteously his faults, and at the same time bring back the said Sibyl and restore her to her husband.

VI

So at early dawn the lords appointed mounted their steeds and went forth into

the country in quest of the fair Sibyl ; and soon after the rising of the sun they were before the manor-house of White-Rose, where they found all a-sleeping. And in the court and in the hall were neither men nor maid-servants, but on all sides silence and sleep. And my said lords sought everywhere, and found naught. And they thought to quit the manor-house, when the youngest of them, who was Messire Philippe Dex, perceived a window high up in the tower. They mounted up the stair all together, without much hope of finding aught, for the tower was old and half in ruins. And it was very high. Then at last they came to a round room quite empty, save for a little straw in the middle covered with more rose-leaves than they had ever seen gathered together. And thereon, clasped in each other's arms, slept Sibyl and White-Rose, clad in every hue and bedecked as if for great and worthy triumph. And, against the freshness of the night, the fair lady had put

her long hair like a cloak over the shoulders of her lover. Now, a little further away in the window there stood a huge peacock half-asleep, and when it saw these lords coming in, it gave marvellously loud harsh screams. But so well slept the two lovers that neither woke at the sound of the peacock's screams, nor at the noise and riot of the lords. And seeing them thus, they seemed so young, so beautiful, and above all so happy, that, albeit all held them to be enemies of the city and of wonderfully evil and pernicious example, there was nevertheless not one who did not feel compassion for their love.

Notwithstanding, the said lords took their swords and struck them three times on the flags with a singular noise and crash of steel. And, forthwith, White-Rose sprang up from the ground, crying! 'St. George for England!' and would have struck a blow at my said lords, for he took the thing for a trap. But they, who were at least ten against one, took

his weapon from him, and made known how they were come on a mission of friendship and humble obedience, and likewise by order of the city, to bring the fair Sibyl back to her husband, and if needful were ready to take her despite White-Rose. And after many words, seeing that all was quite lost, my said lord White-Rose agreed to give her back, albeit quite against his heart and will. For he could do naught else. But she, who did not wish to leave him, threw herself at the feet of these lords, crying—

'My lords, I entreat you to leave me with this man, who is my best friend, and the man I love most in the world! And, for this, if there be any way or manner in the world by which I can do you pleasure, I pray and request you to advise me of it.'

Then she took at great random her rings and her gems, throwing them at the feet of these said lords. But they held her by the arms, and said to her very

gently: 'Come now, fair lady!' and paid no other attention to her words.

And she knew not what to say nor to do, save to weep. For if fine gold, as high as the tower where she was, had been hers, she would full fain have given it in order not to have to go away alone. Then she turned to White-Rose, and they embraced one another, weeping. Nevertheless he gave the lady into the hands of my lords on condition that they would not give her back to Nicolas, her husband, unless he promised that for this act he would neither touch her, nor beat her, nor say a word which might displease her. And the said lords, convinced of the goldsmith's love for his wife, promised and swore and granted his prayer. And then they must say farewell. Thus, to the regret and great despair of the two lovers, the said Sibyl was given into the hands of the lords, and was by them conducted and brought back with great honour within the town of Metz.

Now, clad as she was, all in pink and green and orange, her hair, which seemed like gold, floating over her shoulders, the fair Sibyl made her entry into the city, bareheaded like a bride, surrounded by my said lords; but she had tears in her eyes, and more than once fell into a swoon. And thus she was led to trial, and God knows if at that hour there were any about to see her! And she was interrogated before the judges about many things, to which she readily replied. Then came the husband, and when the lady saw him, she lost all her fine courage anew, hid her face in her hands, and wept so that it was pitiful to hear. But he, who had done so much to get her back, when he saw her thus, grew very white and stern, and from being gentle and melancholy, became in an instant harsh, rude, and very disdainful, cried shame on his wife and her fine clothes, saying—

'Ha, Impudence! Light-o'-Love! Your gallant was generous to you!'

And he jeered at her, laughing and insulting her. Then the judges present pulled him by the sleeve, and told him that he must not receive Sibyl thus, but rather as a pure and glorious wife; they made known to him the manner in which White-Rose had given her back on their given promise and sworn faith that no harm should be done her, or harsh reproach made her. And Nicolas did naught save laugh, and cry—

'Keep her for yourselves, my lords, or else give her to me to work my will upon.'

And there were some who would fain have given her back, but the most part kept to their promise. Then, after much talking, a term and a delay were accorded to the said Nicolas, to wit, fifteen days, to consider the advice of the judges and lords; and during this time, the said Sibyl was put under guard and shut up in the palace, in the room of the Seven Warriors.

VIII

This room of the Council of the Seven Warriors is a great hall, with the history of the Maccabees and the story of Helen of Troy painted on the walls; and there the said Sybil had her bed, and they brought her drink, and good victuals to eat, at the expense of the town, from the Hostel of the Angels. And there she abode for many days, living at as great a cost as would the Papal Nuncio, or the Ambassadors of the Emperor; for the sheriffs did not wish the King of England to be vexed by their doings, and on the other hand they deemed that Master Nicolas would feel more kindly towards his wife in seeing her treated in like manner to a princess. However, the goldsmith showed himself to be a hard, proud man, and was angered that they did not give him back his wife, saying 'that in days of yore, there was a pure maiden emblazoned in the arms of the city, but that the sheriffs now thought to put a

courtesan,' and other strange cruel words, ill-speaking from a husband to his wife.

The True Story of White-Rose and the Fair Sibyl.

During this time the Duke named White-Rose went away to take up his abode at Enery, at the Castle of some lords, his neighbours, in order there to be in mourning and grief; but one day, going a-hunting, he had an adventure, and was surprised by a band of wicked traitors, paid for that purpose by Maître Nicolas, who would ere long have killed him or thrown him into some secret dungeon. Whereby, seeing his jeopardy, the said White-Rose went away to abide in the city of Toul, and left Metz, he and all his folk; and Sibyl, standing at her window the day of his departure, wept sorely.

On the morrow Maître Nicolas, fearing the anger of the townsfolk for this deed of ambush spread for the English Prince, and seeing likewise that his wife was not given back to him, went to make himself a citizen of Thionville, without giving other answer or reason. Then who were

very dolent but the magistrates of Metz. For it profited them but little to have put White-Rose to flight, and lost an honest man, to keep in exchange a poor sinner who had to be feasted at great expense like a lady. For all this time Sibyl was kept in the Hall of the Seven Warriors, and every day had to be given dinner and supper, and wept notwithstanding like any poor wretch.

Then the Council secretly gathered together, and agreed that, since the young woman had no more husband, nor father, nor mother, she must be put into the hands of some good widow, to earn her bread and be a servant-maid in her turn. And on the morrow they freed the said Sibyl, and gave her as servant to an old tallow-chandler, called Mariette, who lived hard by the Holy Cross. But poor Sibyl, who had never in her life done any menial work, wotted not how to help or to please her mistress in aught, and sat all day at the window, dreaming, singing, or gazing

at herself in the mirror. And the old woman, who could do naught for herself on account of her age, got rid of her and hired another servant. Then the said Sibyl was given into the hands of a butcher, her kinsman, a hard, cruel man who made his stick dance on her white shoulders. But this did not make her work harder, and she was as one that would as lief die as live. Then she took courage, and thought night and day if she could not find way of escaping to White-Rose.

IX

Therefore one night, when the moon was bright and the weather fair, for it was fine and hot, she took a sheet she had for her bed, tore it into strips, tied them tightly together, and fastened them to a stick, which stick she put athwart the window-frame. Then, commending her soul to God, she swung herself readily out of the window. But when she was outside

and felt the weight of her body and the little strength she had in her arms, she began to be afraid and would fain have gone back above. Notwithstanding, she took courage; strength came to her, for she saw death before her if she let go her hold, because it was the highest storey of the house, which was a gabled hostel, and one of the most beautiful houses in the Boucherie.

Still she suffered greatly, for she held by her hands only, and had not damped the sheets as she should have done, or fastened them to her waist. And the strips began to crack as if they would break; her hands likewise grew burning, and were torn against the wall in such a manner that blood flowed, and if she had known how to get back she would have gladly done so. And her hands were so wounded and torn that she could not hold on until the end; but, at more than the length of a long lance from the ground, she let go the linen rope, and fell with such violence that she

lay without speaking, the full time of the saying of a psalm.

And when she began to be a little conscious, and to come out of her swoon, she began to scream so very loudly that the whole street re-echoed with her cries, and all the dogs in the neighbourhood awoke and began to bark.

'White-Rose! White-Rose!' she cried, 'you are hurting me. White-Rose! you are killing me badly. What is it that is hurting my ankle? Go away, or take me to our manor-house.'

For the poor woman thought she was at Vigneulles with her lover, and wist not what caused her suffering. And she began to shriek anew as one who had lost all reason. But of a sudden she saw four or five men of the watch, well-armed with cudgels, coming at the sound of her cries; and the poor woman returned to her senses, and was much amazed at her folly.

Then she wished to arise and flee, but her ankle was out of the socket, and she

could not stand upon it to go away, and fell back on the ground, and began to shriek and rave anew. When she came to her senses for the second time, the street was full of people, and she heard the butcher saying to the watchmen—

'She is my servant, who has tried to run away and has broken her ankle. Give her up to me.'

But the watchmen would not give her up, because she had called upon the name of White-Rose; and they deemed there was an affair of the city therein. So they put her on a shutter and carried her to the common prison.

X

Now when the lords and sheriffs of Metz saw the said Sibyl returning in so short a space of time to their charge, they were much displeased and impatient. And there were some of the elders who said that there was no greater pest nor harm in

a city than fair women, and would fain banish her and forbid her the city for ever without recall. Notwithstanding that, the advice of the younger ones was, that her sins should be forgiven her. Thus, by want of mutual understanding, the two parties agreed to leave her for a time in prison.

And at that poor Sibyl was marvellously hopeless, and not so much that the place where she was imprisoned was dark and damp and unhealthy (for it is built inside the arch of the moat, and the water murmurs against it day and night, which is wearisome to hear), but she thought of her friend White-Rose, and that as he knew not where she was, he could not come to her aid. And she could not have escaped, even had she been less well guarded, for much her foot pained her. So she fell sick, and greatly feared to lose her beauty and the love of her gallant.

And meanwhile came the feast of St. Nicolas, and the weather was black, cold,

dull, and hideous. Then the poor woman began to think of her husband, and of all the joy and hope they had always had together at this season, in the time of her integrity. Therefore she sent the judges a letter, asking that she might be given up to her husband, that he might deal with her according to his will.

And the said judges replied forthwith that her husband wanted none of her, but had sent a messenger to Rome in order to arrange his marriage with a young maid of Thionville.

And it was at this time that White-Rose left Toul and went away to France; and Sibyl knew naught thereof. But one day her gaoler, seeing that the said White-Rose was so much in her thoughts that she could not sleep, and that she spent all her time in writing letters to him with a piece of coal, by the light of the fire (for she could not see at all otherwise), and thinking to treat her for her good, said to her—

'You think, fair lady, too much of him who scarce thinks at all of you. For it is long since he left for the country of France.'

Then poor Sibyl said naught, and only wrote and composed more urgently than before. But later, when the said gaoler took her dinner to her, he found her dead within her cell. And it was done in the strangest way in the world. For within this prison there was a window strongly barred with iron bars, to which the poor wretch had hanged herself. And, because she had naught else, she had hanged herself by the strands of her hair—for she had the most beautiful hair in the world; and albeit she was a tall, powerful woman, the tresses were so strong that they held up her weight and strangled her. And thus she was found by the warders of the prison, white and dead in the midst of her splendid hair, the which was like a sunbeam within the window of the cell. Whereby she was dragged through the

streets and thrown into the ditch with thieves and others.

But, as in that year the weather was ill-disposed, and much given to rain, folk murmured, and said that it was because this wretched Sibyl had been put into the quarter of the Christians, of which she was not worthy. Whereby the law had her taken away from that place and buried at the cross-roads as a suicide.

God pardon her misdeeds, and ours likewise!

THE ARCHITECT OF BROU

TO

THE REV. FATHER ROUSSELET

THE ARCHITECT OF BROU

I

Brou-en-Bresse, 1518.

THE work of building the great church of Brou had been going on for twelve years. It was erected by Marguérite of Austria, to the memory of her husband, Philibert the Handsome, killed out hunting at the age of twenty-four. Translated into stone, the anguish of the widow, growing daily colder and calmer, became eternal. And the vast church on the border of the forest was already expanding its leaves, flowers, and the light tendrils of its portal, like branches sprinkled with snow at Christmastide. The *façade* began to open out like a fairy trefoil, rising miraculously in earthy fields to bear witness to the Trinity of God. The visit of the Duchess, who was administering the affairs of state in Flanders, was daily expected; and the artisans of Brou worked with

unusual haste whilst awaiting the arrival of their royal mistress.

II

It was the feast of St. Michael in the year 1518; on that day the architect Colomban did not appear at the church. From five o'clock in the morning the great bell swung to and fro in its wooden tower, and masons and sculptors trooped in from all sides. For the previous evening, it had been decided to work on that day for the benefit of St. Michael, in order to finish the undertaking in time; and the architect was greatly rejoiced at this resolution. At that moment the men were working at the latticed gallery overlooking the great door. In the middle of it stood a still unfinished statue of Saint André, the patron saint of Colomban, who intended him to be throned on the *façade* of his work. All the preceding day the architect had been working out the arms

and hands of the saint, leaning on his cross. The morning come, the workmen waited for him in vain. Wherefore did he desert his much-loved task? At that hour André Colomban was always to be found seated on a block of stone, his parchments spread out on his thin knees, engaged in drawing the plans for the day. The workmen looked at each other with ill-dissimulated impatience. What possesses old father Colomban to go and keep the feast of St. Michael in the woods, like a mere citizen, whilst his workmen are waiting for him in the church? The work had to be stopped for want of plans, and the whole day was lost through his fault.

Towards evening, the master not appearing, they sought him through the whole town of Bourg without discovering aught. They sought him in the log-huts which Colomban himself had constructed for the workmen who lodged around the church. In the neatest of these huts lived a tall, fair, smiling maiden.

'They are seeking thy father, Mariette,' said the workmen.

'He is not in the church?'

'No, he has not been there to-day.'

The maiden thought for a moment.

'He is doubtless with the carters from Pisa. Two loads of unpolished marble arrived last night.'

'Nay,' answered the masons; 'and the carters are asking to be paid, for they want to go back to their own country.'

'It is strange,' said Mariette. But she was much less uneasy than the others, for she knew that men of genius are sometimes singular, and yearn for solitude. 'He will return,' she said. 'Do not be afraid.'

Mariette had such frank, confiding eyes that every one believed what she said. Therefore the workmen went away convinced that at the first stroke of the clock, on the morrow, they would find the architect seated on a block of stone, his large blue eyes dreaming into space.

Nevertheless the days passed sadly and silently without the gay music of the chisel on the stones. The inexplicable flight of Colomban had to be reported to Maître Laurent, the Governor of Brou. The good man, who knew little about art matters, replied, without being greatly moved, that they only had to choose another architect, and appointed a young man, a pupil of the absent master. Philippe Chartres was a very worthy young workman, but he was far from being as clever as André Colomban. He accepted payment on the conditions of the master; and towards the autumn he began his work.

But Philippe was too modest not to feel himself unequal to the task. The result was that every day he spent an hour or two in the hut of Mariette, asking her advice, and begging her to try and remember the designs of her father. Mariette did not know much about them;

but she liked talking to the young master-mason. At this moment, when every one reviled Colomban, the maiden found pleasure in discoursing of him to a sincere and sympathetic friend, who seemed to share her filial veneration. And she said to herself that if heaven had granted her a brother to protect her forsaken lot, she would have wished him alike in all to this good, this excellent young man.

IV

Despite the good advice of Mariette, the church of Philippe Chartres bore but little resemblance to the church of Colomban. Above the beautiful structure, which bore with so light a grace the miraculous flowers of Gothic fantasy, there rose heavily something cold, awkward and uninteresting; an unfortunate imitation of Roman architecture. The workmen lost their spirit before this thankless task; the worthy Philippe himself watched his work

with a disturbed and unquiet eye; but the man who despaired most in the very depths of a heart tortured by vain regrets, was the author and poet of the church—André Colomban himself.

For every night, when the moon lit up fully the unfinished church, and the sombre colony of huts where long since the masons lay sleeping, a pale emaciated man, enveloped in the cloak of a hermit, came and sat on a block of stone before the great door. He sought in his breast a bundle of yellow parchments, which he spread on his knees, looking long at them, comparing one by one the lines of his drawings with the outlines of the church. Then he sighed, and sometimes wept with the silent anguish of the aged.

As the damp cold of winter came on, the gait of the hermit became more and more uncertain, his face more wan, and in his large blue eyes there was seen something glaucous and opaque, like a moonlight reflection. Likewise, towards the

spring, he was obliged to hold the worn parchments of his original drawings quite close to his poor face, whilst his anguish was increased by uncertainty, for, by the light of the mirrored moon, he could scarce distinguish the strange inert mass which, like an evil nightmare, suffocated the efforts of his genius.

One evening, as he was looking at the monstrous edifice, a blessed thought restored his courage, and on a great soft stone, well in view, the architect traced in charcoal a clear distinct plan of the church of his dreams. But when he came back at the end of the month, to his great disappointment, he found nothing changed in the *façade* rising before him. It was higher, that was all. His drawings had not been looked at; or else the night dews had effaced them. 'Great God!' sighed the old man, weeping; 'to think that I can do nothing, and that I am becoming blind!'

At the beginning of March, good Philippe Chartres began to wear an anxious uneasy expression which did not at all suit his open countenance. And it was not that he was more dissatisfied with his *façade;* he was quite resigned about that.

No, it was caused by the annoyance in the workyard; the workmen complained among themselves. Discontent was felt in the air, nay, even general uneasiness. Mariette, who took the worries of Philippe much to heart, was grieved to see her friend so changed, and one day when he found her in tears, she confessed to him that her grief was caused by his not confiding his secrets to her.

'Ah, Mariette!' said the young man, and he looked at her awhile in silence. Then—'And wherefore should not I tell you my secrets? Wherefore should not I ask your advice? I am so lonely, and are not you mine oracle at all times?'

'I am listening to you,' murmured the maiden, blushing.

'Well, Mariette,' continued the master-mason, 'for full a se'nnight I have been much perplexed. Some one, man or spirit, comes at twelve o'clock every day, whilst I am at dinner with the workmen. He goes to all the huts where they work, effaces my drawings and retraces the stones after another design.'

'How insolent!' cried Mariette, with flashing eyes. 'How dare any one touch your beautiful drawings and plans, which are so distinct and beautiful! Oh! it must be some one who is jealous of your genius, Philippe, and your great name. If I could only catch this wicked man!'

Philippe smiled a little, despite his sadness.

'It is true that this annoys and surprises me, for I never know where I am with the building, and whatever measures I take, I can complete nothing. But, Mariette, it is not that which haunts and

tortures me. These lines which are traced on my stones, after a design I have never seen, are weak and wavering, as if done by the hesitating hand of a child. And yet, Mariette, there is something so light and so audacious in their fancies, that they recall . . . Oh, Mariette! in the living world there is only one man who has such a manner . . . Perhaps—and this is what I imagine!—it is the spirit of Colomban who returns to us.'

The maiden trembled in every limb.

'My father! my father!' she sighed, 'if thou returnest, be it from our world, or the next, to think that thou canst return, and not return to me!'

'We must set our minds at rest about this,' pursued Philippe, 'for if it is a spirit, he wishes to tell us something, and if it is a man, whether it is Colomban or another, we must make him listen to reason.'

Mariette looked up.

'We must put some workmen as

sentinels,' she said, 'whilst the others go to dinner as usual . . . and when he comes, they must seize him gently, oh! very gently, without doing him any hurt or ill—and bring—bring him here!' she ended, sobbing.

Philippe took her in his arms, and tried to console her.

'What good advice you give me! so right and judicious! We will do all that exactly, save that we will not have him brought here, Mariette. For the man who pursues us thus may be violent or an evil-doer; in any case, we will take him before the Governor, for it is his right, after all, to administer justice, and not ours.'

VI

On the morrow, the hermit Colomban went after his wont to the huts of the workmen, and pencil in hand effaced the drawings of Philippe, and began to retrace

on the stones designs after his own heart. He was there absorbed in his dream, when the sentinels precipitated themselves upon him, seized him by the collar, and dragged him towards the house of the Governor. No one amongst the crowd of masons recognized in the decrepid and half-blind hermit, their master, Colomban ; they saw naught there save a malicious fool, who interrupted their work, and laughed at them. It was therefore, despite the definite instructions of Philippe Chartres, not without some blows and violent abuse that they led the poor man before Maître Laurent, and every one was too over-excited to notice the confusion in which they found the house of the Governor. It was caused by the arrival of the Duchess Marguérite, and at the moment the workmen dragged their prisoner before the windows, she was holding a conference with Maître Laurent himself and Philippe Chartres, on the subject of the mysterious visitor. The

noise made by the masons and their savage glee apprised the Princess that the culprit had been taken. She advanced towards the crowd—

'Here,' said she, 'is a mysterious affair, and one which I should like to judge personally to-day.'

At the sight of the Duchess, the hermit, thinking he was discovered, threw himself at her feet. The suddenness of his movement made his hood fall back.

'Colomban! Colomban!' shouted the crowd.

The Princess looked at her prisoner sternly.

'Wretched man,' said she, 'wherefore have you thus deserted us?'

The hermit gave vent to long-drawn sobs, but at last, mastering his tears, he said—

'Madam, I made a design, and an estimate for the building of your church, as is the custom. I had scarce executed the half of my design, when there came

certain carters from Pisa with costly marbles that I had ordered for the decoration of the high altar, and demanded to be paid. I went to get the money, but when I looked into the coffer, I saw that I had already spent all. Only a few pence remained, and the church was not half-finished! Then I was terrified, and I fled; I went in one stage as far as Salins, and there I adopted the garb of a hermit for fear of being discovered. Still, the vision of my church never ceased to haunt my cell, maddening me with the thought that no one in the world could carry out my design. And I came back to Brou to see how it was progressing. And then . . . and then! . . . Ah! you would pity me if you knew all that lies here behind my brow, and that no one in the world can translate it . . . and ere long I shall be blind.'

A shudder ran through the hall.

'Colomban,' said the Duchess gravely, 'you have displeased us greatly by think-

ing that we should value a few crowns more highly than the beauty of the church, which will eternally recall a beloved memory. But we forgive you because you are a great artist, and because we know that men of genius are but as little children, in matters of this world. . . . Rise! you are again the Architect of Brou, with a hundred thousand crowns to complete the building. But you are old and weary. . . . Here is a worthy young man, who only asks to help and lighten the labours of your undertaking.'

The Princess made a sign and Philippe came forward.

'Master,' said he, 'we are going to begin all anew; and rebuild according to your design. It went ill without you!'

The Duchess smiled.

'This young man,' she resumed, 'will be the staff of your old age, and your son. For he tells us that it is his sole desire to marry your daughter Mariette, whose

dowry it shall be our royal pleasure to furnish.'

The old man gave a long groan.

'Mariette! Mariette!' he sighed. 'I had forgotten her! Where is she, where is my dear daughter, my darling child?'

'Here, father,' cried the poor child, and she threw herself weeping into the arms of the hermit. He held her for an instant to his heart, but gradually he let her slip from his arms.

'I have an idea,' he said, 'for the left hand of my Saint André. A piece of charcoal, Philippe! They have taken mine away. . . . Yes, that is it. . . . To think that I am losing my sight! Ah, Mariette, thou art still here, dear child? Pray, do not disturb me. . . . Amuse thyself with Philippe. He is an excellent young man. . . . He has not too much genius. He will make thee an admirable husband.'

MADAME DE LA ROCHE

TO

A. M. L'ABBÉ PIERRE DE BOURDEILLES

MADAME DE LA ROCHE

Ferrara, 1535.

In the time of the Duchess Renée, there dwelt in the town of Ferrara a young widow of twenty, by name Madame de la Roche. She was a French woman, and came to Italy from the Court of the Queen of Navarre, where she had previously been a lady in waiting.

The Duchess loved her dearly, for she was of all women the most witty, and the best talker, albeit a little serious, and very much engrossed in the new ideas of the day. She was the pearl amongst the French at the Court; half-a-score, at most, who kept much apart (not loving the Lombards), gathering round their beautiful unhappily married Duchess, who in this land of Ferrara was like a lily amongst thorns.

Now, one summer evening, soon after supper, the Duchess withdrew into the shady garden with Madame de Soubise,

Mademoiselle de Beauregard, and Maître Clément Marot, the poet. Madame de la Roche was likewise there: she was standing up, with a little lute in her hands, singing in her sweet voice—

'Singing in exultation
To God who dwells in Zion,'

to the tune of one of Maître Clément's psalms. The poor man looked at her as if she was a saint.

In truth she was very dainty and very pretty in her white gown. Her thick ashen blonde hair was framed in a little black velvet coif; a broad black ribbon attached the lute to her tall slender figure; and this simple white garb became her so well, that she seemed a greater lady thus attired than if she had been arrayed in scalloped cloth of gold. For she had in her face something indescribable, lovely, tender, and noble, distinguishing her at once from others. Never has been seen, save in her, that delicate colouring, those

candid eyes, never too joyous nor too sad, nor that half-opened mouth seeming to smile at the skies, nor above all that air of womanly gentleness which she was able to spread around her like a perfume. Madame de la Roche.

She was still singing when the music was interrupted by the arrival of a fair, dashing young man, M. Jean de Bourdeilles. He was a handsome, blithesome boy, full of jests, who bowed to all these ladies, smiling at them with a conquering air; then, 'Who is she?' he seemed to say, looking at Madame de la Roche. The psalm ended, the young man was presented to the singer. The Duchess leaned forward, expecting some madrigal. But M. de Bourdeilles seemed to be dumb.

'Why is he so dull, what is the matter with him to-day?' cried pretty Mademoiselle de Beauregard at last.

'Mademoiselle, I am suffering from my heart,' replied the young man. He rose, kissed the hand of the Duchess, made a

profound bow to Madame de la Roche, and withdrew.

'Ah! I shall bear you malice, my friend,' said the Duchess, laughing; 'I shall bear you great malice if you chase away our sprite? What should we do without him in the mortal dullness of this country? And there is no doubt he was frightened by your black ribbons, and your little Lutheran air. For usually he is the maddest and most mocking creature in the world.'

On the morrow, as Madame de la Roche went into church, she found M. de Bourdeilles standing anigh the holy water stoup. When she came home, her lackey gave her a great bouquet of roses sent by that gentleman, who wrote her that they were of his growing, and yet she knew that he had neither an estate nor a garden in Ferrara. An hour later, she received a ballad in praise of her voice. In the evening he danced with her, and told her of her beauty. At night he sang a serenade

beneath her windows. And thus it was every day for sixteen months, at the least, without his receiving other recompense therefrom than: 'Child, do not do that!' or, 'Never have I seen one so importunate as you!' But one evening she learnt that he was going to fight a duel for her sake on the morrow. At once she was his alone, and he learnt, to his great surprise, that all the while she had adored him. And never, I think, was there a woman so passionate, so loving, or so submissive as this selfsame Madame de la Roche.

Madame de la Roche.

It was at this juncture that M. de Bourdeilles, being recalled by his father to France, Madame de la Roche refused to leave him. The scandal and the folly of such a love being pointed out to her, she manœuvred and declared that she did not herself feel in security in Ferrara; some had heard it said to the Duke, 'the lady savoured strongly of Luther.' In short, she asserted her life was in danger, and

asked for protection from the Queen of Navarre. Thereupon she was allowed to accompany her lover to France.

M. de Bourdeilles, being young and thoughtless, was very happy with such a charming companion, and the two lovers prolonged the journey as much as possible. But all happiness has an end, and towards winter they arrived in Paris. There they found Queen Marguérite very pleased to see Madame de la Roche again. Then came the hour of parting; for the Queen was leaving the next day but one for Nerac, and as it was needful that a few days later M. de Bourdeilles should take part in the war in Piedmont, his poor friend decided to accompany the Queen. The parting, like all partings, was bitter and grievous. Nevertheless, the lovers had good hope of meeting again at the Court of their kind patroness.

But scarce had Madame de la Roche arrived in the kingdom of Navarre, than she fell ill. She spent all her days seated

in a high tower overlooking the road to Piedmont, white with snow at that season. On the days that she saw the courier galloping along full speed, she got up very quickly, descended the staircase singing, and came back blushing and gay with the Queen's letters. From her friend she never received any letters. But neither did she ever complain of his silence. 'He is a soldier,' said she. 'He can only write with the point of his sword.' And when the Queen read aloud accounts of the prowess of Captain de Bourdeilles, the young dame laughed and triumphed without reserve. Nevertheless she became daily thinner and weaker. She was nothing now but a phantom—a mere ghost of hope and memory.

Madame de la Roche.

One day she was seized with a chill, and the doctor sent her to bed, albeit she declared she had never felt better. The hour of her death came whilst she was laughing and talking. Who would have said that this woman was dying of

neglect? When she knew that she had only a few moments to live, she sent for one of her varlets, who played very well on the violin.

'Julien,' said she, 'play me the air of the Duchess Renée.'

And the poor lad, quite surprised, began to play—

'Singing in exultation
To God who dwells in Zion,'

when the door opened, and Queen Marguérite appeared on the threshold. She brought good tidings of the war. A victory had been won, partly owing to the courage of M. de Bourdeilles. Poor Madame de la Roche wept for joy, kissed the hands of her mistress, and turning to her varlet—

'Julien!' she cried, 'leave off that psalm, and sound the Defeat of the Swiss, and go on playing it—dost hear—until you see me quite dead.'

This did the other, she helping him

with her own voice. And when he came to the refrain— Madame de la Roche.

'They are confounded,
They are lost,'

she repeated softly two or three times—

'All is lost,'

and turning to the other side of her pillow, with a smile she expired.

Some months later Captain de Bourdeilles came back to Pau to see his mother, who was staying at the Court of Navarre. He met her as she came one evening from vespers in company of the Queen. He embraced the old lady, kissed the hand of his patroness, and with much joy and vainglory related to them at great length all the details of his victories. At last the good Queen, seeing that he said not a word of Madame de la Roche, took his hand, and invited him to accompany her into the empty church for a moment. She walked about with him anigh an hour,

talking all the time of the war, and then standing still—

'My cousin,' said she, 'do you feel nothing moving under you nor under your feet?'

'No, Madam,' answered the captain.

'Think well thereon, my cousin!'

'Madam, I have thought deeply thereon, but I feel nothing moving, for I am walking on firmly cemented flagstones.'

'Now I tell you,' resumed the good Queen, 'that you are standing on the tomb containing the body of that poor Madame de la Roche whom you loved so dearly. Since our souls can feel after our death, you cannot doubt that this charming creature was deeply moved as soon as you drew near her. And if, by reason of the depth of her grave, you did not feel her joy at your approach, she, poor soul! must therefore be the more affected by your unconsciousness! It is a devout duty to remember the dead . . . . and even more those we have loved in their

lifetime. I entreat you to say for her soul a *Paternoster*, an *Ave* and *De Profundis;* sprinkle her grave with holy water; and you will be named as a most faithful lover and a good Christian. I leave you for that purpose.' Madame de la Roche.

After these words the Queen glided swiftly towards the threshold of the church, and for some minutes Captain de Bourdeilles grieved deeply for poor Madame de la Roche.

THE CLOVE CARNATION

TO

MESSER GIAMBITTISTA GIRALDI CINTHIO

THE CLOVE CARNATION

Ferrara, 1595.

FULL three hundred years ago, there dwelt in the town of Ferrara a worthy gentleman called Ser Christofano, whose whole family consisted of one son, twelve years of age, by name Antonio. The father being a widower, and unable to take the entire charge of the child's training, his thoughts turned to a friend of his, one Messer Giano dei Mazzi, whom he had lost sight of for twenty years or more; for Ser Christofano was rich and of gentle birth, favourably received at Court, and the other a man wrapped in books and meditation; it was even said that he had squandered all his available fortune in buying ancient stones and ancient manuscripts, which he kept in a house that remained to him of his patrimony. There he lived very quietly, spending his time in deciphering inscriptions, and annotating his discoveries. Albeit he was very little

seen in the town, he was much spoken of, and not without some respect; for, after all, science is a respectable folly.

Therefore, on a beautiful afternoon in May, Ser Christofano walked a little way out of the town in search of his friend of former years. Towards evening he came to a pretty house with a tower and balcony, such as is often seen in Italy. There was around about it a large gloomy garden, planted with ilexes and laurels. Seated on a bench, in a cool grove, was a handsome old man, who raised his head at the approach of the visitor. Ser Christofano recognized his old friend, Messer Giano, and saw that he was blind.

The two friends, as you may well think, had a thousand things to say to each other. The moon rose behind the laurels, and they had not wearied of talking of old days. But at supper-time they heard a light rustling in the bushes, and a very sweet voice.

'Here she is!' said Messer Giano.

'Come, my Daphne, and greet the friend of my youth.'

And Signor Christofano saw before him a maiden of peerless grace and dignity. She had the regular features, the grave smile, and that divine expression in her eyes, that is seen in those antique Greek medallions, over which her father had worn out his sight. She carried herself well, and walked with a light step and the air of Diana the Huntress.

'I have never seen such a beautiful girl!' cried Ser Christofano.

'Alas!' replied the philosopher, 'to me she is always a child of nine years old. For she was that age when I lost my sight —ten years ago!'

'Nineteen years old!' said Ser Christofano, 'seven years older than my boy!'

'She will be his elder sister,' replied Messer Giano; and Daphne smiled, for she had neither sister nor brother nor friend.

Then Signor Christofano took leave of

them, and some days later he returned with his son Antonio, whom he left with Messer Giano as his pupil. In sooth, he was rather the pupil of Daphne, for the old man was blind and feeble, and the young girl, who read Greek and Latin fluently to her father, knew more than was required to teach so young a boy. Antonio was a good pupil, gentle and docile; he learnt with delight all his friend taught him, and at the end of three or four years he was nearly as great a scholar as she was. In his solitary hours he liked to dream that he was the young Hippolytus, and she Artemis the White; the laurels in the garden recalled the name of Daphne, and he sighed in musing on the unhappy love of a god; but what pleased him most was to sit by moonlight in the lonely, sombre grove, imagining himself to be Endymion and awaiting the goddess.

It was perhaps as the sequel of such thoughts that Antonio lost the freshness of his youth. At sixteen he was tall and

handsome, but very pale and melancholy. Constant sighs broke his speech, and he had no taste for the pleasures of his age. All day long he seemed dreamy and half-asleep ; but nevertheless he did not sleep at night.

When poor Signor Christofano perceived the state of his son, such despair was never seen. He had spent his whole life in intriguing for honours and the society of the great in order to transmit these advantages to Antonio, and behold, at the very moment when his child would have been able to profit by them, pale death claimed him for its own. Oh! with what regret he then looked back upon the past, with what jealous bitterness he thought of the fairest years of Antonio's life passed entirely in the house of the Mazzi, whilst he, Christofano, assiduously attending the Court, knew naught of the heart, naught of the mind of the child, whom, nevertheless, he adored!

'Ah! if I had been there,' thought the

poor father, 'he never would have fallen into this mortal languor. But Giano is blind and his daughter heedless; this mad passion for literature, which has already cost the master his eyesight, is going to rob me of the pupil. Thrice fool was I to entrust to the charge of another the only thing in the world I value!'

It was in this spirit of regret and rancour that Signor Christofano went to take Antonio away from his master, who, although quite blind, was well aware of the coldness of his friend. And thus the two old men, one filled with a spirit of bitterness, and the other wounded by seeming ingratitude, parted, and, to the great surprise of Antonio, his father took him, without farewell or thanks, from the house where he had spent the never-to-be-forgotten hours of childhood.

But, in spite of all the father did, the child went from bad to worse, and the cleverest doctors in Ferrara could not understand his case. At last Christofano

carried his dying child to the mountains, where no intruders could come between them. Half in malice, and half in despair, he did not make known to Messer Giano or his daughter their place of abode.

But one day Antonio said to him—

'I think, father, I should get better if I could drink once again from the fountain in the orchard of the Mazzi.'

And the poor father forgot even the coldness betwixt himself and his friends, mounted his horse, and went in one stage as far as Ferrara. He found the philosopher in the grove of the Mazzi after his wont; he told him all his despair, as well as the artless wish of his child, but in the midst of his talk he heard a low sob, and, turning round, saw the pale face of Daphne, who was leaning against a tree. She was clad all in white, and held in her hands a mass of clove carnations she had just gathered in the garden.

She at once turned to Signor Christofano,

and, expressing herself with difficulty, murmured—

'Is it true that my only friend is sick unto death? Ah! Signor, when you see him, tell him how much we mourn him! And since he was so fond of our carnations, give him this bunch, which I kiss thinking of him.'

Signor Christofano mechanically took the flowers, and the flask of water from the fountain, mounted his horse, and bent his way sadly towards the mountains. There he found his son consumed by fever, and half-dead. But as soon as the child received the carnations and heard the words of the maiden, his sufferings vanished as if by magic; he got up, smiled, and began to live anew, for he knew at last that he loved, and that she mourned him. Quite confused by so much happiness, the child concealed it carefully. His eyes again became brilliant and his step light; he sang as he walked. It is very true that his smile wavered and was still vague

and dreamy, and that most of the time he talked without being much aware what he was saying; but these trifles did not greatly alarm Signor Christofano, who attributed them to the effects of his long weakness.

Some weeks later, father and son returned to their palace in the town. The first care of Antonio was to meet his Daphne. With what shame and embarrassment he began to tell her all that was in his heart! But the beginning made, he pleaded his cause with a passion unexpected from lips so little accustomed to speak of love. To tell the truth, the fair Daphne was not insensible thereunto; the illness of Antonio had already enlightened her as to her own feelings. But she did not forget the seven years' difference in age, and the want of fortune which separated her from her young friend. She said to herself, 'He will forget me!' and again, 'That old courtier, his father, will never forgive him.' And from these two thoughts she drew strength

to resist him a first, a second, and even a third time.

But behind that placid brow and that calm mouth, as of a young goddess, a world of dolorous thoughts tossed and revolted.

'What have I done with my life? What have I done with my youth? What is reading old books, and solving problems in algebra? Alas! I have been asleep in some enchanted country . . . and lo! I awake to find myself too old to respond unto the call of happiness.'

Daphne was very beautiful, and, albeit she bemoaned her age, she was scarce twenty-three years old. Therefore what should be came to pass. One burning day, towards the end of June, Antonio found her sleeping in the grove. He knelt down before his idol, and covered her hands with the maddest kisses. Daphne, half-asleep, but conscious, responded by murmuring his name, and let her happy head fall on the shoulder of her lover.

Antonio would hear no more refusals, and when Daphne was fully awake, she found herself betrothed according to her heart's desire.

It may be that later on we shall have to pity these two young people very much, but we need shed but few tears over them, since, for at least one hour in their lives, they tasted absolute happiness. Their long struggle was suddenly turned to calm; their passion even was annihilated in that beatitude of rare love, which no longer dares to feel, lest the slightest rose-leaf should disturb the balance of its joy. There is in the world no feeling which can compare with this unexpected re-union of two souls, who have for long thought themselves condemned to eternal separation, to a never-ending solitude. What divine freedom to be able to tell each other at last all that each thinks, and, above all, feels! What holy terror to say unto each other, that even this living passion must some day be quenched and

exhausted in the last dust of those mortal hearts wherein it abides!

The night fell earlier than usual on this day, a summer night of stars and roses, but which nevertheless at last separated the lovers. Antonio returned through it to his father; he looked long at him and dared not speak. Throughout the night the child had prepared the fashion of his speech, occupying himself in softening news he knew would be likely to displease his father. Nevertheless, when the morning came, he found nothing better to say than these words—

'Embrace me, my father! I affianced myself to our friend Daphne, last night.'

Signor Christofano gave his son such a terrible look that Antonio immediately lost all hope.

'Antonio!' he cried, 'joy of my old age, is it for this end that I made you my only pride? Is it for this end that I have spent my whole life at Court, amassing so many honours and such splendid advantages for

you, sole hope of my race? And you recompense me by proposing to marry a penniless old maid, the daughter of a school-master!'

Poor Antonio would fain have cut his father's rage short, but he was only sixteen, and was afraid of him.

Meanwhile Signor Christofano began again.

'Good God! what a sad future you are preparing for yourself, for me, ah! and even for her! I see you, fifteen years hence, young, handsome, but good for nothing, the slave of a jealous, sickly old woman. Antonio, I have loved you all your life. In truth, there is nothing in the world save you that I have loved, with all my heart. And you, can you do naught for me, my son? Will you leave me for so small a thing? Think well thereon, my beloved child, for if you marry your Minerva—understand me thoroughly!—I will never see you again whilst I live, though it should break my heart. I will never see

you again, and you shall not close my dying eyes. God will remember this against you.'

He ceased speaking, and during several minutes nothing broke the silence.

At last—

'Antonio!' sighed the old man.

And his son replied—

'Father, I owe you my life. If you wish the gift of life to be a bitter one, so be it! I will forsake the woman I love. But understand that in renouncing my love for Daphne, I renounce all earthly love. You will have no grand-children, my father. I shall never marry; I should be afraid of making my children miserable.'

The old man melted into tears. But he accepted the sacrifice of Antonio without any difficulty; for he said to himself—

'The boy is only sixteen; he will suffer for several days, perhaps for several months. . . (Ah! I remember! . . but it was for the best then, and it will be for the

best in his case also.) Next year I shall find a pretty maid of fifteen for him to marry. . . There is that little Donna Laura, the cousin of the Duchess. . . A most charming child!' . . . And Signor Christofano lost himself in benevolent reveries. Antonio fell ill again, and kept his room for several months.

Meanwhile Ser Christofano worked so strongly on the mind of his old friend, that Messer Giano gave his daughter in marriage to a young man of good family in the neighbourhood, for a great while enamoured of her beauty. These things were accomplished by means of a long interview which the father of Antonio demanded with Daphne. I much fear that the crafty old man made her feel bitterly her responsibility towards him, accusing her of a sort of abuse of confidence, in having troubled the heart of a child entrusted to her care, and who, said he, even in the lesson of love was but a docile pupil.

'It was only delirium coming from

fever,' said Ser Christofano, 'and we must show that it was all a dream and a vision.'

At last the poor child thought to save Antonio by marrying her boorish lover, for she had been accustomed all her life to sacrifice herself to others, without demanding much happiness for herself.

This wise habit saved her from many sorrows, and the first months of her marriage passed, between her blind father and her vulgar husband, in a kind of torpor, composed of duty and habit. She greatly practised the spiritual life, and her scruples helped her to make such an effort to conquer herself, that she ceased to feel and almost to remember.

But one day, as she was praying in a chapel in Ferrara, she heard a stifled sob quite close to her. She looked round and saw Antonio. And a passion of memory possessed her whole being and shook her out of her indifference. She forgot the place where she was, and the chains which bound her: her whole soul was merely an

echo of the beloved voice, her body only lived through her hand which trembled beneath the lips of Antonio. And she knew that love clings fast and has an immortal spring-tide.

But this forbidden love, which feared not to assail her before the altar, where she had pronounced her marriage vows—this terrible love appalled her, for she knew that she was so weak and love so strong. She foresaw her fall, and in the holiness of her soul she found energy for a supreme effort. She looked at her poor lover with tender reproach, and said to him with the voice of a friend—

'I love you very much, dear Antonio. The day will never come when I shall forget you. But I love you, my friend, as I did in the old days of your childhood. To me you are still the sick child for whom I gathered my red carnations.'

'Daphne!' cried Antonio in a heart-rending voice.

She resumed—

'The rest was a dream. . . If you do not yet feel for me mere saintly friendship, leave this town, my brother, where so many things recall to you a not-to-be-forgotten dream. . . Go, my friend, I entreat you. If you have ever loved me, if you love me still, go away Antonio, if only for a year!'

Antonio looked at her for a long time, standing there beseeching him, with despairing, sorrowful looks. But he felt he had no right to dispute the entreaties of his friend. He quitted Ferrara, and took long journeys, trying in vain to cheat the cruel memories which haunted him. Months passed. One night, whilst at a town in France, he dreamt that his friend called to him in a distressed voice. Seized by the thought that she might be in some trouble, and needed his assistance, he set off the following day for his own country. The journey was long. Perhaps he was over-fatigued, but it seemed to him that the nearer he drew to it, the sadder the

landscape looked; that the neighbouring villages he had left so smiling, were half deserted, and that the air diffused a thick, unhealthy miasma. But he said to himself, that all this might well be but the reflection of his inward anxiety. Nevertheless, as he approached Ferrara, he heard a vague sound like funeral knells, as if all the churches in the town were tolling death in unison. There were no longer any guards at the city gates. Within he found naught save an immense tomb.

All along the streets vast ditches had been dug, which exhaled pestilential vapours. In these ditches there were many dead, and perhaps many dying likewise; for those who were touched by the plague had been laid down on the banks, and from time to time, one of them, weary of his sufferings, and the slowness of his agony, threw himself frenziedly into the yawning sepulchre.

All this Antonio saw without resting his eyes thereon. Every force of his heart

impelled him towards the house of Daphne. He passed the palace of his father without a glance : it was silent and deserted.

'Who knows?' said Antonio ; 'if God have so ordained it, she likewise will have gone to take refuge in the country.'

And indeed, when he reached the door of her house, he saw a scene of indescribable desolation. All was sad, void, and forlorn ; the doors gaping, the palace sacked ; and he rejoiced at the thought of his friend seated in some distant spot, where the fresh breezes swayed the branches of the willows on the purling stream. But, at this moment, he saw the old nurse of the Mazzi family, who was standing like himself before the house, and sighing—

'Hey, my dove! Hey, my beloved! must you then die alone, so young, so lonely, so completely deserted! Holy Mary! help us!' moaned the old woman, weeping, unable either to make up her mind to desert her nursling or to brave the fatal air of the contaminated house.

And lo! Antonio heard a voice which even in the midst of the desolation of the city made his heart beat with tumultuous happiness. Nevertheless, this voice was much changed, and the words followed abruptly and faintly, like the drops of a summer thunder-shower.

'And if I am going to die,' said she, 'that likewise is according to the will of God. If the cup is bitter, our Lord Himself drank deeply of it. Ah no! death is sweet to me!'

As she spoke, her fair head appeared framed in the empty window space. The wan smile on her poor thin face was more touching than mere beauty—her splendid hair made a shining aureole around her forehead. Antonio looked at her; she saw him; and in the eyes of both a mist arose.

At last she said—

'I well knew, my love, that you would never abandon me. I heard the sound of your faithful feet hurrying to my grave. And, since I see you again,

I, who was the most miserable of women, am the happiest. Do not weep, my beloved. Events befell thus, because not you, but another became my husband. For, behold! it needs more than a vow to link man and wife in a love that naught can sever. There was no reason why my husband should brave for my sake the most horrible scourge God inflicts. Do not blame him. For, alas! I did not love him!'

Antonio was already within the house. She leaned from above.

'Wait for me!' said she, 'wait for me near the door where the air is still pure. I do not want you to die, my love!'

And, watching from below, he saw her descend one by one the steps of the great wide staircase, very calm, grave, and happy now; the sadness slowly leaving her eyes, like a wave receding from the shore. He stood there, with outstretched arms and wide-opened eyes, the pestiferous city seeming unto him like Paradise.

Lo! there she was quite close to him, three steps away; when she stopped short, leaned suddenly to one side, and fell into the open arms of her lover, her heavy head on his shoulder. She did not move again. She was stone dead.

He held her to his heart at last. Dead!

Much later on in the night, he sought within the house the great sculptured coffer which she had for her bridal raiment. He clothed her in white linen, and laid her in the coffer, covering her with flowers and sweet spices. He kissed her calm brow, and, staggering under the weight, carried into the garden the dust of the woman who had only been his in death. And as he digged her grave, he saw quite close to him, in an angle of the wall, a carnation in flower.

'Alas!' said Antonio, 'to think that she is dead, and that this common flower blooms anew, surviving our love. How dare it flower in such a place, at such an hour? How can flowers bloom, when

Love dies for ever? Ah! that is hardest part of my suffering! To think that all we felt, with such an eternal force, was only a little blood circulating within a little clay! Great God! if I could believe that her soul, which loved me, survives her body, which Thou hast destroyed, I should resign myself, my God, and praise Thee! Ah! what a dreamer's hope! I might as well think that this carnation, once gathered, would blossom eternally in the shadows, whither she descends with my love.'

And mournfully Antonio placed the crimson flower on the breast where all was still.

* * * * *

For twenty years Daphne lay alone in her garden at Ferrara. The footsteps of the husband who had deserted her never came back to trouble her slumber. Only Antonio carefully tended the grave of the dead. He died while he was still young, worn out by a love which was too deep

and too single-hearted to be consoled. With his last breath he besought that he might be buried beside his beloved Daphne.

When the tomb was opened, where the coffer lay crumbled in decay, naught was found therein, save a tress of fair hair, a little dust, and a clove carnation fresh and sweet.

THE END

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