

THE IRON PINCERS OR MYLIO AND KARVEL

BY

EUGÈNE SUE

The Iron Pincers or Mylio and Karvel

PART I

THE COURT OF LOVE

CHAPTER I

THE ORCHARD OF MARPHISE

What I here have to narrate occurs towards evening on a beautiful autumn day, in the orchard of Marphise, the noble Lady of Ariol. The orchard, which lies in the close vicinity of the ramparts of the city of Blois, is surrounded by a high wall, crowned by a hedge of yoke-elm. A handsome summer-pavilion rises in the middle of the garden. The trees are numerous, and their fruit-laden branches are ingeniously intertwined with vines that bear clusters of purple grapes. Not far from the pavilion, a stately pine-tree casts its shadow across a white marble basin filled with limpid water and encircled by a broad band of lawn, on which roses, anemones and gladiolas blend their lively colors. A bench of verdure is contrived around the foot of the gigantic pine, whose dense foliage allows the setting rays of the sun to penetrate it here and there, and to empurple the crystal face of the water in the basin.

Twelve women, the eldest of whom, Marphise, the Lady of Ariol, has hardly reached her thirtieth year, and the youngest, Eglantine, Viscountess of Seligny, is not yet seventeen;—twelve women, the least handsome of whom would everywhere, except here, have been considered a star of beauty;—twelve women are assembled in this orchard. After a collation in which the wines of Blois, of Saumur and of Beaugency have moistened the delicate venison pasties, the eels preserved in mustard, the cold partridges seasoned in verjuice—a dainty repast that is rounded with toothsome confectionery and sweets, moistened, in their turn, with no less copious libations of hippocrass or other spiced wines—the eyes of the noble ladies begin to dance and their cheeks are inflamed.

Certain of being alone among themselves, and sheltered from indiscreet looks or inquisitive ears, the merry gossips observe neither in their words nor in their demeanor the reserve that, perhaps, they might observe elsewhere. Some, stretched at full length on the sward, turn the limpid water of the basin into a mirror, contemplate themselves, and make all manner of winsome grimaces at their own reflections in the water; others, perched upon a ladder, amuse themselves plucking the ruddy apples or mellow pears from the trees, and, as the petticoats of the noble ladies serve

for aprons in which to gather their harvest, the color of their garters is often exposed—a circumstance that in no wise disturbs our climbers, knowing as they do, that their limbs are well shaped; others, again, hold themselves by the hands in a circle, and amidst peals of laughter indulge in a giddy whirl; while still others, being of a more indolent bent, repose upon the bench of verdure and lazily enjoy the balmy air of the delightful evening.

These indolent ones should be named. They are: Marphise, the Lady of Ariol; Eglantine, Viscountess of Seligny; and Deliane, Canoness of the sacred Chapter of Nivelles. Marphise, tall, dark, with eyebrows boldly arched and of no less deep a hue than her raven-black hair and large black eyes, would have resembled the antique Minerva if, like the goddess, Marphise had worn a brass casque on her head, and if her chest, massive and white as alabaster, were imprisoned in a cuirass, in short, if her physiognomy had recalled the austere dignity of the goddess of wisdom. Fortunately, there is no trace of all that, thanks both to the playful brilliancy of Marphise's eyes and to her laughing, sensual and ruddy lips. Her coif of orange color, with its flaps gently turned above her ears, exposes the strands of her black hair, which are braided with a thread of pearls. Her elegant figure stands outlined under her robe of white silk, a rich Lombard fabric relieved with orange-colored designs. Her sleeves, open and flowing, her upturned collar, her sloping corsage, leave her beautiful arms bare, and expose her under-waistcoat of snow-white linen, fluted, and bordered with gold thread over her bosom. In order to cool her burning cheek, Marphise flutters an ivory-handled fan of peacock feathers. Indolently stretched upon the bench of verdure, the nonchalant woman does not notice that a raised fold of her skirt exposes one of her limbs which tightly fits a stocking of pale green silk with silver ribs, together with her dainty slipper of Lyons manufacture, with a red buckle ornamented with rubies.

Marphise turns with a smile towards Eglantine, who, standing behind the bench of verdure, leans her elbows upon its back. Thus, only the face and corsage of the charming Viscountess of Seligny are visible. She has been well named, Eglantine. Never did the flower of the wild-rose, barely blossomed from the bud, display a more delicate tint, or more vernal, than the enchanting visage of the dainty blonde with eyes as blue as the sky of May. All about her is rosy. Rosy are her cheeks, rosy her lips, roses make up the little chaplet of perfumed flowers which crowns the hair-net of silver thread through the squares of which her deep blonde hair peeps out, and finally, rosy is the silk of her gorget, which, from the waist all the way up to the neck, tightly fastened by a row of marvelously wrought silver buttons, sets off her delicate contour.

While Eglantine thus leans upon her elbows on the bench, Deliane, the Canoness of the Chapter of Nivelles is upon her knees at the opposite side of the verdure seat. With one of her arms familiarly reclined upon the white shoulder of Marphise, she listens smiling to the erotic conversation between Eglantine and the Lady of Ariol. Of the two prattlers, one is of superb beauty, the other of charming prettiness. Deliane the canoness, however, is celestial. Dream of a woman of as divine a beauty as your imagination can conceive; clothe her in a scarlet robe of delicate material bordered with ermine; add to that a surplice of the white of the lily like the hood and veil which frame in the ideal face of the canoness; steep her beautiful hazel eyes in a languor of saintly love;—do that and you will have the portrait of the matchless canoness. That being done, gild the group of these three women with a ray of the setting sun, and you will admit that, at that moment, the orchard of the Lady of Ariol, filled as it is with delicious fruit, greatly resembles the terrestrial Paradise;—aye, surpasses it. For one thing, instead of one solitary Eve, you see here a full dozen—some blonde, some dark, some auburn; for another thing, that boor of an Adam is absent, and absent also is the rainbow colored serpent, unless the villain has hidden himself under some cluster of roses and gladiolas.

You have, so far, admired with your eyes; now listen to their talk, always facetious and mirthful, at times anacreontic—rakish words accompanied with immodest postures:

MARPHISE—"I am still laughing, Eglantine, about that pretty story—the eternal stupidity of husbands."

THE CANONESS—"That simpleton of a husband bringing in a light, and finding—what? Why his wife holding a calf by the tail!"

EGLANTINE—"And did the monk escape in the darkness?"

MARPHISE—"Oh! These tonsured friends are cunning lovers!"

THE CANONESS—"I don't know about that. They are taken to be more secretive than the others. It is a mistake!"

EGLANTINE—"And then they ruin you with their solicitations after copes and alms. There is nothing too brilliant for them. They are always a-begging on the sly."

MARPHISE—"But the knights are also quite expensive luxuries! If the clerk loves to strut under silks at the altar, the knight loves to shine at the tourney, and often have we to pay for his swagger, from his spurs to his

casque, from the bridle of his horse to the horse itself, besides garnishing his purse with round pieces of silver and gold!"

EGLANTINE—"And then, on some fine day, horse, armor, embroidered housings—everything lands at the usurer's to fit out some wench, after which your gallant friend returns to you dressed—only in his glory, and you are weak enough to equip him anew! Oh! Believe me, dear friends, they make sorry lovers, these tourney-hunters do! Without mentioning that these redoubtable warriors are often duller than their mounts—"

THE CANONESS—"A clerk is no less sorry a choice. It must be admitted that these churchmen have more wit about them than the knights, but just think of the amusement connected with having to go to church in order to hear your lover sing mass, or with running across him when he is escorting a corpse to its last resting place and is mumbling away at his prayers, in a hurry to return to the house of mourning and have his share of the feast. I must confess it shocks my delicacy."

EGLANTINE—"And if he makes you a present! Fie! His gifts are impregnated with a nauseating odor—they smell of dead bodies."

MARPHISE (laughing)—"And should you die, my beloved, I shall very piously and particularly recommend your soul to God, and sing a superb mass with ringing bells.'—"

The three women laugh aloud at Marphise's joke.

THE CANONESS—"And for all that, out of ten women you will not find two who have not a clerk or a knight for their lover."

MARPHISE—"I believe Deliane is mistaken."

EGLANTINE—"Let's see. We are here twelve in the orchard. We are all young, as we know; handsome, as we are told. We are no fools, either. We know how to find amusement while our husbands are away in the Holy Land."

MARPHISE (laughing)—"Where they expiate their own sins—and ours."

THE CANONESS—"Blessed be Peter the Hermit! With his preaching of the first Crusade over a hundred years ago, the holy man gave the signal for the delectation of the women—"

MARPHISE—"That Peter the Hermit must have been bribed by the lovers. More than one husband who departed for Palestine has repeated, while scratching his ears: 'I'd like to know what my wife Capeluche is doing at this hour! By the blood of God, what is my wife doing now?'"

EGLANTINE (impatiently)—"What we do? Indeed! Why, we enrol our husbands in the large fraternity of St. Arnold. Besides, they are Crusaders. Their salvation is, accordingly, doubly certain. But, for mercy's sake, dear friends, let's leave our husbands in Palestine; may they stay there as long as possible; and let us return to my plan. It is a pleasanter thing to consider. Deliane claims that out of ten women there are not two who have not a clerk or a knight for their lover. We are here twelve of us. Each of us has her tender secret. Where is the woman so small as to reject a lover when she is herself gently and loyally smitten? To yield is a sweet duty."

THE CANONESS (with languor)—"Thank God, we do not desire our fellowmen's death. We must yield to those who love us."

MARPHISE (gravely)—"The woman who, being adored with love, would cause the death of a man by her refusal, must be condemned as a homicide. The Court of Love has under my presidency, issued that memorable decree at its last session under the young elm. The said decree was rendered at the instance of the Conservator of the High Privileges of Love, who made the application before the Chamber of Sweet Pledges. The applicant, if I remember rightly, was a lover residing in the purlieu of the 'Delightful Passion,' 'Perseverence Street,' 'Hotel Despair,' where the unhappy fellow was dying of his flame's inhumanity. Fortunately, when our Seneschal of Sweet-Marjoram, accompanied by the Bailiff of the Joy of Joys, notified the tigress of the Court's decree, she recoiled before the fear of falling into mortal sin by causing the death of her admirer, and surrendered unconditionally to him."

THE CANONESS (with unction)—"It is so sweet a thing to snatch one of God's creatures from the clutches of death!"

EGLANTINE—"Mercy, dear friends. Why do you not listen to my plan? All the twelve of us have some secret love. Let us select one of us for confessor. We shall each in succession make to her our sweet admission. The confessor shall announce the result of our confidences. We shall thus know the number of those who have a spurred or a tonsured lover. The question will then be settled."

THE CANONESS—"An excellent idea! What say you, Marphise? I give it my full support."

MARPHISE—"I accept it! And I am certain our other friends will join in. That will furnish us amusement until night."

Indeed, Eglantine's proposition is gladly accepted by the young women. They draw together, and by common accord choose Marphise as the Lady Confessor. Upon her election, Marphise seats herself on the bench of verdure; her friends step a few paces back and cast mischievous glances upon the Lady Confessor and upon the one confessing. The first of these is Eglantine, the pretty Viscountess of Seligny. She is on her knees at the feet of Marphise, who assuming the manners of a nun, lovingly presses the two hands of the penitent, and addresses her with a self-confident air and sanctimonious voice:

MARPHISE—"Come, dear daughter, open to me your heart; conceal nothing; frankly confess all your sins; say who is your lover."

EGLANTINE (with hands joined and eyes lowered)—"Lady Confessor, he whom I love is young and handsome. He is brave as a knight; well-spoken as a clerk; and yet is he neither clerk nor knight. His fame is greater than that of the most famous counts and dukes; and yet is he neither count nor duke. (Marphise listens to the confession with redoubled attention.) Perhaps his birth is obscure, but his glory shines with incomparable luster."

MARPHISE—"You may well be proud of such a choice. Your lover is a marvel, a phoenix. What is the name of that admirable lover?"

EGLANTINE—"Lady Confessor, I may boldly name him. His name is Mylio the Trouvere."

MARPHISE (thrilling and blushing with emotion)—"What! Did you say, dear daughter, that it is—Mylio the Trouvere?"

EGLANTINE (with downcast eyes)—"Yes, Lady Confessor. That is his name."

MARPHISE (seeking to suppress her surprise and emotion)—"Go, dear daughter, I pray to God that your lover be faithful to you."

The canoness steps forward in her turn, kneels down, and, slightly smiling, slightly smites her well-rounded bosom with her white hands.

MARPHISE—"These tokens of sorrow denote some great sin, dear daughter! Is your choice, perchance, blame-worthy?"

THE CANONESS—"Oh! Not at all! I only fear I am not beautiful enough for my lover, who is the most accomplished of men: youth, wit, beauty, courage—he joins them all in his person! What joy there is in his company!"

MARPHISE—"And the name of that phoenix?"

THE CANONESS (languorously)—"Mylio the Trouvere. That is my friend's name."

MARPHISE (nettled and even angered)—"He again?"

THE CANONESS—"Do you, perhaps, know my lover?"

MARPHISE (repressing herself)—"Do you tenderly love that lover, so faithful to you?"

THE CANONESS (with fire)—"Oh! I love him with all the power of my soul."

MARPHISE—"Go, dear daughter. Let the next one come. (sighs) May God protect all constant loves."

Ursine, Countess of Mont-Ferrier, approaches on a run and leaping like a doe in the month of May. You never saw, and never will you see a more dainty, more saucy, or more savory creature. She was one of the most giddy-headed climbers among those who gathered fruit. Her chaplet of gladiolas lies awry over her head, and one of the heavy tresses of her warm-blond hair tumbles undone upon her dimpled shoulder that is as white as it is plump. Her skirt is green of color, and red her stockings. Her impudent mouth is still purple with the juice of grapes, no less ripe than her own lips. She gives a last bite with her pearly teeth to the almost wholly plundered cluster in her hands, and smiling kneels down at Marphise's feet which she tenderly clasps. Before being interrogated, she cries with charming volubility:

"Venerated Priestess, my lover is a mere college bachelor, but he is so perfect, so handsome, so witty! Ah! (she clicks her tongue against the roof of her mouth) that he would deserve to be a duke, an emperor, or a Pope! Aye, a Pope! Even better, if better could be possible!"

MARPHISE (a vague apprehension stealing over her)—"And what is the name of that model of a lover, that marvel of a gallant?"

URSINE—"His name, venerated Priestess? (snatching with her lips another grape from the cluster). His name? Oh, for his exploits in love, he should be called 'Valiant!' For his charms: 'Prince Charming!' For his constancy, 'Constant!' For his love, 'Cupid' with the strength of Hercules!"

MARPHISE—"You are a happy girl, dear daughter. Constancy is a rare jewel in these days of fickleness and deceit."

URSINE (with ecstasy)—"If my lover only thought of being unfaithful, by the stars in heaven, I would scratch out his eyes. Scores of times upon his divine harp did he sing to me of his fidelity. For you must know, my lover sings like a swan! (proudly) It is Mylio the Trouvere!"

After her confession, Ursine rises, and bounding again like a doe, runs to rejoin her friends.

Sighing and silently fretting, Marphise calls and confesses Floril, Huguette, Dulceline, Stephanette, Alix, Emma, Argentine and Adeline in rapid succession. But, alas! do you notice the Lady Confessor? Do you notice her well, and hear her? "And you, dear daughter," she asks, "What is your lover's name?" "Mylio!" "And you?" "Mylio!" "And you?" "Mylio!" Mylio, the same name every time! All the eleven have on their lips only the name of that horrid Mylio. Almost dying with jealousy, the Lady Confessor winds up with a hearty laugh at the experience, especially when the brunette Adeline, the last one to confess, says to her: "I have for lover the most glorious of trouveres, the most valiant, the most faithful of adorers. To say so is to name to you Mylio, Lady Confessor."

MARPHISE (laughing aloud)—"Oh, poor friends! If that mischievous juggler Adam the Hunchback, or Audefroid the Bastard, only knew our secret, he would to-morrow be singing it under all the tents! It would run from castle to castle, we would become the laughing-stock of the whole world!"

EGLANTINE—"What do you mean?"

THE CANONESS—"You must now make the announcement, Marphise. How many of us have a clerk for their lover?"

MARPHISE—"Not one, dear languorous girl!"

EGLANTINE—"And how many are there of us with a knight for lover?"

MARPHISE—"Not one! (The eleven women look at one another in silent surprise.) Oh, dear friends! We have been shamefully played with. All of us

have the identical lover! Yes, the villain Mylio the Trouvere has deceived all the twelve of us!"

Marphise's revelation first stupefies, then enrages the fair assembly. The bevy of pretty women did not have, as Marphise, the advantage of the necessary leisure secretly to habituate their minds to the thought, and to philosophise over their discovery. All the eleven mouths call for vengeance. The canoness invokes the punishment of the saints against the felony of Mylio; in her despair Eglantine declares that she will turn Bernardine nun the very next day. Tearing the chaplet of gladiolas from her hair, Ursine throws it on the ground, tramples upon it, and swears she will be revenged upon the shameless scamp. They then inquire from one another by what diabolical sorcery the infamous fellow managed for so long a time to keep his infidelity a secret. The recollection of his perjured vows adds new fuel to the rage of the noble dames. The anger of Marphise, who at first laughed over the adventure, is rekindled. She cries out:

"Fair friends, our Court of Love will hold its last autumn session to-morrow. It is a fortunate circumstance. The traitor shall be summoned to appear before our tribunal, that he may be tried in his own presence, sentenced and punished according to the enormity of his crimes. The Court of Love will judge the felon, the infamous criminal who has so shamefully deceived us."

URSINE (energetically)—"No! No! Let us pass judgment ourselves! The Court may, due to certain circumstances, display culpable lenity towards the monster."

SEVERAL VOICES—"Ursine is right! Let us pass judgment ourselves! The felon should be punished by those whom he sinned against."

THE CANONESS (with unction)—"Dear sisters, why not try persuasion before rigor? Let me take Mylio far from the corrupt haunts of men, into some profound solitude, and there, if God should lend me His grace, I expect to lead the culprit to the repentance of his past sins, and the practice of exemplary fidelity in the future. We should have mercy for human frailty."

URSINE—"Aye, dearest, so that he may practice towards you, no doubt, that exemplary fidelity! Just look at the good soul! No! No! The scamp has deceived us shamefully. Justice and vengeance! Neither grace nor pity for such a felony!"

All the voices, the voice of the merciful canoness excepted, demand with Countess Ursine, "Justice and vengeance!"

MARPHISE—"My friends, we shall be revenged! The fellow gave me a rendezvous for this very evening at moon-rise. The sun is going down. Let us all remain here. Mylio will come into the orchard thinking I am alone. We shall then have him in our power—and shall act!"

Marphise's proposition is accepted unanimously, and amidst recriminations and imprecations of all sorts, the rage-mad Ursine is heard to pronounce the names of Fulbert and Abelard, and to mumble the words: "We must punish him!"

CHAPTER II

GOOSE-SKIN THE JUGGLER

Night has come; the stars shine in the sky; only the moon has not yet risen. In lieu of the laughing orchard of the Marchioness of Ariol, you now see one of the last straggling houses of a suburb of Blois, and far away a thick-leaved oak tree, under whose sheltering branches a stout man lies asleep. He might be taken for Silenus if he were not clad in a coat of brown cloth stained with grease and wine spots. His coat, moreover, is as torn as his linsey-woolsey jonquil hose. His shoes are fastened to his feet with pack-thread. The man's enormous paunch, which rises and falls to the cadence of sonorous snores, has snapped the horn buttons off his coat. His pimpled, shapeless, reddish and blotched nose has, the same as his bald head, taken on the winy hue of the juice of the vine that the sleeper is in the habit of quaffing in large potations.

Near him on the sward lies a chaplet of vine-leaves with which he covers the few grey hairs that are still left to him. Not far from the gay customer is his "rotte," a resonant hurdy-gurdy from which his nimble fingers know how to extract music, because Master Goose-Skin, for that is his name, is a skilful juggler. His Bacchic and licentious songs are unmatched in their efficacy to throw nuns, vagabonds and wenches into the best of humor. So profound is Goose-Skin's sleep that he does not hear the approaching footsteps of a new personage, who has just come out of one of the last houses of the suburb. The personage is Mylio the Trouvere.

Mylio is twenty-five years of age. Why speak of his face? His picture, whether faithfully drawn or not, has been described by Marphise and her companions. The trouvere's stature is robust and tall. On his black and wavy hair he carries, half-drawn to one side, a scarlet camail, the tippet of which falls upon and covers his wide shoulders. His white tunic of fine woven Frisian cloth, held closed over his chest by a row of gold buttons, is embroidered at the collar and sleeves with scarlet silk. Of his double sleeves, the outer ones, slashed and floating, are open almost up to the shoulders, while the inner ones fit tightly over his arms and are held at the wrists with gold buttons. From his embroidered belt hangs, on one side, a short sword, from the other an almoner. Mylio has recently been on horseback. We notice that, instead of the shoes with long points tipped upwards in the shape of ram's horns, as is the fashion of the time, he wears over his hose large boots of yellow leather embroidered in red and reaching up to his thighs. While Goose-Skin continues soundly asleep and snoring sonorously, Mylio stops a

few steps away from the old juggler and remarks to himself with an air of no little concern:

"I have not been able to meet the Lombard merchant at Amboise, from where I now come; and he is not yet back at his house. The keeper at the inn where he usually puts up, claims he has gone to Tours to sell some silk goods. I shall have to wait for his return. Seeing he left Languedoc about two months ago, he surely brings me a message from my brother Karvel."

Mylio remains pensive for a moment and proceeds:

"Better than any other, Karvel deserves the name of 'Perfect,' the designation or title given to their pastors by the Albigenian heretics, as the Christian priests call this sect. It was no vain pride that led my brother to accept the title of Perfect. He was led thereto by the solemn determination to justify it by his life; and that life, lived so admirably by him, has been seconded by an incomparable wife, the good and gentle Morise. Never did virtue appear in more enchanting features. Yes, Morise is perfect as my brother is a Perfect. (Smiling.) And yet Karvel and myself are of one blood! Well, can I not, after all, say with the modesty so peculiar to the *trouvere*, that I am perfect after my own fashion? Have I not, although desperately in love with Florette, respected the girl? (A long interval of silence.) Oh! when I compare her candid love with the brazen love intrigues that have turned modern Gaul into a lupanar—when I compare with the stoic life of my brother the life of adventure into which the ardor of youth and the irresistible taste for enjoyment have cast me for the last five years, when I do that, then I am almost minded to follow the good inspiration that my love for Florette has started in my heart. (He reflects.) Certes, in these days of unbridled corruption, if he only has acquired some little renown, is gifted with as much audacity as recklessness in morals, and is a little better shaped than my friend Goose-Skin, who lies there snoring like a canon at matins, the *trouvere* who makes the rounds of the monasteries of nuns or of the castles, whose seigneurs are away on the Crusade, has but to take his pick. Adventures cluster thick around him. Fondled, caressed, generously paid for his songs in gold and silver coin, besides the fervid kiss of the ladies of the manors or the abbesses, a *trouvere* has nothing for which to envy either the clergymen or the knights. He can have a dozen mistresses at one time, and feast upon the most piquant infidelities. Like a merry bird of passage, soon as his gay song has been heard, he can escape with one flap of his wings from the white hand that seeks to retain him, and fly elsewhere to sing, without ever concerning himself about the future, and without regrets on the past. He has rendered kiss for kiss, he has charmed the ears with his roundelays and the eyes with his plumage. What more can be wanted from

him? Aye, to-day so runs love in Gaul! Its emblem is no longer the dove of Cyprus but the lascivious sparrow of Lesbia or the satyr of the ancient priestess of Bacchus! It is the triumph of the god Cupid and his dame Venus!

"Oh, how sweet it is to step for a moment out of the giddy bacchanalia, and refresh one's soul and repose one's heart on the pure pillow of a chaste love! How ineffable are the charms of the tender respect with which one delights in surrounding the innocent confidence of a maid of fifteen! (He again lapses into silence.) Strange! Whenever I think of Florette my mind turns to my brother and his austere life—his useful occupation, that puts mine to shame. Well, whatever I may decide, I must this very evening snatch Florette from the danger that threatens her. (Distant chimes of bells.) The curfew tolls the knell of day. It is now nine o'clock. The sweet child does not expect me until moon-rise. The Marchioness of Ariol and the Countess Ursine will have to dispense this evening with my visit. Dusk was to have seen me enter the orchard of the one, and dawn was to have seen me leave the castle of the other. (Laughs.) This was to be their night. But let me wake up Goose-Skin. I shall need his assistance. (Calls him.) Helloa, Goose-Skin! How the fellow snores! He is in the fumes of the wine that he must have drunk on credit in some tavern. (Stoops and shakes him vigorously.) Will you never wake up, rogue! Old leather-bottle, swollen with wine!"

Goose-Skin emits a series of muffled grunts, whereupon he blows, snorts, whimpers, yawns, stretches his limbs and finally sits up, rubbing his eyes.

MYLIO—"I asked you to wait for me under this tree. You have a very singular way of keeping watch!"

GOOSE-SKIN (rises in a dudgeon, picks up his chaplet of vine-leaves, slams it upon his head, puts his hurdy-gurdy under his arm, and angrily cries at Mylio)—"Ha! Traitor! Double-dyed thief! You robbed me of my feast!"

MYLIO—"What feast did I rob you of, Sir Paunch? Come, wake up!"

GOOSE-SKIN—"You woke me up at the sweetest moment of my dream! And what a dream! I was witnessing the combat of Shrove-Tide against Shrove-Tuesday. Shrove-Tide, armed cap-a-pie, advanced mounted astride of a salmon. For casque he had on an enormous oyster, for buckler a cheese, for cuirass a ray, for spurs a round of sea-urchins, and for sling an eel with an egg between its teeth for a stone!"

MYLIO—"Such is the gluttony of this Sir Paunch that even asleep he dreams of eatables! Oh, you devil of a gourmand!"

GOOSE-SKIN—"Miscreant! You snatched from my mouth dishes that cost me nothing, because, if Shrove-Tide was toothsomely armed, Shrove-Tuesday was no less so. His casque consisted of a veal patty with a roasted peacock for its top. Shrove-Tuesday, all cased in in hams, was astride of a roe whose many-branched antlers were loaded with partridges. For lance he had a long spit, run through a number of roast capons. (Addressing the trouvère with a redoubled affectation of grotesque anger) Vagabond! Man without faith or law! You woke me up at the very moment when, Shrove-Tide succumbing to the blows of Shrove-Tuesday, I was on the point of eating both the vanquished and the vanquisher! Arms and armor! Everything! I was on the point of eating everything including the mounts of the combatants! Oh, in all my life I shall not pardon you for your villainy."

MYLIO—"Calm down! I shall substitute your dream with the reality. You shall not want for victuals."

GOOSE-SKIN—"Oxhorns! A wonderful proposition! To eat with eyes open! What would there be wonderful about that! On the contrary, without you I was eating asleep! Oh, a plague upon you!"

MYLIO—"But suppose I were to furnish you wherewith to guzzle a whole day and night, what would you then have to reproach me with? Just answer, comrade!"

GOOSE-SKIN (gravely)—"You shut my mouth with the promise to fill it with good wine and plenty!"

MYLIO—"Will you render me a service?"

GOOSE-SKIN—"I'm a glutton, a boozier, a gambler, a libertine, a lover of wenches, a liar, a roysterer, a braggard, and a poltroon, but—oxhorns! I am not an ingrate. Never shall I forget that you, Mylio, the celebrated and brilliant trouvère, whose harp is the delight of the castles, have more than once shared your purse with old Goose-Skin the juggler, whose humble hurdy-gurdy cheers only taverns patronized by vagabonds, serfs and wenches! No! Never shall I forget your generosity, Mylio; and I swear to you that you always can count upon me—by the faith of Goose-Skin, which is my war name."

MYLIO—"Are we not fellows in the gay science? Is not your merry hurdy-gurdy, which rejoices the poor and causes them to forget for a moment the

misery of their lives, worth as much as my harp, which entertains the lustful or cloyed idleness of the noble dames? Mention not the services that I have rendered to you, my old friend."

GOOSE-SKIN (interrupting him)—"In helping me you have done more than your duty. Never; no, never shall I forget it!"

MYLIO—"Very well! But now listen to me—"

GOOSE-SKIN (with solemnity)—"When God created the world he put in it three kinds of men: the nobles, the priests and the serfs. To the nobles he gave the land, to the priests the goods of the simpletons, and to the serfs robust arms to work without let for the benefit of the priests."

MYLIO—"Well said. But now stop your speech-making, and let me inform you—"

GOOSE-SKIN—"The lots being then distributed by the Almighty, there remained two other and highly interesting classes to be provided for—the jugglers and the wenches. The Lord thereupon charged the priests to nourish the wenches, and he enjoined the seigneurs to keep the jugglers well fed. So, you see, it was no duty on your part, seeing that you are not a noble, to share your purse with me. Consequently, you have done more than your duty. Consequently the ones who fall short of their divine duty are the degenerate nobles, the curmudgeons, the misers, the skin-flints, the pedants, the—"

MYLIO—"God's blood! By the horns of St. Joseph! Will you give me a chance to speak?"

GOOSE-SKIN (in a pitiful and plaintive tone)—"Oh, the good times of the jugglers are gone! Formerly their purses and their bellies were always kept full. Alas! Our fathers have eaten the meat, we only have the bone to gnaw upon. But, now, speak, Mylio! I shall be as silent as my friend Gueulette, the tavern-keeper's daughter, when I implore her with love—the cruel, pitiless lass! Speak, my benign companion. I listen."

MYLIO (impatiently)—"Are you really done?"

GOOSE-SKIN—"You will sooner pull out my tongue than make me say another word, one single word more! My friend Gueulette herself, the roguish lassy, whose nose is so provoking, and whose corsage is so attractive—even she with her throat—"

MYLIO (walking away)—"The devil take the babbler!"

Goose-Skin runs after the *trouvere*, and imitating the gestures of the deaf-and-dumb, indicates that he pledges himself to silence.

MYLIO (returning)—"I have here in my almoner ten handsome silver deniers. They will be yours if you serve me well; but every superfluous word that you utter means one denier less."

Goose-Skin renews his silent pledges, swearing upon his hurdy-gurdy and his chaplet of vine-leaves that he will be mute as a fish.

MYLIO—"You know Chaillot, the miller of the Abbey of Citeaux?"

Goose-Skin nods affirmatively with his head.

MYLIO (smiling)—"By the Lord, Master Goose-Skin! You are keeping a good guard on your silver deniers. Well, then, that Chaillot, a confirmed drunkard, has for wife Chaillotte, an equally confirmed jade. Being of an accommodating disposition she entertained the monks right royally whenever they went to drink at her mill, until finally the miller's house became nothing but a tavern for the monks of the Abbey of Citeaux. Two weeks ago Abbot Reynier, the superior of Citeaux—"

GOOSE-SKIN—"If I did not fear that it would cost me a silver denier, I would make free to say that the said Reynier is the most dissolute and most wicked scamp that the devil ever tonsured! But out of fear of having to pay for these truths with my good cash, I shall remain mute!"

MYLIO—"In honor to the accuracy of the picture that you have drawn I shall pardon the interruption. But do not let it happen again! Now, then, Abbot Reynier said to me two weeks ago: 'Would you like to see a veritable treasure of rustic beauty? Join us to-morrow at the mill of the abbey. There is a girl at the place who is barely fifteen years old. Her aunt, the miller's wife, brought her up away from the public gaze. The fruit is cherry-ripe. I wish you to give me your opinion of her.' I accepted the abbot's offer. I love to witness the debaucheries of these monks whom I hate. They furnish me with good points for my satires. Well, I accompanied the superior and several of his friends to the mill. Thanks to the provisions that we brought along from the abbey, the meat was tender and the wine old. The heads began to swim. The repast being over, the infamous Chaillotte triumphantly fetches in her niece, a girl of fifteen, so beautiful—Oh, so beautiful!—a flower of grace and innocence. At her sight, the frocked debauchers, the tonsured tipplers, heated with wine, jump up neighing with lustful admiration. Frightened out

of her senses, the poor little girl steps hastily back, forgetting that behind her is an open window that looks over the water of the mill—"

GOOSE-SKIN (with a tone of sorrow)—"And the little girl drops into the water? Poor little one!"

MYLIO—"Yes, but fortunately I stood near and I leaped after her. It was in time. Drawn by the current, Florette was on the point of being broken by the wheel of the mill when I pulled her out."

GOOSE-SKIN—"Even if it should cost me all my ten deniers, I shall cry out aloud that you behaved like a brave fellow!"

MYLIO—"I carried Florette to the river bank. She regained consciousness. I read in her sweet looks her ingenuous gratitude. Profiting by the time that it would take the infamous Chaillotte to come to us, I said to the poor child: 'You are the object of odious projects; feign sickness as long as you can as the result of your fall; I shall watch over you.' And noticing that we were in a close surrounded by a hedge of yoke-elms, I added: 'Day after to-morrow in the evening, when your aunt will be in bed, come if you can and meet me here; I shall then let you know more.' Florette promised me all that I wanted. On the evening agreed upon she was at the appointed place. That is as far as matters stand."

GOOSE-SKIN—"Ho! Ho! So you snatched from the rogue of an abbot the dainty that he was reserving for himself? That was a good stroke!"

MYLIO—"No, I have respected the charming child; she seduced me by her candor. I am in love with, her, desperately in love! I wish to carry her off this very night. I'll tell you why. I met the abbot yesterday. 'Well,' said I to him, 'what has become of the pretty girl whom you and your monks scared so badly that she dropped into the water?' 'She has been ailing as a consequence of her inopportune bath,' the abbot answered me, 'but her health is restored; before the end of the week,' he added laughing, 'I shall take another trip to the mill of Chaillotte and eat a fritter.'"

GOOSE-SKIN—"Oh, wicked monk! It is you who should be frying in Lucifer's big frying-pan! But if Abbot Reynier said so yesterday, to-morrow will be Friday, day after to-morrow Saturday. We shall have to hurry if we expect to save the innocent child from the pursuit of the ruttish buck."

MYLIO—"At our last interview Florette promised me to be at our accustomed trysting place to-night at moon-rise."

GOOSE-SKIN—"Will she consent to follow you?"

MYLIO—"I am certain."

GOOSE-SKIN—"Then, what need you of me?"

MYLIO—"It might happen that this time Florette fails to elude the watchfulness of her aunt, and has not been able to come to our rendezvous."

GOOSE-SKIN—"That would be uncomfortable, for time presses. Meseems I hear the scamp of an abbot moving after his fritter—"

MYLIO—"It is absolutely necessary that I see Florette this evening. I have foreseen the possibility of some obstacle or other. Now, this is my plan. The miller Chaillot goes to bed drunk every night. If, in some way hindered, Florette should not be able to leave the house and should fail at our rendezvous, you are to walk up to the mill and noisily knock at the door. Chaillot, drunk as a brute, will not quit his bed to open, and—"

GOOSE-SKIN (scratching his ears)—"Are you quite sure that the said Chaillot will not get up?"

MYLIO—"Yes; and even if he should get up, there is nothing to fear from him."

GOOSE-SKIN—"You see, the thing is this: These millers have the habit of being always accompanied by some big dog—"

MYLIO—"Master Goose-Skin, I already have pardoned you interruptions enough to almost wipe out your silver deniers. Let me finish. If it should not be convenient for you to lend me your aid, you are free to step back after I shall have imparted my project to you. (Goose-Skin promises to listen.) Well, then, if Florette fails at the rendezvous, you will knock noisily at the house-door of the mill. One of two things: Either the miller's wife, aware of the drunken state of her husband, will herself rise to see who is knocking, or she will send Florette. If the first happens, the dear child has agreed with me that she will profit by her aunt's absence and will run out to meet me; if the second happens, Florette, being thus furnished with a pretext to go out of the house, will likewise come to meet me instead of ascertaining who is knocking at the door. Now, let us suppose that by some miracle Chaillot, not having gone drunk to bed, comes himself to the door. (Goose-Skin mimics the barking of a dog.) Yes, I understand you, Sir Poltroon! Chaillot comes with his dog. It is of that dog that you stand in great fear, not so? (Goose-Skin nods affirmatively, rubbing his calves.) But do you not know, egregious coward, that out of fear for thieves, the occupants of isolated houses never open their doors at night before first calling out and asking who is there? Accordingly, you will have nothing to fear from that terrible dog. You will calmly answer Chaillot that you have a message for his wife from one of the monks of Citeaux and that you must see her immediately. The miller will hasten to call up his worthy spouse. She will hasten to come to the door.

The old busybody has always some secret matter in hand for the hypocrites of the abbey. From there on I shall have to rely upon your own wit, Seigneur Juggler, to give some plausible excuse for your nocturnal call and to keep Chaillotte as long as possible at the door with the charm of your conversational powers."

GOOSE-SKIN—"Venerable matron!" I'll say to the miller's wife, 'I have knocked at your door in order to offer you my humble services. I can break eggs by walking over them, empty a barrel by its bung-hole, make a ball roll and blow out a candle. Do you need any horns for your goats, or teeth for your dogs? Shoes for your cows? I can fashion all those valuable articles, and I am the possessor of a thousand other curious secrets—'"

MYLIO—"I doubt not your eloquence. Keep it for Chaillotte—That is my project. Will you assist me? If you agree, the ten silver deniers are yours."

GOOSE-SKIN—"Give—give—dear and kind friend. I shall sing your praises for your liberality."

MYLIO (putting the money in his hand)—"Here are the ten silver deniers."

GOOSE-SKIN (jumps, capers, clicks the coin in his hands and says)—"Oh, blessed silver! Blessed be thou! With thee one buys women's petticoats and absolutions! Gascon horses and abbeyes! Handsome girls and bishops! Oh, silver! Just show a corner of thy shining countenance, and forthwith even the lame start to run in pursuit of you—(he sings):

"Robin loves me, Robin has me!

Robin wants me, he shall have me!

Robin bought me a dainty hood.

It is scarlet, jaunty and good.

Robin loves me, Robin has me!"

Singing and jumping, Goose-Skin follows Mylio, who strikes across the woods a path that leads to the mill of Chaillot.

CHAPTER III

FLORETTE

After the sparkling carbuncle, the humble violet, hidden under the grass. Son of Joel, you have assisted at the libertine and salacious amusements of the noble ladies assembled in the orchard of the Marchioness of Ariol. Forget for a moment the rare trees, the carefully cultivated flowers, the marble basin of that fairies' garden. Turn your mind from the magnificent displayfulness of that place, and fix it upon the rustic spectacle now presented to you. The moon has risen and shines refulgent from the azure of the star-bespangled dome of heaven. With its mellow rays it lights a leafy willow under which a streamlet, formed by the overflow of the water that turns the mill of Chaillot, flows murmuringly by. The murmur of the running streamlet over its pebbly bottom, from time to time the melodious notes of the nightingale—these alone constitute the music of this beautiful night that is, moreover, embalmed by the perfume of the wild thyme, irises and furze. A girl of fifteen years—Florette—is seated at the edge of the stream on the fallen trunk of an old tree. A ray of the moon that filters through the leafy vault above her head, partially illumines the girl's face. Her long auburn hair parts over her virginal forehead and the two long thick strands into which it is braided reach almost down to the ground. Her only clothing is an old skirt of green serge, fastened at her waist over a shirt of coarse grey material, that is held closed at her bosom with a copper button. Her handsome arms are bare, as are her feet with which she listlessly caresses the silvery water of the stream. Tearful and absorbed in thought, Florette sat down where she was without noticing that her feet dipped in the water. You have seen, son of Joel, the handsome or charming faces of the noble friends of the Marchioness of Ariol. Yet none of those was endowed with the chaste and touching grace that imparts an inexpressible charm to the ingenuous features of Florette. Does not the budding flower, half hidden under the dewy leaf, offer to your eyes in the morning a flitting freshness that the slightest breath might wilt? Such is Florette the spinner. An industrious child, from dawn to dusk, often deep into the night, she spins by the light of her little lamp. She spins, and ever spins, both flax and hemp. She spins them with her dainty fingers that are no less nimble than the spindle itself. Always confined to an ill-lighted chamber, the pure and white skin of the poor serf has not been tanned by the heat of sun; the hard labors of the field have not deformed her delicate hands. Florette sits there so completely absorbed in her own sadness that she does not hear the slight noise that proceeds from the hedge within which the mill is enclosed. Yes, so sorrowful and absent-minded does Florette sit by the stream that she does not even notice Mylio, who, having scaled the hedge, is stepping forward

with caution, looking hither and thither as if expecting to see some one. Having noticed the young girl, whose back is turned to him from where she sits, Mylio approaches without being heard by her, and smiling places his two hands over her eyes; but instantly feeling the tears of the serf wet his fingers, he leaps over the trunk of the fallen tree, kneels down before her and says in a voice of tender solicitude:

"You weep, dear beautiful child?"

FLORETTE (drying her tears and smiling)—"You are now here, Mylio; I shall try to weep no more. The sight of you gives me strength and courage."

MYLIO—"I feared to miss you at our trysting place. But here I am near you, and I trust I can assuage your grief. Tell me, dear child, what is it that makes you weep?"

FLORETTE—"This evening my aunt Chaillotte gave me a new skirt and a waist of fine fabric, and she brought me a bunch of roses for me to weave myself a chaplet."

MYLIO—"Why should these means of beautifying yourself cause your tears to flow?"

FLORETTE—"Alas! My aunt insists on my looking well because she expects seigneur the abbot at the mill to-morrow—he comes to see me, said she."

MYLIO—"The infamous Chaillotte!"

FLORETTE—"My aunt said to me: 'If seigneur the abbot takes a liking to you, you must not repel him. A girl should refuse nothing to a priest.'"

MYLIO—"And what did you answer?"

FLORETTE—"That I would obey the holy abbot."

MYLIO—"Would you, indeed!"

FLORETTE—"I did not wish to irritate my aunt this evening. A refusal might have angered her. She has suspected nothing, and I have been able to come here."

MYLIO—"But to-morrow, when the abbot will come would you consent—"

FLORETTE—"Mylio, to-morrow you will not be there, as you were a fortnight ago, to dash to my assistance and prevent me from being broken in the wheel of the mill—"

MYLIO—"Do you contemplate dying?"

FLORETTE—"A fortnight ago and out of fear at the sight of seigneurs the monks, I fell into the water without meaning to—to-morrow I shall voluntarily throw myself into the river. (The young girl wipes her tears with the back of her hand, and drawing from her bosom a little box-wood spindle gives it to the trouvère.) A serf and an orphan, I own nothing in the world but this little spindle. For six years, in order to gain the bread that my aunt frequently begrudged me, this spindle has whirled from morning to night between my fingers; but in the last fortnight it has more than once stood still, every time I interrupted my work to think of you, Mylio—of you who saved my life. I therefore now ask you as a favor that you keep the spindle as a souvenir of me, poor wretched serf!"

MYLIO (with tears in his eyes and pressing the spindle to his lips)—"Dear little spindle, thou, the companion of the lonely watches of the little spinner; thou, who earned for her a bitter enough daily bread; thou, that, lost in revery, she often contemplated hanging from a single thread; dear little spindle, I shall ever keep thee, thou shalt be my most precious treasure. (He takes from his fingers several gold rings ornamented with precious stones and throws them into the stream that runs at his feet.) To the devil with all these impure souvenirs!"

FLORETTE—"Why do you cast these rings into the water? Why do you throw them away? Why that imprecation?"

MYLIO—"Go! Go! ye shameful souvenirs of an impure life! Ephemeral pledges of a love as fickle as the waters that are now carrying you away! Go! I prefer the spindle of Florette!"

FLORETTE (takes and kisses the trouvère's hands, and murmurs amid tears)—"Oh, Mylio! I shall die happy!"

MYLIO (closing her in his arms)—"Die! You, die? Sweet, dear child, no! Oh, no! Will you follow me?"

FLORETTE (sadly)—"You are trifling with me. What an offer do you make to me!"

MYLIO—"Will you accompany me? I know in Blois a worthy woman, to whose house I shall take you. You will remain hidden in the house two or three days. We shall then depart for Languedoc, where I shall meet my brother. During the journey you shall be my sister; upon our arrival you will become my wife. My brother will bless our union. Will you entrust yourself to me? Will you follow me on the spot? Will you come to my country and live near my brother? All that I am telling you can be easily done."

FLORETTE (has listened to the *trouvere* with increasing astonishment, she passes her two hands over her forehead and says in a tremulous voice)—"Am I dreaming? Is it yourself who ask me whether I would follow you? Whether I would consent to be your wife?"

MYLIO (kneels down before the young serf, takes her two hands and answers passionately)—"Yes, sweet child. It is myself who am saying to you: 'Come, you shall be my wife! Will you be Mylio's?'"

FLORETTE—"Whether I will? To leave hell for paradise? Yes, I consent to follow you!"

MYLIO (rises and listens in the direction of the hedge)—"It is the voice of Goose-Skin! He is calling for help! What can have happened!"

FLORETTE (clasping her hands in despair)—"Oh! I knew it! It was a dream!"

MYLIO (draws his sword and takes the girl's hand)—"Follow me, dear child; fear nothing. Mylio will know how to defend you."

The *trouvere* walks rapidly towards the hedge, holding Florette by the hand. The cries of Goose-Skin redouble in the measure that Mylio approaches the hedge that surrounds the garden of the mill, and behind which he causes Florette to conceal herself with the recommendation that she remain silent and motionless. He then leaps over the enclosure, and by the light of the moon he perceives the juggler puffing and blowing and wrestling with a man whose face is concealed under the hood of his brown cloak. At the sight of Mylio running to his help, Goose-Skin redoubles his efforts and succeeds in throwing his adversary down. Turning thereupon his own enormous weight to account, and thereby easily keeping the hooded man under him, the juggler, who is now out of breath with the struggle, lays himself face down, flat upon his adversary, who, feeling himself crushed under the extraordinary weight, gasps in a rage: "Wretch—vagabond—to—smother—me!"

GOOSE-SKIN (panting for breath)—"Ouf! After victory how delightful, how glorious to rest on one's laurels! Victory! Victory, Mylio! The monster is overcome!"

THE HOODED MAN—"I die—under—this mountain of flesh! Help! Help!—I die—Help!"

MYLIO—"My old Goose-Skin, I shall never forget the service that you have rendered me. Do not move. Keep that fellow down! Do not allow him to rise and flee."

GOOSE-SKIN (stretching himself more and more at his ease over the prostrate body of his adversary)—"Even if I wanted to rise, I could not, I am so completely out of breath. Besides, I feel myself quite comfortable upon the round cushion under me."

THE HOODED MAN—"Help! Murder! This beggar is breaking my ribs—Help!"

MYLIO (quickly stooping down)—"I know this voice! (He removes the hood that hides the face of the vanquished man) Abbot Reynier! The superior of the Abbey of Citeaux!"

GOOSE-SKIN (with a rude up-and-down wobble that draws a moan from the monk)—"An abbot! I have the round body of an abbot for mattress! Oxhorns! Suppose I take a nap! I would surely dream of pretty nuns and good fare!"

MYLIO (to the monk)—"Ha! Ha! Sir Ribald! Consumed by your lustful appetite you could not wait until to-morrow to eat the dainty dish of fritters that you yesterday spoke about to me. Aye, driven by your voracious hunger, you meant to introduce yourself this very night into the house of the infamous Chaillotte, feeling assured that she would be ready to dance attendance upon you at all hours! Ha! Ha! Sir Priapus! You are there like a fox caught in a trap!"

GOOSE-SKIN—"I was hidden in the shadow, when I saw this fellow slinking up to the hedge and making ready to climb it. Like a true Caesar, I fell upon him when he was out of his balance—and I shall hold him. I am on top! The enemy is vanquished!"

ABBOT REYNIER—"Oh, you brace of vile jugglers! You will pay dearly for this outrage!"

MYLIO—"You speak truly, Reynier, abbot superior of the monks of Citeaux of the Abbey of St. Victor! To-morrow it will be daylight, and that daylight will expose your shame! You tonsured hypocrites may impose upon simpletons and fools, but my valiant friend Goose-Skin and myself are neither simpletons nor poltroons! We also enjoy a certain power! Now, remember this, Sir Ribald. Should you be foolhardy enough to try to do us some injury in revenge for this night's affair, we shall put it into a song—Goose-Skin for the taverns, myself for the castles. By heaven! From one end of Gaul to the other the lay will be sung of 'Reynier, Abbot of Citeaux, going at night to snoop fritters at Chaillotte's, the miller's wife, and getting only blows for his pains.'"

GOOSE-SKIN—"You fat monastic debauchee, trust to me for adding all the needed zest to the music!"

ABBOT REYNIER (panting for breath)—"You are sacrilegious wretches—I am here at your mercy—I promise you to keep quiet. But, Mylio, are you after my life? Order this monstrous varlet of yours to roll off me—I am suffocating! Mercy!"

MYLIO—"In order to be properly punished for having dreamed of a paradise of love, you may well tarry a little longer in purgatory, my chaste monk! You, Goose-Skin, keep him fast until you hear me cry: 'Good-evening, Sir Ribald!' You may then rise, and Seigneur Fox may run off with his ears hanging, and take shelter in his holy burrow. Here is my sword, with which you may keep this model of monastic chastity in check if he should endeavor to rebel against you. To-morrow morning, my valiant Caesar, I shall inform you of any further projects."

GOOSE-SKIN (takes up the sword, changes his posture in such a way that he sits squarely upon the monk's stomach, and, pointing the sword at the face of the prostrate man, says)—"You can go, Mylio; I shall wait for the signal."

The trouvere re-enters the garden and speedily issues out of it with Florette, whom he has wrapped in his cloak. He takes her in his arms and helps her leap over the hedge, and thereupon the two lovers walk rapidly towards the shaded road on which they presently disappear. At the sight of the young serf, whom he immediately recognizes, Abbot Reynier emits a deep sigh of grief and rage, a sigh that is rendered doubly doleful by the weight of the juggler, who, comfortably seated upon the monk's stomach, endeavors to while away the time both to himself and his prisoner by singing the following bucolic:

"Fresh when blooms the violet,
And the rose and gladiol',
When the nightingale's songs roll,
Then I'm lured in love's sweet net,
Sing a song much prettier yet,
For the love of my own pet,
For the love of my Gueulette."

ABBOT REYNIER (in a fainting voice)—"The vagabond—is—flattening out my intestines—he is pressing the life out of—me—"

MYLIO (from the distance)—"Good-evening, Sir Ribald! I can hear you from afar!"

GOOSE-SKIN (rises with difficulty by helping himself up with one hand; with the other he holds the sword pointed at the monk while he thus walks backward in the direction whence the voice of Mylio came)—"Good-evening, Sir Ribald! This is the moral of the adventure: 'He who fries the fish, often sees it eaten by another.'"

CHAPTER IV

THE GARDEN OF EGLANTINE

The night and two-thirds of the day have passed since the adventures of the previous evening. You now see, son of Joel, a long avenue of odoriferous trees that lead to the Court of Love, otherwise known as the "Session Under the Elm." The session is held in the garden of the castle of Eglantine, Viscountess of Seligny. On either side of the avenue, the walled ditches are filled with limpid water, where swans and other beautiful aquatic birds disport themselves. They swim and frolic in loving couples, and cut gracefully through the water. The golden fish in the canals, the twittering birds that flutter overhead from branch to branch, seem also to go in couples. Only a poor featherless turtle dove, perched on the top of a dead tree, utters plaintive notes in its lonely singleness. The long alley which is intersected only by the bridge of the canal, runs out upon a grass-plot that is studded with a thousand flowers and in the center of which a magnificent elm raises its majestic trunk, the thick foliage of whose branches builds a thick dome that is impenetrable to the rays of the sun. It is under this elm that are held the sessions of the Court of Love, a licentious tribunal that is also called the "Chamber of Sweet Vows." The court is presided over by a "Queen of Beauty," who represents Venus. The queen is Marphise, the Marchioness of Ariol. The assistant female judges are Deliane, the Canoness of Nivelles, Eglantine, Viscountess of Seligny, and Huguette of Montreuil. The male judges at the Court of Love are, first of all, Sir Hercules, Seigneur of Chinon, a redoubtable knight, blind of one eye and ugly, but, it is said, much in demand with the ladies. He wears a rich tunic with flowing sleeves, and on his black and kinky hair a chaplet of gladiolas bound together with a pink ribbon. Next to him in importance is Adam the Hunchback of Arras, a trouvère renowned for his licentious songs; he is short and bears a hump both in front and behind. His eyes sparkle with mischief; he looks like an old monkey. Next comes Master Oenobarbus, the theological rhetorician, celebrated for the orthodoxy of his religious controversies with the University of Paris. The illustrious disputer is a dry, bilious and bald old man. Nevertheless he affects the dandy, snaps his eyes, squeezes his mouth into the shape of a heart and paints his hollow cheeks. He wears a tunic of pale green silk, and his chaplet of interwoven daisies and violets conceals only partly his scrawny lemon-colored skull. The last of the masculine judges is Foulques, Seigneur of Bercy, only recently back from the Holy Land. His bronzed and scarred visage testifies to his valiant services beyond the seas. He is young, tall, and despite his somewhat ferocious mien, has a pleasant face.

Garlands of flowers and streamers of ribbons hanging from gilt pillars mark the sacred precincts of the tribunal. Farther away stands a brilliant and choice assembly—noble ladies and knights, abbots and abbesses from the neighboring monasteries. Mischievous looking pages and jesting equerries have also put in an appearance at this session of the Court of Love. Among the vast assemblage are the eleven friends of Marphise, who the previous afternoon enjoyed the liberality of her hospitality and joined her in swearing vengeance upon Mylio the Trouvere, a vengeance, however, that he escaped by failing at the rendezvous which engaged him to be in Marphise's orchard at night. The petulant and vindictive little Countess Ursine, the bitterest of all the twelve enraged beauties, can not keep in one place for a single instant. She bristles from one lady friend to the other with an air of importance and anger; whispers in the ear of one; makes a sign to another, and from time to time exchanges significant looks with Marphise, the President of the tribunal. Two large posts covered with foliage and flowers and each surmounted with a silk flag—one bearing the effigy of Venus, the other that of her son Cupid—mark the entrance to the Court of Love. At the entrance of the enclosure stands Giraud of Lancon, a noble knight, who officiates as the porter of the Chamber of Sweet Vows. He allows no lady pleader to enter without exacting from her the toll of a kiss. Within the enclosure, and ready for the orders of the tribunal, are William, Seigneur of Lamotte, whose office is Conservator of the High Privileges of Love; Lambert, Seigneur of Limoux, who is the Bailiff of the Joy of Joys; Hugues, Seigneur of Lascy, who is the Seneschal of Sweet-Marjoram, and, as such, the one upon whom the duty devolves of introducing the fair pleaders, from whom he also has the right to exact the fee of a kiss; moreover it is his duty to assist the Bailiff of the Joy of Joys in chaining with streamers of ribbons and flowers those upon whom the tribunal pronounces sentence, and to lead them to the Prison of Love—a somber tunnel of verdure furnished with moss couches, and located at a secluded spot of the garden.

Such are the morals of these noble women and men; such are the pastimes and amusements of the nobility of this epoch. Son of Joel, listen and look; but do not feel surprised if at times your heart should leap with indignation or sink with disgust.

Presently silence is ordered. Marphise, the President, opens a little cage with gilt bars that is placed near her. Two white doves fly out, flutter about for a moment, and then perch themselves on one of the branches of the elm where they fall to cooing lovingly. The flight of the doves announces the opening of the session.

MARPHISE (rising)—"Let our Conservator of the High Privileges of Love call the cases that are to come up to-day before the Chamber of Sweet Vows."

WILLIAM OF LAMOTTE (reading from a parchment ornamented with blue and red bows)—"Aigline, high and noble Lady of La Roche-Aubert, Canoness of Mons-en-Puelle, plaintiff; Sister Agnes, Bernardine nun, known by the surname of the Plump Beauty, defendant."

The two parties to the suit step out of the crowd and approach the precincts of the tribunal, led by the Seneschal of Sweet-Marjoram. Canoness Aigline is handsome and tall, her mien is imperious. She steps forward, proud and arrogant, dressed in a long scarlet robe embroidered with ermine. Her deliberate gait, her eyes, dark, brilliant and bold, her stately beauty, contrast strongly with the humble attitude of her opponent, Sister Agnes, the Bernardine nun known as the Plump Beauty. The latter wears an unassuming robe of lustrous and well-fitting grey drugget, that, however, sets off her ample proportions. A linen veil, white as snow, frames in her face which shines with freshness and health. Her plump and rosy cheeks are as downy as a peach. A smile that is both pious and arch plays around her mouth, which, although rather large, is appetizingly red and is furnished with two rows of pearly teeth. Her large blue and amorous eyes are devoutly lowered and impart to her the appearance of a purring puss. Her gait, in keeping with her appearance, causes the hem of her dress just to graze the sward, without, however, throwing the folds of her dress into disorder. Altogether, Sister Agnes presents the aspect of the most charming woman who ever emitted a sigh of love from under her monastic veil or in the oratory of a convent.

At the moment when the stately and haughty canoness, accompanied by the modest and well-rounded sister in grey, passes before Giraud of Lancon, a veritable devil in sheepskin with eyes that sparkle with indomitable fire, posted at the entrance of the sacred precincts of the Court, he claims from the two litigants the toll that is due him—a kiss from each. The superb Aigline drops the kiss with the disdainful pride of a rich woman who gives an alms to a poor waif. Sister Agnes, on the contrary, acquits herself of her toll duties with such conscientiousness and suavity that the porter's eyes glisten like two burning coals. The canoness and the Bernardine nun step into the enclosure reserved for the litigants. Aigline advances with resolute steps to the foot of the tribunal, where Marphise sits enthroned in the seat of Venus the Queen of Love, and after making a slight bow, as if the token of deference severely tried her pride, addresses the Court in a sonorous voice:

"Gracious Queen, deign to listen to us; receive with kindness the complaints of your faithful subjects, who, until now jealous for your cult, promise ever to remain equally devoted. For a long time all that was noble and gallant deemed it a glory to love us, us the canonesses. But, lo and behold, the grey Bernardine nuns are now striving to capture our friends away from us. These interloping nuns are alluring and complaisant, and they demand neither attention nor patient devotion. And so it happens that the men are occasionally base enough to prefer these nuns to us noble ladies. Therefore have we come, gracious Queen, to pray you that you curb the insolence of the Bernardines, in order that henceforth they shall not aspire after the noblemen who are made for us, and for whom we are created."

The Bernardine nun steps forward in her turn, but timid and so modest, and with her white hands so piously joined over her well-rounded bust that all hearts are in her favor even before she has spoken. Instead of only slightly bowing before the tribunal, as her accuser had done, the little grey sister humbly falls upon her knees, and without even daring to raise her beautiful blue eyes, addresses Marphise in a sweet voice that sounds like the rippling of pearls:

"Kind and mighty Queen, to whose service the lives of us poor Bernardine nuns are pledged, I have heard the accusation of our proud enemies. What! Has not the Almighty Creator shaped us also for love? Are there not among us women as beautiful and as attractive as among the superb canonesses? Ermine and scarlet ornament their gowns, while in the simplicity of our Order, our gowns have no ornament but that of neatness. I admit that. But in exchange, we have ways, practices and observances that, it seems to me, are at least equal to beautiful gowns. The canonesses claim that we pilfer their friends away from them. No! No! It is their haughtiness that repels their friends. Clad in our own angelic sweetness, their friends prefer us to them. To please without being exacting, to charm without dominating, to tender a love that is humble yet at once fervent and disinterested—that is all our 'artfulness.' Oh, kind Queen, is it any fault of ours if our adversaries fail to practice so simple an art—the art of loving?"

AIGLINE THE CANONESS (excitedly)—"What! Are these servants of the poor to be allowed to add insult to injury? Certes, that man ought to blush at his taste who should prefer a Bernardine nun to us—a Bernardine nun with her grey skirt and her convent gossip! What knight would ever think of them were it not for their impudent and persistent wiles? Brazen provocations, that is the secret of their power! Seeing that it must be said, I shall tell you, Oh Queen, to the shame of the Love whose protecting mother you are, to the shame of the Love that moans at beholding itself thus dragged into the mire,

it is by the baseness of their attachments that so many noble hearts, who otherwise would belong to us, are lost. (Imperiously addressing the little sister in grey) Go to! You have your mendicant monks and your convent brothers. That should suffice you. Keep them. They would cut but a sorry figure in our monasteries of Maubeuge, of Mons or of Nivelles—the rendezvous of the choicest company. But dare not to raise your aspirations to the knights, to the Princes of the Church, to the nobles, to the canons or to the abbots. I forbid you!"

THE BERNARDINE NUN (with a bitter-sweet accent)—"You always return to our grey skirts! Certes, they are not as costly as your scarlet robes. And therefore it is not on that plane that we draw the comparison between us. What we hold is that we are at least equal to you in point of heart, in point of youth and in point of our charms. It is in the name of these humble qualities, which we believe we possess, and in the name of the fervor with which, Oh! Queen, we have ever worshiped at your altars, that we, Bernardine nuns, conjure you to accord to us the benefit of Love, and we request that you deny the unjust pretensions of the canonesses, and that, by a decree issued from the Chamber of Sweet Vows, these insatiable petitioners be and remain forever non-suited."

After pronouncing with energy the last words of her plea, the little sister in grey modestly bows before the Court. Heated discussions forthwith break out in the audience. Opinion is divided. Some approve the haughty demands of the canonesses. Others, on the contrary, maintain that the Bernardine nuns have the right on their side in refusing to allow themselves to be dispossessed of the friends whom they have won by their sweetness and grace. Marphise consults the tribunal, and then gives judgment amid profound silence, as follows:

"You, canonesses, and you, Bernardine nuns, have come here to demand judgment in the name of the Goddess of Love, whose unworthy representative I am. This is the decree that she orders me to pronounce in her name: It is I, Venus, who cause Love to spring up in the human bosom. There is no creature in nature whom I do not inspire with certain desires. Fishes, birds and quadrupeds, all render allegiance to my empire. Animals, however, only follow their own instincts. Man is the only being whom God has endowed with the gift of choice. Accordingly, whatever his choice may be, I approve it, provided only it is guided by Love. In my eyes, the female serf and the daughter of the monarch are equal, provided they be young, handsome and loyally and devotedly love. Canonesses in robes of ermine and purple, I always have esteemed your services; your rich attire, your loving graces, your cultivated minds, your ancient nobility will constantly

attract friends to you. Keep them, but do not drive from my amorous Court the poor Bernardine nuns who serve me in their humble capacity with as much ardor, zeal and constancy. You excel them by your raiment; milk and rose water impart attractive whiteness to your skin; the red paint that enlivens your cheeks adds luster to your sparkling eyes; perfumes of the Orient embalm your magnificently braided hair; incessantly surrounded by the flower of knighthood and of the Church, and accustomed to the niceties of language and to choice expressions of gallantry, your conversation is more entertaining than that of the poor grey sisters, who only hear the flat language and coarse raillery of mendicant monks and convent brothers. You are more dazzling and dashing than the humble Bernardines. Nevertheless, the gentle and well-fed mule of a curate goes as far as the curveting palfrey of a knight. The pheasant seduces our eyes with its golden and azure plumage. Nevertheless, it is the bird's delicate, white and fat meat that pleases the palate; and the partridge, under its modest grey feathers, is as toothsome as the brilliant bird of Phoenicia. I never could order any of the subjects of my empire to prefer this lady-love to that. I will that their choice be free, varied and numerous. As to your lovers, noble canonesses, it depends upon you alone whether you will keep them or not. Be, like the Bernardine nuns, at once sweet and ardent, obliging and exacting. You will not then ever have to fear any infidelity."

The decree, worthy of Solomon, is received with general approval. Nevertheless, yielding to a pardonable sense of fellowship, Deliane the canoness emerges from her habitual languor, and seems to protest to the other members of the tribunal against a decree that she regards as unfavorable to the station of the canonesses. No less angry than Deliane, forgetful of the religious respect that the decrees of the sovereign Court are to be surrounded with, at the moment when, led by the Seneschal of Sweet-Marjoram, Aigline leaves the precinct of the tribunal the latter pinches the Bernardine nun in the arm and says to her in a spiteful tone: "Oh, you menial!—you have had me non-suited—just heavens!—me!—non-suited!" Although smarting both from the words and the vicious pinch, the little sister in grey contains herself and casts an angelic look heavenward as if to court the Almighty's favor with her martyrdom. The slight commotion created by the vicious prank of the canoness is quickly calmed, and Marphise says:

"The case has been heard and judged. Now our Bailiff of the Joy of Joys shall submit to us the disputed questions of Love, if there be any, in order that the Court may pass upon them, and its decisions have the force of law."

THE BAILIFF OF THE JOY OF JOYS (advances to the foot of the tribunal carrying in one hand a roll of parchment tied in many-colored ribbons; he bows to Marphise and says:)—"Illustrious Queen, I have received a large number of questions touching upon grave, ticklish and delicate points concerning the orthodoxy of Love. From all the corners of the empire of Venus, your subjects address themselves to your supreme infallible Court, and implore the charity of its light. The duchy of Languors, the marquisate of Desires, the county of Refusal, the barony of Expectation, together with so many other fiefs of your kingdom, Oh! gracious Queen, humbly pray the Chamber of Sweet Vows to pass upon the following questions, to the end that its decree may put an end to the doubts of the people and determine the doctrine they are to adhere to. They all stand in as much dread of heresy in matters that concern Love, as they do in matters that concern the salvation of their souls."

MARPHISE—"Let our Bailiff of the Joy of Joys read the questions that have been sent to be submitted to the Court. The Court will then go into deliberative session, unless some urgent case that demands immediate trial present itself in the meantime."

Saying this Marphise exchanges looks with Countess Ursine, whose petulant impatience has been steadily on the increase.

THE BAILIFF OF THE JOY OF JOYS—"These are the questions submitted to the supreme and infallible decision of the Court:

"1—Who should be sadder, he whose lady-love has died, or he whose lady-love marries?

"2—Who should feel greater affliction, the husband whose wife is unfaithful, or the lover who is deceived by his lady-love?

"3—Who is more to be blamed, he who boasts of favors that have not been accorded him, or he who divulges the favors he has received from his fair lady-love?

"4—You have a rendezvous with a married woman, which should you prefer—to see the husband leave the house of your lady-love when you are entering it; or see him enter when you are leaving?

"5—You have a lady-love; a rival takes her from you; which of the two should feel happier—you who have been the fair one's first love, or your rival whom she now prefers to you?

"6—A lover is enjoying the favors of his lady-love; a rival is in a fair way of gaining them; she dies; which of the two should experience deeper sorrow at the cruel loss?

"7—Your lady-love proposes to you one single day of joy under the condition that you never after see her again; or she offers to see you every day without, however, ever granting you any favors—which would you prefer?"

"Oh, the devil!" cries Foulques of Bercy, one of the judges of the Court of Love, suddenly interrupting the Bailiff of the Joy of Joys, "the thing to do is to accept the day that is offered, and to enjoy it all you can!"

MARPHISE (turning with severity towards the Seigneur of Bercy)—"We wish to remind our gracious colleague that in a matter of such gravity and importance the individual opinion of one member of the Court may in no wise prejudge the merits of the case. (Foulques of Bercy bows reverently.) Let our bailiff continue to read."

THE BAILIFF OF THE JOY OF JOYS—"8—Who should prize himself happier—an old woman who has a young man for her lover, or an old man who has a young girl for his lady-love?

"9—Which is preferable for a lady-love, a married woman or a maid?

"10—What is preferable, an unfaithful but beautiful lady-love, or a less beautiful but faithful one?

"11—Two women are equal in point of beauty, of youth and of worth; one has loved before; the other is still a novice; should a lover be more anxious to please the former than to be beloved by the latter?

"12—A woman has obstinately rejected her lover and thereby caused his death; should she be considered barbarous and a homicide, responsible for the death that she caused?

"Such are the grave questions submitted for the decision of the Chamber of Sweet Vows, and concerning which the inhabitants of the empire of Cytherea humbly pray the Court to deliberate and pass upon, to the end that the Court's decisions may be taken for a guide, and the people be not exposed to fall into detestable and damnable heresies in matters of Love."

ADAM THE HUNCHBACK OF ARRAS—"As a member of the Court I shall request our beautiful and gracious President to give me leave to make a remark upon the last question."

MARPHISE—"Illustrious trouvère, it is always happiness to us to hear your voice. Impart to us your precious observation."

ADAM THE HUNCHBACK OF ARRAS—"I am of the opinion that the last question should be excluded. It is no longer a debatable question. It has been more than once decided in the affirmative—"

MASTER OENOBARBUS THE THEOLOGIAN—"Yes, the question has been disposed of in the affirmative upon the reasoning presented by me. I beg leave of the Court to be allowed to refresh its memory upon my reasoning. It was this:

"The Court, being consulted upon the question whether a woman, who, by reason of her austerity, causes the death of a gallant, is a homicide. Whereas, if Love hates obdurate hearts, God hates them no less; whereas, God, the same as Love, allows Himself to be disarmed by a tender prayer; whereas, whatever the manner may be in which a man's death is brought about, you are guilty of murder from the moment that it appears that the death resulted from your action; therefore the Court of Sweet Vows decrees and orders as follows: The woman, who, through the rigor of her refusal, has caused the death of a gallant, by whom she was loyally courted, is actually guilty of barbarism and homicide.'

"Such was the decision of the Court. I do not believe the Court is willing to reconsider its decree."

All the members of the tribunal rise and declare that they adhere to their former judgment.

ADAM THE HUNCHBACK OF ARRAS—"In order to corroborate our decree and to render it more popular and easy to be remembered, I propose that it be formulated in meter, as follows:

"You are pretty, young and tender,

Deigned to others show much good:

Hear my verdict: Nothing e'er would

God above so much displease

As to let a Christian die, whom

You could save with greatest ease."

Both the tribunal and the audience applaud the metrical rendition of the decree, as proposed by Adam the Hunchback of Arras. The Court proceeds with the business before it.

MARPHISE—"Our Bailiff of the Joy of Joys shall insert the memorable decree in the archives of the Court, and order all our trouveres, minstrels, jugglers and other sinful brothers of the gay science, that they spread the formula of the sovereign decree with their songs among the subjects of Cytherea, to the end that none may plead ignorance on the head of the monstrous heresy—the idea that a woman who causes the death of her gallant by reason of her refusal is not a homicide."

MASTER OENOBARBUS THE THEOLOGIAN (with fanatical zeal)—"Yes; let the women know that if other heresies may be expiated on earth in the flames of the pyre, the vestibule of the eternal fire, let the tigresses know that before they reach the furnace of Satan they will have to expiate their impiousness in this world in the furnace of remorse. Night and day they have before their eyes the specter of the ill-starred gallant, their victim."

DELIANE THE CANONESS (plaintively languorous)—"Oh, only the pursuit of their gallants on the other side of the grave will cause these inhuman women to understand—but, alas! only too late—all the harm they have done."

MARPHISE (vainly seeking to detect the impatient Countess Ursine in the audience)—"Well—seeing that there is no other pressing suit before the Court, the tribunal will now take up the questions that have been submitted to it, and all of which demand its attention."

CHAPTER V

THE CRUSADERS!

The Queen of Beauty and President of the Court of Love has barely pronounced the words that indicate the taking up of the routine work before her, when the petulant Ursine hurriedly elbows her way through the crowd and presents herself at the entrance of the sacred precinct. Giraud, Seigneur of Lancon, demands in his quality of porter the customary toll due him—a kiss from the fair litigant. Ursine gives him two on the mouth and walks to the foot of the tribunal crying: "Justice! Justice!"

MARPHISE (with a sigh of relief and triumph)—"Speak, dear friend. Justice will be rendered to you, if your right is clear."

COUNTESS URSINE (imperiously)—"Whether my right is clear! Just heavens! Whether our rights are clear, I should say! I am the representative of eleven victims, among whom I am the twelfth!"

MARPHISE—"Justice will be done to each and to all. What is your grievance?"

COUNTESS URSINE—"Each of us, my eleven companions and myself, had a secret gallant. He was charming, witty, daring, bold. Suddenly we learned that we all had the identical lover! The traitor was deceiving all twelve of us at once! Was there ever such audacity?"

ADAM THE HUNCHBACK OF ARRAS (claps his hands and exclaims:)—"What! All the twelve! Oh, the terrible man! What an ample heart must not his be!"

The unheard-of felony throws the members of the Court into mute stupor, except Marphise, Deliane, Huguette and Eglantine, who exchange knowing looks among themselves.

FOULQUES OF BERCY—"I wish to put a question to the plaintiff. Did the prodigious criminal at the time when his shocking infidelity was discovered show himself less daring than usual towards the plaintiff and her companions in misfortune?"

COUNTESS URSINE (with an explosion of violent indignation)—"Never did the criminal act more charming. And we said so in secret to one another, unknowing, alas! that we were all the while speaking of the identical

deceiver! We each said to the others: 'I have a magnificent lover, a matchless gallant! He is always the same'—"

FOULQUES OF BERCY—"And you were all the time being nicely deceived, all the twelve?"

COUNTESS URSINE (furious)—"Yes! It is that very circumstance that renders the traitor all the more guilty!"

Foulques of Bercy shrugs his shoulders and does not seem to share the plaintiff's opinion regarding the aggravation of the offense. Several members of the Court, Marphise, Deliane, Eglantine and Huguette, excepted, the majority of the fair ones in the gathering seem, on the whole, rather to take the view of Foulques of Bercy, and to see an extenuating circumstance in the very enormity of the misdeed. Marphise notices with deep concern the propensity to indulgence. She rises majestically in her seat and says:

"I wish to believe that all the members of the Court join me in feeling a legitimate indignation at the miscreant, who, trampling under foot all the divine and human laws of Love, has dared to commit so formidable an offense against fidelity. If, however, it should happen that I am mistaken; if there be any member of this tribunal inclined to indulgence in sight of such an enormity, let him admit it openly, and his name and his views will be proclaimed throughout the length and breadth of the empire of Cytherea."

A profound silence ensues among the members of the Court.

MARPHISE (radiant)—"Oh, I felt certain that this august tribunal, which has been established in order to take, with severe solicitude, cognizance of the crimes against Love and to check them, aye, even to punish them, if need be, would show itself worthy of its mission. (Addresses the countess.) Dear friend, did you summon the criminal to our bar?"

COUNTESS URSINE—"Yes, I summoned him to appear before the Court of Sweet Vows; and whether it be audacity on his part or a stricken conscience, he has obeyed the summons. I demand that it may please the Court to deliver him to the twelve victims of his felony. They will wreak signal vengeance upon him. (Impetuously.) We must see to it before everything else that the monster, the traitor, the felon shall no longer be able to deceive other women—and that he be punished on the spot—"

MARPHISE (hastening to interrupt the countess)—"Sweet friend, before inflicting punishment, the Court must hear the accused."

COUNTESS URSINE—"The culprit has obeyed our summons and has come accompanied by a fat varlet of a man, whom, he says, he may need in his defense. They are both locked up in the Prison of Love back of the garden."

MARPHISE—"We order our Seneschal of Sweet-Marjoram and our Bailiff of the Joy of Joys to bring forth the culprit and to lead him hither in chains as is the usage, with the customary garlands on his head."

The Seneschal and the Bailiff furnish themselves with two long red and blue ribbons to which several bouquets of flowers are fastened and proceed towards the shady tunnel to fetch the prisoner. A great agitation reigns among the crowd. Opinion is divided on the degree of the culprit's guilt. Unanimous, however, is the curiosity to see the lusty champion. Mylio the Trouvere presently appears, led by the Seneschal of Sweet-Marjoram and the Bailiff of the Joy of Joys. Goose-Skin modestly remains outside of the enclosure of the Court. The youth and good looks of the accused, his renown as a poet and singer, immediately turn the female portion of the assembly in his favor.

MARPHISE (addressing Mylio in an imposing voice)—"You are charged before the Chamber of Sweet Vows with a crime unheard-of in the annals of Love. What have you to say in your own defense?"

MYLIO—"What is the crime that I am charged with?"

MARPHISE—"You have deceived twelve women at once. Each of them believed she alone had you for her gallant. What blacker treason can there be?"

MYLIO—"Who are my accusers? I demand to see them and to be confronted by them."

COUNTESS URSINE (impetuously)—"I accuse you! I am one of your twelve victims. Will you dare to deny your crime?"

MYLIO—"My accuser is such a charming lady, that even if I were innocent I would confess myself guilty. I have come hither to make a solemn expiation of the past. I could choose no better place, no better time, and no better audience. Deign to hear me."

MARPHISE—"Your frankness will not extenuate your crimes, albeit that it does honor to your character. Do I understand you to say that you admit your felony?"

MYLIO—"Yes; I have made love to noble, beautiful, obliging and easy ladies who were mad for pleasure, and who were governed by no law other than their own caprice."

MARPHISE—"Dare you impugn your victims?"

MYLIO—"Far from me be any such thought! Raised in the lap of plenty, ignorance and idleness, those noble ladies only yielded to corrupting examples and counsels. Had they been born in obscurity, leading an honorable existence amidst the occupations and joys of family life, they would all have been exemplary mothers and wives. But how could those noble ladies choose but forget virtue, honor and duty in these shameful days when debauchery has its code and libertinage its decrees, and where unchastity, sitting in a sovereign Court, regulates vice and decrees adultery? Such is the mission of the Court of Love."

Indescribable amazement is depicted on the faces of the Court, its pursuivants and the audience, at the words of Mylio. The members of the Chamber of Sweet Vows look at one another stupefied by the irreverent language. Master Oenobarbus, the theological rhetorician, and Adam the Hunchback of Arras rise to make answer, while the knight Foulques of Bercy, the Seneschal of Sweet-Marjoram and the Bailiff of the Joy of Joys, all of whom are experts at their weapons, mechanically put their hands to their sides in search of their swords. But they all attended Court unarmed, according to the usage of the institution. Marphise raps for silence and says to the *trouvere*:

"Wretch! Dare you insult these august tribunals that are established throughout Gaul in order to propagate the laws of gallantry!"

"And of unbridled lechery!" cries a little flute-like voice, interrupting Marphise. The words proceed from Goose-Skin, who, in order to interject the incongruous words disguised his voice and traitorously hid himself behind a cluster of foliage against which a young page, who was placed near the entrance of the Court, leaned with his back not far from the Seneschal of Sweet-Marjoram. Stung to the quick, the dignitary turns around and seizes the lad by the collar while Goose-Skin, emerging from his hiding place cries in a voice that he purposely renders all the more raucous: "The insolent little joker! From what brothel can he have come that he uses such foul language towards noble dames? He should be driven out on the spot, Seigneur Seneschal of Sweet-Marjoram! Oxhorns—Let us throw him out!"

The poor page looks nonplussed; his face turns red; he is dumbfounded; he seeks in vain to stammer a few words in his own defense; he is beaten by the indignant crowd; and finally, in order to escape worse treatment, flees in the direction of the avenue of trees. After a while the turmoil created by this incident subsides.

MARPHISE (with dignity)—"I know not what were the infamous words that the miserable page, who no doubt is intoxicated, hurled at this tribunal. But the vile words have fallen by virtue of the weight of their own grossness back into the mire from which they issued, and have not been able to rise to the pure ether of Love that this Court inhabits! (A murmur of approbation receives the ethereal response of Marphise, who thereupon proceeds, addressing Mylio:) What! A hundred times did you repeat on the harp the decrees of the tribunal of Cytherea; and now you insult it! Do you forget that only your chants succeeded in lowering the otherwise insuperable barrier that rose between yourself and the noble assemblages where you were tolerated among the knights and the abbots, you, the child of villeins, you, a vile serf, no doubt! The baseness of the language you have held to-day reveals but too clearly the ignominy of your origin."

MYLIO (with bitterness)—"You speak truly. I am of serf stock. For centuries your race has enslaved, degraded and crushed down mine. Yes; while you here brazenly discuss in refined language foolish or obscene subtleties, millions of poor female serfs are not allowed to enter their husbands' bed until they have been soiled by the seigneurs in the name of an infamous law! Oh! What I accuse myself of is having forgotten that fact even for a moment—aye, I accuse myself triply for having done that!"

MARPHISE—"The humble admission is but one more proof of the hugeness of your insolence and of your ingratitude—dozen-fold traitor and felon!"

MYLIO—"You speak truly again! I was cruelly ungrateful towards my family when, several years back, driven by the ardor of youth I left Languedoc, the country of freedom, the country of honorable customs—a happy land that has known how to crop the crests of the seigneurs and to reconquer both its dignity and independence!"

MASTER OENOBARBUS THE THEOLOGIAN (angrily)—"Dare you glorify Languedoc, that devilish country, that hot-bed of heresy!"

FOULQUES (excitedly)—"Languedoc, where the execrable communes of the people still stand unshaken!"

MYLIO (proudly)—"I accuse myself for having left that noble and brave province, and for coming to these debased regions to charm with licentious songs the ears of this nobility that is the foe of my race! That is my real crime."

The proud words of Mylio arouse the indignation of the seigneurs. Fearing lest, in his capacity of the *trouvere's* companion, he may also become the victim of the seigneurs' rage, Goose-Skin profits by the tumult to slide unperceived towards the tunnel of verdure that serves as the Prison of Love. The angered voice of the Seigneur of Bercy rises above the din. Threatening Mylio with his fists, he cries:

"Wretch! To dare insult the knighthood and our holy Church, and that at this place! I shall order my men to seize you, and they will use their straps upon your shins! Miserable slave! Abominable scamp!"

MYLIO (calm and dignified)—"Foulques of Bercy, your men are superfluous. Fetch a sword. Mine lies in the pavilion of verdure. By God! If you are a man this Court of Love will be transformed into an enclosed field and these fair ladies into the judges of the combat!"

FOULQUES (furious)—"Vile serf, I shall punish your insolence with my cane! Down on your knees, villain!"

MYLIO (mockingly)—"By heaven! If your charming wife Emmeline heard you make such threats she would say to you: 'Dear friend, do not insult in that manner Mylio—he is a better man than you; he may hurt you!'"

At the cutting repartee, Foulques bounds from his seat. One of the noblemen in the audience draws his sword, and passing it over to the Seigneur of Bercy, says: "Avenge the affront, kill the villain as you would a dog!" Mylio, unarmed, crosses his arms over his breast and defies his adversary. But Goose-Skin, who, yielding to a first impulse of poltroonery had fled to the Prison of Love where Mylio's sword lay, hears the threats of Foulques, and realizing the danger the *trouvere* runs, takes the sword, returns in haste, and the very moment when the Seigneur of Bercy rushes sword in hand upon Mylio, the latter hears behind him the panting voice of the juggler, saying: "Here is your sword; defend yourself; defend both of us; if you do not I shall be cut into shreds by virtue of our friendship. Oxhorns! Why did we run into this hornets' nest!"

MYLIO (takes his sword and puts himself in a position of defence)—"Thanks, my old Goose-Skin! I shall work for us both! Just watch!"

All in a tremble the juggler shelters himself behind Mylio. Foulques of Bercy, on his part, surprised at seeing the trouvère suddenly armed, remains for a moment in perplexity. A knight is free to kill a defenceless villedin, but to cross steel with one is to disgrace himself.

MYLIO—"What, Foulques! You are afraid! Your wife's warning has convinced you! You fear I may hurt you!"

FOULQUES OF BERCY (emitting a cry of rage and furiously attacking the trouvère)—"You lie in your throat! Dog!"

MYLIO (defending himself and goading Foulques of Bercy with biting mockery)—"I know Emmeline and I know she knows you. Did she not tell you more than once not to get heated lest your adversary whip you?"

FOULQUES OF BERCY (fighting with redoubled impetuosity)—"Death and fury! I must have his life!"

MYLIO (defending himself and still goading the Seigneur of Bercy with his irritating jests)—"She knows you so well for a coward that she made me promise her I would not tell on you when you ran away from a fight, or nicely swallowed an affront."

GOOSE-SKIN (keeping safely entrenched behind the trouvère)—"Oxhorns! Control your tongue! He will have neither pity nor mercy for us! You are driving him so mad that he will have us broiled alive."

FOULQUES OF BERCY (fighting with unabated fury and increased rage at being unable to wound Mylio)—"Blood of Christ! The vile vagabond manages his sword like a knight!"

The combat continues a while longer, with ferocity on the knight's part and imperturbable deliberation on the part of the trouvère, in the center of a circle that consists of the audience and the members of the Court, without either the trouvère or the knight being wounded. Both are strong men and dexterous in the use of weapons. The huge body of Goose-Skin, behind the trouvère, according as the latter's evolutions compel him to move over the ground, jumps hither and thither, backward and forward. His enormous paunch wobbles, he puffs for breath; he seems to be suffocating. Finally, the trouvère ably parries a terrible blow aimed at him by the seigneur and immediately plunges his sword into the knight's thigh. The knight roars with rage, staggers and drops backward upon the blood-stained sword. The witnesses to the combat hurry to bring aid to the vanquished, and for an instant forget the trouvère.

GOOSE-SKIN (out of breath and still holding himself behind Mylio)—"Ouf! The big scamp gave us a deal of trouble before we could bring him down. But now, Mylio, take my advice. Let us profit by the tumult and pull our legs out of the trap."

Suddenly the loud sound of trumpets is heard at the further end of the avenue of trees, and almost immediately a large body of knights, armed cap-a-pie, wearing on their shoulders the cross of the Crusaders and covered with dust, are seen entering the avenue at a gallop. Among them, and also on horseback, is Abbot Reynier, the superior of the monks of Citeaux, clad in his white robe. Equerries follow the train bearing the banners of their respective seigneurs. Arrived at the bridge that intersects the broad avenue of trees, the seigneurs alight.

"The Crusaders! They are back from the Holy Land!" is the affrighted cry that goes up from the gathering of noble ladies and knights congregated at the Court of Love, and taken by surprise by their homing husbands.

The latter mistake the cry for a welcome, and run across the bridge shouting joyfully: "Yes, dear wives! We are back from the Holy Land! Eleven we departed, and eleven we return, thanks to the miraculous protection of the Lord!"

"And of the good St. Arnold, the patron of deceived husbands!" added Goose-Skin aside, as he profited by the tumult created by the new arrivals to slip into the avenue with the *trouvere*. "What a droll and lucky accident! It is the return of the eleven husbands of your eleven sweethearts that saves you from the ire of that crowd! I shall split my sides with laughter!"

Thanks to the general commotion, the *trouvere* and the juggler make good their escape, while the eleven doughty crusading knights gladly call their noble wives to them. The Canoness Deliane, being the only unmarried one of the twelve who met in the orchard of the Lady of Ariol, remains behind. The eleven wives rush into the arms of the valiant crusaders, who, blackened as moles and dusty as tramps, rejoice in the embrace of their faithful spouses.

The first ebullitions of joy having somewhat subsided, Abbot Reynier, clad in the long white robe of the monks of Citeaux, ascends the throne that was until recently occupied by Marphise, the Queen of the Court of Love; commands silence, and, like a new Cuckoo Peter, as Peter the Hermit was popularly called, prepares to spread a new Crusade—this time at home. The Crusade that he has in contemplation is not to the Holy Land. The faith now calls for a raid upon the heretics of the south of Gaul. Silence reigns, and

Abbot Reynier, the sycophantic debauchee, who, driven by his concupiscence, only the evening before clandestinely crept into the close of the mill of Chaillotte, addresses the assembly, not in the savage and fiery language of Peter the Hermit, but in measured words, cold and trenchant as the iron of an axe:

"I have accompanied hither the seigneurs Crusaders, who, anxious to meet their chaste wives, hasten to this place where we find the most illustrious seigneurs of Touraine assembled. Ye noble seigneurs, learned trouveres and noble ladies who hear me, the time is past for frivolous games. The enemy is at our gates. The province of Languedoc has become the hot-bed of an execrable heresy, that is slowly invading the rest of Gaul, and menaces the three sanctuaries, arch-sanctuaries of the land—the Church, the Royalty and the Nobility. The wildest of these heretical miscreants, worse by far than the Saracens themselves, take their arguments from the primitive Evangelium and deny both the authority of the Church and the privileges of the seigneurs; they declare the equality of men; they brand as a theft all wealth in the hands of those who did not produce it; worst of all they hold that 'the serf is the equal of the seigneur, and that he who does not work neither shall he eat!'"

SEVERAL NOBLES' VOICES—"This is infamous! This is insanity! To death with the miscreants!"

ABBOT REYNIER—"It is insanity, it is infamous; furthermore, it is dangerous. The sectaries of this heresy gain daily new proselytes. Their leaders, who are all the more vicious and pernicious seeing they affect to practice the reforms that they preach, acquire in that way a detestable influence over the populace. Their pastors, who replace our own holy Catholic priests, have themselves called 'Perfects.' Finally, in their infernal criminality, they seek to render their own lives exemplary! It is high time that they be exterminated!"

SEVERAL NOBLES' VOICES—"The wretches! The hypocrites! To death with the felons!"

ABBOT REYNIER—"Languedoc, that fertile region that abounds in wealth, is in a frightful condition. The Catholic clergy are despised; the royal authority is hardly recognized; the nobility is no less humbled than the Church herself, and, shocking to say! unheard-of outrage! the nobility of the region is almost wholly infected by the damnable heresy. Everywhere replaced by popular magistrates, and stripped of all special privileges, the seigneurs are confounded among the common people. Serfdom no longer exists in that

country; the nobility works its fields in common with their tenants. Counts and viscounts are seen there engaged in commerce like bourgeois, and growing rich by traffic! Finally, and as if to cap the climax of abomination, the nobility frequently marries Jewish wives, the daughters of opulent merchants!"

SEVERAL NOBLES' VOICES—"Shame! Abomination of desolation! It will be the ruin of Christendom! That calls for vengeance! To the sack with Languedoc! Death to the heretics!"

ABBOT REYNIER—"It is both a shame and a terrible danger, my brothers and sisters. The heresy is spreading amain. If it triumphs, the Church is done for, and so are royalty and nobility. The masses lose the sense of terror for hell that we inculcate. We would then be compelled to renounce our rights, our land, our property. We would be forced to bid adieu to the happy and comfortable life that we lead. We would have to resign ourselves to live by work like the serfs, the rustics and the bourgeois. We would be condemned to help ourselves with our hands! What a distressing perspective!"

SEVERAL NOBLES' VOICES—"It is the end of the world! It is chaos! An end must be put to these heretics! They must be exterminated!"

ABBOT REYNIER—"In order to stamp out this heresy we must make a Crusade against Languedoc! Such a war would be but play for so many valiant men who have traveled as far as the Holy Land to fight the Saracens, and it would be even more meritorious in the eyes of God."

THE ELEVEN CRUSADERS (in chorus)—"Blood of Christ! We have just arrived from Palestine; if God wills it, we are ready to start to-morrow for Languedoc!"

THE ELEVEN WIVES (heroically)—"Go, Oh, valiant husbands! We are resigned to everything that the service of God commands! We are resigned even to the sacrifice of having you absent! Depart immediately, ye champions of the Church! May St. Joseph protect us."

ABBOT REYNIER—"I expected no less from the faith of these valorous knights and from the courage and devotion of their worthy spouses! Oh, dear brothers! If the Crusade to the Holy Land Paradise wins to us, know that the Crusade against Languedoc, a deed that is pious and terrestrial in one, will win for you a double Paradise from God. You will enjoy the heavenly Paradise after death, and before death you will enjoy the terrestrial

Paradise of the fertile lands that you will conquer and divide among yourselves! Such is the will of our Holy Father Innocent III. The holy pontiff has issued to us, his servitor, the order to preach this holy war of extermination. I shall read to you, my beloved brothers and sisters, the letter that he has addressed to us on this occasion:

"INNOCENT III TO HIS DEARLY BELOVED SON REYNIER, ABBOT OF CITEAUX:

"We hereby order you to bring to the knowledge of all princes, counts and seigneurs of your province that we summon them to assist you against the heretics of Languedoc; and that, when they shall have arrived in that country, they banish out of it all those whom you, my son Reynier, shall excommunicate; confiscate their goods, and apply towards them the extreme punishment in case they persist in their heresy. We enjoin all Catholics to arm themselves against the heretics of Languedoc whenever my son Reynier may call upon them so to do, and we grant to those who take part in this expedition for the defence of the faith the property of the heretics and all and the same indulgences that we accord to those who depart on the Crusade to Palestine. Up, then, soldiers of Christ! Up, then militia-men of the holy militia! Exterminate impiety with all the means that God may reveal unto you. Fight the heretics with vigorous and merciless hands by waging against them a harder war than against the Saracens, because they are worse. And let the orthodox Catholics be established on all the domains that now belong to the heretics. Amen!"

The last words of the letter of Pope Innocent III add fuel to the religious enthusiasm of the audience. The noble seigneurs have often heard about the industriousness of the inhabitants of the south of Gaul. They have heard how the people of that region have grown wealthy through a commerce that extends over the Orient and Greece, Italy and Spain; they have heard the praises sung of the soil of Languedoc, which, admirably cultivated, overflows with wine, grain and oil, and abounds in cattle. The conquest of the new and veritable "promised land" is easy. The journey is only about a hundred leagues' distance. What is such a little trip to these doughty fighters, many of whom have traveled as far as Palestine in search of a quarrel? Abbot Reynier's preaching is, accordingly, crowned with completest success. The wives, delighted at being rid again of their husbands, and counting upon their share of the booty of Languedoc, incite the gallant knights to enter again and as soon as possible upon the road of the Crusader against the heretics. What can there be clearer than the heresy of Languedoc? Have not the bedeviled fellows, by abolishing in their south of Gaul the delightful privileges, thanks to which the noble ladies of the north of Gaul live in

luxury, pleasures, idleness and libertinage without other thought than to make love, endangered all the delights in the north of Gaul also? Accordingly, mindful of the possible contagion of such a pestilence, and shuddering at the bare thought of their, noble dames that they are, being reduced to live modestly and industriously by their own labor like the villeins and bourgeois, they cry out louder still than their husbands: "To arms! Death to the heretics!"

The Chamber of Sweet Vows dissolves amidst wild commotion. The larger number of the knights, from the Bailiff of the Joy of Joys to the Seneschal of Sweet-Marjoram, hasten home to prepare for their departure on the Crusade against Languedoc, where they are to exterminate the heretics of the south of France.

CHAPTER VI

ON TO LANGUEDOC!

Happily thrown into the shade by the arrival of the eleven Crusaders from the Holy Land, Mylio and his companion profit by the address of Abbot Reynier to reach a stone stair that leads down to one of the canals, and to conceal themselves under the arch of the bridge. From their place of concealment the two hear the words of the Abbot of Citeaux and the acclamations of his audience. As much surprised as alarmed at the projected war, seeing that his brother Karvel le Brenn is one of the pastors, or Perfects, of the heretics of Languedoc, the *trouvere* hastens to leave the garden without being seen, and skirting the banks of the canal he finally arrives at a secluded spot near the ramparts of Blois.

GOOSE-SKIN (who has followed his friend, and who observed profound silence during his hasty march, finally stops out of breath)—"Because you have the legs of a stag you feel not the least consideration for an honest man who is hampered in his walk by a big paunch that heaven has afflicted him with. Oh! Mylio, what a day this has been! It has made me boil over with rage! If water were not a sort of mortal poison to me, I would have rested on the edge of the garden. It is now night. What say you, shall we drop in at the tavern of my friend Gueulette and gather our spirits? Hey? Mylio? Do you not hear me? (strikes him on the shoulder) Helloa, my bold and brave *trouvere*! Are you dreaming with open eyes?"

MYLIO (awakes from his revery and reaches out his hand to the juggler)—"Adieu, I bid you good-bye!"

GOOSE-SKIN—"How! 'Good-bye!' You are going away? You leave a friend—what ingratitude!"

MYLIO (rummages in his purse)—"I shall share my purse with you. I have not forgotten the service that you have just rendered me."

GOOSE-SKIN (pockets the money that the *trouvere* gives him)—"What! And with that you rid yourself of your old companion? And I promised myself so much pleasure running the country with you!"

MYLIO—"It is impossible! I shall depart instantly, and take Florette along on the crupper of my horse."

GOOSE-SKIN—"I never indulged in the barbarity of crushing a horse under my weight. You have just given me money. I shall purchase an ass, and

shall whip the brute so hard and so incontinently that he will be bound to follow close upon the heels of your horse."

MYLIO—"You wish to accompany me without first inquiring what my destination is?"

GOOSE-SKIN—"Oxhorns! Your route will be from castle to castle to charm the ears and eyes of the beautiful ladies, to live high, to amuse yourself. Oh, let me follow you—Each to his role—You will enchant the noble dames, I their servants. Your harp will be for the large hall of the manor, my hurdy-gurdy for the kitchen. Long live joy, and glory to St. Joseph!"

MYLIO—"No, no! I renounce this life of license and adventure. I am going back to my brother in Languedoc. I shall marry Florette, and, perhaps, hardly shall I be married, when I may have to leave my wife and go to war!"

GOOSE-SKIN—"To war! Did you say to war?"

MYLIO—"Did you not hear that sycophant of an Abbot Reynier preach the extermination of the heretics? My brother is one of their leaders, he is one of the Perfects. I am going to him and shall share the dangers that he runs. So, then, adieu! The journey that I am about to set out upon is not one of pleasure."

GOOSE-SKIN (scratching his ear)—"No! The greater the pity—and yet, if I were sure that I would be no trouble to you on the route, it would please me greatly to accompany you. How can I help it? Friendship, custom—I would be greatly grieved to separate from you. It seems to me that if I leave you I shall for long find the wine bitter and that not a song could issue out of my throat. I can not live without your company."

MYLIO—"Your attachment touches my heart. But to go to Languedoc is to plunge into the risks of war."

GOOSE-SKIN—"I shall not deny that I am as timid as a hare, but perhaps I may acquire a more martial turn if I remain near you. Courage, the saying goes, is contagious. Moreover, as you saw, at a pinch I can be good for something. I can render some slight services. I beg you, Mylio, allow that I follow you. Thanks to this money that you have so generously given me, I shall buy a mount—Hold! It occurs to me that my friend Gueulette's father has a mule that he will be glad to sell for almost nothing. The beast is as stubborn as Gueulette herself; and by departing with you I shall prove to that tigress that I can make light of her attractions. That will be my revenge. So, then, I beg of you to let me accompany you."

MYLIO—"Very well, my old Goose-Skin! Go and purchase your mule. It is now dark. I shall run for Florette to the house of the worthy woman where I have concealed her. We must leave Blois at the earliest possible. Abbot Reynier or the friends of Foulques may give us trouble if we tarry."

GOOSE-SKIN—"Let them come! Oxhorns! I already feel bold and brave! So far from fearing danger, I would court it! Yes, I defy ye, giants, enchanters, and demons—dare to appear before me! Just dare!"

Mylio and Goose-Skin separate, the latter dancing and singing. Their journey to Languedoc is successfully made.

PART II

THE ALBIGENSIAN HERETICS

CHAPTER I

THE PERFECT'S HOME

Son of Joel, you have been made acquainted with the morals of the noble ladies, of the seigneurs and of the abbots of the north of Gaul. To judge by their ardor in undertaking the Crusade preached by Abbot Reynier against Languedoc, the country infected by a devilish heresy, as the monk said, they must be good Catholics. Oh, Fergan, my ancestor! A century ago, you had occasion to shudder at the sight of the gigantic butchery committed by the Crusaders in Jerusalem, where seventy thousand defenceless Saracens were massacred within two days. The monstrosities of the old Crusaders are now repeated in Gaul herself. A war of extermination has been declared by the Pope, not now against the Saracens, but against the sons of our own country. You shall now be acquainted with the morals of these heretics of Languedoc, these honest and industrious people upon whose heads all the furies are to be unchained.

Lavaur, a flourishing city of the country of Albigeois, lies not far from Albi. Sacrovir le Brenn, the son of Colombaik, and grandson of Fergan the Quarryman, who was a tanner like his father, amassed a little property and settled down with his wife and children near Lavaur towards the year 1060. There he purchased a small tract of land which he cultivated with the aid of his children. One of these died young; the other grew to manhood, married and had a son named Conan le Brenn, who was the father of Karvel the Perfect and Mylio the Trouvere.

The scene is placed in the humble but bright home of Karvel. The house is situated at the extreme end of one of the suburbs of Lavaur, a fortified town about seven leagues from Toulouse, the capital of the marquisate of the same name, whose titular master now is Raymond VII.

Karvel exercises the profession of physician. He consolidated his father's heritage with a farmer who, together with his family, occupies one part of the house, while the other part is reserved to Karvel and his wife. Karvel is seated in a spacious chamber the narrow windows of which, made of small glass squares that are held fast in a frame of lead, open upon a meadow crossed by the river Agout. The Agout flows not far from the ramparts of Lavaur. A long table, littered with parchments, stands in the center of the

chamber. On little shelves, ranged along the walls, are vases with leaves or flowers, or filled with bulbs of medicinal plants. In a corner is a stove over which several copper vessels, used in the distillation of certain herbs, are held over the fire by iron tripods. Morise, Karvel's wife, is attending to these, while Karvel himself, leaning over the table, is poring over some manuscripts on the art of healing.

Karvel is about thirty-six years of age. His admirable face is rendered all the more remarkable by the expression of a high degree of intelligence and of inexhaustible kindness. A long robe of black cloth opening wide at his neck exposes the folds of his shirt that is fastened with silver buttons. His wife Morise is thirty. Her blonde hair, braided in plaits, crowns her lovely face, on which, thanks to a happy mixture, playfulness is combined with gentleness and firmness.

Morise interrupts her labors, remains thoughtful for a moment and, contemplating one of the copper vases which is rather more rounded than the rest, smiles and says to her husband:

"That copper vase reminds me of the capers of poor Mylio, your brother. He loved to put the basin over his head as a casque to make me laugh."

KARVEL (smiling sadly)—"But you, in turn, used to compel the giddy-headed boy to taste our bitterest decoctions. Good, dear, Mylio! If only our friend the Lombard merchant succeeded in meeting him in Touraine!"

MORISE—"Our friend surely found him easily. All he had to do would be to inquire after the celebrated Mylio the Trouvere. Your brother's name is so well known that its fame reached as far as here. Was it not only day before yesterday that Aimery was reciting to us some of Mylio's songs translated into the language of this region?"

KARVEL (smiling again)—"Giraude did not altogether share the enthusiasm of her brother Aimery for those licentious verses, and not that she affects prudery. I have never seen such lofty virtue joined to so much intelligence. Never—except—in yourself!"

MORISE—"Fie, flatterer! The idea of comparing me with the Lady of Lavaur! That charming and virtuous woman, who, left a widow at twenty, and although as beautiful as day, and Countess of Lavaur besides, and having only to choose among the wealthiest seigneurs of Languedoc, still preferred to remain single in order to devote her attention wholly to the education of her son Aloys!"

KARVEL—"Oh! Say all imaginable good things you please about our friend Giraude, you will still fall short of the full truth—Noble woman! How angelic is her heart! How inexhaustible her charity! Oh, the saying does not lie—'Never does a poor body knock at her door without leaving happy.'"

MORISE—"It is she herself who supervises the school that she founded for little children in order to combat the ignorance and misery that breed all manner of vices. Boys and girls find there an asylum."

KARVEL—"And what a high degree of courage did she not display during last year's great epidemic when the sick had to be tended! Noble and saintly woman!"

MORISE—"I do admire the solid education that she gives to her son. I shall not soon forget the day when Aloys, about to be twelve, was taken to the City Hall of Lavaur by his mother who said to our consuls: 'My friends, be the tutors of my son. His father would have brought him up, as he was himself, in the respect for the communal franchises. The only privilege that he will some day demand from you, will be to march in the front ranks in case the city is attacked, or of offering you a refuge in our castle. But thanks be to God, we shall continue to enjoy peace; and my son, ever following in the footsteps of his father, will cultivate his lands in common with our tenants. We shall have a holiday in Lavaur when Aloys will have cut his first furrow on our fields, guided by our oldest laborer. Aloys will ever feel proud of handling the food-yielding plow and of cultivating his fields.'"

KARVEL—"And do you know that there was no abler farmer in all this region than the old Master of Lavaur? From far and wide they came for his advice. Oh, what a difference between the seigneurs of the north of Gaul and those of our happy region! The former think of nothing but to shine at tourneys and to indulge in a ruinous luxury which they are able to keep up only by overwhelming their serfs with taxes. Here, on the contrary, a few fools excepted, the seigneurs, almost all of whom have risen from the bourgeoisie, cultivate their lands in common friendship with their tenants, or equip vessels for commerce. And so we see here universal prosperity and affluence in our smiling country."

MORISE—"Aimery, the brother of the Lady of Lavaur, was telling us only yesterday: 'Languedoc is the envy of all Gaul.'"

KARVEL—"By the way of Aimery, is there anything more touching than the unalterable affection that links him to his sister Giraude? When I behold the

two enjoying that delicious sentiment I regret all the more the absence of our Mylio, our dearly beloved brother."

MORISE—"Patience! Your brother has a good heart. When the first ardor of youth will have spent itself, he will return to us."

KARVEL—"I never doubted Mylio's heart. He only yielded to the impetuosity of his age and the vivacity of his nature—to that craving for adventures that, it would seem, asserts itself from time to time in us, the sons of Joel."

MORISE—"Yes; in those legends of your family that we have so often read together we have seen Karadeucq the Bagauder, Ronan the Vagre, Amael, who was the favorite of Charles Martel, all of them, driven, like your brother, to adopt a vagabond life in early youth. I feel quite sure that Mylio will repent his light-headedness, and that we shall see him again."

KARVEL—"One pleasure only our union has until now been deprived of. We have no children. I should have liked to see Mylio married. The stock of Joel might not then run out."

MORISE—"I take charge of his marriage. When your brother comes back to us, he will be able to have his pick among the handsomest girls of Lavaur. Some one of them will know how to pin him down here."

The door of the chamber is suddenly thrown open, and Karvel's farmer neighbor enters precipitately, saying:

"Master Karvel, here are Dame Giraude, her brother and her son! They are carrying in their arms a young girl in a faint."

CHAPTER II

GIRAUDE OF LAVAU

Just as the Perfect is about to step out of the chamber in which he and his wife Morise were discussing the prospects of Mylio, and to render assistance to the guests that were announced, Aimery, his sister Giraude and her son enter, carrying in Florette in a swoon. The Lady of Lavaur and her brother hold the young girl in their arms. Aloys, a lad of fourteen, holds her feet. Florette is gently deposited upon a couch of woven straw. While Morise runs into another room for a cordial, Karvel takes the sweet girl's pulse. Her dusty clothes and tattered shoes reveal that she walked a long distance. Her forehead is bathed in perspiration. Her face is pale, her respiration troubled.

The Lady of Lavaur, her brother and son group themselves near the couch and await silent and uneasy the words from the lips of the physician. Giraude, who is of the same age as Morise and of striking beauty, is modestly dressed in a robe of green material. An orange-colored coif, from which hangs a white veil that partially covers her face, exposes her two heavy tresses of black hair. Her large and gentle blue eyes, now moistened with a tear, rest upon Florette, whom she contemplates with tender interest.

Aimery is forty years of age, and is dressed in field laborer's clothes—a broad-brimmed felt hat, a blouse held around his waist by a leather belt, a cloth coat and heavy leather boots. His open, comely, and resolute physiognomy depicts deep concern in the girl's condition.

Aloys, who is as rustically clad as his mother's brother, strikingly resembles his parent. The only marked difference is that his youthful face, in contrast to his mother's, is slightly browned by the sun. The education that his mother gives him is intended to inure the lad to manly and useful work, and to cultivate in him a taste for the same. The boy's eyes are filled with tears as he contemplates Florette, into whose mouth the physician pours a cordial by introducing the head of a little flask between her lips. The group presents the picture of charming benevolence.

THE LADY OF LAVAU (holding up Florette's head, speaks in a low voice to the Perfect and Aimery:)—"Poor child! She does not yet regain consciousness! How pale she is! What a sweet and charming face she has!"

AIMERY—"The face of an angel, friend Karvel! What do you think can be the cause of her swoon? Do you think she is in danger?"

KARVEL—"I see no trace of a fall or of a wound. The poor girl must have experienced some severe shock, or she may have succumbed to excessive fatigue. (Turning to his wife) Morise, fetch me some fresh water."

Aloys has frequently been at the Perfect's. He knows his way in the house. He anticipates Morise, runs to an earthenware vase, dips out some water into a cup and brings the same to the physician. Touched by the attention of the boy, Karvel turns to Giraude with a look of approbation. The mother kisses her son on the forehead.

"In acting so thoughtfully, my friend, Aloys conducts himself obedient to your instructions. He seeks to be useful to others."

Florette, whose temples the Perfect moistens with the fresh water that Aloys brought to him and into which he poured a few drops of an elixir, slowly regains consciousness. Her face gradually regains its color. She sighs twice. Presently tears gather slowly under her long eyelashes and she murmurs in a feeble voice:

"Mylio! Mylio! Help! Help!"

KARVEL (amazed)—"What is that she says?"

AIMERY—"She pronounces your brother's name; she calls for help."

Florette raises both her hands to her forehead. A profound silence reigns in the chamber. She sits up on the couch. Her large eyes wander timid and surprised hither and thither, all around her. She gathers her thoughts, and presently, breaking out in tears, she cries in a heart-rending voice:

"Oh! Have mercy! Save Mylio! Save him!"

KARVEL (alarmed)—"What great danger does my brother run?"

FLORETTE (clasping her hands)—"Are you Karvel the Perfect, Mylio's brother?"

KARVEL—"Yes; yes. But calm yourself, poor child, and tell me where my brother is. What danger threatens him? Tell us who you are, and how you happen to know my brother."

FLORETTE—"I am a poor serf of the country of Touraine. Mylio saved my life and my honor. He said to me: 'Florette, I am going back to Languedoc. During our journey you will be my sister; when we arrive at my brother's

house you will be my wife—I wish him to bless our union.' Mylio kept his promise. We traveled happy at heart. When we were about five leagues from here—" (sobs smother Florette's voice; she is unable to utter another word.)

THE LADY OF LAVAU (in a low voice to the Perfect)—"Oh, Karvel, your brother's tender love for this poor serf testifies in his favor. His heart has remained true, despite the slips of his youth. May God be praised!"

KARVEL (drying his tears)—"We never doubted it. But what has happened to him? Good God, what are we about to learn!"

AIMERY—"Sister, I shall go out; I may be able to gather some information."

ALOYS (with alacrity)—"Uncle, I will go with you, if mother allows. I shall help you in your inquiries!"

KARVEL (to Aimery)—"Wait a minute, my friend! (To Florette who is still sobbing) Dear child—dear sister—you are now our sister, I beg you, calm yourself, and tell us what has happened to Mylio, and where we could find him."

FLORETTE—"He told me that besides his wish of being speedily back to his brother's house, there was another reason, which he would inform you of, that induced him to hurry the journey, on account of which we traveled day and night. I was on the crupper of Mylio's horse; a friend of his accompanied us on a mule. This morning we halted at a large burg which is entered through a stone arcade—"

KARVEL—"That is the burg of Montjoire, about four leagues from here."

FLORETTE—"We traveled so fast from the time that we left Touraine that our horse's shoes wore out, and he lost two before we entered the burg. Intending to have his mount reshod, Mylio inquired for a blacksmith and took his friend and myself to an inn where he told us to wait for him. Mylio's companion is a merry juggler. He fell to playing upon his hurdy-gurdy and to singing songs against the church and the priests before the people at the inn. While he was at it, two monks escorted by several knights came in and ordered him in the name of the Pope to stop. He answered them with some jests. Thereupon the men of the escort, together with the monks, rushed at poor old Goose-Skin, that is his name, and they beat him and called him a heretical dog."

AIMERY—"This looks serious! The monks have never before dared to show so much audacity. At Montjoire, as in the rest of Albigeois, the priests of

Rome are loved as the pest. But the people in the inn are of this country. Did they not take the part of your traveling companion?"

FLORETTE—"Yes, sir; they did, and Mylio came in as the scuffle was at its height. He tried to defend his friend who was being badly treated. The people of the inn had the worst of the fight and fled, leaving Mylio and the juggler in the hands of the monks; these said they were going to lock up the two heretics in the dungeon of the seigneur of the burg."

AIMERY—"Impossible! Raoul of Montjoire execrates the black-froaked militia as much as I do myself. I can hardly understand the impudence of those monks. Do they think they are in the north of Gaul? This dirty work will have to be looked into."

FLORETTE—"Alas! sir, what I am telling you is but too true. When Mylio saw himself overpowered, he and his companion pinioned and that the two were being dragged away, he cried out to me: 'Florette, run quick to Lavaur; inquire your way; when you arrive at the suburb of the town ask for the house of Karvel the Perfect, and tell my brother I am held here a prisoner.' Thereupon I ran all the way to this place—"

THE LADY OF LAVAU—"And your strength gave out, did it not, dear child? And you dropped down where we found you, about two hundred paces from here?"

FLORETTE—"Yes, madam. But for mercy's sake! Hasten to the help of Mylio! The monks may want to kill him. Run to his assistance!"

AIMERY (to Karvel)—"I shall take my sister back to Lavaur. You and I will then jump upon our horses and ride out to Raoul. I guarantee that we shall bring Mylio back with us."

CHAPTER III

THE SHADOW OF WAR

Aimery's plan is accepted, but its execution is immediately rendered superfluous. Hurried steps are heard approaching the house. Florette looks electrified, listens in the direction of the door and cries out: "It is he! It is Mylio—I recognize his steps—I hear him!"

Almost immediately after Florette's announcement Mylio steps into the chamber, followed by Goose-Skin. Florette, Karvel and Morise rush to meet the *trouvere*. He responds to their embraces with inexpressible bliss. Aimery, Aloys and his mother contemplate the scene with deep emotion.

THE LADY OF LAVAU—"Oh! He who can inspire so much affection must merit it!"

ALOYS (in a low voice to his mother and pointing at Goose-Skin who stands aside)—"Mother, look at that poor old man! Nobody speaks to him. He is entirely forgotten—And he seems to be sad. Shall I go to him and bid him welcome in this country?"

THE LADY OF LAVAU—"That is a kindly thought. Do so, my dear child."

While Mylio answers in mute transport the caresses of his dear ones, Aloys timidly approaches the old juggler. Goose-Skin is not sad, only he feels greatly embarrassed. In speaking to him of the austere virtues of Karvel the Perfect and his wife, Mylio above all recommended to the juggler not to break out into gross and ribald jests, as was his wont. Accordingly, faithful to the instructions of his friend, Goose-Skin is holding himself in. The old fellow makes serious efforts to repress his droll thoughts; he puckers up his lips, strives to look serious and venerable, but only succeeds in imparting to his otherwise jovial features the pitiful expression that Aloys mistook for sadness.

ALOYS (with a kindly voice)—"Welcome in our country, good father!"

GOOSE-SKIN (aside to himself)—"This brat is surely a little Perfect himself. I shall have to keep guard over my tongue. (Aloud to Aloys in a grave and sententious tone) May God preserve you, my young master, and always keep you in the path of virtue. Because virtue—affords more true and merry contentment than the most charming grace—What do I say!—Virtue is a man's lady-love. Well now, virtue excels love-making." (Unable to understand the last words of Goose-Skin, Aloys looks upon the juggler with

wondering eyes and returns to his mother, while Goose-Skin proceeds apart to himself) "I am satisfied with my first trial. I have given the youngster a high opinion of my wisdom and of my powers of speech."

KARVEL (leading Mylio to Aimery and his sister)—"Dame Giraude, I solicit from you for Mylio a little of the good will that you entertain toward us."

THE LADY OF LAVAU—"You well know, Karvel, that Aimery and myself have long shared your tender affection for your brother."

MYLIO (respectfully and sincerely)—"Madam, Karvel has just been telling me of the debt of gratitude that I owe you. (Pointing to Florette) This dear child dropped on the road exhausted with fatigue—and you, your worthy brother and your son brought her help—you carried her to my brother—"

THE LADY OF LAVAU (interrupting Mylio)—"If the filling of a duty deserves reward, we shall find it in the happiness of having been helpful to this charming girl, who will soon belong to the brother of one of our best friends."

MYLIO (to Aimery, smiling)—"Will you, at least, sir, allow me to thank you for your kindness towards me and my traveling companion? Karvel tells me that you were on the point of taking horse to deliver us from the clutches of our enemies."

AIMERY—"Very naturally. Raoul of Montjoire is a friend of mine. Like all of us inhabitants of Languedoc, he has only aversion for the monastic fraternity. I was sure that he would set you free at my request, both you and your merry companion, yonder bulky customer, whose droll songs caused the disturbance."

GOOSE-SKIN (hearing himself referred to as a droll and merry customer, and considering himself in the midst of people who are all more or less Perfects, redoubles his efforts to look dignified)—"I request the noble lady, the noble sir and the other members of this company kindly not to take me for a droll customer. My song, which provoked the ire of the tonsured gentry at the inn, was simply a cry of indignation uttered by a man who might have been virtuous—but who, ripened by experience, knows that the gown does not make the monk, that the bowl does not make the wine, that the gorget does not make the throat, that the skirt does not make the legs—"

Mylio interrupts the flow of Goose-Skin's eloquence with an angry look. The juggler holds his tongue, steps back penitently, and in order to keep himself

in countenance proceeds to examine the copper vessels that are placed on the distilling furnace.

MYLIO (turning to Aimery, who, together with Karvel could not suppress a smile at the words of the juggler)—"Overpowered, disarmed, pinioned by the men who escorted the two monks, myself and my companion were taken to Raoul of Montjoire. One of the monks said to him: 'These two heretics have had the audacity, one of them of singing a song that was insulting to the priests of the Lord, the other of defending the singer. I call upon you, in the name of the Church, to punish the two criminals.' 'By God, monk, I thank you' answered Raoul, 'you could bring no more acceptable guests to me,' and addressing his men he proceeded: 'Here, friends! Untie the bonds of these brave contemners of the Church of Rome, the modern Babylon that is smirched with rapine and blood!'"

AIMERY—"That language is the only one that Raoul could hold!"

MYLIO—"As soon done as said. We were freed from our bonds and the Sire of Montjoire added, showing the monk the door: 'Get you gone, and quick as possible, you agent of Rome, vile Romanist, wicked Roman creeper! You are not here in France where the tonsured lackeys of Rome rule the roost!' 'Detestable miscreant! Damned heretic!' cried the monk, furious, and he left the room shaking his fists at Raoul and saying: 'Tremble! The day of the wrath of heaven is near! You will soon be all crushed in your nests, vile viperous heretics!'"

THE LADY OF LAVAU—"The audacity of these monks should arouse our indignation, were it not that we are aware of the impotence of their hatred."

MYLIO—"Oh, madam, the day is unhappily at hand when the hatred of the priests is a thing to be feared. I have hastened hither to let you know it."

KARVEL—"What do you mean?"

MYLIO—"I have traveled almost day and night to be ahead of tidings that I can plainly see have not yet reached you, and that explain the insolence of the monk and the threats that he hurled at Raoul."

AIMERY—"What has happened?"

MYLIO—"Pope Innocent III has issued orders to all the bishops to preach a Crusade against the heretics of Languedoc."

AIMERY (laughing)—"A Crusade? Do these tonsured folks take our country for the Holy land? We are not Saracens!"

MYLIO—"At this very hour he is unchaining against your provinces the same fanatic hatred and savage cupidity that at one time the Papacy unchained against the Saracens. The Pope has already bestowed your lands and other property upon the future Crusaders. He has promised them pardon for all their crimes, the past, the present and the future—earthly riches, heavenly treasures."

THE LADY OF LAVAU—"What you tell us, Mylio, seems incredible. Whence can all that hatred against us 'heretics,' as they call us, proceed? Does not the Catholic Church preserve in Languedoc its churches, its domains, its bishoprics, its monks and its priests? Have they ever been disturbed in the exercise of their cult? Why should they make a Crusade against us? Simply because we practice the evangelical morality of Jesus according to our own faith? Simply because our heart and our reason reject the myth of original sin which smites with its anathema even the child in its mother's womb? Simply because we smile at the pretension of the priests to claim to be the infallible representatives of God on earth, and declare that the newly born child will be damned if it dies unbaptized? Can they mean to punish us because we prefer our own Perfects, worthy pastors like you, Karvel, who, industrious and austere, practice and preach in the midst of the sacred joys of family life the sublime doctrine of Christ, the friend of the poor and the sorrowing, the enemy of the hypocrites and of the rich? But, moreover, why resort to violence? Are the Catholic priests the only repositories of the true faith? Are they the only inspired ones of God? Let them convert us by reason, by gentleness, by persuasion. Why appeal to violence—to fire and sword! No, no! It would be the height of blindness and of human perversity!"

MYLIO—"The Crusades against the Saracens were preached by the Church, and the same Church is now stirring up anew the same execrable passions against the provinces that have withdrawn themselves from the tyranny of Rome. Great dangers are threatening Languedoc. While passing Cahors I learned that a man of rare military valor, but fanatical and merciless, Simon, Count of Montfort-L'Amaury, one of the most famous heroes of the last Crusade in the Holy Land, was placed in the chief command of the Catholic army that is about to invade this country."

KARVEL—"Simon of Montfort is well known by us! The choice of such a chief is, indeed, the signal for a war of extermination, a war without mercy or pity. Helas! What disasters are in store for us!"

AIMERY—"If the Catholics attack us we shall know how to defend ourselves. I swear to God, this war will be a terrible one!"

THE LADY OF LAVAU (anxiously)—"But what harm do we do the Catholics? Do we force our belief upon them? By what right should they want to impose theirs upon us with war and violence? In battle the children of the poor mothers are killed. (Saying this in a trembling voice and her eyes wet with tears, Giraude presses her son with anxiety and tenderness to her heart, and takes Aimery's hand.) War is the terror of mothers, sisters and wives! War is an execrable affair!"

AIMERY—"Sister dear, calm your fears!"

THE LADY OF LAVAU—"Alas! I am no heroine. I live on my love for my son and for you, and when I think that you, together with so many friends dear to my heart, may perish in this terrible war! (Again embraces her son passionately and murmurs:) Oh! I am afraid! Good God, have mercy upon us!"

ALOYS—"Good mother, do not fear; we shall defend you."

THE LADY OF LAVAU—"We shall flee this very evening with my brother. We shall take ship at Aigues-Mortes—"

AIMERY—"And who will defend the city and the Castle of Lavaur, of which your son is the seigneur?"

THE LADY OF LAVAU—"Let the priests seize our castle, our lands and all, provided only my son and you are left to me!"

AIMERY—"The capture of the city and the castle fatedly draws in its wake the ruin and death of all the inhabitants and men of the field who will take refuge in them at the first tidings of the Crusade. Would you leave them without a guide?"

THE LADY OF LAVAU—"Pardon me, brother; pardon me, friends. What I said was cowardly—"

A FARMER (enters)—"Seigneur Aimery, one of your servants has just come from the castle, where your friends have gone in haste to consider matters of grave importance with you and with Dame Giraude. Your presence is requested."

AIMERY—"The tidings brought by Mylio are confirmed!"

KARVEL (to the Lady of Lavour)—"Courage, Giraude! Friendly hearts and firm devotion will never be wanting to you."

THE LADY OF LAVAUUR (drying her tears)—"Adieu, good Karvel! Pity my weakness! I am ashamed of it! Pardon a moment of debility!"

KARVEL—"No; you have not been weak. The mother spoke—the sister—the cry of nature leaped from your soul; I honor you all the more therefore. I well know that you never fall short of any duty when the moment comes to fill it."

THE LADY OF LAVAUUR—"Alas! I hope so—Oh! What a horrible thing war is! We were happy! (She contemplates her son, embraces and weeps over him.) What wrong have we done to those priests? What wrong have we done them, my poor child!"

AIMERY (to Mylio)—"Your presence in these perilous days is a welcome assistance. We know you to be a resolute man, Mylio. So long, Karvel. I shall let you know this evening the result of our conversation with our friends at the castle, and the decision that we may have adopted."

Before leaving the Perfect's house the Lady of Lavour approaches Florette who all this while has been seated near Morise. After keeping himself aside for a while, Goose-Skin sat down on a bench and is now sound asleep. He is exhausted with the rough handling that he received at the inn. The Lady of Lavour takes Florette's hand and says with a sad smile on her lips:

"Poor little one, good and devoted as you are, you arrive in our country at an unhappy season. May we weather the dangers that threaten us without having to lose any head that is dear to us! Whatever may happen, count in it on my friendship." Moved into tears, Florette raises to her lips the hands of the Lady of Lavour with brimming emotion. After a last adieu to Morise and the Perfect, the Lady of Lavour leaves, accompanied by her son and Aimery.

CHAPTER IV

ROBIN LOVES ME, ROBIN HAS ME!

Left to themselves the family of the Perfect for a moment contemplate one another in silent admiration for Giraude.

MYLIO (to Karvel)—"I can not express to you how that woman's charming kindness touches my heart. Even in the midst of her anxieties for her son and her brother, she has words of good will for Florette."

KARVEL—"That woman is an angel! (He looks at Mylio in silence for a moment; his eyes moisten with a tear of tenderness; he opens his arms and in a voice trembling with love proceeds:) One more embrace—still another—my dearly beloved brother!"

Mylio and Karvel embrace passionately. Morise and Florette share in silence the emotions of the two brothers. None seem to hear the snores of Goose-Skin, whose sleep is ever sounder and grows more noisy.

MORISE (to Mylio)—"So you have come back to us to stay!"

MYLIO—"Oh! dear sister, yes; permanently—not so, Florette?"

FLORETTE—"My wishes will be yours, Mylio; still it is sweet to conform to them, seeing I am received with so much kindness by your dear relatives."

MYLIO—"And yet, brother, if you have no objection, I have a project that will take me away for several days."

MORISE—"What! So soon! Did you hear the wicked boy, Florette? He thinks of leaving us!"

FLORETTE (smiling)—"Either Mylio will take me along with him, or he will leave me here with you; whichever way, I shall be satisfied."

KARVEL—"What is your plan, brother?"

MYLIO—"My sincere love for Florette has put an end to the pranks of my youth. Your own indulgence and Morise's will draw a veil over the past. Nevertheless I have put to bad use the faculty for poetry that nature endowed me with. I now desire to turn it to a useful purpose. Brother, you and I have read in the legends of our family how, at the time of the invasion of Gaul by the Romans, the Gallic bards fired the courage of our

combatants, and how, still later, after the Roman conquest, the bards continued to arouse with their patriotic chants the people of Gaul against the foreign conqueror. The memorable chant of the Chief of the Hundred Valleys:

'Drop, drop, thou dew of gore!'

armed more than one arm against the Romans."

KARVEL—"I grasp your thought—I approve it, Mylio—Aye, it would be putting the poetic talent that God gifted you with to a noble use, by using it to arouse the enthusiasm of our people."

MYLIO—"The Church orders her monks to preach the extermination of our country. Now, we the trouveres, like the Gallic bards of old, will fire the people with our songs against the fanatics who threaten our freedom and our lives!"

MORISE—"The thought is generous and noble. I join my approval to Karvel's."

MYLIO—"A minute ago the Lady of Lavaur repeated twice a few words that drew tears from me: 'What wrong have we done to those priests, my poor child?'"

FLORETTE—"Oh! Mylio, those words made me also weep. They still affect me!"

MYLIO—"It is because they are true and heart-rending words that escaped from a maternal heart. What wrong was done to those priests!"

At this moment a snore that sounds like a thunder clap breaks upon the silence from the corner where Goose-Skin is soundly sleeping. Mylio turns around, looks at the juggler, and, smiling at the sight, says to Karvel:

"Brother, I have wholly forgotten to mention my traveling companion to you."

MORISE—"Despite his serious mien, your brave companion makes me feel like laughing."

KARVEL—"The poor man perhaps feels sad that a minute ago Mylio stopped him short at the best turn of his paraphrase concerning the profound truth that 'the gown does not make the monk.' His discourse was interrupted."

MYLIO—"My companion is a juggler, which is the same as saying that his coarse songs, much as they are liked in the taverns, are hardly calculated for delicate ears. I therefore notified Goose-Skin, that is the name that he goes by, that he must keep a watch over his words when near you. Hence his embarrassment, and his obstinate persistence in assuming a venerable appearance. I must pray your indulgence towards him. Yours also, Morise. He is entitled to it by reason of his attachment to me, of which he has given me more than one proof."

KARVEL—"All good hearts deserve indulgence and friendship, brother. (Smiling) But I am inclined to reproach you for having made of us scarecrows of virtue and frightening the poor fellow. That is why he is so embarrassed in his conversation and demeanor."

A second snore so prodigious and so much louder than the first escapes from Goose-Skin that he is himself awakened with a start. He rubs his eyes and rolls them around with a scared look; rises abruptly and re-assuming his air of gravity addresses Morise with great affectation of politeness:

"May our compassionate hostess bestow upon me the alms of her mercy for the enormous incongruity of my sleep. But we have been traveling day and night since we left Blois; hence great is my fatigue. Besides, and moreover, in that it causes the vile low appetites to slumber, sleep is of itself a sort of virtue—"

MYLIO (interrupting him)—"Why, sister, this fat man who is here boasting to you of the virtuous innocence of his sleep, in that it causes his earthly appetites to slumber—this identical man, who speaks to you in that guise, came near throttling me one day, simply because I woke him up in the middle of a savory dream in which, after seeing Shrove-Tide do battle with Shrove-Tuesday, the one armed with fishes the other with sausages, he was just about to devour both the vanquished and the vanquisher, together with their full accoutrements."

GOOSE-SKIN (in a tone of pitiful reproach to his friend, seeing that Karvel and his wife laugh at Mylio's story)—"Oh, Mylio!"

MYLIO—"Accordingly, you are informed that my friend Goose-Skin, whom I hereby introduce to you, is a gourmand, likes his cups a little—or, rather, a good deal—"

GOOSE-SKIN—"I! Just heavens!"

MYLIO—"He is also somewhat of a fibber, a roysterer, not over bold, considerable of a libertine and a braggart—that is his portrait from the side of his morals!"

GOOSE-SKIN (with a contrite air)—"Oh! Respectable host and hostess! Do not believe that wicked jester! All that he has just told you is false!"

MYLIO—"After this confession that modesty alone kept back from my friend's lips, I shall add: But he has a good heart, he shares his crust of bread with whomsoever is hungry, and his pot of wine with whomsoever is thirsty. Finally, he has given me proofs of affection that I shall not forget in all my life. (Addressing Goose-Skin more particularly) This being said, my good Goose-Skin, my friends and myself must now request you not to have the word 'virtue' constantly on your lips, and, instead of lowering your eyes, of keeping yourself under constraint, of puckering your lips with an air of piety, allow your broad smile to spread freely over your wide countenance, and, should it please you, even to sing, full throated, whatever is your favorite song. Nobody will be angry about it."

KARVEL (to Goose-Skin, who heaves a sigh of relief, and whose face seems slowly to dilate)—"My brother has interpreted our thoughts. So, then, dear guest, no more constraint. Return to your natural good spirits. We heartily love a hearty laugh. Do you know why? Because a false or wicked heart never is frankly joyous. Moreover, we believe that much should be pardoned to those who have remained good; they will become better. You are of the former, dear guest. We welcome you. We shall love you as you are, and, jolly friend, love us as we are."

GOOSE-SKIN (wholly himself again)—"Oh! Dame Virtue, I bow to you—"

MYLIO (interrupting him)—"How is that? Still affecting sanctity?"

GOOSE-SKIN—"Oh! Dame Virtue! You muffle yourself up in an unseemly cloak. With a suspicious eye, foaming mouth and twisted neck you harass people in the voice of an owl in love, saying: 'This way! Come immediately this way, you lumbering scamp! You sack of wine! You pig of gluttony! You brick of lasciviousness! You hare of cowardice! This way! Be quick about it and adore me, serve me! Woo me! And if you do not, I shall strangle you, vagabond! Green dog! Red donkey! Triple mule!' And do you wonder, sweet lady, that people take their paunches between their hands in order that they may be able to run all the faster, and escape from your gracious invitation?"

MORISE (to Karvel, smiling)—"He is right!"

GOOSE-SKIN—"Oh sharp-tongued dame! Old scold of a dame! Claw-fingered dame! Just assume for a moment the mild look, the sweet voice, the good heart, the gentle language of my amiable hostess, Dame Morise, who stands here, or of our worthy host Karvel, who stands there, and you will see, Dame Virtue, whether you will still cause people to run away from you, and whether people will not, on the contrary, say to you (addressing Morise:) 'Dame Virtue, poor old Goose-Skin has been pursued until now by a horrible witch, who, usurping your name, strove by dint of insult and scratches to force him to court her. Alas! Old Goose-Skin now finds out too late the trickery of the witch; he is no longer of the age to court anybody. Therefore, gracious Dame Virtue, pity Goose-Skin. He only now sees you for the first time in your pure and charming reality.' But, alas! I am now too old to dare raise my eyes to you!"

MORISE (smiling)—"Let it be so! I shall be Dame Virtue; and in accepting the name I certainly am not Dame Modesty. But, never mind! I am Dame Virtue. Now, then, as such, I call upon you earnestly to raise your eyes up to me. I am neither proud, exacting, jealous nor difficult to please. Young folks or old, good looking or homely, provided their actions prove to me that they occasionally remember me, ever find me in a happy frame of mind and loving. So you see, dear guest, that despite your age, you still may love Dame Virtue!"

GOOSE-SKIN (scratching his ear)—"Oh, certainly! If all that shall be required of me will be some slight service, now and then, I certainly shall enlist myself as your servant, Dame Virtue. But, in all humility, I know myself."

MYLIO—"Come, now, my good friend! No exaggerated modesty. I shall on the spot give you an opportunity to prove to my brother and sister that you are capable of a brave and generous act."

GOOSE-SKIN—"Do not undertake too much—take care! I am not yet very firmly nailed to virtue."

MYLIO—"A minute ago, while you slept, I informed Karvel, and he approved it, of a good and useful project that I have in mind. You heard at Blois the words of Abbot Reynier as clearly as I did. The Church is about to let loose the dogs of war upon Languedoc. We must now, with our songs, raise the popular resistance to the pitch of heroism against the merciless Crusade. Second me in the undertaking. I rely upon you."

GOOSE-SKIN—"Ho! Mylio, my poor hurdy-gurdy will not wait to accompany my songs. It will break loose all of itself—with laughter if it hears me strike a heroic note. No, no! For your harp be the laurel of battle, for my humble hurdy-gurdy a branch of the grape vine or a bouquet of marjoram."

KARVEL (to Goose-Skin)—"Noble guest, take my brother's word. If he has charmed with his chants the ears of the rich, you have charmed those of the poor. You will certainly move their hearts as well if you sing to them of the frightful ills that our country is threatened with by the Crusade that is being preached against us."

GOOSE-SKIN—"Worthy host, may I never in my life again touch a tankard of wine, if I know what to sing upon such a theme."

FLORETTE (timidly)—"Mylio—if I dared—"

MYLIO—"Speak, dear child!"

FLORETTE—"I heard you on the road say that that wicked monk of Citeaux, Abbot Reynier, from whose clutches I escaped, thanks to you, Mylio, is one of the chiefs of the Crusade. It seems to me that if Master Goose-Skin would narrate in a song the story of how that wicked monk, who is one of the chief agents of this war which they have started in the name of God, meant to ruin a poor serf girl—"

GOOSE-SKIN (clapping his hands gleefully)—"Florette is right! 'The Fritter of the Abbot of Citeaux!' That shall be the title of the song. You remember, Mylio, the words of Sir Ribald when he told you he meant to make a speedy call at the mill of Chaillotte? Ha! By my hurdy-gurdy! I shall salt the song. I shall pepper it so generously that even people with palates no better than a whale's, once they shall have tasted my song will be seized with a furious appetite to despatch the sycophants! The hypocrites! Devoured with concupiscence, they now propose to massacre people in the name of the Savior of the world!"

MYLIO—"Excellent! Excellent, my old Goose-Skin! Instil in your verses the indignation of your soul, and your song will be good for ten thousand soldiers in the defense of Languedoc. (To Florette) Your excellent judgment has served you well, dear girl. Your straightforward and childlike heart is justly in revolt at the horrible spectacle of the hypocrisy of these proud, greedy and debauched priests, who now threaten to exterminate the people of this country while they invoke the name of Jesus, the God of love and forgiveness. (To Morise and Karvel) I shall be back on the day of danger. If

my love for Florette has inspired me with disgust for my barren and dissolute life, the remembrance of both you, Morise, and you Karvel, has brought me back here. I wish that my marriage with her who is to be the companion of my life be consecrated by your and your wife's presence. To marry under your auspices, is not that to pledge myself to take you for my model?"

KARVEL (profoundly moved, takes the hands of Florette and Mylio, joins them in his own, and says in a tremulous voice)—"Your marriage will be inscribed to-morrow in the register of our city magistrates. Mylio, my brother, Florette, my sister, you whom the mysterious bonds of the heart already unite, I take to witness the thoughts of your souls and the words of your lips, be ye forevermore one! Henceforth rejoice at the same joys, suffer the same pains, console each other in the same hopes, share with each other the daily toils that will worthily provide you with your daily bread. If, happier than Morise and myself, you should live again in your children, strive by precept and by example to develop in them their original goodness. Bring them up in the love of work, of justice and of right, to the end that, faithful to the morals of Christ, one of the wisest men that humanity has produced, they be indulgent towards those whom ignorance, neglect or misery have led astray. For all such let them have a ready pardon, instruction, love and charity.

"But also habituate their young souls to be awake to and to entertain a horror for oppression and iniquity. Habituate your children to the thought that some day they may have to suffer, to struggle and perhaps to die in the defense of their rights. Teach them that, if clemency towards the weak and the suffering is a virtue, resignation to the violent acts of an oppressor is an act of cowardice, is a crime! Saturate their souls in the hatred for injustice; then, on the day of trial, your children will be found ready and resolute. Let them repose unshakable faith in the future, in the enfranchisement of Gaul, our motherland.

"Finally, impart to your children this virile druid conviction—'Man, immortal and infinite like God, proceeds from one world to another, eternally reviving body and soul in those innumerable stars that shine in the firmament.' Impart to them this sturdy belief, and they will be, as our fathers were during the heroic epoch of our history, healed of the disease of death.

"And now, Mylio, my brother, and Florette, my sister, may your union be what the ardent wishes of my heart desire for it! May the ills that threaten this country leave you unscathed! Oh, believe us, Florette, you will be

doubly cherished by us, because, thanks to you, our brother has come back to us, and my wife and myself have gained a sister in you."

At the end of these words, Karvel the Perfect presses Florette and Mylio to his heart and holds them long in his embrace. With her forehead leaning on the shoulder of her husband, Morise partakes of the deep emotion that thrills him and the bridal couple. Goose-Skin himself can not hold back a tear which he wipes away with the point of his thumb. But speedily recovering his habitual good spirits, the old juggler cries out:

"Oxhorns! Master Karvel, excuse the sincerity of old Goose-Skin, but he is of the impression that in the south, as well as the north of Gaul, there is no wedding without a repast. I therefore demand for this evening the wedding feast; to-morrow the marriage will be entered in the city's register; and day after to-morrow Mylio and I will depart to preach the anti-Crusade in our fashion. (Addressing Morise) Oh! Dame Virtue, see how you have mastered me! Ordinarily I am as craven as a hare, and yet, to please you, I shall take the road and preach war with my music-box. But, God wills it. I feel so furiously inclined to sing my war song, that my throat is dry in advance. It will have to be very thoroughly moistened."

KARVEL (smiling)—"It fortunately happens, merry guest, that we have in the house a cask of Montpelier wine. We shall forthwith broach it."

MORISE (to Goose-Skin)—"And I have in yonder cupboard a ham of Aragon that is worthy of serving as a mace to the famous knight Shrove-Tuesday, whose defeat you dreamed!"

GOOSE-SKIN—"Oh! Dear Dame Virtue, you will think you are dreaming, yourself, when you see me play my jaws and swallow your victuals."

KARVEL—"You may exercise your jaws also upon a brace of superb capons that our farmer brought us yesterday. And we also have a trout, quite worthy of serving knight Shrove-Tide for mount."

GOOSE-SKIN—"That is a feast worthy of a chapter of canonesses!"

KARVEL (to Goose-Skin, and pointing to Mylio, who is speaking to Florette in a low voice)—"The prodigal son has returned, must we not kill the fatted calf?"

MYLIO (to Florette in a low and fervid tone)—"And now, at last, my sweet friend, my charming Florette, you are really my wife!"

FLORETTE (contemplating her husband with tender love and tears in her eyes)—"Mylio, all I have in my heart, my love, my life I give you. It is little—in exchange for the happiness that I owe you!"

GOOSE-SKIN (interrupting the lovers)—"What is that you are prattling about in that languorous voice? Rather sing my song, little Florette, sing it in a joyous voice:

"Robin loves me, Robin has me!

Robin wished me—he shall have me!"

CHAPTER V

SONG ON THE CRUSADE AGAINST THE ALBIGENSIANS

Behold them, the priests at their head,

Behold them, the Cath'lic Crusaders!

The red cross on their breasts,

And the Christ on their lips,

The fagot in one hand,

The sword in the other!

Behold them in our dear land of Languedoc!

Behold them, the Cath'lic Crusaders,

Behold them, the priests at their head!

What wrong have we done to these priests?

Oh, what wrong have we done unto them!

From all the quarters of old Gaul,

They rush into Albigeois, the Cath'lic Crusaders.

At their head march the legate of the Pope, and Reynier, the Abbot of Citeaux,

And with them many a bishop and many an archbishop:

The Archbishop of Sens, and he of Rheims,

The Bishop of Cahors, and he of Limoges;

The Bishop of Nevers, and he of Clermont;

The Bishop of Agde, and he of Autun.

What wrong have we done to these priests?

Oh, what wrong have we done unto them!

The Knighthood is numerous also:

Simon, bloodthirsty Count of Montfort, their commander.

Him follow the Count of Narbonne and the Count of St. Paul,

The Viscount of Turenne and Adhemar of Poitiers,

Bertrand of Cardaillac and Bertrand of Gordon,

The Count of Le Forez and he of Auxerre,

Peter of Courtenay and Foulques of Bercy,

Hugues of Lascy and Lambert of Limoux,

Neroweg of the Templars' Order,

Also knight Gerard of Lancon,

And many more! So many more!

What an army! What an army!

Twenty-thousand knights, all cased in iron.

Two hundred thousand footmen, strollers, serfs and vagabonds.

From near and far, all, to the call of the priests,

They have come to deluge in blood our Languedoc.

They have come from Auvergne and from Burgundy,

From Rouergue and from Poitou,

From Normandy and from Saintogne,

From Lorraine and from Brittany.

Over hills and over valleys, by the land and by the water

They have come, and still they come.

They all approach with the cry:

"To the heretics, death!"

Behold them, the priests at their head,

Behold them, the Cath'lic Crusaders!

The red cross on their breasts,

The Christ on their lips,

The fagot in one hand,

The sword in the other!

Behold them in our dear land of Languedoc!

Behold them, the Cath'lic Crusaders,

Behold them, the priests at their head!

What wrong have we done to these priests?

Oh, what wrong have we done unto them!

CHAPTER VI

SONG ON THE BUTCHERY OF CHASSENEUIL

Here they are, before Chasseneuil, the Catholic Crusaders,

Before Chasseneuil, the fortified town!

Behind their high walls' shelter, men, women and children

Have sought refuge from burghs and from hamlets.

The men in arms are on the ramparts;

Women and children weep in the houses.

The women and children weep in the houses,

The Crusaders have sighted the town.

Behold Abbot Reynier of Citeaux.

He steps forth; he speaks. He says:

"Heretics of Chasseneuil, choose—

The Catholic faith or death!"

The answer comes:

"Monk, be gone!

Romanist, avaunt!

We prefer death to the Church of Rome!

The devil take the Pope!

Monk be gone!

We prefer death to the Church of Rome!"

Abbot Reynier, in a passion,

Back to the Crusaders he rides, and he cries:

"Kill, burn, pillage, ravage!

That not one of the Chasseneuil heretics

Escape the sword or the flames!

Their goods now belong to the Catholics!

Kill, burn, pillage, ravage!"

The assailants are wild, no less so th' assailed.

How the blood flows! Oh! How it flows!

The besiegers are in numbers, uncountable:

The besieged are but few.

Woe to the vanquished!

The ramparts being scaled

The priests pour in, cross in hand:

"Kill—kill the Chasseneuil heretics!

Kill—kill the Chasseneuil heretics!"

The Crusaders have massacred, slaughtered and killed

Old men and young,

Aged grand-mothers, youthful grand-daughters,

Virgins and infants!

The blood runs in streams through the streets of Chasseneuil!

The blood runs red and steaming,

As waves in the butcher's place of slaughter!

They have massacred at Chasseneuil

Full seven thousand of our people,

The Catholic Crusaders!

They have slaughtered seven thousand at Chasseneuil!

At last, tired of carnage and outraging women,

They pillage and pillage again!

In pillaging houses they meet women and old men,

Children and many of the wounded,

Who sought refuge in places concealed.

The gibbets are raised!

The pyres are lighted!

The rope and the flames end the work

Which the sword set on foot.

Torture and slaughter!

The rope and the flames end the work

Which the sword set on foot!

Ravaged from one end to the other,

The city contains but corpses in heaps!

"To Beziers!"

Now cries the papal legate.

"Fall to, Montfort, up and to work!

His Holiness has issued the order!

Kill, pillage, burn all heretics,

As was done at Chasseneuil!"

"To Beziers!" echoes back the Count of Montfort.

And, behold, they march to Beziers,
The Catholic Crusaders,
The red cross on their breasts,
The name of Jesus on their lips,
The sword in one hand,
The fagot in the other,
To torture and to slaughter!
What wrong have we done to these priests?
What wrong have we done unto them!

CHAPTER VII

SONG ON THE BUTCHERY OF BEZIERS

Behold, them, the Cath'lic Crusaders,

Arrived before fortified Beziers!

They are gorged with pillage and blood,

The priests ever leading the way!

At the side of Montfort are the Archbishops of Sens and Bordeaux,

The Bishops of Puy, Autun, Limoges, Bazas and Agde,

Besides from Clermont, Cahors and Nevers.

The Army of the Faith encircles the town.

Reginald of Montpayroux, the Bishop of Beziers,

Whom, together with all of his priests, the people

Had left unincommoded in his episcopal palace,

Reginald of Montpayroux, then addresses the town:

"Renounce your heresy,

Submit to the Catholic Church;

If not, by the Catholic Church I swear to you,

Not one house I'll leave standing in your town of Beziers!

Not one living being shall be left with his life!"

"Be gone, bishop!" he's answered aloud,

"Be gone, Romanist! Sooner we'll kill ourselves,

Ourselves, our wives and our children than submit to your Church!"

"Be gone, bishop! Sooner we'll kill ourselves,

Ourselves, our wives and our children than submit to your Church!"

Thus did the people make answer. To Montfort

The bishop reports, and he adds: "Fall to, Montfort!

His Holiness has issued the order

To arms!

Kill, burn, pillage and ravage!

Let not a single heretic escape death!

Their goods are now ours!"

"Yes!" cries the Abbot of Citeaux. "Not even if

Twenty thousand, a hundred thousand they be,

Not one of them, no, not a single one shall escape

The rope, or the sword, or the flames!

Torture and slaughter!"

No! Not a single creature escapes

The rope, or the sword, or the flames!

"But," answers Montfort,

"There are Catholics at Beziers;

How are we, in the midst of the carnage

To distinguish the faithful?"

The papal legate cries in answer:

"Kill away!

Kill them all!

The Lord will distinguish His own!"

"Kill them all!" cries the papal legate,
"The Lord will distinguish His own!"
Beziers is taken by assault;
They kill all the living, as they did at Chasseneuil,
The Cath'lic Crusaders!
First, seven thousand children, sheltered in St. Madeleine's Church,
Are put to the sword
And the carnage continues two consecutive days.
Aye, two consecutive days, from sun-rise to sun-rise.
And the time is all needed, those two days and nights,
To slaughter sixty-three thousand creatures of God;
Aye, sixty-three thousand,
Catholics and heretics killed at Beziers!
Sixty-three thousand.
That is the number of Beziers' victims.
After the raping of women and slaughter, the pillage;
After the pillage, the torch of th' incendiary.
The booty is placed upon wagons outside the town
And then—"Burn up Beziers! Burn up the heretic hot-bed!"
And all is burned down—all—
Artisans' houses and houses of bourgeois;
The communal City Hall, and the viscount's palace;
The hospital of the poor, and the great cathedral built by Gervais.
Everything burned, aye everything.
And when all is burnt down, and the wagons of booty heaped high,
And the vine-stocks pulled up by the roots,
And the olive trees cut down in the orchard,
And the crops consumed by the flames in the garrets,
"To Carcassonne!"
Cries the papal legate.
"Fall to, Montfort! On the march!
His Holiness has issued the order.
To Carcassonne!
Kill, pillage, burn the heretics, as we have done
At Chasseneuil and Beziers!
To Carcassonne!"
"On to Carcassonne!
Kill, pillage, burn the heretics as we have done
At Chasseneuil and Beziers!
On to Carcassonne," echoes Montfort.
And behold them, they march on Carcassonne,
The Cath'lic Crusaders, the priests in the lead!
The red cross on their breasts,

The name of Jesus on their lips,
The sword in one hand,
The fagot in the other!
To the rape, to tortures and slaughter!

What wrong have we done to these priests?

Oh, what wrong have we done unto them!

CHAPTER VIII

SONG ON THE BURNING OF CARCASSONNE

They march upon Carcassonne,
The Cath'lic Crusaders! Ill fortified is the town,
Into the town, Roger, the young Viscount of Beziers,
Too late back from Aragon to defend the capital of his domain,
Has thrown himself.
The young man is bold and generous, beloved by all.
A heretic, like most the seigneurs of Languedoc,
This land of freedom.
The young viscount bows before the popular magistrates,
And to the city's franchise.
The viscount and councilmen re-kindle the town's folks' enthusiasm,
Chilled for a moment by the massacres of Chasseneuil and Beziers.
Deep ditches are dug, high palisades raised
To strengthen the ramparts of Carcassonne.
The old and the young, the rich and the poor, men, women and children—
All labor with zeal for the defense of the city, and they say:
"No! We shall not let ourselves be slaughtered as
The people of Chasseneuil and Beziers—
No!"
"No! We shall not let ourselves be slaughtered as
The people of Chasseneuil and Beziers—No!"

But the line of the horizon is soon darkened by dust,
From afar the earth trembles
Under the tread of steeds caparisoned in iron,
And mounted by warriors cased in iron themselves.
The iron points of a forest of lances glisten,
They glisten like the armors
In the rays of the rising sun.
The hill, the valley and the plain
Soon are covered with cohorts innumerable.
The multitude in arms has steadily, steadily swollen.
It reaches from East to West, it overlaps the horizon.
It approaches from the North and the South,
And Carcassonne is from all sides surrounded.
The wagons and baggage follow the trains,
And behind them larger and still larger crowds.
Early in the morning th' invader descends the distant hills.
The Cath'lic Crusaders encamp towards evening.
Early in the morning th' invader descends the distant hills.
The Cath'lic Crusaders arrive and encamp towards evening.
Montfort, the prelates and knights raise their tents;
The multitude sleeps on the ground under the vault of the heavens.
They are so delightful; oh! so delightful, the nights of Languedoc!
Other Crusaders invade and they pillage the suburbs,

Whose inhabitants fled within Carcassonne.

At dawn the next morning, the trumpets sound in the Crusaders' camp;

"To the assault! Death to the heretics of Carcassonne!

Kill—kill as you did at Chasseneuil and Beziers!

To the assault!"

The men of Carcassonne are on the ramparts.

The struggle begins; it is bloody, it is furious.

The young viscount and consuls by example and courage redouble

The strength of the besieged.

Women and children fetch stones for the engines of war;

The ditches are heaped full with corpses.

"Victory for the heretics! This time they triumph!"

The assailants are all driven back.

But dearly they paid for this vict'ry, the heretics!

Helas! They paid for it dearly,

The heretics of Carcassonne.

Of their men there are killed, or are wounded

Full twelve thousand heroes, the flow'r of the brave.

Still greater is the loss of the Crusaders.

But still their forces number near two hundred thousand.

A messenger from Montfort arrives in Carcassonne, and he says:

"Sir viscount, Sirs consuls! The Pope's blessed legate and also

Seigneur Montfort the count offer a truce unto you,

And they swear on their faith of Cath'lic priests and of knights

That if you, viscount and consuls, will come to the camp of the crusaders

You shall all be respected, and allowed to return to your city

Should you decline to accept the terms that the legate and count will propose."

Reposing their faith in the oaths of the priest and the knight,

"Let's to the camp!" say the consuls in the hope their city to save.

And they appear in the tent of Montfort.

They appear in the tent of Montfort.

The viscount says to the count: "Spare the unhappy town,

Mention the ransom; it shall be paid unto you.

If you refuse, to Carcassonne we shall ride back

And bury ourselves under its ruins!"

"Brave Sire!" answers Montfort,

"The whole of your domain now belongs unto me:

The Holy Father to the soldiers of Christ has given the goods of the heretics.

Write on the spot to your townsmen to renounce

Their damnable heresy, else we'll assault them again on the morrow.

By the God who died and again resurrected, I swear,

Unless they renounce, your townsmen will be put to the sword,

As we did with those of Chasseneuil and Beziers."

The viscount makes answer: "Montfort, adieu!

We've a horror for the Church of the Pope; we reject your proposal;

We shall know how to die!"

And Montfort replies: "No 'adieu' here will pass, Sir Viscount of Beziers!

Yourself and your councilmen now are my prisoners,

The prisoners of me, Montfort, the chief of this holy Crusade."

"Your prisoners we? We, whom a truce now protects?

We, who are here relying on the word of a priest, of the papal legate?

We, who are here under your pledge as a knight?

No, not we; we're no pris'ners of thine."

Abbot Reynier of Citeaux then replies: "These are the Pope's own words:

'None is bound to keep his pledge to him who keeps not his pledge to God.'

"You shall remain our prisoners, Viscount of Beziers!

To-morrow, to the assault!

Fall to, Montfort!

The Holy Father has ordered:

'Kill, burn, pillage! Let not a heretic of Carcassonne

Escape the sword, the rope, or the flames!'"

"Let not a heretic of Carcassonne

Escape the sword, the rope, or the flames!"

The young viscount and consuls are pinioned—

The viscount soon dies by poison, the consuls on the gibbet.

At dawn th' assault is sounded;

The Crusaders march against the walls;

The walls, they are unguarded, they are not now defended.

The Crusaders knock down the palisades,
Fill up the ditches, beat in the gates.
None guard the city; none defend it.
Without striking a blow the Crusaders rush into the streets,
They rush into the houses.
Not a soul is seen on the street, not a soul is found in the houses.
The silence of the tomb reigns in Carcassonne,
What has become of its people?
The silence of the tomb reigns in Carcassonne,
What has become of its people?
The Crusaders invade every nook, every corner.
They find, at last, in hidden corners
Some people gravely wounded, some ill and some old,
Or some women lying-in.
The Crusaders thus find some wives, some daughters or mothers
Who refused to abandon some husband, some father, some son,
Too seriously wounded or old to take flight,
To take flight through the woods and the mountains,
And there to keep in concealment
For days, for months, perhaps.
They fled! Did all the inhabitants of Carcassonne flee?
They fled! Did all the inhabitants of Carcassonne flee?
Yes, notified during the night of the fate of their viscount and consuls,

Afraid of the extermination threatened to their town,
All fled, the wounded dragging behind,
The mothers carrying their children on backs and on arms,
The men taking charge of the provisions.
Aye, leaving behind their hearths and their goods,
All have fled by a secret subterranean passage—
They fled, the people of Carcassonne fled.
They fled, the people of Carcassonne fled,
The thickets of the forests,
The caverns of the mountains will be their place of refuge,
For days to come and months.
If ever they see their town again,
How many will return from the woods, the caverns and the rocks?
How many will have survived exhaustion?
They left, twenty thousand and more;
A few thousand, perhaps, may return.
"Oh! the heretics of Carcassonne have slipped through our fingers!"
Thus cries the papal legate:
"Those who were unable to follow them shall bear the punishment for all.
Pillage the town, and after the pillage the pyre, the gibbet
For the miscreants who fell into our hands!"
Carcassonne is ravaged from cellar to garret.
After the pillage the gibbets are raised,

And the wood is piled for the pyres.

Death! Torture! Rape! Slaughter!

Carcassonne is ravaged from cellar to garret.

After the pillage the gibbets are raised,

And the wood is piled for the pyres.

The Crusaders carry the wounded,

Mutilated some of these are, others expiring;

The weak, the old, the lying-in women,

The daughters, the wives and the mothers of those who were unable to flee—

All are hanged, quartered, or burned.

Flare up, ye flames of the pyres!

Ye ropes of the gibbets, straighten yourselves

Under the weight of your loads!

All are hanged, quartered or burned—

All the Carcassonne heretics left in the town;

All are hanged, quartered or burned,

And then the wagons are filled with the booty.

"To Lavaur!" now cries the papal legate.

"Fall to, Montfort! On the march!

Kill, pillage, burn the heretics!

Our Holy Father thus has issued the order!"

"To Lavaur! To Lavaur!" Montfort makes answer.

And behold, the Cath'lic Crusaders now march upon Lavaur.

Priests lead the way,

The red cross on their breasts,

The name of Jesus on their lips,

The sword in one hand,

The torch in the other!

What wrong have we done to these priests?

Oh, what wrong have we done unto them!

CHAPTER IX

THE HERETICS' WAR SONG

Aye, behold them on the march to Lavaur,

The fagot in one hand,

The sword in the other,

The Catholic Crusaders!

Aye, behold what they've done until now.

Oh, valiant sons of Languedoc!

Oh, ye sons of ancient Gaul,

Who, like our fathers, have known how to re-conquer freedom,

Read on the flag of the Catholic Crusaders,

Read—read these lines traced in blood and in fire:

"Chasseneuil,"

"Beziers,"

"Carcassonne."

Tell me! Will "Lavaur" also soon be read on its folds?

And "Albi"?

"Toulouse"?

"Arles"?

"Narbonne"?

"Avignon"?

"Orange"?

"Beaucaire"?

Tell me, has there been enough rapine and rape,

Carnage and arson?

Tell me, is't enough?

Are Chasseneuil, Beziers, Carcassonne enough?

Tell me, Chasseneuil, Beziers, Carcassonne—

Is't enough?

Tell me, are all our cities to be turned into heaps of ashes?

Our fields into deserts, whitened with human bones?

Our woods into forests of gibbets?

Our rivers into torrents of blood?

Our skies into ruddy reflections of conflagrations and pyres?

Tell me, will you submit,

Ye brave men who emancipated yourselves from the yoke of Rome?

Will you relapse, you, your wives, your children,

Under the execrable power of the priests,

Whose soldiers rape, slay and burn women and children?

Are you ready for that?

No! You are not! No!

Your hearts beat high, your blood boils and you declare:

Chasseneuil, Beziers, Carcassonne—that's enough! Too much!

Aye, aye, Chasseneuil, Beziers, Carcassonne—that's enough!

Despite their valor, our brothers have perished.

Let us redouble our valor,

Let us crush our enemy.

No truce nor mercy for him.

Over mountains and valleys—

Let's pursue him! Harrass him! Cut him to pieces!

Let us rise as one man, sons of Languedoc,

All!

Implacable war!

War to the death to the Cath'lic Crusader!

Right is with us;

All is justified against them—

The fork and the scythe,

The club and the stone,

The hands and the teeth!

To arms, ye heretics of Languedoc!

To arms!

Also we cry:

"On to Lavour!"

And may Lavour be the grave of the Cath'lic Crusaders!

Vengeance! Death to the invader!

Mylio the Trouvere composed this song, and throughout the country sang it from place to place while the army of the Crusaders marched upon the city and Castle of Lavour.

CHAPTER X

BEFORE THE CASTLE OF LAVAU

Son of Joel, the following scenes take place in a beautiful villa that has been abandoned by its heretic owners, lies at only a short distance from the castle of Giraude, the Lady of Lavaur, and is now besieged by the Crusaders. The retreat is occupied by the general of the Army of the Faith, Simon, Count of Montfort. He is accompanied by his wife Alyx of Montmorency, who only recently joined her husband in Languedoc. The tents of the seigneurs lie scattered around the house occupied by their chief. The camp itself, formed of huts of earth or of tree branches in which the soldiers are bivouacked, lies at a distance. The mass of serfs, who availed themselves of the opportunity to leave their masters' fields under the pretext of joining the hunt of heretics, but who were attracted mainly by the prospect of pillage, lie on the bare ground and shelterless.

It is night. A wax candle sheds a dim light in one of the lower apartments of the villa. A large fire burns in the hearth, the evening being cool. Two knights are engaged in conversation near the fire. One is Lambert, Seigneur of Limoux, who, at the Blois Court of Love, filled the functions of Conservator of the High Privileges of Love. The other is Hugues, Seigneur of Lascy, ex-Seneschal of Sweet-Marjoram in the same Court. Although now in full armor, the fur cap that he wears exposes a bandage around his head. The knight was wounded at the siege of Lavaur.

HUGUES OF LASCY (addressing his companion who has just entered the room)—"Montfort now rests somewhat more easily. One of his equeries, who just left the patient's room, told me that the count was sleeping and that his fever seems to have gone down."

LAMBERT OF LIMOUX—"So much the better, because I have just notified Alyx of Montmorency that she should no longer count upon the physician whom she expected from Lavaur."

HUGUES OF LASCY—"Who is he?"

LAMBERT OF LIMOUX—"Seeing this morning that Montfort was a prey to a high fever and to a painful oppression of the chest that her own surgeon equerry was unable to relieve, the countess remembered having heard one of our prisoners say that the most famous physician of this country, a fanatical heretic, was at the Castle of Lavaur. The countess ordered the prisoner to be brought to her, and offered to set him free upon condition

that he would convey to the physician a letter in which a safe conduct was promised him if he consented to come and attend to Montfort, after which the celebrated Esculapius was to be free to return to the beleaguered city."

HUGUES OF LASCY—"What an imprudence! How can the countess entrust so precious a life to the care of a heretic?"

LAMBERT OF LIMOUX—"Dismiss your fears. The scamp immediately left on his errand, and at the solicitation of the countess I waited for the physician at our advanced posts. I waited until now to bring him here. But night set in; he has not appeared; we need no longer expect him. Nevertheless, I left orders for him to be brought hither in case that he should still present himself at the camp, which is highly improbable."

HUGUES OF LASCY—"The countess has lost her wits. How could she think of entrusting Montfort's life to an enemy!"

LAMBERT OF LIMOUX—"I raised the objection to Alyx of Montmorency. Her answer was that seeing the physician in question is one of those whom these damned heretics call 'Perfects', the man would certainly carry his hypocrisy to the point of not betraying the trust reposed in him. She thinks so because the affectation of honesty on the part of these wretches goes beyond all bounds. It is the sublimity of knavery."

HUGUES OF LASCY—"No doubt these fanatics are capable of the most wicked affectation, in order to give themselves the semblance of virtue."

LAMBERT OF LIMOUX—"There is one thing, however, that is no false semblance, and that is the inveterate resistance offered by these people of Lavour. Do you know that they defend themselves like lions? Blood of Christ, it looks like a dream! The siege of this accursed town, that has already cost us many captains and soldiers, has now lasted nearly a month, while Chasseneuil, Beziers and Carcassonne were taken almost without striking a blow. These fellows of Lavour are rude customers!"

HUGUES OF LASCY—"Their determined and also unexpected resistance, not hitherto encountered by us since our invasion of Albigeois, is attributed to the enthusiasm that certain furiously savage poems are said to have kindled among the people, and which are being sung from place to place by Mylio the Trouvere, the same whom we knew in northern Gaul."

LAMBERT OF LIMOUX—"That Mylio must be among the besieged. No doubt it is he who is pricking the Lady of Lavour, one of the most embittered heretics of the country, to offer the desperate resistance that we meet."

HUGUES OF LASCY (with a cruel smile)—"Patience! Patience! This is not a Court of Love where warriors bow down before the authority of women. Blood of Christ! When we shall have seized this infernal castle, a terrible court of justice will be held within its walls, and the Lady of Lavaur will be proclaimed Queen of the Pyre."

LAMBERT OF LIMOUX—"And after the execution of the she-cat we shall salute you 'Seigneur of Lavaur;' happy Lascy! Montfort has promised the seigniory to you; it is one of the most valuable of Albigeois; and he never fails in his word toward the faithful."

HUGUES OF LASCY—"Will you envy me the gift? Has not Montfort, who is now the master and conqueror of the region, bestowed several of the seigniories upon chiefs of our Crusade? He may bestow one upon you also!"

LAMBERT OF LIMOUX—"May heaven keep me from entertaining any jealousy towards you! As to me, my part is done. And to speak truly, the good bags of gold and the fine silver vessel that I captured at the sack of Beziers, and which are safely kept in my baggage, are, to my mind, preferable to all the domains of Albigeois. One can not carry home with him either lands or castles, and the chances of war are risky. But I hope that I shall have nothing more to fear from that quarter after the 10th of this month."

HUGUES OF LASCY—"What does that date signify?"

LAMBERT OF LIMOUX—"The day after that date the forty days will have expired that are all a Crusader owes to a holy war. The forty days begin from the moment he sets foot upon the heretical land. After that he can ride with his men back to his own manor. And that is what I purpose to do—"

The confidential unbosoming on the part of the ex-Conservator of the High Privileges of Love is at this point interrupted by one of the equeries of the Count of Montfort, who comes running out of the neighboring chamber.

HUGUES OF LASCY—"Where are you running to in that way? What pressing business have you in hand?"

EQUERRY—"Oh, sire, the count is in great danger. He lies in the agony of death!"

HUGUES OF LASCY—"But only a short while ago he was resting calmly, and the fever had abated? What change has come over him?"

EQUERRY—"The count just woke up and is almost suffocated. I am running after Abbot Reynier by order of the countess. She wishes him to administer the extreme unction to the seigneur, and open for him the gates of paradise."

The equerry runs off on his errand, and is barely away when a soldier enters and says to Lambert of Limoux:

"Seigneur, I have brought to you the heretic of Lavaur, whom I was ordered to wait for at our advanced posts. He asks to be allowed to enter."

LAMBERT OF LIMOUX—"Let him in!—Let him in—He could arrive at no more opportune moment."

HUGUES OF LASCY—"Do you insist on trusting Montfort's life to that damned heretic? You are assuming a grave responsibility."

LAMBERT OF LIMOUX—"I shall take him to Alyx of Montmorency.—It will be for her to decide in this grave emergency."

The soldier enters with Karvel the Perfect. The latter's physiognomy is stamped with his habitual serenity. He holds a little casket in one hand and salutes the knights in the chamber.

LAMBERT OF LIMOUX (to Karvel)—"Follow me. I shall take you to Alyx of Montmorency, the worthy spouse of the Count of Montfort."

CHAPTER XI

MONTFORT AND THE PERFECT

Simon, Count of Leicester and of Montfort-L'Amaury lies on a bed in great agony. Alyx of Montmorency, a woman barely thirty years old, is on her knees near her husband's couch.

Lambert of Limoux introduces Karvel the Perfect to Alyx and withdraws, leaving him in the chamber.

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY (crossing herself, addresses the physician in a feeble voice)—"You have been long in coming. It may now be too late!"

KARVEL—"We have many wounded in Lavaur. My first assistance was due to them. You have summoned me in the name of humanity. I have come, madam, to fill a sacred duty."

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY—"At times it pleases the Lord to avail Himself of the most perverse instruments in behalf of His elect!"

KARVEL (smiles at the singular reception and approaches the couch of Simon whose haggard face and fixed eyes seem to give no sign of intelligence. After a long and attentive examination of the patient, after placing his hand on the count's forehead, slightly touching his parched lips with his fingers and consulting his pulse, addresses the countess)—"Your husband must be quickly bled, madam. (Saying this he draws from his pocket a reticule that contains a red cloth band and lancets; he picks out one of these and adds) Kindly draw this table and candle nearer, madam; I shall then want your assistance to support your husband's arm. The silver basin that I see on yonder shelf will serve to receive the blood in. I recommend to you, madam, not to allow the count to bend his arm when I prick it. There is an artery that my lancet might cut, if the arm is not held steady—and that would prove mortal."

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY (impassible)—"My husband can die. He is in the state of grace."

For an instant stupefied by such frigid insensibility, Karvel stays his hand, but his professional instinct resumes the ascendancy, and he boldly and dexterously lances the vein, from which a jet of thick black blood immediately issues and falls steaming into the silver basin.

KARVEL—"What black blood! The bleeding will, I hope, save your husband, madam!"

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY—"The will of God be done! May His name be glorified."

The patient's blood continues to flow into the silver vessel. Only the muffled and continued sound of the trickling blood interrupts the otherwise profound silence of the chamber. The Perfect attentively watches the count's face and notices the gradual manifestations of the beneficent effect produced by the blood letting. The patient's skin, until then parched and burning, is gradually suffused with a copious perspiration. His chest is relieved. His fixed eyes are soon covered by their lids. Karvel again consults the count's pulse, and cries delighted: "He is saved!"

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY (raising her eyes to the ceiling)—"Lord, since it pleases You to leave my husband in this valley of tears and misery—may Your will be done! May Your holy name be glorified!"

Karvel stops the flow of the blood with the red bandage, which he rolls around the count's arm. He then steps to the casket that he brought with him and which he placed upon a table, takes from it several vials and prepares a potion. Montfort's condition improves as if by enchantment. He gradually recovers from his lethargy, and heaves a sigh of profound relief. The Perfect finishes the preparation of the potion, steps back to the couch and says to the countess:

"Please raise your husband's head, madam, and help me to make him drink this potion that will restore his strength. All danger of death is now removed."

Alyx of Montmorency follows Karvel's instructions. The effect of the potion is not long in manifesting itself. Montfort's gaze, that until then seemed vague and wandering, falls upon the physician. He contemplates Karvel in silence for a moment, and turning his head toward the countess while he painfully raises his arm to point at the Perfect, he asks in a feeble and hollow voice: "Who is that man?"

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY—"It is the heretic Lavaur physician whom we sent for."

At these words Simon shudders with surprise and horror. He closes his eyes and seems to be steeped in thought. After depositing a little flask on the

table, Karvel closes his casket, takes it in his hands and says to the countess:

"Madam, you will give your husband a mouthful of the potion in this flask every hour during the night. I think that will suffice to restore the count to health. He shall have to keep his bed two or three days. And now, adieu; the wounded of Lavaur are waiting for me."

MONTFORT (seeing his savior moving towards the door, rises on his elbow and says to Karvel in an imperative tone)—"Stop! (The Perfect hesitates to obey the count; the latter rings a bell that lies near him and says to one of the equerries who answer the call). That physician shall not leave the place without my orders."

The equerry bows and leaves the chamber.

MONTFORT—"Listen, physician, I am expert on courage. You have given a proof of courage in coming hither—alone—in the lion's den—"

KARVEL—"Your wife summoned me to your camp in the name of humanity. You are a human being—you suffered—I hastened to you. Moreover, I thought it well to prove once more how these 'heretics,' these 'monsters'—against whom so many horrors have been unchained—practice the evangelical morality of Jesus. You are our implacable enemy, Montfort, and yet I am glad to have saved your life."

MONTFORT—"Blaspheme not! You have only been the vile instrument of the will of God, Who has willed to spare my life, the life of His unworthy servant, the life of the humble sword of His triumphant Church.—But I repeat it. You are a brave fellow. As such you interest me. I would like to save your soul."

KARVEL—"Do not trouble yourself about that. Only let me return without delay to Lavaur, where our wounded await my services."

MONTFORT—"No! You shall not depart so soon!"

KARVEL—"You have the power. I submit (After a moment's reflection) Seeing that you oppose my departure, seeing that you believe you owe me some gratitude, pay the debt by sincerely answering me a few questions."

MONTFORT—"I allow you to speak."

KARVEL—"Your valor is well known.—Your morals are austere.—You are humane towards your soldiers. At the crossing of the Durance you were

seen to throw yourself into the water to save a foot-soldier who was being carried off by the current."

MONTFORT (brusquely)—"Enough! Enough! You shall not awaken in my soul the demon of pride! I am only an earthly worm!"

KARVEL—"I am not flattering you.—You are accessible to humane promptings. Now, then, tell me, did you not moan at the fate of the sixty thousand creatures of God—men, women and children—who were massacred in Beziers by orders issued by yourself and the papal legate?"

MONTFORT—"Never did I feel greater exaltation. To obey the Pope is to obey God!"

KARVEL (struck by the sincerity of Montfort's tone, remains pensive for a moment)—"The delirium of war is blind, I know. But after the battle is over, after the sanguinary fever is cooled down, still to order in cold blood the massacre of thousands of unarmed and inoffensive beings, women and children—it is shocking! Think of it, Montfort, to order the massacre of children!"

MONTFORT (afflicted)—"Oh! How does the sacrilegious astonishment of the miscreant prove the depth of his heresy! He does not know that children die in a state of grace!"

KARVEL—"Explain yourself more clearly. Be indulgent with my ignorance. Let us be definite. In a city that is taken by storm, a mother flees with her child. You slay the mother. Is that a worthy act before God?"

MONTFORT—"The viper that is crushed, breeds no more little ones. The supply of the miscreants is thus reduced."

KARVEL—"That is logical. But why slay the child? That is an abominable act?"

MONTFORT—"Of what age are you supposing the child to be?"

KARVEL—"I suppose it to be at its mother's breast."

MONTFORT—"Has it been baptized by a Catholic priest?"

KARVEL—"That child at its mother's breast whom you slay—has been baptized."

MONTFORT—"Then it is in a state of grace and ascends straight into Paradise. As to children who are older than seven years, they go to purgatory there to await their admission in the blessed resting place. But if they have not been baptized—then the case is grave—"

KARVEL—"What happens to those children?"

MONTFORT—"The poor little creatures, still dripping with the soilure of original sin, go straight to hell where they are forever deprived of the countenance of God. Nevertheless, in consideration of their tender years, the hope is left to them of being exempted from the everlasting flames by the prayers of the faithful—a grace that never would have fallen to their share had they been allowed to remain wallowing in the pestilence of heresy! Their death will have resulted in a mitigation of their punishment."

KARVEL—"Accordingly, in these days of a 'holy war', the accidental killing of a Catholic child sends him straight to Paradise, and the slaying of a heretic child affords it a good opportunity to escape the everlasting flames, but does not snatch it out of hell!"

MONTFORT—"You have put it correctly. The child that is not baptized can never emerge out of hell."

KARVEL—"I am now clear upon the fate of children. Let us now take up the case of women—"

MONTFORT—"I am anxious to save your soul. Perchance this conversation will open your eyes to the light."

KARVEL—"In the Castle of Lavaur that you are now besieging there is a woman—an angel of goodness and virtue. Her name is Giraude. (The count seems to be seized with fury at the mentioning of the name and tosses on his couch). Let me finish what I have to say. Be not impatient; besides, a fit of anger might prove fatal to you in your present condition. Take a few drops of this potion. I see that your wife, piously absorbed in her orisons, forgets the creature for the Creator."

MONTFORT (after taking a few draughts of the potion and again heaving a sigh of relief)—"The Lord has had pity upon me, miserable sinner that I am! I feel my strength returning. May the Lord be praised! Let the heretics tremble in their burrows!"

KARVEL—"The Lady of Lavaur is locked up with her son and brother in the Castle of Lavaur which you are now besieging. Giraude is an angel of virtue

and goodness. Suppose that to-morrow, more successful than in your previous attacks upon the castle, you carry it by assault, and Giraude together with her son, a lad of fourteen, having escaped the general massacre, fall into your hands. What will you do with that woman and her son? Answer me, noble Count of Montfort!"

MONTFORT—"The papal legate will say to the heretic woman: 'Will you, yes or no, renounce Satan and re-enter into the bosom of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church? Will you, yes or no, renounce all your earthly goods and lock yourself up for the rest of your days in a cloister, there to expiate your past heretical life?'"

KARVEL—"Giraude will answer the Pope's legate: 'I have my faith, you have yours. I wish to remain true to my religion.'"

MONTFORT (enraged)—"There is but one faith in the world, the Catholic faith! All who refuse to enter the pale of the Church deserve death. If the Lady of Lavour should persist in her detestable creed, she will perish in the flames of the pyre!"

KARVEL—"I know not whether you have any children. But you have a wife. Your mother still lives or has died. Think of her, you pious servant of the Church! Montfort, unconquerable warrior, you certainly loved your mother?"

MONTFORT (with emotion)—"Oh, yes—I loved her dearly!"

KARVEL—"And yet you would mercilessly order a woman to be burned who was a model of a wife, and is a model of a mother?"

MONTFORT (with a sinister smile)—"And that surprises you? You take me for a ferocious man? Oh, my God! how can you do otherwise, seeing that you have no faith. If you had you would understand that, on the contrary, I act with humanity by bringing the sword and the fagot into your country."

KARVEL—"Humanity in burning and massacring the heretics, and in authorizing rape and butchery?"

MONTFORT—"Listen, and now it will be my turn to say: Answer with sincerity. You have a wife, a mother, children, friends. You love them dearly. In your country there is a province that is a permanent hot-bed of a contagion that threatens to invade the neighboring districts, to attack your own family, your friends and the whole population. Will you, under such circumstances hesitate one instant to purify that corner of your country, even if you have to do it with fire and sword? In the very name of that

humanity that you speak about, will you hesitate to sacrifice a thousand, twenty thousand infected beings in order to save millions of other human beings from the incurable pestilence? No! no! You will strike, and strike hard, and strike again. Your arm would never rest until the last one of the execrable and infected beings is dead, and has carried the last germ of the frightful disease into his tomb. And you will have performed an act of humanity."

KARVEL (listens to Montfort's words with increasing emotion and intensity. For a moment he stands petrified by the sincere savagery of the chief of the Crusade. The Perfect then cries out with painful indignation)—"Oh, Catholic priests! Your infernal astuteness is such that, in order to insure the triumph of your unbridled ambition, you know how to exploit even the generous promptings of a man's heart and turn them to your own purpose!"

MONTFORT—"What is that you say! Impious blasphemer! Retract those infamous words!"

KARVEL—"It is not you, blind and convinced fanatic, that I accuse. You said so, and you expressed your convictions. Yes, you consider yourself humane. Yes, if you slay children, it is in order to despatch them to Paradise! If you exterminate us mercilessly, it is because according to your convictions our belief damns the souls of men forever! But, good God, what a religion is that! It is a monstrous, a frightful prodigy! It so wholly dethrones man's reason and upsets his sense of right and wrong that you and your accomplices verily believe you are doing an act of piety when you carry ferocity beyond even the bounds of possibility!"

Having finished her orisons, Alyx of Montmorency rises. She overhears Karvel's last words, approaches the count and says to him in a tone of mingled terror and pain while pointing her trembling finger at the Perfect "Oh! How many souls may not that hardened sinner forever lead astray! Let him die!"

MONTFORT (meditatively)—"I was thinking of that—there is nothing to expect from him. (Deliberately to Karvel) Do you persist in your heresy?"

KARVEL—"Hear, Montfort: at Chasseneuil, at Beziers, at Carcassonne, at Termes, at Minerve, in all the places whither the Army of the Faith carried ravage and murder, women, maids and children who escaped the massacre and were by you condemned to the pyre, threw themselves heroically into the flames rather than, even with their lips, accept that Roman Church, whose base name causes us disgust and horror. The 'heresy' has passed

into our blood; our children have taken it in with their mothers' milk. Not unless you exterminate them all will you have exterminated 'heresy' from this region. The more men, women and children you slay, the vaster the regions of our country that you depopulate and turn into deserts, all the more imperishable will be the monuments raised by yourself and that will teach the next generations to execrate your Church. The air that is breathed in this region has for centuries been so impregnated by the breath of freedom, that breath is so pure and penetrating, that neither the steam from the torrents of blood that you have shed, nor yet the smoke that has gone up from the pyres that you have lighted have been able to contaminate it. Here our ancestors have lived in freedom; here we shall know how to live in freedom or to die; and here our children will emulate us and remain, like ourselves, unshackled by the Church of Rome."

While the Perfect speaks these words Montfort and his wife exchange glances alternately expressive of indignation, horror and amazement. The wan eyes of Alyx of Montmorency fill with tears. She clasps her hands and addresses the count:

"Oh! My heart bleeds like the heart of the Holy Virgin! I take You for witness, Lord God, my divine master! Strengthened by faith against the trials that it has pleased You to afflict me with for my salvation, it is long since I have wept. No; I have seen my father die and my second son; I looked upon their corpses with a tranquil eye, seeing that it was You, Oh my God, who called them unto You. To-day, however, my tears flow when I think of the thousands of poor souls whom the abominable preachings of this monster of perdition may cause to burn everlastingly in hell!"

MONTFORT (weeping like the countess, whom he closes in his arms)—
"Console yourself, dear and saintly wife! Console yourself! We shall pray for the souls that this miscreant has damned. It has pleased the Lord to recall me to life this day. I shall prove my devout recognition by dedicating to pious works a part of the booty that we shall take at Lavaur. I shall establish masses for the repose of the souls of the heretics of this city whom I shall exterminate."

The ingenious idea of masses, especially consecrated to the repose of the souls of the heretics whom Montfort promises himself soon to put to the sword or to consign to the flames, seems to assuage the countess's grief. Suddenly the din of a distant tumult breaks in upon the silence of Montfort's sick chamber. Trumpets are heard sounding from the direction of the camp. Montfort starts, half rises on his couch, listens and cries: "Alyx, it is the call to arms! The besieged must have made a sally! This way, my

equerries!—My armor!—Let my horse be saddled." Thus speaking, the count rises half naked on the couch, but enfeebled by the fever and the blood-letting, he is seized with a vertigo, his limbs tremble under him and he drops down on the bed. In dropping, the bandage of the arm unfastens, the recently lanced vein re-opens, and the blood streams out anew. Karvel hastens to the side of Montfort, who lies unconscious on the couch, and seeks to stop the flow of blood while one of the equerries breaks precipitately into the room crying:

"Seigneur!—Seigneur!—To arms!—The camp is broken into!"

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY—"What is the meaning of these trumpet blasts? Is there an engagement on?"

THE EQUERRY—"The Seigneurs of Lascy and Limoux were in the neighboring room awaiting the orders of seigneur the count, when a knight rode in in haste to notify them that a large heretic force was seeking to enter the Castle of Lavaur under the cover of night, in order to reinforce the garrison. Hugues of Lascy and Lambert of Limoux immediately rode off with the knight and ordered a call to arms."

KARVEL (attending to Montfort)—"Oh! Mylio's songs have not been vain. They have redoubled the courage of the inhabitants of Languedoc!"

A SECOND EQUERRY (enters and says to the countess)—"A messenger has just arrived. He brings information that the heretics are fighting with desperate courage. Abbot Reynier requests monseigneur to mount his horse and ride forth. It will steel the courage of our troops."

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY (pointing to the count who still lies unconscious and is being attended to by the Perfect)—"Tell the messenger of our venerable Father, Abbot Reynier, that monseigneur lies unconscious on his couch, and is unable to take horse—Go! (The equerry hastens out. Alyx raises her eyes heavenward and joins her hands.) May the Almighty watch over His elect!"

KARVEL (sadly)—"Oh! How many of our brothers will not lose their lives in the attack!"

THE SECOND EQUERRY (re-entering)—"A soldier has just alighted from his horse. He rode ahead of Abbot Reynier. It is said that, thanks to an intrepid sally of the besieged who came out to the help of the forces that sought to enter the castle, the pagans succeeded in making good their entry into Lavaur. Many of them, however, have been killed, wounded or taken

prisoner. Lambert of Limoux and Hugues of Lascy are bringing the prisoners to camp. Abbot Reynier is with them."

KARVEL (with great anxiety)—"Good God! If Mylio and his friend the juggler should happen to be among the prisoners, it will be their sentence of death."

CHAPTER XII

GOOSE-SKIN'S CONVERSION

The fears of Karvel the Perfect are verified. Mylio is a prisoner of the Crusaders. He was captured at the moment when, leading a body of men from the fields, he attempted to force an entry into Lavaur in order to reinforce the garrison. Goose-Skin also is among the prisoners. Together with the trouvere, the juggler is taken into the large hall of the villa by Lambert of Limoux and Hugues of Lascy. Karvel has remained near Montfort. Mylio is wounded. A blood-stained handkerchief bandages his arm. Although unscathed, the juggler seems to be a prey to great apprehension. Informed upon the dangerous condition of the count, Abbot Reynier proceeds to the patient's chamber, while Hugues of Lascy and Lambert of Limoux, their visors down, converse in a low voice a few paces away from the trouvere and the juggler.

MYLIO (to his companion in a tone of sorrow)—"My poor Goose-Skin, you are now a prisoner—it is all my fault."

GOOSE-SKIN (peevishly)—"Yes; it is your fault. I was dead; quite dead; could you not leave my ashes in peace?"

MYLIO—"Just as, thanks to the sally of the brave men of Lavaur under Aimery, I was about to enter the town, I noticed that you were not near. I felt uneasy about you. I stopped. By the light of the moon I saw you twenty paces behind lying on your face—"

GOOSE-SKIN—"Oxhorns! Had I lain down on my back I would have had my paunch trampled out of shape under the feet of the combatants."

MYLIO—"I ran back to you thinking you were wounded. Our companions entered the town in the interval, the gate closed behind them, and—here we are, prisoners."

GOOSE-SKIN—"What I blame you for is for having drawn upon me—good and peaceful corpse that I was—the attention of these scampish Crusaders. I heard one of them cry out: 'That mountain of meat is so enormous that I wager my pike could not transfix it. Just watch, my companions.'—"

MYLIO—"And no sooner had you heard the words than you turned so prodigious a somersault that I was as happy at your resurrection as amazed at your agility. It was a wonderful jump."

GOOSE-SKIN—"Oxhorns! A good deal less than was at stake would make one nimble. Did I not have my paunch to save?"

MYLIO—"And was it for that that you prudently simulated death during the attack?"

GOOSE-SKIN—"By the heavens! The moment that I heard those brutes of Crusaders cry: 'To arms!' I threw myself down flat, face down on the ground. And this is the way heroism is recompensed! I calculated that by bravely throwing myself as an unsurmountable obstacle between our companions and the enemy, I would cover their rear, and they would be able to enter the town in safety before the Crusaders had time to climb over my body."

MYLIO—"Your good spirits have come back. So much the better."

GOOSE-SKIN (nodding his head towards the two seigneurs, who now draw near after having raised their visors)—"Mylio, it seems to me we know these two men. May the devil take them to hell!"

MYLIO (looking back)—"Hugues of Lascy? Lambert of Limoux? (addressing them in an ironical voice) All hail to the Bailiff of the Joy of Joys! By the heavens! Here we have a bit of infamous hypocrisy! Is it you, holy men, who have come to extirpate heresy in Albigeois? (Turning to Goose-Skin) Do you remember that last pleading before the Court of Love?"

GOOSE-SKIN—"The court of ribaldry, of which these two bearers of the cross were worthy officers?"

HUGUES OF LASCY (to Lambert)—"Do you hear the vipers' language? Our capture is good. Since these two jugglers started over the country, the dogs of heretics have shown their teeth with greater madness! We shall know how to cure them of their madness!"

GOOSE-SKIN (plaintively)—"Poor folks! To have become so mad! Some monk must have bitten them, not true, Seigneur Bailiff of the Joy of Joys?"

At this moment Simon of Montfort enters clad in a long brown robe that resembles a monk's frock. On one side he leans upon the arm of his wife Alyx of Montmorency, on the other upon the arm of Abbot Reynier. One of the count's equerries hastens to bring a chair for his master, the other mounts guard at the door of the contiguous apartment where Karvel the Perfect is kept a prisoner. Montfort is silent. Abbot Reynier casts upon Mylio and Goose-Skin a look of triumph and inveterate hatred. The monk has not yet forgotten the night when the trouvère and the juggler carried away

Florette from the mill of Chaillotte, and left him lying bruised and disappointed on the ground.

MONTFORT (addressing Mylio in a hollow voice)—"Were you among the heretics of whom a large number succeeded in forcing an entry into Lavaur?"

MYLIO—"Yes, Seigneur Count, I was among the combatants and fought my best."

MONTFORT—"Your name is Mylio the Trouvere. You plied at Blois your unworthy trade of perdition. You poured out the venom of your calumnies against the priests of the Church, the most sacred personages. I am thoroughly informed concerning you—"

MYLIO (interrupting the count and addressing the abbot)—"Oh, sycophant! So you have taken early precautions to head off the narrative of your nocturnal adventure at the mill of Chaillotte!"

Alyx of Montmorency raises her hands and turns her eyes heavenward as if to take the heavens to witness. The count darts a furious look at Mylio.

GOOSE-SKIN (in a low voice to the trouvere)—"The looks of that specter chill me to the marrow of my bones. We are lost!"

MONTFORT (to Mylio, angrily)—"Hold your tongue, blasphemer! Heretic dog! If you do not, I shall have your tongue torn out!"

ABBOT REYNIER (to Montfort with unction)—"My dear brother, we should have contempt only for such insults. The wretch is possessed. Helas! He no longer belongs to himself. It is the demon that speaks through his mouth."

MYLIO (impetuously to the abbot)—"Will you dare deny that you crept one night into the close of the mill of Chaillotte, the despicable coupler in your service, with evil designs on Florette, and that, but for Goose-Skin, who is here a witness, and myself, you would have succeeded in your satanic purpose and blighted the poor child?"

GOOSE-SKIN (breaks in upon Mylio trembling at every limb, throws himself at Montfort's feet and clasping his hands cries)—"Illustrious and benevolent seigneur, I remember nothing—I am wholly upset, fascinated, dazed. All that I remember is that I was a pig, an unclean animal. Alack! It was no fault of mine, because, Oh! redoubtable prop of the Church, I have not yet received baptism. Alack! Not yet. But a second ago, the instant I beheld your august

face, it seemed to me that I saw a light like a halo shining around your holy person. One of those divine rays penetrated my body and it has suddenly given me an inextinguishable thirst for celestial knowledge; it has caused me to pant after the baptismal waters that will purify me of my abominable sins. Oh, pious seigneur! May you and your saintly spouse deign to officiate as my god-father and god-mother; consent, I pray you, to hold me over the baptismal font—I shall be a model of fidelity. My body shall be harnessed in beads and scapularies!"

MONTFORT (aside to Abbot Reynier)—"Hem! Meseems this fat miscreant has been illumined rather too suddenly by the light of heaven—and yet he might be sincere!"

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY—"It often pleases the Lord to accelerate the effects of His grace in order to render them more striking."

ABBOT REYNIER (aside to the count and his wife)—"It also might be that the fear of death and not faith has brought about the conversion of this sinner."

MONTFORT—"What is there to be done, reverend Father? How shall we interpret his conduct?"

ABBOT REYNIER (aside to the count)—"He should be sent to the pyre along with the rest."

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY—"But, Father, if he is sincere, if the man has really been touched by divine grace?"

ABBOT REYNIER (aside to Alyx and her husband)—"A reason the more. If he is sincere, the flames of the pyre will, in the eyes of the Lord, be an acceptable expiation of the new convert's abominable past life. If he deceives us, the pyre will be the just punishment for his sacrilegious falsehood. In either case, the pyre is meet for the miscreant. The matter is settled."

Montfort and his wife are struck by the double advantage of the monk's proposition and exchange looks of approval.

MONTFORT—"Rise, man! God will know whether your conversion is sincere."

GOOSE-SKIN (aside to himself)—"Good! Good! It is now merely an affair between God and myself. We shall arrange matters comfortably between us two."

MONTFORT (to Mylio)—"You have a brother who is a pastor of these devil-possessed heretics. Does he not enjoy a great influence in the town?"

MYLIO (proudly)—"All the inhabitants would give their lives to save his own. My brother is their idol."

MONTFORT—"I shall allow you to return to Lavaur. You shall tell the inhabitants in my name: 'Abjure your heresy; re-enter the pale of the holy Catholic Church; deliver the Lady of Lavaur unconditionally to Montfort, and also her son, the consuls of the town and a hundred of the most notable citizens; relinquish your property to the soldiers of Christ; if you do your lives will be saved; if you do not, at day-break to-morrow the flames of Karvel's pyre will give to the Crusaders the signal for the assault!' That is the mission that I confer upon you."

MYLIO (stupefied)—"My brother! You speak of burning my brother alive! Oh, horrible alternative!"

MONTFORT—"He is a prisoner in my camp."

MYLIO (in consternation)—"My brother! A prisoner!"

GOOSE-SKIN (aside to Mylio)—"Follow my example—abjure—demand baptism!"

MYLIO (to Montfort in a trembling voice)—"My brother is a prisoner, say you? You are surely spreading a snare for me. But even if he stood there before me, loaded with chains, Karvel would curse me if I were to accept your offer, and could be infamous enough to promise you to exhort the inhabitants of Lavaur in his name to submit to the Church of Rome!"

Suddenly the sonorous and gentle voice of the physician is heard. Kept a prisoner in the adjoining room, the words of Mylio have reached him. "Brother," he cries, "falter not before the foe."

MYLIO (electrified)—"Karvel's voice!"

The trouvère rushes in the direction from which the voice proceeded, but Lambert of Limoux and Hugues of Lascy throw themselves in Mylio's way and hold him back. Montfort turns to one of his equerries and says: "Let the other heretic in."

Immediately Karvel the Perfect steps in, he advances towards his brother with a smile of ineffable tenderness, and pointing with his finger at the knights who are holding Mylio addresses Montfort: "What! Violence against an unarmed enemy?"

At a sign from the count the seigneurs leave Mylio free, and the two brothers rush into each other's arms. They converse apart for a moment during which Karvel informs his brother of the circumstances that brought him into the Crusaders' camp.

HUGHES OF LASCY (stepping towards Montfort)—"Seigneur, day is dawning. Everything is in readiness for the assault of Lavaur. The army only awaits the signal. What are your orders?"

MONTFORT—"Let the signal for the assault be given at sunrise. Yet too feeble to mount my horse, I shall have myself carried in a litter. As to these three heretics, their execution shall be the signal for the attack."

GOOSE-SKIN (stupefied)—"One moment! What the devil! I have abjured; I did! I am a good Catholic!"

KARVEL (to Montfort)—"So, then, count, we are to die? I thank you for this death!"

MYLIO (to Montfort)—"I also thank you for this death, coward! Felon! Knight without word and without faith! Miserable fanatic!"

The count drops his head at the reproach. His soldier's heart is touched to the quick by the just charge of felony.

ABBOT REYNIER—"These wretches dare to mention the word 'faith'! And will you, Montfort, be affected by reproaches that issue from such mouths? Have you forgotten that our Holy Father, Innocent III, said: 'None need to keep faith with those who fail in their faith to God'? Would you protect the lives of these maddened heretics and thus enable them to lure thousands of unhappy beings into their detestable heresy?"

MONTFORT (affrighted)—"Oh! No, Father! A thousand times, no!"

ABBOT REYNIER—"Come, then! Hold high your head, intrepid soldier of our Church! The Lord will cause Lavour to fall into your hands!"

MONTFORT (with fanatic exaltation)—"To arms, knights! To the assault! God is with us! No mercy when we take Lavour! Kill, slay women, children, old men and young! Kill them all! As at Beziers, the Lord will distinguish His own. (Pointing to the three prisoners) Let these three men be pinioned! Let them be kept in a safe place until the moment of their execution!"

GOOSE-SKIN (distracted with terror, throwing himself at Montfort's feet and seizing his robe)—"Gracious god-father! You promised me that you would hold me over the baptismal font. I wish to live henceforth a good Catholic. I believe in the Church, I believe in all her past, present and future saints. I believe the most incredible miracles. I shall believe anything that you want."

MONTFORT (to Abbot Reynier)—"You were right. This wretch yields to fear and not to the faith. He is a miscreant."

ABBOT REYNIER (to Goose-Skin)—"If your faith is sincere, the pyre will purify you of your past sins. But if you are merely feigning a sacrilegious conversion, the eternal flames will be your just punishment. You shall be burned alive like the others."

GOOSE-SKIN (rises furious)—"Oh, you lascivious buck! Oh, you lewd pig and tiger of cruelty! You are trying to take revenge for the night when I threw you down, and kept you there and prevented you from blasting a pure and poor girl! Hypocrite and criminal!"

The count's equerries fall upon Goose-Skin and pinion him despite his violent resistance. They also pinion Mylio and Karvel who quietly allow

themselves to be bound. The trumpets sound. Hugues of Lascy enters and announces that all is ready for the assault and that a litter awaits the count. ALYX OF MONTMORENCY (falls on her knees)—"Go, my noble husband. I shall remain here on my knees until the battle is ended, and shall pray for the triumph of your arms, and the extermination of the enemy, and for the salvation of the poor heretical souls of Lavour."

ABBOT REYNIER (to Montfort)—"Come, brave soldier of Christ! Come and receive from my hands the bread of the angels, the holy communion!"

Montfort leaves the room reclining upon the monk's arm and followed by his equerries, while Alyx of Montmorency remains on her knees in fervent prayer.

MYLIO (looking sadly at Goose-Skin)—"Alas! It was his friendship for me that brought him to this country!"

KARVEL (pensively contemplating Alyx of Montmorency who is murmuring her orisons)—"Poor creature! Her heart has remained good. She is imploring the mercy of heaven for the victims!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE ESPLANADE AT LAVAU

After a heroic defense the city and Castle of Lavaur surrender to the Crusaders. The consuls have stipulated for the safety of the inhabitants. But obedient to the dictum of Pope Innocent III—"None need to keep faith with those who have failed in their faith to God"—despite the terms of the capitulation, almost all the prisoners are massacred, the rest are reserved for separate execution.

One night has passed since the surrender of Lavaur.

Suddenly the chimes of a neighboring church ring the passing-bell. Soon thereupon a little door that connects with a stone balcony, upon which rows of seats are arranged, is thrown open. The Archbishops of Lyons and of Rennes, the Bishops of Poitiers, of Bourges, of Nantes and other prelates, all dressed in their sacerdotal robes, issue through the little door in solemn procession and take their seats. Montfort and Alyx of Montmorency follow, accompanied by the papal legate and Abbot Reynier. The quartet seat themselves in the front row of the balcony. Below the balcony and in plain view of the audience is a stone esplanade. Soldiers are ranked at the foot of the walls; they are followed by priests and monks of several orders carrying aloft silver crucifixes and black banners, and singing funeral canticles at the top of their voices.

THE EXECUTIONER (on his knees before a little furnace, to a sergeant-at-arms)—"My irons are ready. Bring forward the sons of Satan."

The sergeant goes to the door of the vault and knocks. The door opens and twenty-eight men and fifteen women step out. They are of all ages and all conditions. The prisoners move slowly; they cannot take long steps; their feet are chained. Their arms are pinioned behind their backs. They step upon the stone esplanade.

ABBOT REYNIER (in a menacing voice)—"Heretics of Lavaur! Will you abjure? Will you acknowledge the infallible authority of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church?"

AN OLD MAN (to Abbot Reynier)—"My son died defending the town. The ruins of my house that was burned down after the pillage are still smoldering. I am near my grave. I now own nothing. But even if I had as many days before as I have behind me, even if I still had more wealth than I ever had, even if there still stood by my side the cherished child of my old

age—even then, both he and I would answer you: 'Death, a thousand times death, rather than embrace your infamous religion.'"

THE PRISONERS (among whom is Florette, fall on their knees and cry)—
"Mercy for our Lady of Lavour and her son!"

Only Florette remains standing. Mylio's young wife is pale, livid; she sees nothing of all that is happening around her. Her thoughts are with her husband, whom she believes killed long before. Noticing that the dear child does not kneel with the rest, Abbot Reynier's attention is attracted towards her. He recognizes her, his eyes bulge and he says to himself: "Ha! I shall now be doubly revenged upon that vagabond Mylio!"

THE OLD MAN (to Alyx of Montmorency, who, herself pale and with eyes cast down, is devoutly counting her beads)—"Madam, in the name of your mother, mercy for our Lady of Lavour!"

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY (unmoved)—"If she does not abjure her heresy, she must perish!"

ABBOT REYNIER (in a thundering voice)—"Hardened heretics, the Church now delivers you to the secular arm! Enemies of God, may your death strike a salutary terror among your fellows!"

THE PROVOST OF THE ARMY (to the executioner)—"Take your hot irons.—But leave one of his eyes to the old man who has just spoken. With it he shall guide the rest."

The executioner and his assistants seize at haphazard one of the prisoners. He is a young man. They bind him down upon a seat on the scaffold, while the executioner himself walks over to his furnace.

THE HERETIC (to the executioner's assistants)—"What are you going to do? Have mercy upon me!"

ONE OF THE ASSISTANTS—"We are going to put out both your eyes, heretic dog! Pagan!"

THE HERETIC (terrified)—"Oh, death rather—rather death than such a torture—mercy! (He vainly tries to snap his bonds and writhes convulsively, crying) Brothers! Help! They are going to put out our eyes. Oh, Lord, have mercy upon us!"

THE PRISONERS (to Montfort)—"Such a punishment is frightful. Have us rather burned—strangled! Mercy!"

MONTFORT (with a hollow voice)—"No mercy! Your blind souls are closed to the divine light. So shall your bodily eyes be forever closed to the light of day!"

A HERETIC (whose teeth are chattering with terror)—"Seigneur, myself and several of our companions abjure. Mercy! Mercy!"

ABBOT REYNIER—"Too late! Too late!"

The young heretic, who is firmly tied to the seat on the scaffold, is furthermore held down by the assistants of the executioner. The latter approaches the victim, who emits heart-rending shrieks and mechanically closes his eyes. With two thrusts of his sharp and incandescent iron the executioner pierces both the eyelids and the globes of the two eyes. The blood and smoke ooze out of the now hollow orbits. The shrieks of the victim are fearful, but they are speedily drowned by the choir of the monks and priests who chant their litanies aloud.

The same punishment, inflicted upon the rest of the prisoners in succession, is accompanied throughout by the funeral psalmody. Florette is the last victim, reserved to close the ghastly performance. At the sight of the horrors thus enacted in her presence, the poor girl almost loses her reason. She imagines herself oppressed by a nightmare. Sustained by the executioner's assistants she marches mechanically to the seat on the scaffold. These hardened men themselves feel moved to pity. After she is fastened down to the seat and before proceeding with the operation, the executioner whispers to her; "Take my advice, little one, open your eyes—you will suffer less. If the eyelids are shut the pain is double, because the hot iron must pierce them before it reaches the eye-ball. Do you understand me? Come, little one, do as I tell you; are you ready?"

FLORETTE (in a low voice to herself and only semi-conscious)—"Meseems I have been told to open my eyes in order that I may suffer less. Oh, no! I shall shut my eyes in order to suffer all the more, and die speedily, and rejoin Mylio. (Her haggard eyes wander; they alight upon Abbot Reynier; the girl shudders.) Oh, monk of Citeaux! Oh, infamous monk! There he stands, hovering before me in his white robe like a specter announcing death!"

THE EXECUTIONER (holding in his hand the iron, the sharp point of which is at white heat)—"Quick now, my pretty girl! Open your eyes wide!"

Florette on the contrary closes her eyes firmly; her face becomes cadaverous; her bluish lips are convulsively pressed; she awaits death.

THE EXECUTIONER (stamping on the ground)—"Open your eyes quickly—my iron is cooling. (The young woman does not obey) The devil take you! Fool! (The executioner darts his burning iron into the victim's right eye) The devil take the heretic's obstinacy! The right eye is now out!"

FLORETTE (emits a piercing cry, and swoons murmuring)—"Mylio—help!"

The poor child swoons away so completely that she utters but a feeble moan at the burning out of her left eye.

ABBOT REYNIER (aside)—"What a pity! Such beautiful eyes! Why did the hussy prefer that miserable Mylio to me!"

MONTFORT (addressing the old man, only one of whose eyes was put out)—"You may now serve as the guide for these sinners. They may now be unopinioned. Let them consecrate the rest of their lives to repentance!"

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY (sadly to her husband)—"Alas! The punishments that the stiff-neckedness of these wretches compels us to inflict upon them are horrible—but the Church so orders it."

THE PROVOST (stepping to the foot of the balcony and addressing Montfort)—"Seigneur, shall the pyre be lighted?"

MONTFORT—"Be quick about it! Let the pyre be lighted immediately to burn the other heretics alive."

ABBOT REYNIER (in a resonant voice)—"Bring the other heretics forth! The terrestrial hell shall be to them the vestibule of the eternal hell."

Again the gate that communicates with the esplanade is thrown open. Pricked in the back by the lances of the soldiers behind them, a crowd of men, women and children of all ages issues from the dungeon with pinioned hands. The soldiers rank themselves in a cordon along the edge of the esplanade, and with the points of their lowered lances drive the human mass of prisoners into a burning fosse.

Among the last victims to issue from the dungeon are Karvel the Perfect, his wife Morise, the Lady of Lavaur and her son. Accident threw the four together at this supreme moment. Giraude is clad in black, her arms are pinioned at her back; so are Aloys's, who has received a severe wound on his

left shoulder, seeing that, despite his tender years, he insisted upon fighting at his uncle's side during the siege. Giraude does not take her eyes from her son. The distracted mother's angelic features betray the horror which, little recking her own fate, she feels at the atrocious death that awaits her son. The latter guesses his mother's preoccupation, and endeavors to calm her with a smile. Karvel and his wife march with a firm step and serene front. Nevertheless, at the sight of the shocking spectacle that presents itself to him the instant he steps upon the esplanade, the Perfect stops short and shudders with horror. On the left are twenty-four gibbets awaiting their victims with arms outstretched; on the right, the prostrate bodies of those, who, too weak to withstand the torture of "blinding," are now dead or dying: they lie strewn around the foot of the scaffold; finally, a little further away from the gibbets and corpses, lambent flames rise from the pit, a vast brazier whose fires are kept alive with the fuel furnished by the flesh, the bones and the entrails of the heretics. From the midst of that burning heap of human remains some tokens of life are still visible. Arms, limbs and chests quiver and writhe convulsively; here and there a head is seen with hair aflame and features singed. Oh! son of Joel, no human pen could depict to you the aspect of these beings in the throes of such a death.

Such is the spectacle that presents itself to Karvel and his wife. The Perfect stops, and turns to the balcony where Montfort, his wife, the mitred abbots, the noble dukes, counts and knights are ranked in state. He contemplates the assemblage for an instant, and, a prophetic inspiration lighting his face, cries out aloud:

"Oh, ye priests of Rome! Verily, verily I say unto you the evangelical faith has departed from your midst; to-day it dwells among those whom you style heretics, and there it will dwell imperishable as truth! You have the might—the might—ephemeral as that pyre that, this very evening, will be but a heap of ashes!"

ABBOT REYNIER (jumps up furious)—"Tear out that heretic's tongue!"

The executioner and his assistants seize Karvel. While the latter hold the Perfect the former quickly takes out of his bag a pair of small iron pincers with wooden handles; he heats the iron in the furnace; and armed with the incandescent instrument of torture, beats in the Perfect's teeth, and tears out his tongue together with shreds of his lips. Morise closes her eyes and plunges into the burning furnace, whither her husband is thrown immediately after her.

The only heretics now left of those that were condemned to the pyre are the Lady of Lavour and her son. At the moment when the executioners drag them towards the fosse, Giraude throws herself upon her knees under the balcony where she just perceived Alyx of Montmorency. With convulsed hands and a voice that palpitates with horror the distracted mother cries:

"Madam! I do not ask you for my life. But I shudder for my son at the thought of the pyre. Oh! madam, for mercy's sake, obtain from your husband the commutation of our punishment. Let us be slain with the sword!"

ALYX OF MONTMORENCY (lowers her eyes and clasps her beads)—"It may not be!"

THE LADY OF LAVAU (with a heart-rending voice)—"I implore you! Listen to a last prayer! Order them to burn me, but let them kill my son with the sword. You are silent? Oh, God! Have you no children, yourself, that you can be so merciless?"

Aloys kneels down beside his mother. His hands being tied behind his back the boy's movements are constrained. He breaks into tears and approaches his face to the lips of his mother, who covers it with kisses and wets it with her tears. Alyx of Montmorency, whose eyes seem to moisten, timidly looks at Montfort and says to him in a low voice: "Monseigneur, I pity this heretic woman, could not her request be granted?"

ABBOT REYNIER (precipitately)—"Madam, in her quality of Mistress of Lavour, this woman is guiltier than any other. She and her son must be burned alive!"

MONTFORT (impatiently)—"Oh! my reverend Father. Provided this heretic woman die, what does it matter whether it be by the rope, the sword or by fire? She will have been made an example of. After all, the Lady of Lavour is of noble race; some concession must be made to the nobility. (The count casts his hollow eyes around him and proceeds with an expression of lassitude and disgust) And even that—to have the woman and her child slain there—before my very eyes. May the Lord pardon me a sinful weakness—my heart fails me! (He notices a cistern, and beckons to the provost) Come, be quick about it. Throw the woman and her son into that well and cover it up with large stones."

THE LADY OF LAVAU (with a look of gratitude)—"Oh, thanks! Thanks! (To her son) Come, my child, we shall be drowned together."

While Giraude and Aloys descend the stone steps within the well in which their lives are to be extinguished, the former turns to the executioner who accompanies them and is to thrust them into the water. "We are about to die," she says, "neither my son nor I can offer any resistance. For mercy's sake, free us from our bonds. My son and I could at least give each other a last embrace and die in each other's arms!"

The Lady of Lavaur and her son are untied, and while the two hold each other in a close embrace and exchange their last adieus amidst sobs, the executioner makes a sign to his assistants, who forthwith push mother and son down into the well. The sound is heard of the two bodies striking the water, the water closes over them, they rise again to the surface, their agonizing cries rise from the depth of the well; presently silence reigns within.

Perceiving that the sun is on the decline, also, perhaps, exhausted by the sight of the wholesale butcheries and wishing to hasten their end, Montfort orders the provost of the army to bring on the esplanade the heretics that are condemned to be hanged. They are brought out. At their head and hardly able to walk, seeing that he received many wounds during the siege, marches Aimery, the brother of the Lady of Lavaur. Close behind him come Mylio the Trouvere and Goose-Skin the juggler. They are followed by the consuls and other notabilities of the town. Soldiers with drawn swords lead the prisoners to the foot of the gibbets.

ABBOT REYNIER (rising)—"People of Lavaur, will you abjure your heresy?"

AIMERY—"Between your Church and the gibbet, we choose the gibbet."

ABBOT REYNIER (in a thundering voice)—"Death to the heretics. Hang them all!"

MYLIO (looking distractedly around him)—"Poor Florette! She must have perished. My last thought shall be for my brother and for you, sweet child! I have hung on my neck the little spindle that you gave me. It lies on my heart. We shall soon meet again in the new world, where a new life awaits us. (To Goose-Skin, who seems steeped in thought) Old friend, pardon me your death. It is your devotion to me that has led you to this pass."

GOOSE-SKIN—"I was just asking myself whether there are hams and good wives in those starry worlds that your brother spoke to us about, where, according to him, we are to be born again in the flesh and the spirit. Oxhorns! If I am born again with my paunch, why, its weight and bulk will greatly incommode me in the ascent towards the empyrean!"

With the aid of a ladder the executioners have raised Aimery up to the noose that dangles from the first gibbet. The ladder is quickly removed and the victim remains hanging by the neck. For a few instants his limbs twitch convulsively, but they soon relax and remain motionless.

THE EXECUTIONER (approaching Goose-Skin)—"Your turn now, my fat customer! Come, no grimaces! Take your place quickly!"

GOOSE-SKIN (scratching his ear)—"Hem! Hem! The rope of your gibbet seems too thin for me, and your ladder too frail. I am very heavy, I fear that my weight may demolish your machine. You had better put off my hanging."

THE EXECUTIONER—"You need not feel uneasy about that. I shall hang you high and short. Hurry up. Night is upon us!"

GOOSE-SKIN (dragged to the gibbet)—"Adieu, Mylio! I have drunk my last bumper of wine here below. We shall clink glasses again in the stars. (Turning to the balcony where Abbot Reynier is seated). As to you, the devil is waiting for you with his big frying-pan in his hand!"

Mounted up to the middle of the ladder which leans against the gibbet, the executioner gives Goose-Skin a violent jerk by the collar in order to compel him to step up. The juggler is not to be hurried, and putting his inert weight to use, remains immovable. The executioner's assistants then push him up and putting their shoulders under him succeed in raising his bulky body to the middle of the ladder. What, however, with the juggler's enormous weight and the heavy shaking of the gibbet caused by his resistance, the instrument of death, which has been hastily raised and is but weakly planted in the ground, now sways and breaks down. It falling, together with the ladder, Goose-Skin and the executioner, all in a heap upon the third gibbet, the latter yields to the shock, tumbles and falls over upon the fourth, which, likewise breaking down, carries the next one to the ground. But poorly fixed over night in the earth, most of the gibbets are torn down through the initial momentum imparted by the fall of the one that was intended to end Goose-Skin's life.

MONTFORT (impatiently)—"Seeing that the gibbets leave us in the lurch, exterminate the heretics with the sword!"

Soon after, the count leaves the balcony, taking Alyx of Montmorency with him. The lady is hardly able to stand. The soldiers who brought out the twenty-four heretics to be hanged fall upon them with their lances and swords. When the soldiers finally report their work done, Abbot Reynier withdraws with the rest of the clergy from the balcony.

The moon, shining radiantly from the starry vault of heaven, inundates with its mellow light the esplanade of the Castle of Lavaur. Round about lie the bodies of the ill-starred beings who succumbed to the torture of blinding. Among these bodies is Florette. The young woman has not recovered from her swoon; her chest heaves painfully; her head rests upon a stone; the moonlight falls upon it. Not far from her lie the corpses of those who escaped the rope only to fall under the sword of the Soldiers of the Faith. Not a sound disturbs the silence of the night. One of the bodies that lies on the ground raises itself slowly. It is Mylio the Trouvere.

MYLIO (listens, looks about with caution, and calls in a low voice)—"Goose-Skin, all the soldiers are gone—we have nothing more to fear—the danger is over. Goose-Skin!—Oh! poor fellow, he probably has died, smothered under

the weight of the other corpses! Oh! I can never forget that the fellow's devotion to me was the cause of his death!—There he lies face down and half covered by two other corpses." (Mylio stoops in order to clasp one of the juggler's hands.)

GOOSE-SKIN (raising his head)—"Oxhorns! Am I really alive? I thought I heard my funeral prayers!"

MYLIO—"Oh, joy! You are not dead? You heard me, and yet you kept silent?"

GOOSE-SKIN—"At first, out of prudence, and then out of curiosity to know what you would say of old Goose-Skin. I was happy to learn that you still love me. But, now, tell me, have you any plan?"

MYLIO—"I shall leave Lavaur this very night after I have taken a casket of some value to me which my poor brother Karvel entrusted to a friend of his, Julien the Bookseller. As to you, my brave companion—(Mylio stops; his foot has struck the iron pincers that served to martyrize Karvel the Perfect). What is this? An instrument of torture left behind by the executioner? (Picks up the pincers and contemplates them in silence.) Oh, son of Joel! I shall pay my tribute to the legends and relics of our family." (Puts the pincers in his belt.)

The trouvere and the juggler are lying not far from the wall of the cistern, where one of the executioner's assistants, taking pity on the inert body of Florette, who was still evidently alive, had laid the young woman. The moon sheds its light full upon the spot. Suddenly Mylio is startled by the sight that he sees. He utters a cry of mingled joy and grief, and rushes to Florette, whose face, despite its mutilation, he immediately recognizes. He takes one of Florette's hands; it is wan. He feels her heart; it beats. The trouvere raises and carries the precious burden to the exit of the esplanade, and in a voice broken with sobs cries out to the juggler: "She is alive!"

GOOSE-SKIN (rejoiced)—"She lives! Oh, oxhorns! If we succeed in escaping from the clutches of the Crusaders, it shall be my business to cheer the sweet child with my favorite song: 'Robin loves me—'"

Mylio stops at the door of the esplanade to wait for Goose-Skin, who comes up to him panting for breath at the moment when, regaining consciousness, Florette feels herself in a man's arms and murmurs feebly:

"Mylio—Mylio—my dearly beloved Mylio!"

EPILOGUE.

About three years after the massacre of Lavaur, my great-grandfather Mylio, the Trouvere, wrote the preceding "play" at Paris, where he succeeded in arriving with his wife, my great-grandmother Florette, and Goose-Skin.

After he left the esplanade, carrying his blind and unconscious wife in his arms, he hid her in the ruins of a nearby house that was set on fire the day before by the Army of the Faith. Thanks to Mylio's care, his wife regained consciousness, but alas! was never more to see the light of day. When Florette sufficiently recovered, Mylio left her in the care of Goose-Skin and

started to the city in search of a friend of his brother Karvel. The friend's name was Julien, the Bookseller. Karvel had entrusted him with the casket that contained the family relics. Julien having miraculously escaped the massacre of Lavaur, afforded Mylio, Florette and Goose-Skin a safe refuge in his house. Under that hospitable roof, the three quietly awaited the departure of the army of Montfort. His wife's condition determined Mylio to renounce the war and consecrate his life to her. Languedoc was soon entirely under the iron rule of Montfort and Mylio decided to leave the country.

Julien the Bookseller was in frequent commercial correspondence with one of the most celebrated members of his profession in Paris named John Belot. Knowing the excellence of Mylio's handwriting, Julien proposed to him to take employment at John Belot's as a copyist of ancient and modern books. Mylio accepted the offer and was furnished by Julien with a letter to the Parisian bookseller.

The journey to Paris was undertaken as soon as Florette was in condition to sustain its fatigue. It was accomplished in safety. Nine months after their arrival, my grandfather, whom Mylio named Karvelaik, in honor of his own brother Karvel the Perfect, was born. With the birth of Karvelaik, the old juggler remained a fixture in the house, insisting upon rocking my grandfather's cradle and singing him songs. Happy as Florette was with her child, she did not long survive. She waned steadily, and two years and a half after her arrival passed away in the embrace of her husband and her son. The disconsolate trouvere sought surcease of sorrow in the playfulness of his little son and the imperturbable good nature of Goose-Skin. It was in the effort to relieve his mind of the recollection of the great sorrow that fell upon him that he soon after wrote the preceding play, which he added to our family legends, and to which he joined the iron pincers that he took from the esplanade of the Castle of Lavaur and that were used in the martyrdom inflicted upon his brother Karvel. Goose-Skin died twelve years later. His last words were his favorite song:

"Robin loves me, Robin wants me."

Mylio lived to verify the truth of the prophetic words of our ancestor Fergan the Quarryman:—"Let us never weaken, let us never lose hope! The future belongs to freedom!" Eight years after the devastating flood of the Crusaders swept over Languedoc the people that were left in Agenois, Querci and Rouergue rose again. The signal for the uprising was the death of the Count of Montfort, who was killed before Toulouse. The revolt rapidly gained strength. The Crusaders were driven from the south; the old heresy raised its head anew and triumphed everywhere in Languedoc. The chains of Rome were once more sundered. But they were forged again, and again fastened on Languedoc by the Inquisition of 1229. To-day Languedoc remains fettered.

My grandfather Karvelaik handed down at his death the family relics to my father Julyan, and he handed them down to me, his son Mazurec le Brenn, who follow the booksellers' trade here in Paris. Heavy clouds are again gathering over the head of our unhappy country. May my son Jocelyn be spared!

THE END.