

# THE IRON TREVET OR JOCELYN THE CHAMPION

BY

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# **The Iron Trevet or Jocelyn the Champion**

## **PART I**

### **THE SEIGNIORY OF NOINTEL**

#### **CHAPTER I**

##### **THE TAVERN OF ALISON THE HUFFY**

On a Sunday, towards the end of the month of October of 1356, a great stir was noticeable since early morning in the little town of Nointel, situated a few leagues from the city of Beauvais, in the department of Beauvoisis. The tavern of Alison the Huffy—so nicknamed from her hot temper, although she was a good woman—was rapidly filling with artisans, villeins and serfs who came to wait for the hour of mass at the tavern, where, due to the prevailing poverty, little was drunk and much talked. Alison never complained. As talkative as huffy, dame Alison preferred to see her tavern full with chatterers than empty of tipplers. Still fresh and buxom, though on the shady side of thirty, she wore a short skirt and low bodice—probably because her bust was well rounded and her limbs well shaped. Black of hair, bright of eyes, white of teeth, and quick of hands, more than once since her widowhood, had Alison broken a bumper over the head of some customer, whom liquor had rendered too expressive in his admiration for her charms. Accordingly, like a prudent housekeeper, she had taken the precaution of replacing her earthenware bumpers with pewter ones. That morning the dame seemed to be in a particular huffy mood, judging by her rumpling brows, her brusque motions, and her sharp and cross words.

Presently, the door of the tavern was darkened and in stepped a man of vigorous age, with an angular and sun-burnt face, whose only striking features were two little, piercing, crafty and savage eyes half hidden under his eyebrows thick and grizzly like his hair, that escaped in disorder from under his old woolen cap. He had traveled a long distance; his wooden shoes, shabby cloth leggings and patched smock-frock were covered with dust. He was noticeably tired; it was with difficulty that he moved his limbs with the support of a knotted stick. Hardly inside the tavern, the serf, whose name was William Caillet, let himself down heavily upon a bench, immediately placing his elbows on his knees and his head upon his hands. Alison the Huffy, already out of humor, as stated, called to him sharply:

"What do you want here? I do not know you. If you want to drink, pay; if not, off with you!"

"In order to drink, money is needed; I have none," answered William Caillet; "allow me to rest on this bench, good woman."

"My tavern is no lazar-house," replied Alison; "be gone, you vagabond!"

"Come now, hostess, we have never seen you in such a bad humor," put in one of the customers; "let the poor man rest; we invite him to a bumper."

"Thank you," answered the serf with a somber gesture and shaking his head; "I'm not thirsty."

"If you do not drink you have no business here," the buxom tavern-keeper was saying when a voice, hailing from without, called: "Where is the hostess ... where is she ... a thousand bundles of demons! Is there no one here to take my horse? Our throats are dry and our tongues hanging out. Ho, there, hostess, attend to us!"

The arrival of a rider, always a good omen for a hostlery, drew Alison away from her anger. She called her maid servant while herself ran to the door to answer the impatient traveler, who, his horse's bridle in hand, continued finding fault, although good-naturedly. The new arrival was about twenty-four years of age; the visor of his somewhat rusty casque, wholly raised, exposed to view a pleasant face, the left cheek of which was furrowed with a deep scar. Thanks to his Herculean build, his heavy cuirass of tarnished iron, but still usable, seemed not to press him any more than a coat of cloth. His coat of mail, newly patched in several places, fell half over his thigh-armor, made, like his greaves, of iron, the latter of which were hidden within the large traveling boots. From his shoulder-strap hung a long sword, from his belt a sharp dagger of the class called "mercy". His mace, which consisted of a thick cudgel an arm long, terminating in three little iron chains riveted to a ball seven or eight pounds heavy, hung from the pommel of the rider's saddle, together with his steel-studded and ribbed buckler. Three reserve wooden lance shafts, tied together, and the points of which rested in a sort of leather bonnet, adjusted to the strap of one of his stirrups, were held up straight along the saddle, behind which a sheep-skin satchel was attached. The horse was large and vigorous. Its head, neck, chest and part of its crupper were protected by an iron caparison—a heavy armor that the robust animal carried as easily as its master wore his.

Responding to the redoubled calls of the traveler, Alison the Huffy ran out with her maid and said in bitter-sweet voice: "Here I am, Sir. Hein! If ever you are canonized, it will not be, I very much fear, under the invocation of St. Patience!"

"By the bowels of the Pope, my fair hostess, your pretty black eyes and pink cheeks could never be seen too soon. As sure as your garter could serve you for a belt, the prettiest girl of Paris, where I come from, could not be compared to you. By Venus and Cupid, you are the pearl of hostesses."

"You come from Paris, Sir Knight!" said Alison with joyful surprise, being at once flattered by the compliments of the traveler, and proud of having a guest from Paris, the great city. "You really come from Paris?"

"Yes, truly. But tell me, am I rightly informed? Is there to be a passage of arms to-day, here in the valley of Nointel?"

"Yes, Sir; you arrive in time. The tourney is to begin soon; right after mass."

"Well, then, my pretty hostess, while I take my horse to the stable to have him well fed, you will prepare a good repast for myself, and, to the end that it may taste all the better, you will share it with me while we chat together. There is much information that I need from you;" and raising his coat of mail to enable him to reach his leather purse, the rider took from it a piece of silver. Giving it to Alison, he said gaily: "Here is payment in advance for my score. I am none of your strollers, so frequent in these days, who pay their host with sword thrusts and by plundering his house;" but noticing that Alison examined the piece before putting it in her pocket, he added laughing: "Accept that coin as I did, with eyes shut. The devil take it, only King John and his minter know what the piece is worth, and whether it contains more lead than it does silver!"

"Oh, Sir Knight, is it not terrible to think that our master, the King, is an inveterate false-coiner? What times these are! We are borne down with taxes, and we never know the value of what we have!"

"True. But I wager, my pretty hostess, that your lover is in no such annoying ignorance.... Come, you will have overcome your modest blushes by the time your maid has shown me the way to the stable, after which you will make my breakfast ready. But you must share it with me; that's understood."

"As you please, Sir Knight," answered Alison, more and more charmed with the jolly temper of the stranger. Accordingly, she hastened to busy herself with the preparations for the meal, and in a short time spread upon one of the tables of the tavern a toothsome dish of bacon in green fennel, flanked with fried eggs, cheese and a mug of foaming beer.

The serf, William Caillet, now forgotten by the hostess, his forehead resting on both his hands, seemed lost to what went on around him, and kept his

seat on a bench not far from the table at which presently Alison and the traveler took theirs. Back from the stable, the latter relieved himself of his casque, dagger and sword, laying them down near to himself, and proceeded to do honor to the repast.

"Sir Knight," said Alison, "you come from Paris? What fine stories you will have to tell!"

"Mercy, pretty hostess, do not call me 'Sir Knight.' I belong to the working class, not the nobility. My name is Jocelyn. My father is a book-seller, and I am a champion as my battle-harness attests to you;—and here I am at your service."

"Can it be!" exclaimed Alison, joining her hands in glad astonishment, "you are a fighting champion?"

"Yes, and I have not yet lost a single case, as you may judge from my right hand not yet being cut off—a penalty reserved for all champions who are vanquished in a judicial duel. Although often wounded, I have at least always rendered a Roland for my adversary's Oliver. I learned in Paris that there was to be a tourney here and thinking that, as usual, it would be followed or preceded by some judicial combat, where I might represent the appellant or the appellee, I came to the place on a venture. Now, then, as a tavern-keeper, you are surely informed thereon."

"Oh, Sir champion! It is heaven that sends you. There will surely be need of you."

"Heaven, I am of the opinion, mixes but little in my concerns. Let us leave Gog and Magog to settle their affairs among themselves."

"You should know that, unfortunately, I have a process. I admit that I am in great trouble."

"You, my pretty hostess?"

"It is now three months ago that I lent twelve florins to Simon the Hirsute. When I asked him for the money, the mean thief denied the debt. We went before the seneschal. I maintained what I said; Simon maintained his side. There were no witnesses either for or against us, and as the amount involved was above five sous, the seneschal ordered a judicial battle. But who would take my part?"

"And you have found nobody to be your champion against Simon the Hirsute?"

"Alas, no! By reason of his strength and his wickedness the fellow is feared all over this country. No one would venture to fight with him."

"Well, my pretty hostess, you can count with me. I shall fight him as well for the sake of your pretty eyes as for the sake of your cause."

"Oh, my cause is good, Sir champion. It is as true that I lent Simon the Hirsute those twelve florins as.... I'll tell you how it was—"

"You need say no more. A pretty mouth like yours would not fib. Moreover, I'm in the habit of placing confidence in what my clients tell me. What is wanted is, not solid reasons, but rude blows with the sword, the lance or the mace. Thus, so long as this right fist is not cut off, it will offer arguments more conclusive than the subtlest ones of the most famous jurists."

"I must not conceal from you the fact that that thief of a Simon has been an archer. He is a dangerous man. Everybody is afraid of him."

"Pretty hostess, there is another custom I have when I am to plead a case. I never inquire how my adversary fights. In that way I never form in advance a plan of attack, frequently frustrated in practice. I have a quick and correct eye. Once on the arena, I size up my man, fall to, and decide on the spot whether to thrust or to cut. I have ever congratulated myself on this manner of pleading. You may rely upon me. The tourney does not open till noon; my arms are in good condition and my horse is eating his provender. Let's drink a glass: Long live joy, my pretty hostess! and good luck to the good cause!"

"Oh, helpful champion! If you gain my process I shall give you three florins. It would not be paying too much for the pleasure of seeing the scamp of a Simon the Hirsute brought to grief!"

"Agreed! If I gain your process you will give me three florins and a smacking kiss for good measure, if you like!... Agreed?"

"Oh, Sir, such things are not said."

"Well, then, I shall give you the smacking kiss, seeing the other plan embarrasses you. But by all the devils, your forehead remains troubled. Why so? You needed a champion, and heaven—as you said—sends you one who is impatient to sail into the thief, and yet your pretty forehead keeps its wrinkles!"

"I should be satisfied, and yet my heart is heavy. I want to tell you all about it."

"Have you, perchance, some other process, or some unfaithful lover? You may speak freely to me."

Alison remained for a moment sad and silent, whereupon she resumed with painful voice.

"Sir champion, you come from Paris; you must be very learned. Perhaps you may render a service to a poor lad who is much to be pitied, and who also must himself do battle to-day in a judicial duel, but under very sad circumstances."

"Explain yourself. What is the matter?"

"In this country of Nointel, when a female serf or bourgeois marries, the seigneur, if it please him, is entitled to ... the first night of his female vassal. They call it the 'right of first fruits.' ... At least do not laugh!"

"Laugh! Not by the devil!" answered Jocelyn, whose face suddenly overspread with somberness. "Oh, you recall to my mind a melancholy affair. A short while ago I had to plead a case on the arena near Amiens. Crossing a village, I saw a gathering of serfs. Upon inquiry I learned that one of the peasants of the group, a butcher attached to the fief of the bishopric, had married that very morning a handsome girl of the parish. The bishop, in the exercise of his right, sent for the bride to take her to his bed. The serf answered the episcopal bailiff, charged with the mission: 'My wife is in my hut, I shall bring her out to you'; and coming back a few instants later said to him: 'My wife is a little bashful, she does not like to come out, go in and bring her out yourself.' The bailiff went into the hut, and what does he find? The unhappy girl lying in a pool of blood; she was dead."

"Good God! What a shocking story!"

"In order to ransom her from dishonor, her husband had killed her with a blow of his axe."

At these words, William Caillet, who until then had remained indifferent to the conversation between Alison and Jocelyn, shook convulsively, raised his savage face and listened, while, tears streaming from her eyes, Alison cried: "Oh, poor woman! To be thus killed! What a terrible resolution must not have seized her husband to resort to such a frightful extreme!"

"Resolute men are rare."

"Alas, Sir champion. Those who, degraded by serfdom, remain indifferent to such ignominy are perhaps less to be pitied than those who resent it."

"But most of them do resent it," cried Jocelyn. "In vain do the seigneurs seek to reduce these ill-starred beings to the state of brutes. Are not even among wild beasts the males seen to defend their females unto death? Does not man, however coarse, however brutified, however craven he may be, fire up with jealousy the moment he loves? Is not love the only possession left to the serfs, the only solace in their misery? Blood and death! I grow savage at the mere thought of the rage and despair of a serf at the sight of the humble companion of his cheerless days sullied forever by a seigneur! By the navel of Satan, by the horns of Moses, the thought of it exasperates me!"

"Oh, Sir," said Alison with tears in her eyes, "your words tell the story of that poor Mazurec, the young man I was about to tell you of."

William Caillet again shook convulsively at the sound of the name of Mazurec, and leaped up, but controlling himself by dint of a violent effort, he resumed his seat, and lent increased attention to what was said by Alison and Jocelyn, who himself seemed greatly struck by the name of Mazurec, that his hostess had just pronounced.

"The serf's name is Mazurec?" he inquired, visibly affected.

"Yes, Sir. Why does the name surprise you?"

"It is one of my own father's given names. Do you know the age of the young fellow?"

"He can be no more than twenty years; his mother, who has long been dead, was not of this neighborhood."

"Whence came she?"

"I could not tell you that. She arrived here shortly before the birth of Mazurec. She begged her bread. Our neighbor the miller of the Gallion mill, took pity upon her. His own wife had died in childbed about two months before. The name of Mazurec's mother was Gervaise."

"Gervaise?" repeated Jocelyn, seeming to interrogate his memory, "was her name Gervaise?"



"Yes, Sir champion. She was so pleasing and sweet to the eyes of the miller that he said to himself: 'She must soon be brought to bed; if she is willing, she shall be nurse to both my child and her own.' And so it was. Gervaise brought up the two boys. She was so industrious and of so good a character that the miller kept her as a servant. Then a misfortune happened. The Count of Beaumont declared war to the Sire of Nointel. That is now five years ago. The miller was compelled to follow his seigneur to war. During that time the men of Beaumont raided the place, burning and sacking. They set fire to the mill where Gervaise was left with the two children. She perished in the flames, together with the miller's child. Mazurec alone escaped miraculously. Out of pity my husband and I took him in."

"You are a worthy woman, my hostess. I shall have to cut the throat of Simon the Hirsute."

"Do not praise me too much, Sir champion. The hardest heart would have taken an interest in Mazurec. He was the sweetest and best child in the world. His goodness and mildness won for him the name of Mazurec the Lambkin."

"And did he make good the promise of his name?"

"He was a real lamb. All night long he cried for his mother and his foster brother. By day he helped us, according to his strength, in whatever work we had in hand. When the war closed our neighbor the miller did not come back. He had been killed. The Sire of Nointel had the burnt-down mill rebuilt. God only knows what taxes he imposed upon us, his vassals, to indemnify himself for the expenses of his campaign against the seigneur of Beaumont. Mazurec took service under the new miller. Every Sunday, on his way to church, Mazurec stopped here to thank us for our kindness towards him. There is no more grateful heart than his. And now I'll tell you how his misfortune came about. Occasionally he was sent by the miller with bags of flour to the village of Cramoisy, about three leagues from here, where the Sire of Nointel has established a fortified post. In that village—poor Mazurec has made me his confidante—he often saw, seated at the door of her hut, a beautiful young girl, spinning at her wheel; other times he met her pasturing her cow along the green borders of the road. This young girl was known as Aveline-who-never-lied. She had a heart of gold."

"And these two folks loved each other?"

"Indeed! They loved each other passionately. And they were well matched."

William Caillet listened to Alison's narrative with redoubled attention. Unable, to keep back a tear that rolled down his emaciated cheeks, he wiped it off with the back of his hand. The tavern-keeper proceeded:

"Mazurec was a serf of the same seigniory with Aveline and her father. The latter consented to the marriage. The bailiff of the Sire of Nointel in the absence of his master, also gave his consent. Everything was moving smoothly along, and often did Mazurec say to me: 'Dame Alison, what a pity that my mother cannot witness our happiness!'"

"But how came these happy hopes to be destroyed, my pretty hostess?"

"You know, Sir, that, if the seigneur is willing, the vassals can ransom themselves of the infamous right that we spoke of a few minutes ago. So did my deceased husband, without which I would have remained single all my life. Aveline's father had a cow for only earthly possession. He sold that, preferring to forfeit the animal that furnished him with food, rather than to see his adored daughter dishonored by the Sire of Nointel. The day of the betrothal Mazurec went to the castle to deliver to the bailiff the price of the bride's redemption. Unfortunately, the bailiff happened to be away. The bridegroom returned to Aveline, and her father decided that they should be married the next morning, and that immediately after the mass Mazurec should return to the castle to ransom his wife. The marriage took place, and, according to custom, the bride remained locked up at the vicarage until the husband could show his letter of redemption."

"Yes," observed Jocelyn. "And it therefore often happens that, to escape the disgrace, brides yield themselves to their intended husbands before marriage. No more than just, under the circumstances."

"But too true; and often also the men thereupon leave the poor girl and do not marry her. But neither Mazurec nor Aveline entertained such evil thoughts. In possession of the needed sum for the ransom, he only asked to acquit himself honestly. After the mass, Mazurec returned to the castle, carrying the money in a purse suspended from his belt. On the road he met a knight who inquired for the way to Nointel; and, would you believe it, Sir? while Mazurec was giving him the directions, the scamp of a knight stooped down in the saddle as if to adjust the strap of his stirrup, snatched the purse from poor Mazurec, and, spurring his horse, galloped off."

"There are hundreds of such thefts committed. The knights look upon them as mere feats of knighthood. But they are infamous acts!"

"Mazurec, left behind distracted, vainly ran after the thief. He lost sight of him. An hour later he arrived breathless at the castle, threw himself at the feet of the bailiff, told him of his mishap, and with tears in his eyes demanded justice against the thief. The Sire of Nointel, who had arrived at his manor that very morning from Paris, accompanied by several friends, happened to cross the corridor at the very time that Mazurec was imploring the bailiff's help. The Sire of Nointel, informed of the occurrence, asked, laughing, whether the bride was pretty. 'There is none prettier in your domain, Sire', answered the bailiff. Suddenly, his eyes falling upon one of the knights of the Sire's suite, Mazurec cried: 'It is he who robbed me of my purse, only an hour ago!' 'Miserable serf', thundered the seigneur, 'dare you charge one of my guests with robbery? You lie!'"

"Without a doubt the thievish knight denied the robbery."

"Yes, Sir, and Mazurec, on his side, still insisted. Thereupon, after a whispered conversation with the bailiff and the knight who was accused of the robbery, the Sire of Nointel gave this decision: 'One of my equerries, escorted by several men-at-arms, shall forthwith proceed to the vicarage and conduct the bride here. According to my right, I shall spend the night with her. To-morrow morning she may be returned to that vassal. As to the charge of robbery, that he has the effrontery to prefer against a noble knight, the knight demands the trial of arms, and if, although defeated, this vile varlet survives the battle, he shall be tied up in a bag and cast into the river as the defamer of a knight. Let justice take its course.'"

"Oh!" cried Jocelyn, "the unhappy lad is lost. The knight is the appellant, as such he has the right to fight on horseback and in full armor, against the serf in a smock-frock and with a stick for only weapon."

"Alas, Sir! As you see I had good reasons for being heavy at heart. Poor Mazurec thought less on the battle than on his bride. He threw himself sobbing at the feet of his seigneur, and beseeched him not to dishonor Aveline. And do you know what answer the Sire of Nointel made to him? 'Jacques Bonhomme'—that's the title of derision that the nobles give their serfs—'Jacques Bonhomme, my friend, I have two reasons for spending this night with your wife: first, because, as they say, she is quite comely; and second, because that will be the punishment for your insolence to charge one of my guests with larceny.' At these words Mazurec the Lambkin became Mazurec the Wolf. He threw himself furiously upon his seigneur, meaning to strangle him. But the knights who stood by felled the poor serf to the floor, pinioned him and thrust him into a dungeon. Can anything exceed such cruelty? Add to that that the Sire of Nointel is himself betrothed

to be married; his bride, the noble damosel Gloriande of Chivry, is to be the queen of the tourney about to take place."

"Shame!" cried Jocelyn, his cheeks aflame with indignation, and furiously striking the table with his Herculean fist. "An end must be put to these horrors! They cry for vengeance! They cry for blood!"

"Oh! There will be blood!" whispered a hollow voice in the ear of Jocelyn. "Floods of blood! The torch and the axe will do their office"; and feeling a strange hand pressing on his shoulder, the champion turned quickly around. Before him stood William Caillet.

"What do you want?" asked the young man, struck by the sinister and desperate looks of the peasant. "What do you want of me? Who are you?"

"I am the father of Mazurec's wife."

"You, poor man?" cried the hostess with pity. "Oh! I regret to have been rude to you. Pardon me, poor father. Alas, what have you come here for?"

"For my daughter," answered William; and he added with a frightful smile: "She will be now returned to me; the night is over; the infamous dues are paid."

"My God! My God!" rejoined Alison, unable to repress her tears. "And when we think that poor Mazurec is a prisoner at the castle, and that this morning, before mass, he is to make the 'amende honorable' on his knees before the Sire of Nointel—"

"He! Is he to be subjected to that further indignity?" cried Jocelyn, interrupting his hostess. "And what is he to apologize for?"

"Alas, Sir champion!" answered Alison, "I have not yet told you the end of the adventure. While Mazurec was being taken to prison, the bailiff went for Aveline at the vicarage and brought her to the castle. She resisted her seigneur with all her strength. He then laughed in her face and said: 'Ho! you resist me! Very well. I shall now have the pleasure of exercising my right by judicial decree. It will be a good lesson to Jacques Bonhomme.' He thereupon had the bride taken to a cell, and lodged a complaint against her in the court of the seneschal at Beauvais. Seeing that the law recognizes the right of a seigneur over his female vassals, the court gave its decree accordingly. It is in the name of justice that the wretched Aveline was violated last night by our seigneur; it is in the name of justice that Mazurec is sentenced to beg the pardon of his seigneur for having intended to oppose

him in the exercise of his seigniorial right; it is in the name of justice that, after this public expiation, Mazurec is to fight the thief of a knight."

"Aye," put in William Caillet, clenching his fists; "Mazurec is to fight on foot and armed with a stick against his robber, covered with iron ... Mazurec will be vanquished and killed, or, if he survive, will be drowned. I shall try to fish out his body and bury him in some hole ... Then I shall take away my daughter ... She is to be returned to me this morning, and who knows but in nine months I may be the grandfather of a noble brat!" After a short pause the peasant resumed with a sinister and chilling smile: "Oh! If that child should live ... if it should live...." But he did not finish his sentence. For a moment he remained silent; then, laying his horny right hand upon the shoulder of Jocelyn, he approached the young man's ear and added in a low voice: "Shortly ago you said an end must be put to these horrors, they call for blood!"

"Yes, and I say so again. These horrors cry for vengeance! They cry for the death and destruction of our oppressors!"

"He who says that aloud is a man who will act," replied the serf fastening his small, savage and piercing eyes upon the champion. "If the time for action arrives, remember William Caillet ... of the village of Cramoisy, near Clermont."

"I shall not forget your name," Jocelyn returned in a low voice to Caillet, and clasped his hand. "The hour of justice and vengeance may sound sooner than you think, especially if there are many serfs like you!"

"There are," rejoined the peasant in the same low voice. "Jacques Bonhomme is on his feet. We are preparing a general uprising."

"It was to assure myself regarding that that I rode into this region," whispered Jocelyn in the ear of Caillet, without being heard by Alison. "Silence and courage! The day of reprisal is at hand."

More and more agreeably surprised at meeting in Jocelyn an unexpectedly, the peasant did not remove his penetrating eyes from the young man. Habituated by servitude to mistrust, he feared to be deceived by the promises of an unknown person. Suddenly the chimes of the church of Nointel fell upon their ears. Alison shivered. "Oh!" said she, "I shall not have the courage to witness the ceremony!"

"What do you mean?" asked Jocelyn, while the men who had gathered in the tavern trooped out precipitately, saying: "Let us hasten to the parvise of the church.... One should see everything there is to be seen...."

"They are going to witness the 'amende honorable' of poor Mazurec," answered Alison.

"I shall have more courage than you, my good hostess," said Jocelyn taking up his sword and casque, and looking for William Caillet, who, however, had disappeared. "I shall witness that sad ceremony because, for more reasons than one, the fate of Mazurec interests me. The tourney will not begin until after mass; I shall have time to return for my horse so as to have myself forthwith entered by the judge-at-arms as your defender against Simon the Hirsute."

"My God, Sir! Is there, then, no way to prevent the judicial duel of poor Mazurec?... It means death to him!"

"If he declines the battle he will be drowned; such is the law of our feudal lords. But I hope I may be able to give Mazurec some good advice. I shall try and speak to him. Wait for me here, my pretty hostess, and do not lose hope."

Saying this, Jocelyn wended his steps towards the parvise of the church.

## CHAPTER II

### THE "AMENDE HONORABLE"

The church of Nointel rose at one end of a spacious square, into which two tortuous streets ran out. The houses, most of which were constructed of wood, sculptured with no little art, were topped with slated roofs, pointed and deeply inclined. Some of these domiciles were ornamented with balconies, where on this morning numerous spectators stood crowded. Thanks to his athletic physique, Jocelyn succeeded without much trouble to reach the edge of the parvise, where, among a number of knights, stood the Sire of Nointel, a tall young man of haughty and scoffing mien, whose reddish blonde hair was curled like a woman's. He wore, according to the fashion of the time, a richly embroidered short velvet tunic, and silk hose of two different colors. The left side of his clothing was red, the other yellow. His shoes, made of tender cordwain, tapered upward like a gilded ram's horn. From his half red, half yellow velvet bonnet, ornamented with a chain of precious stones, waved a tuft of ostrich feathers—altogether a head-gear of exorbitant value. The friends of the Sire of Nointel were, like himself, dressed in parti-colored garb. Behind this brilliant company, stood the pages and equerries of the seigneur carrying his colors. One of them held his banner, emblazoned with three eagle's talons on a red background. At the sight of that device, the designation of the house of Neroweg, the hereditary enemy of his own family, Jocelyn shuddered, astonishment seized him, he became profoundly pensive. The rasping voice of a royal notary drew Jocelyn from his reverie. Stepping forward to the front of the parvise, the notary three times called for silence, and then, amidst the profound stillness of the crowd, he proceeded to read:

"Whereas the charter and statute on the right of first fruits vests in the seigneur of the lands and seignior of Nointel, Loury, Berteville, Cramoisy, Saint-Leu and other places the privilege of demanding the first wedded day of all the maids who are not noble, and who shall marry in said seignior, after which the said seigneur shall no longer touch the said married woman, and shall leave her to her husband;

"And whereas, on the eleventh day of this month, Aveline-who-never-lied, a female serf of the parish of Cramoisy, was married to Mazurec the Lambkin, a miller serf at the Gallion mill;

"And whereas, our young, high, noble and puissant seigneur, Conrad Neroweg, knight and seigneur of the said seignior herein above mentioned, having wished to exercise his right of first fruits on the said Aveline-who-

never-lied, and the said Mazurec the Lambkin, her husband, having sought to oppose himself thereto by using unseemly words towards the said seigneur, and the said married woman having been required to submit to the said right and having obstinately refused, the said seigneur, by reason of the disobedience of the said married couple and their unseemly words, caused them both to be separately imprisoned and filed a criminal bill with his worship the seneschal of Beauvoisis notifying him of the above occurrences;

"And whereas, an inquest was made in writing and by the summoning of witnesses upon the ancient right and custom in order to ascertain and establish that the said seigneur of Nointel has the said right to the first fruits; and the information being gathered and inquest made, a sentence was rendered by the court of the seneschal of Beauvoisis, as follows, word by word:"

Clenching his fists with rage, Jocelyn observed to himself: "Can law, can justice consecrate such infamy! To what human power can these wretched vassals appeal in their despair? Oh, the martyrs of so many centuries can not fail to demand heavy reprisals!"

The royal notary proceeded to read:

"The case of the young, high, noble and puissant Conrad Neroweg, seigneur of Nointel and other seigniories, reclamer of the right of first fruits upon all maids, not noble, who marry in the said seignior, the party of the one part, and Aveline-who-never-lied, recently married to Mazurec the Lambkin, refuser of the said right, the party of the other part; and the said seigneur of Nointel, also claimant in reparation and chastisement for the unseemly words pronounced by the said Mazurec the Lambkin. The court of the seneschal of Beauvoisis, in view of the criminal charges of the said seigneur and the information and inquests taken, rendering justice to the parties concerned, says and declares that the said seigneur is well grounded in law and in reason in claiming the first fruits from all maids, not noble, married in his seignior; and by reason of that which is declared herein above, the said court has sentenced and now condemns the said Aveline-who-never-lied and the said Mazurec the Lambkin to render obedience to the said seigneur in what concerns his right of the first fruits; and concerning the unseemly words that the said Mazurec the Lambkin pronounced against his seigneur, the said court has sentenced and now sentences him to apologise to said seigneur and, with one knee on the ground, his head bare, and his hands crossed over his breast, to pray his mercy in the presence of all who were assembled at his wedding. And, furthermore, the said court orders that



the present sentence shall be announced by a royal notary or beadle in front of the church of the said seigniory."

The decree, which confirmed and consecrated through the organs of law and justice the most execrable of all the feudal laws, produced different emotions in the surrounding crowd. Some, stupefied with terror, misery and ignorance, cowardly resigned to a disgrace that their fathers had been subjected to and was reserved for their own children, seemed amazed at the resistance that Mazurec had offered; others, who, due to a sentiment, if not of love, yet of dignity, prized themselves happy that, thanks to their money, the ugliness of their wives, or the accidental absence of the seigneur, they had been able to escape the ignominy, imagined themselves in the place of the condemned man and were somewhat moved with pity for him; finally, the larger number, married or not, serfs, villeins or townsmen, felt violent indignation, hardly repressed by fear. Hollow murmurs ran through the crowd at the last words of the notary. But all these sentiments soon made place for those of anguish and compassion when, led by the seigneur's men-at-arms, the condemned man appeared at the portico of the church. Mazurec was about twenty years of age, and the benignity of his face and the mildness of his nature had earned him the name of Lambkin. On that day, however, he seemed transfigured by misfortune and despair. His physiognomy was savage and pinched, his clothes in tatters, his face livid, his eyes fixed and red with tears and sleeplessness, his hair tumbling—all imparted to him a frightful appearance. Two men-at-arms unbound the prisoner, and pressing heavily upon his shoulders forced him to drop upon his knees before the Sire of Nointel, who together with his friends, laughed outright at the abject submission of Jacques Bonhomme. Presently the royal notary said in a loud voice:

"The reparation and amende honorable of the condemned man to his seigneur must have for witness those who assisted at the marriage of Mazurec. Let them come forward."

At these words, Jocelyn the Champion saw William Caillet and another robust serf, called Adam the Devil, step from the front ranks of the crowd. To judge by the perspiration that bathed his bony and tired face, the latter had just run a long distance. Struck, at first, by the determined mien of Adam the Devil, Jocelyn saw him, as well as his friend William Caillet, suddenly metamorphose himself, so to speak. Affecting dullness and humble timidity, dropping their eyes, doubling their backs, and dragging their legs, both doffed their caps with a pitiful air as they approached the royal notary. Caillet saluted him by twice bowing to the earth with his arms across his breast and saying in a trembling voice:

"Pardon ... excuse ... Sir, if we, I and my companion, come alone. The other witnesses of the wedding, Michael-kill-bread and Big Peter, they have just been laid up with the fever which they caught draining the swamp of our good seigneur. Their teeth are clattering and they are shaking on the straw. That's why they have not been able to come to town. I am William, the father of the bride; this is my companion, Adam, who witnessed the wedding."

"These witnesses will suffice, I think, for the amende honorable, will they not, seigneur?" said the notary to the Sire of Nointel. The latter answered with an affirmative nod of the head, while continuing to laugh aloud with his friends at the stupid and timorous appearance of the two boors. All the while, on his knees a few paces from his seigneur, Mazurec could not repress his tears at the sight of Aveline's father; they rolled down slowly from his inflamed eyes while the notary addressed him, saying: "Cross your hands over your chest, and raise your eyes to heaven."

The condemned man clenched his fists with rage and did not follow the notary's orders.

"Ho! pshaw!" cried William Caillet, addressing Mazurec in a reproachful tone. "Don't you hear what this kind gentleman says? He told you to cross your two hands, in this way ... look ... this way ... look at me ..."

These last words, "look at me," were pronounced by the peasant with such force that Mazurec raised his head, and understood the meaning of the rapid glance that Caillet darted at him. Quickly obeying the orders of the notary, the condemned man crossed his arms on his breast.

"Now," proceeded the scribe, "raise your head towards our seigneur and repeat my words: 'Seigneur, I humbly repent having had the audacity of using unseemly words towards you.'"

The serf hesitated a moment, and then, overcoming his aversion with a violent effort, he repeated in a hollow voice: "Seigneur, I humbly repent having had the audacity of ... using ... unseemly words ... towards you."

"Further," pursued the notary, "I repent no less humbly, my seigneur, of having wickedly wished to oppose your exercise of your right of the first fruits upon one of your female vassals, whom I took for my wife."

Mazurec's resignation had reached the end of its tether. The notary's last words, recalled to the unhappy man's mind the infamous violence that the sweet maid whom he tenderly loved had been made a victim of; he uttered a heart-rending cry, hid his face in his hands and, convulsed with sobs, fell

forward with his face on the ground. At that spectacle, Jocelyn, whose indignation threatened to overpower his prudence, was about to leap forward, when he again heard the cry of William Caillet. Stooping down to Mazurec as if to help him rise, he said two words in his ears so as to be heard by none others, and continued aloud: "Ho! Pshaw!... What ails you?... Why do you weep, my boy?... You are told that our good seigneur will pardon your fault when you shall have repeated the words that you are ordered to.... Go ahead.... Fling them out quickly, those words!"

With his face bathed in tears and a smile of the damned, Mazurec repeated these words after the notary had told them over again: "I repent no less humbly, my seigneur, having wickedly wished to oppose your exercise of your right of the first fruits upon one of your female vassals, whom I took for my wife."

"In repentance of which, my seigneur," pursued the notary, "I humbly place myself at your mercy."

"In repentance of which, my seigneur," stammered Mazurec in a fainting voice, "I humbly place myself at your mercy."

"Be it so," responded the Sire of Nointel with a haughty and flippant air. "I grant you mercy. But you shall not be set free until after having rendered satisfaction in a judicial duel, to which you are summoned by my guest Gerard of Chaumontel, a nobleman, whom you have outrageously defamed by accusing him of larceny." Turning thereupon to one of his equerries: "Let the peasant be guarded until the hour of the tourney, and let the daughter be delivered to her father;" and stepping away with his friends towards the door of the church, the young seigneur said to them, laughing: "The lesson will do Jacques Bonhomme good. Do you know, gentlemen, that that stupid pack has of late been pricking up its ears and commenced to bridle up against our rights? Although she was a comely lassie, I cared little for that peasant's wife; but it was necessary to prove to the vile rustic plebs that we own it body and soul; therefore, gentlemen, let us never forget the proverb: 'Smite a villein and he'll bless you; bless a villein and he'll smite you.' Now, let us hear the sacred mass; you will tell me whether Gloriande de Chivry, my betrothed, whom you will see in my seigniorial pew, is not a superb beauty."

"Happy Conrad!" said Gerard of Chaumontel, the robber knight, "for bride, a handsome and radiant beauty, who, besides, is the richest heiress of this region, seeing that after the death of the Count of Chivry, his seignior, in default of male heirs, will fall from the lance to the distaff! Oh, Conrad! What

beautiful days of gold and silk will you not spin, thanks to the opulent distaff of Gloriande of Chivry!"

At the moment when thus chatting the noblemen entered the church, Mazurec, who was still kept a prisoner, vanished under the vault, and a man of the suite of the Sire of Nointel led out Aveline. She was not quite eighteen. Despite the pallor of her face and her deeply disturbed features, the girl preserved her surpassing beauty. She moved with faltering steps, still clad in her humble bride's apparel, of coarse white cloth. Her loose hair fell upon and half covered her shoulders. Her lacerated arms still bore the traces of tight hands, seeing that, in order to triumph over the desperate resistance of his victim, the Sire of Nointel had her bound fast. Crushed with shame at the thought of being thus exposed to the gaze of the crowd, the moment she stepped upon the parvis Aveline closed her eyes with an involuntary movement, and did not at first see Mazurec who was being taken back to prison. However, at the heart-rending cry that he uttered, a shudder went over her frame, she trembled at every limb, and her eyes met the gaze of her husband, a gaze of desolation, in which passionate love and yet painful repulsion mixed with ferocious jealousy, raised within his breast by the thought of the outrage that his wife had been subject to, were all depicted at once. The last of these feelings was betrayed by an involuntary movement, made by the wretched young man, who, avoiding the beseeching looks of Aveline, made a gesture of horror, covered his face with his hands, and rushed under the vault like one demented, followed by the men-at-arms who had him in charge.

"He despises me," murmured the girl with fainting voice and following her husband with haggard eyes. "He now no longer loves me." Saying this, Aveline became livid, her knees yielded under her, she lost consciousness and would have rolled upon the ground without Caillet, who, hastening to meet her, received her in his arms, saying: "Your father remains to you." Then, helped by Adam the Devil, he raised her up, and both, carrying the swooning young bride in their arms, disappeared in the crowd.

Jocelyn the Champion, a witness to this distressing scene, rushed into the vault that opened upon the parvis, overtook the keepers of Mazurec and said to one of them:

"The serf they are taking away yonder has been summoned to a judicial combat, is it so comrade?"

"Yes," answered the man-at-arms, "he is to combat with the knight Gerard of Chaumontel. Such is the sentence."

"I must speak to that serf."

"He is to communicate with nobody."

"I am his judicial second in this combat, will you venture to keep me from seeing and speaking with my client? By Satan! I know the law. If you refuse—"

"There is no need of bawling so loud. If you are Jacques Bonhomme's judicial second, come ... you have a sorry principal!"

## CHAPTER III

### THE TOURNAMENT

The tourney, a ruinous spectacle offered to the nobility of the neighborhood by the Sire of Nointel in celebration of his betrothal, was held on a large meadow that stretched before the gates of the town. The lists were according to the royal ordinance of the year 1306, twenty-four paces long by forty wide, and surrounded by a double row of fences four feet apart. In this latter space the horn and clarion blowers were posted; likewise the valets of the combatting knights were allowed in this latter enclosure, ready to carry their masters from the mêlée, or to run to their assistance when unhorsed, seeing that these valiant jousts were covered with such heavy and thick armor that they could move only with difficulty. Within these barriers were also seen the heralds and sergeants-at-arms, charged with preserving order at the tourney, and passing upon foul blows.

The plebs of the town and neighboring fields, having hastened to witness the spectacle at the close of the mass, crowded on the outside. A more ragged, wan, miserable and worn-out mass could hardly be imagined than that presented by the crowd whose crushing labors supplied the prodigalities of their seigneurs. The only satisfaction enjoyed by these cowed and brutified people was that of being allowed to assist from a distance, as on this day, at the sumptuous displays that they paid for with their sweat and their marrow. The vassals, leaving their mud-huts, where, exhausted with hunger and broken by toil—at night they huddled pell-mell on the marshy ground like animals in their pens—contemplated with an astonishment that was sometimes mixed with savage hatred, the brilliant assemblage covered with silks and velvets, embroideries and precious stones, seated on a spacious amphitheater, that, decked with tapestries and rich hangings, rose along one of the sides of the lists, and was reserved for the noble dames, the seigneurs and the prelates of the vicinage. On either side of the amphitheater, which was sheltered by tent-cloths from the rays of the sun and from the rain, were two tents intended for the knights who participated in the jousts. There they don their heavy armors before the combat, and thither are they transported when hurt or unhorsed. Numerous banners emblazoned with the arms of the Sire of Nointel floated from the top of poles that surround the lists. The queen of the tournament is Gloriande, a noble young lady, the daughter of Raoul, count and seigneur of Chivry, and betrothed since the previous month to Conrad of Nointel. Magnificently bedizened in a scarlet robe embroidered with gold, her black hair braided with pearls, tall and of remarkable beauty but of a haughty and bold type, with disdainful lips and imperious mien, Gloriande was throned superbly

under a species of canopy contrived in the center of the platform, whence she could command a view of the arena. Her father, proud of his daughter's beauty, stood behind her. The noblemen and ladies of all ages, were seated on benches flanking either side of the canopy where the young queen of the tournament paraded her wealth and her charms. Suddenly the clarions sound the opening of the passage of arms; and a herald, clad in red and yellow, the colors of Nointel, advances to the center of the arena and cries the formula:

"Hear ye, hear ye, seigneurs and knights, and people of all estates:—our sovereign seigneur and master, by the grace of God, John, King of the French, forbids under penalty of life and of forfeiture of goods, all speaking, crying out, coughing, expectorating or uttering and giving of any signs during the combat."

The profoundest silence ensues. One of the bars is lowered, and the Sire of Nointel, cased in a brilliant steel armor tipped with gold ornaments, rides into the arena. Mounted on a richly caparisoned charger that he causes to prance and caracole with ease, he reins in before the canopy of Gloriande, and the damosel, taking from her own neck the necklace of gold strands, ties it to the iron of the lance that her betrothed lowers before her. By that act he is accepted by the lady as her knight of honor, a quality by which he is to exercise sovereign surveillance over the combatants, and if the point of the weapon from which hangs the necklace touch any of the jousts, he must immediately withdraw from the combat. In giving her necklace to her knight, Gloriande's shoulders and bosom remain naked, and she receives without blushing the testimonies of admiration showered upon her by the knights in her vicinity, whose libertine praises savor strongly of the obscene crudities peculiar to the language of those days. After having made the tour of the field, during which he displays anew his skill in horsemanship, the Sire of Nointel returns to the foot of the platform where the queen of the tournament is seated, and raises his lance. The clarions forthwith resound, the bars are let down at the opposite sides of the arena, and each gives passage to a troop of knights armed cap-a-pie, visors down, recognizable only by their emblems or the color of their shields and the banners of their lances. The two sets, mounted on horses covered with iron, remain for an instant motionless like equestrian statues, at the extremities of the arena. The lances of these gallants, six feet long and stripped of their iron, are, in the parlance of tourneys, "courteous"; their thrust, no wise dangerous, can have for its only effect to roll the ill-mounted combatant off his horse. The Sire of Nointel consults the radiant Gloriande with the eye. With a majestic air she waves her embroidered handkerchief, and immediately her knight of

honor utters three times the consecrated formula: "Let them go! Let them go! Let them go!"

The two sets break loose; the horses are put to a gallop; and, lances in rest, they rush to the center of the lists, where they dash against one another, horses and riders, with an incredible clatter of hardware. In the shock the larger number of lances fly into splinters. The disarmed tilters thus declare themselves vanquished, and their armor and mounting belong by right to the vanquisher. Accordingly, these tourneys are as much a game of hazard as is a game of dice. Not a few renowned tilters, hankering after florins more than after a puerile glory, derive large revenues from their skill in these ridiculous jousts; almost always do the adversaries whom they have overcome ransom their arms and horses with considerable sums. At a signal of the Sire of Nointel, a few minutes' truce followed upon the disarming of two of the knights who rolled down upon the thick bed of sand that the ground is prudently covered with. There is nothing so pitifully grotesque as the appearance of these disarmed gallants. Their valets raise them up in almost one lump within their thick iron shell that impedes their movements, and with legs stiff and apart, they reach the barrier steaming in perspiration, seeing that, in order to soften the pressure, these noble combatants wear under their armor a skin shirt and hose thickly padded with horse's hair. The vanquished abandon the lists in disgrace, while the vanquishers, after prancing over the arena, approach the platform where the queen of the tournament is enthroned. There they lower their lances to her in token of gallant homage. The charmed Gloriande answers them with a condescending smile and they leave the lists in triumph. The remaining knights now continue the struggle on foot and with swords—swords no less "courteous" than their lances, without either point or edge, so that these valiant champions skirmish with steel bars three feet and a half long, and they carry themselves heroically in a combat that is all the less perilous, seeing that they are protected against all possible danger by their padded undergarments laid over by an impenetrable armor.

At a fresh signal from the Sire of Nointel, a furious conflict is engaged in by the remaining combatants. One of them slips and falls over backward and remains motionless, as little able to rise as a tortoise laid on its back. Another of the Cæsars has his sword broken in two in his own hands. Only two combatants now remain, and continue the struggle with rage. The one carries a green buckler emblazoned with an argent lion, the other a red buckler emblazoned with a gold dolphin. The knight of the argent lion deals with his sword such a hard blow upon his adversary's casque, that, dazed by the shock, the latter falls heavily upon his haunches on the sand. The great conqueror superbly enjoyed his triumph by proudly contemplating his



vanquished adversary, ridiculously seated at his feet; and, responding to the enthusiastic acclamations of the assembled nobility, he approached the throne of the queen of the tourney, bent one knee, and raised his visor. After placing a rich collar around the conqueror's neck in token of his prowess, Gloriande stooped down, and, following the custom of the time, deposited a loud and long kiss upon his lips. This duty, attached to her distinguished office, Gloriande fulfilled without blushing, and with an off-handedness that denoted ample experience. Thanks to her beauty, the young lady of Chivry had been often before chosen queen of tournaments. The clarions announced the victory of the knight of the argent lion, who, strutting proudly with the trophy around his neck, placed his right hand on his hip, walked around the arena, and marched out at the barriers.

These first passages of arms were followed by an interval during which the valets of the Sire of Nointel, carrying cups, plates, and flagons of gold and silver, that glistened in the dazzled eyes of the peasants, served the noble company on the platform with spiced wines, refreshments and choice pastries, ample honor being done by all to the munificence of the Sire of Nointel.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE JUDICIAL COMBAT

The seigneurs, their wives and daughters on the platforms had just enjoyed the refection, while commenting upon the incidents of the tourney, when a shudder ran through the crowd of peasants and bourgeois massed outside of the barriers. Until then and while witnessing the jousts and the passages of arms they had been animated with curiosity only. In the combat, which it was murmured among them was to follow these harmless struggles, the populace felt themselves concerned. It was to be a combat to the death between a vassal and a knight, the latter on horseback and in full armor, the vassal on foot, dressed in his blouse and armed with a stick. Even the more timid and brutalized ones among the vassals revolted at the thought of so crassly unequal a conflict, in which one of their class was inevitably destined to death. It was, accordingly, amidst a silence laden with anxiety and suppressed anger that one of the heralds uttered three times from the center of the arena the consecrated formula: "Let the appellant enter!"

The knight Gerard of Chaumontel, now summoned to the trial of a judicial combat against the accusation of theft made by Mazurec, issued from one of the contiguous tents and entered the arena on horseback, in full armor. His buckler hangs from his neck; his visor is up; in his hand he carries a little image of St. James, for whom the pious knight seemed to entertain a peculiar devotion. His two seconds, on horseback like himself, ride beside him. With him they make the round of the arena while the fair Gloriande says to her father disdainfully: "What a shame for the nobility to see a knight reduced, in order to prove his innocence, to do combat with a varlet!"

"Oh, my daughter! What evil days these are that we live in!" answered the aged seigneur with a growl. "Those accursed king's jurists are crossing their pencils over all our rights under the impertinent pretext of legalizing them. Was not a decree of the court of the seneschal of Beauvoisis requisite in order to authorize our friend Conrad to exercise his seigniorial right over a miserable female serf in revolt?" Remembering, however, that his daughter was the betrothed of the Sire of Nointel, the Count of Chivry stopped short. Gloriande surmised the cause of her father's reticence and said to him with a haughtiness that verged on anger: "Do you think that I am jealous of such as her? Can I look upon these female serfs as rivals?"

"No, no; I am not placing such an insult upon you, my daughter ... but after all, the rebellion of that female vassal is as novel as it is monstrous. Oh, the spirit of revolt among the populace, although partly broken to-day, has

spread into our domains and has infested our peasants also; and that is taken by the crown for a pretext to add to our troubles by encroaching upon our rights, claiming that they must be first sanctioned by the jurists. A curse upon all reform kings!"

"But, father, our rights remain."

"Blood and thunder, my daughter! Do our privileges stand in need of confirmation by the men of the gown? Does not our class hold its rights by the right of our ancestors' swords? No, no, the crown aims at monopolizing all rights, and to be the sole exploiter of the plebs."

"Have not the kings," observed another knight, "taken from us one of our best sources of revenue, the minting of money in our seigniories, under the pretext that we coined false money? The devil take kings who hold up law! May hell consume the gentry of the pen!"

"Blood and thunder! It is enough to make one's blood boil in his veins," cried the Count of Chivry. "Is there in the whole world any worse money than the king's. False coiners have been quartered who are less thievish than our King John and his predecessors."

"Let that good prince look elsewhere than here for support," put in another knight. "The truce with England will soon expire. If war breaks out anew, King John will see neither a man nor a gold piece out of my domain. He may, for all I care, leave his carcass on the field of battle."

"Oh, gentlemen," said Gloriande gulping down a yawn, "how uninteresting is your conversation! Let us rather talk about the Court of Love that is soon to hold its sessions in Clermont, and for which I shall order the most skillful hairdressers from Paris. I am also expecting a Lombard who is to bring me magnificent silks, woven with gold and silver, and which I shall wear during the solemnity."

"And what do you expect to pay all those fine things with?" cried the Count of Chivry. "How are we to meet the expenses of brilliant tourneys and the sumptuous displays of the Court of Love if, on the one side, the King ruins us, and, on the other, Jacques Bonhomme refuses to work?"

"Oh! Oh! Dear father!" replied the fair Gloriande, laughing aloud. "Jacques Bonhomme will meekly bend the neck. At the first crack of the whip of one of our hunters you will see those varlets lie down flat upon their faces. And mind you," added the young lady, redoubling her laughter, "just turn your eyes to that bugaboo of a Jacques Bonhomme, does he not look

redoubtable?" and she pointed with her finger at Mazurec the Lambkin, who, at the second call of the herald, had stepped into the arena accompanied by his two seconds, Jocelyn the Champion and Adam the Devil. Mazurec, dressed in his "blaude," the ancient Gallic blouse, made of coarse cloth and of the same fabric as his hose, wore on his head a woolen cap while his wooden shoes partly hid his bare feet. Jocelyn, his second, held in his hand a stout stick of sorb, four feet long, and freshly cut by himself in a neighboring thicket, with an eye to the fact that, when fresh, the sorb wood is heavy and does not easily break. The appellee, as well as the appellant, in the judicial battle were required to make the round of the arena before engaging in combat. The serf filled the formality in slow and measured steps, accompanied by his two seconds.

"My brave fellow," Jocelyn said to Mazurec, "do not forget my advice, and you stand a chance of worsting your noble robber, for all that he may be on horseback and armed cap-a-pie."

"I'd as lief die," answered the serf, marching dejectedly between his two seconds with his head down and his eyes fixed: "When I saw Aveline this morning it was as if a knife had entered my heart," he added sobbing. "Oh, I am a lost man!"

"By the navel of the Pope! No feebleness," replied Jocelyn with emphasis and alarmed at the despondent voice of his principal. "Where is your courage? This morning from a lambkin you became a wolf."

"To now live with my poor wife would be a daily torture to me," murmured the serf. "I would rather the knight killed me outright."

Thus conversing, half the field had been covered by Mazurec in company with his seconds. The latter, more and more alarmed at the unhappy young man's despondency, were at that moment passing at the foot of the amphitheater where the nobility of the neighborhood were seated with the fair Gloriande in their midst. Casting an expressive look at the champion, Adam the Devil nudged Mazurec with his elbow and said to him in a low voice: "Take a look at the betrothed of our seigneur.... I swear she's handsome!... That will make a pretty wedding! Hm!... Won't the two lovers be happy?" At these words, which fell like molten lead upon the bleeding wound in his heart, the vassal shook convulsively. "Take a good look at the handsome young lady," proceeded Adam the Devil. "See how happy she is in her rich clothes. Do you hear her laugh?... Go to! No doubt she's laughing at you and at your wife, who was violated last night by our seigneur.... But do take a look at the beauty! I wager she is jeering at you."

Drawn from his dejection, and rage mounting to his heart, Mazurec brusquely raised his head. For an instant his eyes fiery and red with weeping, fastened on the betrothed of his seigneur, the haughty damosel, resplendent in attire and personal beauty, radiant with happiness, and surrounded by brilliant knights, who, courting her smiles, crowded near her.

"At this hour," the caustic voice of Adam the Devil whispered to the ear of Mazurec, "your own bride is drinking her shame and her tears. What! In order to avenge Aveline and yourself would you not make an attempt to kill the nobleman who robbed you!... That thief is the cause of all your misfortune."

"My stick!" cried the vassal leaping forward, transported with rage, at the same instant that one of the sergeants-at-arms hurried by to notify him that it was not allowed to stop on the arena and look at the ladies, but that he was to betake himself to one of the tents in order, before the combat, to take the customary oaths with the vicar of Nointel. Now inflamed with hatred and rage, Mazurec quickly followed the sergeant-at-arms, while, walking more slowly, Jocelyn said to Adam the Devil:

"You must have suffered a great deal in your lifetime ... I overheard you a minute ago. You know how to fire hatred—"

"Three years ago," broke in the serf with a wild look, "I killed my wife with an axe, and yet I loved her to distraction—"

"Was that at Bourcy—near Senlis?"

"Who told you of it? How come you to know it?"

"I happened to ride through the village on the day of the murder. You preferred to see your wife dead rather than disgraced by your episcopal seigneur."

"Exactly. That's the way I felt on the subject."

"But how did you become a serf of this seigniory?"

"After I killed my wife, I kept in hiding for a month in the forest of Senlis, where I lived on roots; thereupon I came to this country. Caillet gave me shelter. I offered my services as a butcher to the superintendent of the seigniory of Nointel. After the lapse of a year I was numbered among the vassals of the domain. I remained here out of friendship for Caillet."

During this conversation between his two seconds Mazurec had arrived near the tent where he, as well as the Knight of Chaumontel, was to take the customary oath. Clad in his sacerdotal robes and holding a crucifix in his hands, the vicar addressed the serf and the knight.

"Appellant and appellee, do not ye shut your eyes to the danger to which you expose your souls in combating for a bad cause. If either of you wishes to withdraw and place himself at the mercy of his seigneur and the King, it is still time. It will soon be too late. One of you is about to cross the gates of the other world. You will there find seated a God who is merciless to the perjurer. Appellant and appellee, think of that. All men are equally weak before the tribunal of divine justice. The eternal kingdom is not entered in armor. Is either of you willing to recede?"

"I shall maintain unto death that this knight has robbed me; he has caused my misfortunes; if God is just, I shall kill this man," answered Mazurec in a voice of concentrated rage.

"And I," cried the knight of Chaumontel, "swear to God that that vassal lies in his throat, and outrageously slanders me. I shall prove his imposture with the intercession of our Lord and all his saints, especially with the good help of St. James, my blessed patron."

"Aye," put in Jocelyn, "and above all with the good help of your armor, your lance and your sword. Infamous man! To battle on horseback, helmet on head, cuirass on body, sword at your side, lance in your hand, against a poor man on foot and armed only with a stick. Aye, you behave like a coward. Cowards are thieves; consequently, you stole the purse of my principal!"

"How dare you address me in such words!" cried the knight of Chaumontel. "Such a common fellow as you! Miserable vagabond! Intolerable criminal!"

"Heavens be praised! He utters insults!" exclaimed Jocelyn with delight. "Oh, Sir thief, if you are not the most cowardly of two-legged hares, you will follow me on the spot behind yonder pavillion, or else I shall slap your ignoble scamp's face with the scabbard of my sword."

Livid with rage, Gerard of Chaumontel was, to the extreme joy of Jocelyn, about to accept the latter's challenge, when one of his seconds said to him:

"That bandit is trying to save his principal by provoking you to a fight. Fall not into the trap. Do not mind him, mind the vassal."

Taking this prudent advice, Gerard of Chaumontel contemptuously answered Jocelyn: "When arms in hand I shall have convicted this other varlet of imposture, I shall then consider whether you deserve that I accept your insolent challenge."

"You evidently desire to taste the scabbard of my sword," cried Jocelyn. "By heaven, I shall not deprive you of the dish; and if your hang-dog face does not redden with shame, it will redden under my slaps. Coward and felon—"

"Not another word, or I shall order one of my men to expel you from the arena," said the herald-at-arms to Jocelyn; "a second has no right to insult the adversary of his own principal."

Jocelyn realized that he would be compelled to yield to force, held his tongue, and cast a distracted look at Mazurec. The vicar of Nointel raised the crucifix and resumed in his nasal voice: "Appellant and appellee, do you and each of you still insist that your cause is just? Do you swear on the image of the Saviour of mankind?" and the vicar presented the crucifix to the knight, who took off his iron gauntlet and placing his hand upon the image of Christ, declared:

"My cause is just, I swear to God!"

"My cause is just," said in turn Mazurec; "and I take God for my witness; but let us combat quickly; oh, quickly!"

"Do you swear," proceeded the vicar, "that neither of you carries about his person either stone, or herb, or any other magic charm, amulet or incantation of the enemy of man?"

"I swear," said the knight.

"I swear," said Mazurec panting with rage. "Oh, how much time is lost!"

"And now, appellant and appellee," cried the herald-at-arms, "the lists are open to you. Do your duty."

The knight of Chaumontel seized his long lance and jumped upon his horse, which one of his seconds held for him, while Jocelyn, pale and deeply moved, said to Mazurec, while giving him his stick: "Courage!... Follow my advice ... I expect you will kill that coward ... But one last word.... It regards your mother ... Did she never tell you the name of your father?"

"Never ... as I told you this morning in prison. My mother always avoided speaking to me of my father."

"And her name was Gervaise?" asked Jocelyn pensively. "What was the color of her hair and eyes?"

"Her hair was blonde, her eyes black. Poor mother."

"And had she no other mark?"

"She had a small scar above her right eye-brow—"

The clarions sounded at this point. It was the signal for the judicial duel. Unable to restrain his tears, Jocelyn pressed Mazurec in his arms and said to him: "I may not at a moment like this reveal to you the cause of the double interest that you inspire me ... My suspicions and hopes, perhaps, deceive me ... But courage ... Hit your enemy on the head."

"Courage!" put in Adam the Devil in an undertone. "In order to keep your blood boiling, think of your wife ... remember the betrothed of your seigneur laughed at you.... Kill the thief, and patience.... It will some day be our turn to laugh at the noble damosel.... Think above all of your wife ... of her last nights shame and of your own.... Remember that you have both been made forever unhappy, and fall to bravely upon that nobleman! Be brave.... You have a cane, nails and teeth!"

Mazurec the Lambkin uttered a cry of rage and rushed into the lists at the moment when, in answer to a motion from the Sire of Nointel, the marshal of the tourney gave the signal for the combat to the appellant and appellee by calling three times the consecrated words: "Let them go!"

The noble spectators on the platform laughed in advance at the sorry discomfiture of Jacques Bonhomme; but among the plebeian crowd all hearts stopped beating with anxiety at this decisive moment. The knight of Chaumontel, a vigorous man, armed in full panoply, mounted on a tall charger covered with iron, and his long lance in rest, occupied the center of the arena, while Mazurec dashed to the spot barefoot, clad in his blouse and holding his stick in his hands. At sight of the serf, the knight, who, out of contempt for such an adversary, had disdained to lower his visor, put the spurs to his horse, and lowering his pointed iron-headed lance, charged upon the serf certain of transfixing him then and there, and then trampling over him with his horse. But Mazurec, mindful of Jocelyn's recommendations, avoided the lance thrust by suddenly letting himself down flat upon his face; and then, partly rising up at the moment when the



horse was about to grind him under its hoofs, he dealt the animal two such heavy blows with his stick on its forelegs that the courser, stung with pain, reared, slipped its footing and almost fell over, while its rider was shaken out of position on the saddle.

"Felony!" cried the Sire of Nointel with indignation. "It is forbidden to strike a horse!"

"Well done, my brave woolen cap!" cried the populace on the outside, palpitating with suspense and clapping their hands, despite the strictness and severity of the royal ordinances which commanded profound silence to the spectators at a tourney.

"Fall to, Mazurec!" simultaneously cried Jocelyn and Adam the Devil. "Courage! Kill the nobleman! Kill him! Death to the thief!"

Mazurec rose, and seeing the knight out of poise and holding to the bow of his saddle, dropped his stick, picked up a fistful of sand, leaped upon the horse behind Gerard of Chaumontel, while the latter was seeking to regain his equilibrium, lost no time in clutching the knight around the neck with one hand, turned him half over backward, and with the other rubbed his eyes with the sand he had just picked up. Almost half-blinded, the noble robber dropped his lance and reins and sought to carry his hands to his eyes. Mazurec seeing the movement, put his arms around the knight, and, after a short struggle, succeeded in making him wholly lose his balance and tumble down to the ground, where both fell rolling on the arena, while the crowd of serfs, now considering the serf the victor over the knight, clapped their hands, stamped on the ground with joy and cried: "Victory for the woolen cap!"

Gerard of Chaumontel, however, although blinded by the sand and dazed by the fall, gathered fresh strength from the rage that took possession of him at finding himself unhorsed by a peasant, and with little difficulty regained the upper hand over his unskilled adversary. In the unequal struggle against the man clad in iron, the tight clasp of the virtually naked serf was in vain; his nails broke off against, or glided harmlessly over the polished armor of his adversary, while the latter, finally succeeding in planting his two knees upon the serf's chest, bruised his head and face with a shower of hammer blows dealt with his iron gauntlet. His face beaten to pulp and bleeding, Mazurec pronounced once more the name of Aveline and remained motionless. Gerard of Chaumontel, who was gradually regaining his sight, not satisfied with having almost beaten the serf's face out of shape, then drew his dagger to finish his victim. But quickly recalling himself, and

animated by a feeling of refined cruelty, he replaced the dagger in his belt, rose upright, and placing one of his iron shod feet upon the chest of the prostrate and moaning Mazurec, cried in a stentorian voice: "Let this vile impostor be bound up, put in a bag and thrown into the river as he deserves. It is the law of the duel; let it be carried out!"

## CHAPTER V

### SHEET LIGHTNINGS

An oppressive silence followed the close of the judicial combat, as Gerard of Chaumontel, leaving the outstretched body of the serf on the sand, rejoined his seconds while rubbing his irritated eyelids, and jointly they quitted the arena. The sergeant-at-arms had proceeded to pick up the prostrate body of the vassal in order to carry it to the bridge that spanned the near-by river; and the vicar of Nointel had followed on the tracks of the mournful train, in order to administer the last sacraments to the condemned man so soon as he should recover consciousness, and before he was bundled into a bag, agreeable to the ordinance, and cast into the river. For a moment struck dumb with terror by the issue of the judicial combat, the plebs crowd was slowly recovering its voice, and, despite its habit of respect towards the seigneurs, had begun to murmur with rising indignation. Several voices were heard to say that the knight having been unhorsed by the vassal, the latter was to be considered the victor and should not be killed. The turmoil was on the increase, when an unexpected event suddenly drew to itself the attention of the crowd and cut short its criminations. A large troop of men-at-arms, covered with dust and one of whom bore a white flag emblazoned with the fleur-de-lis, hove in sight at a distance over the field and rapidly approached the fenced-in arena. Mazurec was forgotten. Sharing the astonishment of the assembled nobility at the sight of the armed troop that had now reached the barriers, the Sire of Nointel applied both spurs to his horse, rode rapidly forward, and addressing himself to one of the new arrivals, a herald with the fleur-de-lis jacket, saluted him courteously and inquired:

"Sir herald, what brings you hither?"

"An order of the King, my master. I am charged with a message to all the seigneurs and noblemen of Beauvoisis. Having learned that a large number of them were gathered at this place, I came hither. Listen to the envoy of King John."

"Enter the lists and read your message aloud," answered Conrad of Nointel to the herald, who, producing a parchment from a richly embroidered bag, rode to the center of the arena and prepared to read.

"This extraordinary message augurs nothing good," said the seigneur of Chivry to his daughter Gloriande. "King John is going to demand some levy

of men of us for his war against the English, unless it be some new edict on coinage, some fresh royal pillage."

"Oh, father! If, like so many other seigneurs, you had only chosen to go to the court at Paris ... you would then have shared in the largesses of King John, who, we hear, is so magnificently prodigal towards the courtiers. You would then have gained on the one side what you lost on the other. And then also ... they say the court is such a charming place ... continuous royal feasts and dances, enhanced by choicest gallantry. After our marriage Conrad must take me to Paris. I wish to shine at the royal court."

"You are a giddy-headed girl," observed the aged seigneur shrugging his shoulders, and half closing his fist, which he applied to his ear for a trumpet, so as to be better able to hear the royal herald, he remarked to himself: "What devil of a song is he going to sing to us?"

"John, by the grace of God, King of the French," said the herald reading from his parchment, "to his dear, beloved and faithful seigneurs of Beauvoisis; Greeting!"

"Proceed, proceed; we can do very well without your politeness and greetings," grumbled the aged seigneur of Chivry. "They are gilding the pill for us to swallow."

"Pray, father, let me hear the messenger," said Gloriande impatiently. "The royal language has a court perfume that ravishes me."

The herald proceeded: "The mortal enemy of the French, the Prince of Wales, son of the King of England, has perfidiously broken the truce that was not to expire for some time longer. He is advancing at the head of a strong army."

"There we are," cried the Count of Chivry, angrily stamping with his feet. "It is a levy of men that we are going to be asked for. Blood and massacre! To the devil with the King!"

The herald continued reading: "After having set fire to everything on their route, the English are marching towards the heart of the country. In order to arrest this disastrous invasion, and in view of this great public danger, we impose upon our peoples and our beloved nobility a double tax for this year. Furthermore, we enjoin, order and command all our dear, beloved and faithful seigneurs of Beauvoisis to take up arms themselves, levy their men, and join us within eight days at Bourg, whence we shall take the field against the English, whom we shall vanquish with the aid of God and our

valiant nobility. Let everyone be at his post of battle. Such is my will. JOHN."

This appeal from the King of the French to his valiant nobility of Beauvoisis was received by the noble assemblage with a mute stupor, that speedily made place for murmurs of anger and rebellion.

"We refuse to give men and money. To the devil with King John!" cried the Count of Chivry. "Already has he imposed subsidies upon us for the maintenance of his troops. Let him take them to war! We propose to remain at our manors!"

"Well said!" exclaimed another seigneur. "The King evidently kept up no army. All our moneys have been squandered in pleasures and festivities. The court at Paris is an insatiable maw!"

"What!" interjected a third; "we are to wear ourselves out making Jacques Bonhomme sweat all the wealth he can, and the cream thereof is to go into the King's coffers? Not by all the devils! Already have we given too much."

"Let the King defend himself. His domains are more exposed than our own. Let him protect them!"

"It is all we can do, we and our own armed forces, to protect our castles against the bands of marauders, of Navarrais and of the hired soldiery that ravages our lands! And are we to abandon our homes in order to march against the English? By the saints! Fine goslings would we be!"

"And in our absence, Jacques Bonhomme, who seems to indulge in dreams of revolt, will put in fine strokes!"

"By heavens, messieurs!" cried a young knight, "We, nevertheless, may not, to the shame of knighthood, remain barracked on our own manors while battles are being fought on the frontier."

"Well! And who keeps you back, my dear fire-eater?" cried the Count of Chivry. "Are you curious to make acquaintance with war? Very well; depart quickly, and soon.... Each one disposes at his will of his own person and men."

"As to me," loudly put in the radiant Gloriande with fiery indignation, "I shall not bestow my hand on Conrad of Nointel if he does not depart for the war, and return crowned with the laurels of victory, leading to my feet ten Englishmen in chains. Shame and disgrace! Gallant knights to stay at home

when their King calls them to arms! I shall not acknowledge for my lord and husband any but a valiant knight!"

Despite Gloriande's heroic words and a few other rare protests against the selfish and ignominious cowardice of the larger number of seigneurs, a general murmur of approval received the words of the aged seigneur of Chivry, who, encouraged by the almost unanimous support of the assembly, stepped upon his bench and answered the herald in a stentorian voice:

"Sir, in the name of the nobility of Beauvoisis, I now answer you that we have our hands so full on our own domains, that it would be disastrous for us to take the field in distant regions. For the rest, the request of the King will be considered when the deputies of the nobility and the clergy shall be assembled in the States General of the Kingdom. Until then we shall remain at home."

A sudden outburst of hisses from the crowd of peasants and bourgeois answered the words of the seigneur of Chivry; and Adam the Devil, leaving Jocelyn the Champion for a moment alone with Mazurec, who, having regained consciousness, was resignedly expecting the hour of his death, thrust himself among several groups of serfs saying:

"Do you hear them? Fine seigneurs they are!... What are they good for?... Only to combat in tourneys with pointless lances and edgeless swords, or to indulge in bravados in combats, where they are fully armed, against Jacques Bonhomme, armed only with a stick!"

"That's so!" answered several angry voices. "To the devil with the nobility!"

"Poor Mazurec the Lambkin! It is enough to make one's heart ache to see his face bleeding under the iron gauntlet of the Knight."

"And now they are to put him in a bag and throw him into the water!... I declare.... That's what they call justice...."

"Ah! When, thanks to the cowardice of our seigneurs, the English will have penetrated to this region," resumed Adam the Devil, "what with our masters on one side and the English on the other, we shall be like iron beaten on the anvil by the hammer. Oppressed by these, pillaged and sacked by the others, our lot will be twice as hard. Woe is us!"

"That's what happens now when bands of marauders descend upon our villages. We flee for safety to the woods, and when we return, we find our homes in flames or in ashes!"

"O, God! What a lot is ours!"

"And yet our vicar says that secures our salvation ... in heaven! Another fraud upon us!"

"Woe is us if on top of all our ills we are to be ravaged and tortured by the English. That means our end."

"Yes, and we are all to go down through the cowardice of our seigneurs," put in Adam the Devil, "themselves, their families and retainers safely entrenched and provisioned in their fortified castles, they will allow us to be pillaged and massacred by the English! Oh! What a fate is in store for us!"

"And when everything we have will have been devastated," replied another serf in despair, "our seigneur will then tell us, as he told us when the last gang of marauders passed over the region like a hurricane: 'Pay your taxes, Jacques Bonhomme,' 'But, Sire, the marauders have carried away everything; they have left us only our eyes to weep with, and we weep!' 'Oh, you rebel, Jacques Bonhomme! Give him quick a beating and put him to the torture!' Oh, it is too much ... too much!... That must end. Death to the nobles and their helpers, the clergy!"

The murmurs among the rustic plebs, at first low and rumbling, presently broke out into loud hisses and imprecations, and these were so menacing and direct against the nobles, that the seigneurs, for a moment taken aback by the incredible audacity of Jacques Bonhomme, bridled up furiously, drew their swords, and, in the midst of alarmed cries of the elder and younger ladies, precipitately descended the steps of the platform to chastise the varlets at the head of the sergeants of the tourney, their own men-at-arms and also of those of the royal herald, who promptly sided with the noblemen against the plebs.

"Friends," cried Adam the Devil, rushing from one group of the serfs to another to inflame their courage, "if the seigneurs are a hundred, we are a thousand. Have you not a minute ago seen Mazurec unhorse a knight all alone, with his stick and only a handful of sand? Let's prove those nobles that we are not afraid of them. Pick up stones and sticks! Let's deliver Mazurec the Lambkin! Death to the nobles!"

"Yes! Take up stones and sticks! Let's deliver Mazurec!" responded the more daring ones. "The devil take the seigneurs who wish to leave us at the mercy of the English!"

Under the pressure of this furious mob a portion of the barrier around the lists was soon torn up and a large number of vassals, arming themselves with the debris of the fence, redoubled their threats and imprecations against the seigneurs. Attracted by the tumult and catching a glimpse of Adam the Devil, who with glistening eyes was brandishing one of the posts of the barrier, Jocelyn left Mazurec and ran towards the serf to whom he cried out: "Those wretches will be mowed down ... you will lose everything.... The right time has not yet come!"

"It is always in time to kill noblemen," answered Adam the Devil, grinding his teeth, saying which he redoubled his vociferations: "Stones and sticks! Let's deliver Mazurec!"

"But you lose him by that!" cried Jocelyn in despair. "You will lose him! I hoped to save him!" and turning to the surrounding serfs he said: "Do not attack the seigneurs; you are in the open field, they on horseback; you will be trampled under foot. Come, now! Disperse!"

The voice of Jocelyn was lost in the tumult, and his efforts remained fruitless in the midst of the exasperation of the mob. A reflux of the crowd separated him from Adam the Devil, and soon the foresight of the champion was but too well verified. For a moment taken by surprise and even frightened at the aggressive attitude of Jacques Bonhomme, a spectacle they had never before witnessed, the seigneurs presently recovered their composure. Headed by the Sire of Nointel and supported by about fifty men-at-arms, sergeants and knights who speedily mounted their horses, the armed nobility now advanced in good order, and charged upon the revolted serfs with swords and lances. The women and children who happened to be in the crowd, were thrown down and trampled over by the horses, and filled the air with their heart-rending cries. The peasants, without order and without leadership, and already frightened at their own audacity whose consequences they now dreaded, fled in all directions over the meadow. Some few of the more valorous and determined stood their ground and were either cut down by the knights or severely wounded and taken prisoners. In the heat of the fray, Adam the Devil, who had been thrown down by a sabre cut, was seeking to rise when he felt a Herculean hand seize him by the collar, raise him and despite his resistance, drag him far away from the field of carnage. The serf recognized Jocelyn who said to him while dragging him along: "You will be a precious man on the day of uprising ... but to allow yourself to be killed to-day is an act of folly.... Come, let us preserve ourselves for a later day."



"Mazurec is lost!" cried the serf in the agony of despair and struggling against Jocelyn; but the latter, without making answer, compelled Adam the Devil, who was greatly enfeebled by the loss of blood, to take shelter behind a heap of lumber that had been brought thither for the construction of the barrier around the lists, but had been found unnecessary. Both lay themselves down flat upon the grass.

## CHAPTER VI

### PROPHECIES AND PREMONITIONS

The sun has gone down; night is drawing nigh. The noble dames, frightened by the recent popular commotion, have left the platform of the tourney and returned to their manors either on their palfreys or on the cruppers of their cavaliers' horses. At a short distance from the lists where lay the corpses of a considerable number of serfs, killed in their futile attempt at revolt, flows the Orville River. On one side its banks are precipitous, but on the other they slope gently, covered with reeds. The river is crossed by a wooden bridge. To the right of the bridge are a few old willows. Their branches have almost all been freshly lopped off with axes. The few remaining ones, strongly supported and spreading out, have been turned into gibbets. From them now hang the bodies of four of the vassals who had been captured in the revolt. The pendent bodies resemble shadows cast upon the clear sky of the dusk. Night approaches rapidly. Standing on the middle of the bridge surrounded by his friends, among whom is Gerard of Chaumontel, the Sire of Nointel makes a sign, and the last of the revolted and captured serfs is, despite his cries and entreaties, hanged like his companions from a branch of a willow on the bank of the river. A man then brings to the bridge a large bag of coarse grey material, of the kind used by the millers. A strong cord inserted at its mouth like a purse-string enables its being tied closely. Mazurec the Lambkin is led forward tightly pinioned. Up to then he had been seated at one end of the bridge near the vicar. The latter after having placed the crucifix to the mouths of the serfs that had been hanged, returned to the victim about to be drowned. Mazurec is no longer recognizable. His bruised face covered with clotted blood is hideous to behold. One of his eyes has been knocked out and his nose crushed under the fierce blows dealt him by the knight of Chaumontel with his iron gauntlet. The executioner opens the mouth of the bag while the bailiff of the seigniorie approaches Mazurec and says: "Vassal, your felony is notorious; you have dared to charge Gerard, a nobleman of Chaumontel, with robbery; he appealed to a judicial duel where you were vanquished and convicted of calumny and defamation; in obedience to the royal ordinance, you are to be submerged until death does ensue. Such is the supreme and irrevocable sentence."

Mazurec steps forward, and as he is about to be seized and thrust into the bag, he raises his head, and addressing the Sire of Nointel and Gerard, says to them as if inspired with prophetic exaltation:

"It is said among our people that those about to perish become seers. Now, this is what I foretell: Gerard of Chaumontel, you robbed me and now you have me drowned ... you will die drowned. Sire of Nointel, you have done violence to my wife ... your wife will be done violence to. Mayhap my wife may bring to the world the child of a noble; ... your wife may bring to the world the child of a serf. May God take charge of my vengeance. The day of reprisals will come!"

Mazurec the Lambkin had barely uttered these words when the executioner proceeded to tie him up in the bag. Conrad grew pale and shivered at the sinister prophecy of his vassal, and was unable to utter a word. Gerard, however, addressing the serf who was being "bagged" burst out laughing and pointed to the five hanged serfs who rocked in the evening breeze, and whose outlines were dimly perceptible like spectres in the twilight, said:

"Look at the corpses of those villeins who dared to rebel against their seigneurs! Look at the water that runs under the bridge and that is about to swallow you up ... should Jacques Bonhomme still dare to kick, there are our long lances to pierce him through, wide branched trees to hang, and rivers to drown him."

Mazurec was the while tied in the bag, and at the moment when the executioner was about to hurl him into the river, the vassal's voice was heard for the last time from within the canvas. "Gerard of Chaumontel, you will be drowned; Sire of Nointel, your wife will be violated...."

A peal of contemptuous laughter from the knight answered the serf's prediction, and amidst the silence of night the splash was heard of Mazurec's body dropping into the deep waters of the river.

"Come away, come away," said the Sire of Nointel to Gerard in a faltering voice; "let's return to the castle; this place frightens me. The prophecy of that miserable villein makes me shudder despite myself.... He mentioned reprisals."

"What feebleness! Conrad, are you becoming weak-minded?"

"Everything that happened to-day is of ill-omen. I tremble at the future."

"What do you mean?" replied Gerard, following his friend who was walking away at a rapid pace. "What is that you said about ill-omen? Come, explain the cause of your terror."

"This evening, before returning to Chivry, Gloriande said to me: 'Conrad, to-morrow my father celebrates our betrothal in the chapel of his castle; I desire that you depart that same evening to join the forces of the King; and even then I shall not be your wife unless you lead back from battle and place at my feet, as a pledge of your bravery, ten Englishmen in chains and captured by yourself.'"

"The devil take such folly!" cried Gerard. "The romances of knighthood have turned her head!"

"I wish," added Gloriande, "that my husband be illustrious by his prowesses. Therefore, Conrad, to-morrow I shall take the oath at the altar to finish my days in a monastery, if you are killed in battle, or if you fail in the promises that I have demanded of you!"

"By the saints! That girl is gone daft on her Englishmen in chains. There are only blows to be fetched in war, and your betrothed runs the chances of seeing you return without an eye, a leg or an arm ... if you do return.... The devil take her whims!"

"I am bound to yield to Gloriande's wishes. There is no more stubborn head than hers. Besides, she loves me as I do her. Her wealth is considerable. I have dissipated a good part of my fortune at the court of King John. I cannot renounce the marriage. Whatever it may cost me, I must join the army with my men. Sad it is, but there is no choice!"

"Be it so! But then fight ... prudently and moderately."

"I am anxious to live so that I may marry Gloriande ... provided during my absence the prediction of that miserable vassal—"

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" broke in the knight of Chaumontel, laughing out aloud. "You surely are not troubled with the fear that during your absence Jacques Bonhomme will violate your wife?"

"These villeins, an unheard of thing, have dared to insult, to menace and to throw themselves upon us like the wild beasts that they are."

"And you saw that rag-tag flee before our horses like a set of hares. The executions of this evening will complete the lesson, and Jacques Bonhomme will remain the Jacques Bonhomme of ever. Come! Make your mind easy! While I prefer a hundred times the hunt, the tourneys, wine, game and love to the stupid and dangerous feats of war, I shall accompany you to the army, so as to bring you back soon to the beautiful Gloriande. As to the

English prisoners that you are to lead in chains to her feet as a pledge of your valor, we shall scrape together a few leagues from our lady's manor the first varlets that we can lay our hands on. We shall bind them and threaten them with hanging if they utter a single word; and they will do well enough for the ten English prisoners. Is not the idea a jolly one? But, Conrad, what are you brooding over?"

"Perhaps I was wrong in exercising my right over that vassal's wife," replied the Sire of Nointel with a somber and pensive mien. "It was a mere libertine caprice, because I love Gloriande. But the resistance of the scamp, who, besides, charged you with theft, irritated me." And resuming after a moment of silence, the Sire of Nointel addressed his friend: "Tell me the truth; here among ourselves; did you really rob the villein? It would have been an amusing trick.... I only would like to know if you really did it?"

"Conrad, the suspicion is insulting—"

"Oh, it is not in the interest of the dead serf that I put the question, but it is in my own."

"How? Explain yourself more clearly."

"If that vassal has been unjustly drowned ... his prophecy would have more weight."

"By heavens! Are you quite losing your wits, Conrad? Do you see me saddened because Jacques Bonhomme has predicted to me that I was to be drowned?... The devil! It is I who mean to drown your sadness in a cup of good Burgundy wine.... Come, Conrad, to horse ... to horse!... Supper waits, and after the feast pretty female serfs! Long live joy and love! Let's reach the manor in a canter—"

"Perhaps I did wrong in forcing the serf's wife," the Sire of Nointel repeated to himself. "I know not why, but a tradition, handed down from the elder branch of my family, located at Auvergne, comes back to me at this moment. The tradition has it that the hatred of the serfs has often been fatal to the Nerowegs!"

"Hallo, Conrad, to horse! Your valet has been holding your stirrup for the last hour," broke in the cheerful voice of Gerard. "What are you thinking about?"

"I should not have violated the vassal's wife," the Sire of Nointel still mumbled while swinging himself on his horse's back, and taking the route to his manor accompanied by Gerard of Chaumontel.

## CHAPTER VII

### WRECKED HEARTS

The ground floor of the house of Alison the Huffy is closed. A lamp burns inside, but the door and windows are bolted within. Aveline—who-never-lied lies half stretched out upon a bench. Her hands lie across her breast, her head reclines on the knees of Alison. She would be thought asleep were it not for the tremors that periodically convulse her frame. Her discolored visage bears the traces of the tears, which, rarer now, still occasionally escape from her swollen eyelids. The tavern-keeper contemplates the unfortunate girl with an expression of profound pity. William Caillet, seated near by, with his elbows on his knees, his forehead in his hands, takes not his eyes from his daughter. He remembered Alison, and relying on her kind-heartedness, had taken Aveline to the tavern with the aid of Adam the Devil, who immediately had gone out again to the tourney to meet Jocelyn the Champion, by whom he was later snatched from the fray.

Suddenly sitting up affrighted, Aveline cried semi-delirious: "They are drowning him.... I see it.... He is drowned!... Did you not hear the splash of his body dropping into the water?... My bridegroom is dead...."

"Dear daughter," said Alison, breaking into tears, "calm yourself.... Have confidence in God.... They may have had mercy upon him—"

"She is right.... This is the hour," said William Caillet in a low hollow voice. "Mazurec was to be drowned at nightfall. Patience! Every night has its morn. The unfortunate man will be avenged."

Hearing a rap at the door, Alison, who was holding Aveline in her arms, turned to William: "Who can it be at this hour?"

The old peasant rose, approached the door and asked: "Who's that?"

"I, Jocelyn the Champion," a voice answered.

"Oh!" murmured Aveline's father, "he comes from the river"; saying which he opened.

Jocelyn entered with quick steps. At the sight, however, of Mazurec's wife, held in a swooning condition in the arms of Alison, he stopped short, turned to Caillet, and whispered to him: "He is saved!"

"He?" cried the serf stupefied. "Saved?"

"Silence!" said Jocelyn, pointing to Aveline. "Such news may prove fatal if too suddenly conveyed."

"Where is he? Where did he take refuge?"

"Adam is bringing him hither.... He can hardly stand.... I came ahead of them.... He is weeping incessantly.... We came across the field.... The curfew has sounded. We met nobody. Poor Mazurec is saved—"

"I shall go out to meet him," said Caillet, panting with emotion. "Poor Mazurec! Dear son! Dear child!"

Jocelyn approached Aveline, who, with her arms around Alison's neck was sobbing bitterly. "Aveline," said Jocelyn to her, "listen to me, please. Have courage and confidence—"

"He is dead," murmured Aveline moaning and not heeding Jocelyn. "They have drowned him."

"No ... he is not dead," Jocelyn went on saying. "There is hope of saving him."

"Good God!" cried Alison, now weeping with joy and embracing Aveline in a transport of happiness. "Do you hear, dear little one? He is not dead."

Aveline joined her hands and essayed to speak, but the words died away on her lips that trembled convulsively.

"This is what happened," explained Jocelyn. "Mazurec was put into a bag and he was thrown into the water. Fortunately, however," Jocelyn hastened to add, seeing Aveline utter a smothered cry, "Adam the Devil and myself, profiting by the darkness, had hidden ourselves among the reeds that border the bank of the river about a hundred paces from the bridge. The current was toward us. With the aid of a long pole we sought to drag towards us the bag in which Mazurec was tied up, and to pull him out in time."

"Oh!" stammered the young girl. "Help came too late."

"No, no! Calm yourself. We succeeded in drawing the bag to the bank. Adam cut it open with one rip of his knife, and we took Mazurec out of the canvas still breathing."



"He lives!" exclaimed the girl in a delirium of joy. Her first movement was to precipitate herself towards the door, and there she fell in the arms of her father, who, having just returned, stood on the threshold.

"Yes, he lives!" said Caillet to his daughter, closing her to his breast. "He lives ... and he is here!"

That same instant Mazurec appeared at the threshold, pale, faint, dripping water, his face unrecognizable, and supported by Adam the Devil. Instead of running to the encounter of her husband, Aveline staggered back frightened and cried: "It is not he!"

She did not recognize Mazurec. His crushed eye, encircled with black and blue concussions, his crushed nose, his lips split and swollen, so completely changed his once sweet and attractive features, that the hesitation of the vassal's wife lasted several seconds; but soon recovered from her painful surprise, she threw herself at the neck of Mazurec, and kissed his wounds with frantic excitement.

Mazurec returned the embrace of his wife and murmured sadly: "Oh, poor wife ... although I still live, yet you are a widow."

These words, reminding as they did the young couple that they were forever separated by the infamous outrage that Aveline had been the victim of and that might mean maternity to her, caused them both to break forth into a flood of tears that flowed while they remained closely locked in a gloomy and mute embrace.

"Oh!" exclaimed William Caillet, even whose harsh features were now moistened with tears at the sight of the ill-starred couple, "to avenge them.... How much blood.... Oh! how much blood.... What conflagrations ... what massacres ... the reprisals must be terrible."

"That seigniorial race must be strangled out of existence," put in Adam the Devil, biting his nails with suppressed rage. "They must be extirpated ... they must be killed off ... all of them ... even the whelps in the cradle ... not a vestige of the seignior must be left in existence." And turning to Jocelyn, the peasant added with savage reproach: "And you, you tell us to be patient—"

"Yes," answered Jocelyn, interrupting him; "yes, patience, if you wish on one day to avenge the millions of slaves, serfs and villeins of our race, who for centuries have been dying, crushed down, tortured and massacred by the seigneurs. Yes, patience, if you desire that your vengeance be fruitful and

accomplish the deliverance of your brothers! To that end I conjure you, and you, Caillet, also—no partial revolts! Let all the serfs of Gaul rise simultaneously, on one day, at the same signal. The seigniorial race will not see the morrow of that day."

"To wait," replied Adam the Devil, scowling with impatience; "always to wait!"

"And when will the signal of revolt come?" asked Caillet. "Whence is it to come? Answer me that!"

"It will come from Paris, the city of revolts and of popular uprisings," answered Jocelyn; "and that will be within shortly."

"From Paris," exclaimed the two peasants in a voice expressive of astonishment and doubt. "What! Those Parisians ... will they be ready to revolt?"

"Like you, the Parisians are tired of the outrages and exactions of the seigneurs; like you, the Parisians are tired of the thieveries of King John and his court, both of whom ruin and starve the country; like you, they are tired of the cowardice of the nobility, the only armed force in the country, and that, nevertheless, allows Gaul to be ravaged by the English; finally, the Parisians are tired of praying and remonstrating with the King to obtain from him the reform of execrable abuses. The Parisians are, therefore, decided to appeal to arms against the royalty. The rupture of the truce with the English, just announced by the royal messenger, will undoubtedly hasten the hour of revolt. However, until that solemn hour shall sound, patience, or all is lost."

"And these Parisians," replied Caillet with redoubled attention, "who directs them? Have they a leader?"

"Yes," answered Jocelyn with enthusiasm, "a most courageous, wise and good man. He is an honor to our country!"

"And his name?"

"Etienne Marcel, a bourgeois, a draper, and provost of the councilmen of Paris. The whole people are with him because he aims at the welfare and the enfranchisement of the people. A large number of the bourgeois of the communal towns, that have fallen back into the royal power and who are ready to rise, are in touch with Marcel. But he realizes that the bourgeois and artisans would be guilty of a wicked act if they did not offer their advice and help to the serfs of the country and aid them also to break the yoke of

the seigneurs. By acting in concert—serfs, artisans and bourgeois—we could easily prevail over the seigneurs and the royal house. Count ourselves; count our oppressors. How many are they? A few thousand at the most, while we are millions!"

"That's true," said Caillet, exchanging looks of approval with Adam. "The towns and the country combined, that's the world! The seigneurs and their clergy are insignificant."

"I came to this place," proceeded Jocelyn, "by the advice of Etienne Marcel, calculating that, as a rule, tourneys attract a large number of vassals. I was to ascertain whether the sentiment of rebellion existed in this province as it did in others. I have no longer any doubt on the subject. I have met you, William and Adam, and no longer ago than this afternoon I have seen, much as I regretted the partial and hasty movement, that Jacques Bonhomme, tired of his burden of shame, misery and sufferings, is ripe for action. I shall now return to Paris with a heart full of hope. Therefore, patience! Friends, patience! Soon will be the hour of reprisals sound, the hour of inexorable justice. Then, death to our oppressors!"

"Yes," answered Caillet; "we shall settle the accounts of our ancestors ... and I shall settle the accounts of my daughter.... Do you see my child? Do you?" and the old peasant pointed to Aveline who sat near Mazurec. Overcome with sorrow, mute, their eyes fixed on the floor and holding each other's hands the smitten couple presented a picture of unutterable woe.

"But coming to think of it," said Jocelyn. "Mazurec cannot remain in this territory."

"I have thought of that," rejoined Caillet. "To-night I shall return to Cramoisy with my daughter and her husband. I know a grotto in the thickest part of the forest. The hiding-place was long of service to Adam. I shall take Mazurec thither. Every night my daughter will take to him a share of our pittance. The poor child feels so desolate that to separate her entirely from her husband would be to kill her. He shall remain in hiding until the day of vengeance shall have arrived. You may rely on me, upon Adam and upon many others."

"But who will give the signal at which the towns and country folks are to rise?" asked Adam the Devil.

"Paris," responded Jocelyn. "Before long I shall have moneys brought to you, or I may bring them myself, with which to purchase arms. Be careful not to

awaken the suspicions of the seigneurs. Buy your arms one by one in town ... at fairs, and hide them at home. If you know any safe blacksmiths, get them to turn out pikes ... town money will furnish you with iron ... and with iron you will be able to purchase revenge and freedom. Who has iron has bread!"

A prolonged neighing just outside the door interrupted the conversation. "It is Phoebus, my horse," cried Jocelyn, agreeably reminded that he had left the animal tied close to the tourney. "He must have grown tired of waiting for me, must have snapped the strap and returned to the tavern after me, where, however, he has been only once before. Brave Phoebus," Jocelyn added, proceeding to the door. "This is not the first proof of intelligence that he has given me." Hardly had Jocelyn opened the upper part of the door than the head of Phoebus appeared; the animal neighed anew and licked the hands of his master, who said to him: "Good friend, you shall have a good supply of oats, and then we shall take the road."

"What, Sir, you intend to depart this very night?" asked Alison the Huffy, drying her tears that had not ceased to flow since the return of Mazurec. "Do you mean to depart, despite the dark and the rain? Remain with us at least until to-morrow morning."

"The royal messenger has brought tidings that hasten my return to Paris, my pretty hostess. Keep a corner for me in your heart, and ... we shall meet again. I expect to be soon back in Nointel."

"Before leaving us, Sir champion," insisted Alison, rummaging in her pocket, "take these three franks. I owe them to you for having won my case."

"Your case?... I have not yet pleaded it!"

"You have gained my case without pleading it."

"How is that?"

"This forenoon, when you returned for your horse to ride to the tourney, Simon the Hirsute came out of his house as you passed by. 'Neighbor,' said I to him, 'I have not until now been able to find a champion. I now have one.' 'And where is that valiant champion?' answered Simon sneering. 'There,' said I, 'do you see him? It is that tall young man riding yonder on the bay horse.' Simon then ran after you, and after a careful inspection that took you in from head to foot, he came back crestfallen and said to me: 'Here, neighbor, I give you three florins, and let's be quits.' 'No, neighbor, you shall return to me my twelve florins, or you will have to settle with my champion,

if not to-day, to-morrow.' A quarter of an hour later, Simon the Hirsute, who had now turned sweet as honey, brought me my twelve florins. Here are the three promised to you, Sir champion."

"I have not pleaded, and have nothing coming to me from you, my pretty hostess, except a kiss which you will let me have when you hold my stirrup."

"Oh, what a large heart you have, Sir champion!" cordially answered Alison. "One embraces his friends, and I am certain you now entertain some affection for me."

After Phoebus had eaten his fill and Jocelyn had thrown a thick traveling cloak over his armor, he returned to the room. Approaching Mazurec he said to him with deep emotion: "Courage and patience ... embrace me ... I know not why, but I feel an interest in you beside that which your misfortunes awaken ... I shall ere long have clarified my doubts"; and, then addressing Aveline: "Good-bye, poor child; your hopes are shattered; but at least the companion of your sorrows has been saved to you. Often will your tears mingle with his and they will seem less bitter"; turning finally to Caillet and Adam the Devil, whose horny hands he pressed in his own: "Good-bye, brothers ... remember your promises; I shall not forget mine; let us know how to wait for the great day of reprisal."

"To see that day and avenge my daughter, to exterminate the nobles and their tonsured helpers, is all I desire," answered Caillet; "after that I shall be ready to die."

After planting a cordial kiss on the red lips of Alison, who was holding his stirrup, and two on her rosy cheeks, Jocelyn the Champion bounded on his horse, and despite the rain and the thick darkness, hastily resumed the road to Paris.

"Happy trip and speedy return!" cried out Alison after him.

## **PART II**

### **THE REGENCY OF NORMANDY**

#### **CHAPTER I**

##### **THE STATES GENERAL**

The Frankish conquerors of Gaul founded about a thousand years before the date of this narrative the first dynasty that reigned in the land. Clovis, the first of the kings, established and his successor followed the custom of almost yearly convoking their leudes, or chiefs of bands, to gatherings that they named Fields of May. At these assemblies, from which the Celtic or conquered people were wholly excluded and to which only the warrior ruler class was admitted, the Frankish chiefs or feudal lords deliberated with their supreme sovereign, the king, in their own or Germanic tongue upon new martial enterprises; or upon new imposts to be laid upon the subjected race. It was at these Fields of May that later, during the usurpatory dominion of the stewards of the palace, the do-nothing kings, those last scions of Clovis, unnerved and degenerate beings, appeared once a year with artificial beards as the grotesque and hollow effigies of royalty. These assemblies were continued under the reign of Charles the Great and the Carolingian kings—the dynasty that in 752 succeeded that of Clovis. The bishops, accomplices of the conquerors, joined in these assemblies, where, accordingly, only the nobility, that is, the conquerors, and the clergy had seats. Under Hugh Capet and his descendants, the dynasty of the Capets, which succeeded that of the Carolingians in 987, continued the practice of the Fields of May, but under a different name. At irregular intervals they held in their domains Courts or Parliaments—assemblies composed of seigneurs and prelates, but from which the newly shaping class of bourgeois or townsmen was excluded, along with the artisans and serfs, essentially as was the case under the previous dynasties. These assemblies represented exclusively the interests of the ruling class and its accomplices.

Towards the close of 1290, the legists or lawyers, a new class of plebeian origin, began to enter the parliaments. The royal power, that had reared its head upon the ruins of the independence of the feudal lords, grew ever more oppressive and absolute, and the functions of the parliaments were by degrees restricted to servilely registering and promulgating the royal ordinances, instead of remaining what they originally were, free gatherings where kings, seigneurs and prelates deliberated as peers upon the affairs of the State—that is to say, their own private interests, to the exclusion of those of the people. In course of time, despite these registrations, neither

law nor ordinance was carried out, and the government became wholly autocratic. Then came a turn. The spirit of liberty breathed over Gaul, and a species of general insurrection broke out against the crown. The townsmen, entrenched in their towns, the seigneurs in their castles, the bishops in their dioceses, reused to pay the imposts decreed at the royal pleasure. Thus Philip the Fair, in the early part of the eleventh century, was unable to enforce the ordinance that levied a fifth of all incomes. Although the decree was registered by parliament, the officers of the King were met with swords, sticks and showers of stones in Paris, Orleans and other places, and remained unable to fetch the money to the royal treasury. At that juncture Enguerrand de Marigny, an able minister, who was later hanged, said to Philip the Fair: "Fair Sire, you are not the strongest; therefore, instead of ordering, request, pray, entreat, if necessary. To that end convoke a national assembly, States General, composed of prelates, seigneurs and bourgeois or townsmen, jointly deputed. In our days, fair Sire, we must reckon with the townsmen, that bourgeois class that has succeeded in emancipating itself. To that national assembly submit gently, mildly and frankly the needs that press you. If you do, there is a good chance of your wishes being met."

The advice was wise. Philip the Fair followed it. Thus it came about that for the first time since nine centuries, and thanks to the communal insurrections, the bourgeois—those plebeians who represented the subjugated class—took their seats in the national assembly beside the seigneurs, who represented the oppressors, and the bishops, their accomplices. Before these States General, that thus came into existence, the king now appeared in humble posture, affecting poverty and good will, and obtained the levies of men and subsidies that he needed. After Philip the Fair, his descendants, greedy, prodigal and needy, convoked a national assembly whenever they required a new levy of taxes or of men. The bourgeois deputies ever appeared at these assemblies in a defiant mood. They never were convoked except to exact gold and the blood of their race from them. To exact is the correct term. Vain it was for the bourgeois deputies to refuse, as they did, the levies of men and moneys that seemed to them unjust. Their refusal was annulled, and the method of annulment was this: The States General consisted of three estates—the nobility, the clergy and the bourgeoisie—each being represented by an equal number of deputies. Accordingly, the bourgeoisie was out-voted by the combined estates of the nobility and the clergy, both of which were ever found anxious to meet the royal wishes on the head of taxation.

The reason was plain. The prelates and seigneurs, being exempt of taxation in virtue of the privileges of the nobility of the one and the alleged sanctity of the other, and sharing, thanks to the prodigalities of the kings, in the taxes

levied on the bourgeoisie, granted with gladsome hearts all the levies for money that the crown ever requested.

Thus stood things at the beginning of the reign of John II. Though the position of the people continued to be grievous, yet marked progress had been made.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **ETIENNE MARCEL**

The hopeless minority in which the bourgeoisie found itself in the States General rendered its participation in government a fiction. It remained for a great man and the proper juncture in order to turn the fiction into a reality. The juncture set in during the year 1355, when King John II found his treasury empty through his ruinous prodigalities, and Gaul in flames through the pretensions of the King of England to the ownership of the country and his efforts to reconquer it, while in the south Charles the Wicked, King of Navarre, whom John II. had given his daughter in marriage, was arms in hand, capturing several provinces to which he laid claim as part of his wife's dower. The man of the occasion arose in Etienne Marcel.

With the country torn up by war and his treasury bankrupt, John II convoked the States General. He needed stout levies of men and stouter levies of money. The Archbishop of Rouen, then the royal chancellor, haughtily presented the King's demands. But the imperious chancellor had counted without Etienne Marcel, one of the greatest men who ever added luster to the name of Gaul. The great commoner, deputed to the States General by the city of Paris and indignant at seeing the nobility and clergy disregard the just protests of the deputies of the bourgeoisie, thundered against the odious practice, and, sustained by the menacing attitude of the Parisians, he uttered the memorable declaration that the alliance of the nobility and the clergy was no longer to be of controlling force upon the deputies of the bourgeoisie, and that if, contrary to the vote of the bourgeoisie, the seigneurs and prelates granted levies of men and moneys to the King without any guarantee as to the proper employment of such forces and funds for the public welfare, the towns would have to refuse obedience to such decrees and furnish neither men nor moneys to the crown.

These energetic and wise words, never heard before, imposed upon the States General. In the name of the deputies of the bourgeoisie, Marcel submits to the crown the conditions under which the third estate would consent to grant the men and subsidies asked for; and the crown accepts, knowing the people of Paris stood ready to sustain their spokesman. Unfortunately, and the experience was to be more than once made by Marcel, he soon realized the hollowness of royal promises. The moneys granted by the national assembly are insanely dissipated by the King and his courtiers. The levies of men, instead of being employed against the English, whose invasion spread over wider areas of the national territory, are turned to the private wars of the King against some of the seigneurs, and

intended either to protect or enlarge his own domains. The audacity of the English redoubles; they break the truce and threaten the very heart of the land; and King John then hastily summons his faithful and well-beloved nobility to join him in the defence of the nation.

The reception given to the royal herald by the valiant jousts, warm from the passage of arms at the tourney of Nointel, has been narrated. Nevertheless, with good or ill will, the majority of the gallants, all of whom were made to fear for their own estates by the foreign invasion, dragged their vassals after them, and joined John II near Poitiers. At the first charge of the English archers the brilliant gathering of knights turn their horses' heads, ply their spurs, cowardly take to flight, and leave the poor people that they had compelled to follow them at the mercy of the invader who falls upon them and ruthlessly puts them to the sword. King John himself remains a prisoner on the field, while his son Charles, Duke of Normandy, a stripling barely twenty years of age, escapes with his brothers the disgraceful defeat of his father only by riding full tilt to Paris, where, in his capacity of Regent, he convokes the States General for the purpose of obtaining fresh sums to ransom the seigneurs who remained in the hands of the enemy.

Without Etienne Marcel, the draper, Gaul would have been lost; but the ascendancy of his genius and patriotism dominated the assembly. In answer to the chancellor, who conveyed the demands of the Regent, Marcel declared that before attending to the ransom of the King and knights, the nation's safety demanded attention. The nation's safety demanded urgent and radical reforms. He recited them. And, losing sight of nothing, but developing superhuman activity, he caused Paris to be protected with new fortifications in order to render the town safe from the English who had advanced as far as St. Cloud. He armed the people; organized the street police; made provisions for food by large importations of grains; calmed and reassured the alarmed spirits; by his example imparted a similar temper to the other towns; and, faithful in the midst of all other cares to the plan of reform that he had pursued and ripened during the long years of his obscure and industrious life, he caused the appointment of a committee of twenty-four bourgeois deputies charged with the drafting of the reforms that were to be demanded from the Regent. The deputies of the nobility and the clergy withdrew disdainfully from the national assembly, shocked at the audacity of the bourgeois legislators. These, however, masters of the situation and laboring under the high inspiration of Etienne Marcel, drew up a plan of reforms that in itself meant an immense revolution. It was the republican government of the ancient communes of Gaul, now extended beyond the confines of the town and made to cover the entire nation; it was the substitution of the power of deputies elected by the whole country for the

absolute power of the crown. The King becomes merely the chief agent of the States General, and he has no power without their sovereign consent to dispose of a single man, or a single florin. These reforms, the fruit of many vigils on the part of Etienne Marcel, were accepted and solemnly sworn to by Charles, Duke of Normandy, in the capacity of Regent for his father, then a prisoner in the English camp, and they were promulgated in the principal towns of Gaul with the sound of trumpets, under the title of "Royal Ordinance of the 17th day of January, 1357." The ordinance was as follows:

The States General shall henceforth meet whenever they may think fit and without requiring the consent of the King, to deliberate upon the government of the kingdom, and the vote of the nobility and clergy shall have no binding power over the deputies of the communes.

The members of the States General shall be under the protection of the king, the Duke of Normandy and their successors. And, furthermore, members of the States General shall be free to travel throughout the kingdom with an armed escort that shall be charged with causing them to be respected.

The moneys proceeding from the subsidies granted by the States General shall be levied and distributed, not by royal officers, but by deputies elected by the States General; and they shall swear to resist all orders of the King and his ministers, in case the King or his ministers wish to turn the moneys to other expenses than those provided for by the States General.

The King shall grant no pardon for murder, rape, abduction or infringement of truce.

The offices of justice shall not be sold or farmed out.

The costs of processes, inquests and administration in the chambers of parliament and of accounts shall be lowered, and the officials of those departments who may refuse, shall be expelled as extortionists of the public fund.

All seizures of food, clothing or money in the name and for the service of the King or of his family shall be forbidden; and power is given to the inhabitants to gather at the call of their town bell and to pursue the seizers.

To the end of avoiding all monopoly and extortion, no officer of the King shall be allowed to carry on any trade in merchandise or money.

The expenses of the household of the King, the Dauphin and of the princes shall be moderated and reduced to reasonable bounds by the States

General; and the stewards of the royal households shall be obliged to pay for what they buy.

Finally, the King, the Dauphin, the princes, the nobility, the prelates of whatever rank, shall bear the burden of taxation the same as all other citizens, as justice requires.

Compared with the Fields of May of olden days, where the conquering Franks and their bishops disposed of the people of Gaul like cattle, the national assemblies, held under the ordinance that Etienne Marcel had wrung from the crown—assemblies dominated by the industrious class which by its labor, commerce, trades and arts enriched the country while the royalty, nobility and clergy devoured it—the progress was gigantic.

No less distinguished were the services of Etienne Marcel at this juncture against the foreign invader, who was advancing with rapid marches upon the capital of the land. Paris, originally circumscribed to the island that is washed by the two arms of the Seine, extended itself from century to century beyond its original cradle to the right and to the left, until under the reign of John II it had grown to a town of large proportions. The old part of the city, that which is bounded by the two arms of the river, continued at this time to be called the Cité and served as the headquarters of the clergy, whose houses seemed to cuddle under the shadow of the high towers of the tall church of Notre Dame. The Bishop of Paris had almost the entire Cité for his jurisdiction. On the right bank of the Seine and at the place where rose the thick tower of the gate of the Louvre, began the fortified premises of what was generally called the town. It was peopled with merchants, artisans and bourgeois, and it contained the square at one end of which stood the pillory, where malefactors were exposed or executed before taking their corpses to the gibbets of Montfaucon. The girdle of fortresses that surround Paris to the north extends from the thick tower of the Louvre to the gate of St. Honoré. From there, the wall winding towards the Coquiller gate, reaches the gate of Mont Martre, makes a curve near St. Denis street, continues in the direction of the gate of St. Antoine, and arrives at the Barbette gate, which is flanked by the large tower of Billy, built on the borders of the Seine opposite Notre Dame and the isle of Cows. The girdle of the ramparts, interrupted at this spot by the river, is resumed on the left bank. It skirts the quarter of the University, which is inhabited by the students and which has for its issues the gates of St. Vincent, St. Marcel, St. Genevieve, St. James and St. Germain. Thence it flanks the palace of Nesle and runs out into the tower of Philip-Hamelin, built on the left bank opposite the tower of the Louvre, which rises on the right bank. This vast enclosure which insured the defense of Paris was completed by arduous labors of fortification

due to the genius and the prodigious activity of Etienne Marcel. He caused the ramparts to be equipped with numerous engines of war of the new kind that then began to come in vogue named cannons—tubes made of bars of iron held fast by rings of the same metal. By means of a powder recently invented by a German monk, these cannons expelled stone and iron balls with what was then considered marvelous velocity, force and noise, and to a then equally marvelous distance. Without those immense works, all of which were executed within three months, the capital of Gaul would have inevitably fallen into the hands of the English.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MAN OF THE FURRED CAP

Many weeks had elapsed since the night when Jocelyn the Champion rode back to Paris from the little village of Nointel. A man wearing a woolen cap, clad in an old blouse of grey material, carrying a knapsack on his back and a heavy stick in his hand entered Paris by the gate of St. Denis. It was William Caillet, the father of Aveline-who-never-lied. The old peasant looked even somberer than when last seen at Nointel. His hollow and fiery eyes, his sunken cheeks, his bitter smile—all betokened a profound and concentrated sorrow. This, however, yielded presently to astonishment at the tumultuous aspect of the streets of Paris, where he now found himself for the first time in his life. The multitude of busy people wearing different costumes, the horses, carriages, litters that crossed in all directions, gave the rustic a feeling akin to vertigo, while his ears rung with the deafening cries incessantly uttered by the merchants and their apprentices, who, standing at the doors of their shops solicited customers. "Hot stoves! Hot baths!" cried the keepers of bathing houses; "Fresh and warm cakes!" cried the pastry venders; "Fresh wine, just arrived from Argenteuil and Suresne!" cried a tavern-keeper armed with a large pewter tumbler, and with looks and gestures inviting the toppers to drink; "Whose coat needs mending?" asked the tailor; "The oven is warm, who wants to have his bread baked?" vociferated a baker; further off a royal edict was being proclaimed, announced by drum and trumpet; in among the crowd several monks, collectors for a brotherhood, held out their purses and cried: "Give for the ransom of the souls in purgatory!" while beggars, exhibiting their real or assumed deformities exclaimed: "Give to the poor, for the love of God!" Before venturing further into Paris, William Caillet sat down on a stone step placed near a door meaning both to rest himself and to accustom his eyes and ears to a noise that was so utterly new to him.

Presently a distant rumbling, proceeding from Mauconseil street, almost drowned the cross-fire of cries. At intervals the roll of drums and mournful clarion notes mingled with the approaching and rumbling din, and soon Caillet heard repeated from mouth to mouth in accents at once sorrowful and angry: "That's the funeral of the poor Perrin Macé." All the passers-by started, and a great number of merchants and apprentices left their shops in charge of the women behind the counters, and ran towards Mauconseil and Oysters-are-fried-here streets, where the funeral procession was to pass after traversing St. Denis street.

Struck by the eagerness of the Parisians to witness the funeral, which seemed to be a matter of public mourning, Caillet followed the crowd, whose confluence from several other streets soon became considerable. Accident threw him near a student of the University of Paris. The young man, about twenty years of age, was named Rufin the Tankard-smasher, a nickname that was borne out by the jovial and convivial mien of the strapping youngster. He had on his head a crazy felt hat that age had rendered yellow, and he wore a black coat no less patched up than his hose. He looked as threadbare as ever did a Paris student. Held back by his rustic timidity, Caillet did not venture to open a conversation with Rufin the Tankard-smasher, notwithstanding several remarks dropped by the crowd around him and by the student himself increased the rustic's curiosity in the young man.

"Poor Perrin Macé!" said a Parisian, "To have his hand cut off and then be hanged without trial! And all because it so pleased the Regent and his courtiers!"

"That's the way the court respects the famous ordinance of our Marcel!"

"Oh, this nobility!... It is the pest and ruination of the country!... It and its clergy!"

"The nobles!" cried Rufin the Tankard-smasher; "they are merely caparisoned and plumed parade horses; good to prance and not to carry or draw. The moment they are called to do work, they rear and kick!"

"And yet, master student," ventured a large sized man with a furred cap, "the noble knighthood deserves our respect."

"The knighthood!" cried Rufin, laughing contemptuously, "the knighthood is good only to figure in tourneys, attracted by the lure of profit. The horse and arms of the vanquished belong to the vanquisher. By Jupiter! Those doughty chaps seek to throw down their adversaries just as we students seek to knock down the nine-pins at a bowling game on the college grounds. But so soon as their skins are in danger in battle, where there is no profit to be fetched other than blows, that same nobility shamefully takes to flight, as happened at the battle of Poitiers, where it gave the signal for run-who-run- can to an army of forty thousand men pitted against only eight thousand English archers! By the bowels of the Pope! Your nobles are not men, they are hares!"

"Come, now, master student," laughingly put in another townsman; "let us not be too hard upon the nobility; did it not rid us of King John by leaving him a prisoner in the hands of the English?"

"Yes!" exclaimed another, "but we shall have to pay the royal ransom, and in the meantime must submit to the government of the Regent, a stripling of twenty years, who orders people to be hanged when they demand the moneys owing to them by the royal treasury, and object when we strike them, as did Perrin Macé."

"With the aid of heaven, our friend Marcel will soon put a stop to that sort of thing."

"Marcel is the providence of Paris."

"Friends," resumed the man of the furred cap, smiling disdainfully, "you seem to have nothing but the name of Marcel in your mouths. Although Master Marcel is a provost and president of the town council, yet he is not everything on earth. The other councilmen are his superiors in trade. Take, for instance, John Maillart, there you have a worthy townsman—"

"Who is it dare compare others with the great Marcel!" cried Rufin the Tankard-smasher. "By Jupiter, whoever utters such foolishness quacks like a goose!"

"Hm! Hm!" grumbled the man of the furred cap; "I said so!"

"Then it is you who quack like a goose!" promptly replied the Tankard-smasher. "What! You dare maintain that Marcel is not the foremost townsman! He, the friend of the people!"

"Aye, aye!" came from the crowd. "Marcel is our saviour. Without him Paris would by this time have been taken and sacked by the English!"

"Marcel," resumed the Tankard-smasher with increasing enthusiasm, "he who restored economy in our finances, order and security in the city! By the bowels of the Pope! I know something about that! Only a fortnight ago, towards midnight, I with my chum Nicolas the Thin-skinned were beating at the door of a public house on Trace-Pute street. The woman of the house refused us admission, pretending that the girls we were looking for were not in. Thereat I and my friend came near breaking in the door. At that a platoon of cross-bowmen, organized by Marcel to maintain order in the streets, happens to go by, and they arrest and lodge both of us at the



Chatelet, despite our privileges as students of the Paris University!... Now dare say that Marcel does not keep order in town!"

"That may all be," answered the man of the furred cap; "but any other councilman would have done as much; and Master John Maillart—"

"John Maillart!" exclaimed Rufin. "By the bowels of the Pope! Had he or any other, the King himself, dared to encroach upon the franchises of the University, the students, rising en masse, would have poured, arms in hands, out of their quarter of St. Germain and there would have been a battle in Paris. But what is allowed to Marcel, the idol of Paris, is not allowed to any other."

"The student is right!" went up from the crowd. "Marcel is our idol because he is just, because he protects the interests of the bourgeois against the court people, of the weak against the strong. Long live Etienne Marcel!"

"Without the activity of Marcel, his courage and his foresight, Paris would have been burned down and deluged in blood by the English."

"Did not Marcel also keep our town from starvation, when he went himself at the head of the militia as far as Corbeil to protect a cargo of grain that the Navarrais meant to pillage?"

"I don't deny that," calmly observed the man of the furred cap with envious insistence. "All I maintain is that, put in the place of Marcel, Maillart would have done as well."

"Surely, provided the councilman had the genius of Marcel. If he had, he surely would have done as well as Marcel!" rejoined the Tankard-smasher. "If my sweetheart wore a beard, she would be the lover and somebody else the sweetheart!"

This sally of the student was received with a universal laughter of approval. The immense majority of the Parisians entertained for Marcel as much attachment as admiration.

Wrapt in his somber silence, William Caillet had listened attentively to the altercation, and he saw confirmed that which Jocelyn the Champion had stated to him a short time ago at Nointel concerning the influence of Marcel upon the Parisian people. By that time, the roll of drums, the notes of the clarions and the din of a large multitude had drawn nearer. The procession turned into Mauconseil in order to cross St. Denis street. A company of the town's cross-bowmen, commanded by a captain, marched at the head and

opened the way, preceded by the drummers and clarion blowers, who alternately struck up funeral bars. Behind the cross-bowmen came the town's heralds, dressed in the town colors, half red and half blue. From time to time the heralds recited solemnly the following mournful psalmody:

"Pray for the soul of Perrin Macé, a bourgeois of Paris, unjustly executed!"

"John Baillet, the treasurer of the Regent, had borrowed in the name of the King a sum of money from Perrin Macé.

"Macé demanded his money in virtue of the new edict that orders the royal officers to pay for what they buy and return what they borrow for the King, under penalty of being brought to law by their creditors.

"John Baillet refused to pay, and furthermore insulted, threatened and struck Perrin Macé.

"In the exercise of his right of legitimate defence, granted him by the new edict, Perrin Macé returned blow for blow, killed John Baillet and betook himself to the church of St. Méry, a place of asylum, from where he demanded an inquest and trial.

"The Duke of Normandy, now Regent, immediately sent one of his courtiers, the marshal of Normandy, to the church of St. Méry, accompanied with an escort of soldiers and the executioner.

"The marshal of Normandy dragged Perrin Macé from the church, and without trial Macé's right hand was cut off and he was immediately hanged.

"Pray for the soul of Perrin Macé, a bourgeois of Paris, unjustly executed."

Regularly after these sentences, that were alternately recited by the heralds in a solemn voice, the muffled roll of drums and plaintive clarion notes resounded, but they hardly served to hush the imprecations from the crowd, indignant at the Regent and his court. Behind the heralds followed priests with their crucifixes and banners, and then, draped in a long black cloth embroidered in silver, came the coffin of the executed bourgeois, carried by twelve notables, clad in their long robes and wearing the two-colored hats of red and blue, such as were worn by almost all the partisans of the popular cause. The collars of their gowns were held by silver brooches, likewise enameled in red and blue, and bearing the inscription "To a happy issue," a device or rallying cry given by Marcel. Behind the coffin marched the councilmen of Paris with Etienne Marcel at their head. The obscure bourgeois, who had stepped out of his draper's shop to become one of the

most illustrious citizens of Gaul, was then in the full maturity of his age. Of middle height and robust, Etienne Marcel somewhat stooped from his fatigues, seeing that his prodigious activity of a man of both thought and action left him no repose. His open, manly and characterful face bore at the chin a thick tuft of brown beard, leaving his cheeks and lips clean shaven. The feverish agitation of the man and the incessant cares of public affairs had furrowed his forehead and left their marks on his features without, however, in any way affecting the august serenity that an irreproachable conscience imparts to the physiognomy of an honorable man. There was nothing benigner or more affectionate than his smile when under the influence of the tender sentiments so familiar to his heart. There was nothing more imposing than his bearing, or more threatening than his looks when, as powerful an orator as he was a great citizen, Etienne Marcel thundered with the indignation of an honest and brave soul against the acts of cowardice and treason and the crimes of the feudal nobility and the despotic crown. The provost wore the red and blue head-gear together with the emblazoned brooch that distinguished the other councilmen. Among these, John Maillart often during the procession gave his arm to Marcel, who, fatigued by the long march through the streets of Paris, cordially accepted the support of one of his oldest friends. Since youth Marcel had lived in close intimacy with Maillart, but the latter, ever keeping concealed the enviousness that the glory of Marcel inspired him with, could not now wholly repress a bitter smile at the enthusiastic acclaim that saluted Marcel along the route.

A woman clad in long mourning robes and whose presence seemed out of place at such a ceremony marched beside Maillart. It was his wife, Petronille, still young and passing handsome, but of atrabilious and harsh mien. Each time that the heralds finished the mournful psalmody and before they began it anew, Petronille Maillart would break out into sobs and moans, and raising and wringing her arms in despair cried out: "Unhappy Perrin Macé! Vengeance upon his ashes! Vengeance!" The plaintive outcries and the contortions of Madam Maillart seemed, however, to excite more surprise than interest with the crowd.

"By Jupiter!" cried Rufin the Tankard-smasher, "what brings that bellowing woman to this funeral? What makes her demean herself like that, as if she were possessed? She is neither the widow nor any relative of Perrin Macé."

"For that reason her presence is all the more admirable," observed the man of the furred cap addressing the crowd. "Behold her, friends! Do you see how her despair testifies the extent to which she, as well as her husband, share

in the terrible fate of poor Perrin Macé?... You are witnesses, friends, that Dame Petronille is the only councilman's wife who assists at the ceremony!"

"That's true!" said several voices. "Poor, dear woman! She must feel sadly distracted."

"Yes, indeed. And surely that is not the case with the wife of Marcel, our first magistrate. She and the others remain calmly at home, without at all concerning themselves about this public sorrow," put in the man of the furred cap. "Fail not to take notice!"

"By the bowels of the Pope!" cried the Tankard-smasher. "Marcel's wife acts like a sensible body. She is right not to come out and exhibit herself and utter shrieks fit to deafen Beelzebub just when the drums are silent.... The affliction of that bellowing woman looks to me like a sheet of music, marked on time. That woman is playing a comedy."

"You vainly try to pass the matter off as a joke, master student," rejoined the man of the furred cap. "It will, nevertheless, be noted that the wife of Maillart assisted at the funeral of Perrin Macé, and that the wife of Marcel did not. Hm! Hm! My friends, that gives room for many suspicions; or, rather, it confirms certain rumors."

"What suspicions?" asked Rufin; "What rumors? Explain yourself."

But without answering the student the man of the furred cap was lost in the crowd, while continuing to whisper to those that he came in contact with. During this slight incident, the funeral procession had continued to file by. Notable townsmen, carrying funeral torches, marched behind the councilmen; they were followed by the trade guilds, each headed by its banner; finally the rear was brought up by a long line of people of all conditions uttering imprecations against the Regent and his court, and acclaiming Marcel with ever increasing enthusiasm. Marcel, the crowd declared, would know how to avenge the fresh and sanguinary court iniquity.

From mouth to mouth the announcement was carried that, after the ceremony, Marcel would address the people in the large hall of the Convent of the Cordeliers. William Caillet silently assisted at this scene which seemed to impress him deeply. After a few moments' reflections he overcame his rustic timidity and drew Rufin the Tankard-smasher aside by the arm just as the latter was about to walk away. The student turned around, and yielding to the joviality of his nature as well as purposing to haze the rustic

after the time-honored practice of the University of Paris, said to him banteringly: "I wager, dear rustic, that you overheard me speaking of one of my sweethearts! Hein! I see through you, my sylvan swain! You would like to admire the town beauties. By the bowels of the Pope! You shall have your pick—"

Hurt by the student's banter, William Caillet answered him gruffly: "I am a stranger in Paris; I come from a great distance—"

"Oh! You would like to enter the University, would you?" Rufin interrupted him with redoubled hilarity. "You are somewhat too bearded for a bachelor; but that does not matter; what faculty would you choose? theology or medicine? arts, letters or canonical law?"

"Oh, these townsmen!" exclaimed the old peasant with pungent bitterness. "They are no better than the people of the castles. Go, Jacques Bonhomme, you have enemies everywhere and nowhere a friend."

Saying this, Caillet started to walk away. But touched by the sad accent of the peasant, Rufin held him back: "Friend, if I have hurt your feelings, excuse me. We townsmen are not the enemies of Jacques Bonhomme for the reason that our enemies are common to us both."

Ever suspicious, Caillet remained silent and sought to discover from the face of the student whether his words did not conceal a trap or implied some fresh ridicule. Rufin surmised the apprehensions of the serf, examined him once more attentively, and now struck by the lines of sorrow on his face, said to him: "May I die like a dog if I am not speaking sincerely to you. Friend, you seem to have suffered much; you are a stranger; I am at your disposal! I do not offer you my purse because it is empty; but I offer you half of the pallet on which I sleep in a student's room with a chum from my province, and a part of our meager pittance."

Now convinced by the frankness of the townsman, the peasant answered: "I have no time to stay in Paris; I only wish to speak with Jocelyn the Champion and Marcel; could you help me to that?"

"You know Jocelyn the Champion?" Rufin asked with deep interest, while a cloud of sadness darkened his countenance.

"Did any misfortune befall him?"

"He left here to assist at a tourney in Beauvoisis some time ago, and the poor fellow never returned.... His aged and infirm father died of grief at the

disappearance of his son. Brave Jocelyn! I entered the University the year before he left it. He was the best and most courageous lad in the world.... He must have been killed at the tourney, or assassinated on his return to Paris. Highwaymen infest the roads."

"No; he was not killed at the tourney of Nointel. The night after the passage of arms I saw him take his horse to return to Paris."

"Are you from Beauvoisis?"

"Yes," answered Caillet; and he added with a sigh: "Well, that young man is dead! Great pity! There are few like him who love Jacques Bonhomme." After a moment's silence the peasant resumed: "How can I manage to meet Marcel?"

"By following me to the convent of the Cordeliers where he is to address the people after the funeral of Perrin Macé. Come with me."

"Go ahead," said Caillet; "I shall follow you."

"Come, we shall go out by the Coquiller gate; that's the shortest route."

The old peasant walked in silence by the side of Rufin who sought to draw from him some words on the subject of his trip. But the serf remained impenetrable. Going out by the gate of St. Denis and following the streets of the suburbs, that were much less crowded than those of the city, Caillet and his guide had just left Traversine to enter Montmartre street when they heard the distant funeral chant of priests interspersed from time to time with plaintive clarion notes. The peasant noticed with surprise that as the chant drew nearer the residents along the streets closed and bolted their doors.

"By the bowels of the Pope!" exclaimed the student. "Accident is serving us well. You have seen honors paid to the remains of Perrin Macé by the officials and the people; you will now see the honors paid to John Baillet, the cause of the iniquity that Paris is feeling indignant about. Yes, Baillet's remains are honored by the Regent and his court. Come quick; the procession is probably going to the convent of the Augustian monks." Hastening his steps and followed by the peasant, the student reached the corner of Montmartre and Quoque-Heron streets, opposite which stood the convent, whose doors opened to receive the coffin. "Look," said the student turning to Caillet. "How significant is not the contrast presented by these two funerals. At Perrin Macé's a large concourse of people were present, serious and moved with just indignation; at John Baillet's nobody assists

but the Regent, the princes, his brothers, the courtiers and the officers of the royal household—not one representative of the people! The townsmen leave a deep void around this royal demonstration which is indulged in as a sort of challenge to the popular one. Tell me, friend, does not the very aspect of the two processions appeal to the eye. At the funeral of Perrin Macé we saw a great mass composed of bourgeois and artisans plainly or even poorly dressed; at the funeral of John Baillet we see only a handful of courtiers and officers brilliantly attired in gold and silk and velvet, and decked in magnificent uniforms."

William Caillet listened to the student, seeking to bore through him with his eyes, and shaking his head answered pensively: "Jocelyn did not deceive me," and after a pause he proceeded: "But what are the Parisians still waiting for? We are ready, and have long been!"

"What do you mean?" asked Rufin.

Immediately relapsing into his former close-mouthedness, the peasant made no answer. The procession just turned into the street. The coffin of John Baillet, heavily inlaid with gold and preceded by royal heralds and sergeants-at-arms was borne by twelve menials of the Regent in costly livery. The young prince and his brothers, accompanied by the seigneurs of the court, alone followed the coffin. Charles, the Duke of Normandy and now Regent of the French, as the eldest son of King John, at the time an English prisoner, had, like his brothers and the French nobility, fled ignominiously from the battlefield of Poitiers. The young man who now governed Gaul was barely twenty years of age. He was of frail physique and pale complexion. His sickly face concealed under a kind and timid mien a large fund of obstinacy, of perfidy, of wile and of wickedness—odious vices usually rare in youths, except of royal lineage. Magnificently dressed in gold-embroidered green velvet, a black head-gear ornamented with a chain and brooch of costly stones on his head, the mean-spirited and languishing Regent marched slowly leaning on a cane. At a short distance behind him advanced his brothers, and then came the seigneurs of the court, among them the marshal of Normandy, who, ordered by the young prince, had superintended the mutilation and subsequent execution of Perrin Macé. The marshal, who was the Sire of Conflans, one of the Regent's favorites, superb and arrogant, cast upon the few and straggling spectators disdainful and threatening looks, and exchanged a few words with the Sire of Charny, a courtier no less loved by the prince than he was detested by the people. Suddenly Rufin the Tankard-smasher felt his arm rudely seized by the vigorous hand of Caillet, who with distended and flaming eyes, and his breast heaving with pain, gasped out:

"Look!... There they are!... There are the two! The Sire of Nointel and that other, the knight of Chaumontel!... Oh, do you see them both with their scarlet hats, down there with the tall man in an ermine cloak?" cried out Caillet despite himself.

"Yes, yes; I see the two seigneurs," answered the student, astonished at the emotion manifested by the peasant. "But what makes you tremble so?"

"Down in the country they are thought dead or prisoners of the English," exclaimed Caillet. "Fortunately it is not so.... There they are ... there they are ... I have seen them with my own eyes!" and contracting his lips with a frightful smile the serf added raising his two fists to heaven: "Oh, Mazurec!... Oh, my daughter!... Here I see the two men at last!... They will return home for the marriage of the handsome Gloriande.... We've got them!... We've got them!"

"The looks of this man make me shiver," thought the student to himself, gazing at the peasant with stupor, and he proceeded aloud: "Who are those two seigneurs that you are speaking of?"

Without heeding Rufin, Caillet proceeded to say: "Oh, now more than ever am I anxious to see Marcel without delay. I must speak with the provost!"

"In that case," the student said to him, "come and rest at my lodging. In the evening we shall wait upon the provost at the convent of the Cordeliers. He is to address the people there this evening. But, once more, what is the reason of your excitement at the sight of those two seigneurs in the Regent's suite?"

The peasant cast a suspicious side-glance at the student, remained silent and his face assumed a somber hue.

"By the bowels of the Pope!" thought Rufin the Tankard-smasher, "I have run up against an odd customer; he alternates between dumbness and riddles. He saddens even me who am not given to melancholy! He positively frightens even me who am no poltroon!"

And accompanied by William Caillet, the student wended his steps towards the quarter of the University.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE SERPENT UNDER THE GRASS

Etienne Marcel's house was located near the church of St. Eustace in the quarter of the market. His shop, filled with rolls of cloth that were exposed on the shelves, communicated with a dining room. A staircase ran into this room, leading to the chambers on the floor above.

It being night and the shop closed, Marguerite, Marcel's wife, and Denise her niece, had gone upstairs into one of the chambers where they took up some sewing which they were busily at by the light of the lamp. Marguerite was about forty-five years. She must have been handsome in her younger days. Her face betokened kindness and was now pensive and grave. Denise was close to eighteen. Her cheerful face, habitually serene and candid, seemed this evening profoundly sad. The two women remained long in silence, each engaged in her work. By degrees, however, and without raising her head Denise's needle relaxes, and presently, dropping her hands upon her lap, the tears roll out of her eyes. Marguerite, no less pre-occupied than her niece, mechanically raises her eyes towards the young girl, and noticing her tears, says tenderly:

"Poor child! I know the cause of your sorrow because I know the bent of your mind. I would not have you share a hope that I myself hardly retain. But, after all, although the continued absence of Jocelyn justifies our fears, we should not despair.... He may yet return...."

"No, no," answered Denise, now giving free course to her tears. "If Jocelyn still lived, he would not have left his aged father in the uncertainty that hastened his death. If Jocelyn still lived he would have communicated with my uncle Marcel, whom he loved and venerated like a father. No, no", she exclaimed amid sobs, "He is dead. I shall never see him again!"

"My child, it is quite possible that carried away by his imprudent courage, Jocelyn went to the battle of Poitiers, where he may have remained in the hands of the English. Prisoners return. I conjure you, do not yield to despair. I suffer to see you weep."

In lieu of answer the young girl rose and walked up to Marguerite, took her two hands, kissed them and said: "Dear, good aunt, you brush aside your own sorrows to think of mine, and you seek to console me.... I am ashamed not to know better and to repress my sorrow while you bear up so courageously before Master Marcel and your son!"

"Truly, Denise, I do not understand you", remarked Marguerite slightly embarrassed. "My life is so happy, I need no special courage to bear it—"

"Oh, oh! Do I not see you daily receive Master Marcel and your son Andre with a smile on your lips and a serene face, while your heart is in a storm of anxieties—"

"You are mistaken, Denise!"

"Oh, believe me; it is no indiscreet curiosity that guided me when I sought to penetrate your feelings. It was the desire to say nothing that might wound your secret thoughts whenever I am alone with you, as now so often happens good dear aunt."

"You dear child!" exclaimed Marguerite embracing Denise with effusion and now making no effort to restrain her own tears. "How could I fail to be profoundly effected by so much delicacy and tenderness? How could I fail to respond with unreserved confidence?" Marguerite stopped but after a last few moments of hesitancy and making a supreme effort she proceeded: "'Tis true; you did not deceive yourself. Yes, my life is now spent amid anxieties and alarms. I thank you for having drawn the secret from me. I shall now, at least, be able to weep before you without reserve, and give a loose to my heart. Having paid that tribute to feebleness, I shall be able all the better to appear serene before my husband and my son! Oh ... I admit it; my only fear is to have them discover that I suffer! I know Marcel's love for me. It reciprocates mine. If he knew I was wretched I might cause his own calmness and fortitude to weaken that never yet have abandoned him and that he needs now more than ever in these perilous days."

"Oh, the women who envy you would at this moment pity you, did they but see and hear you, dear aunt!"

"Yes", replied Marguerite with bitterness; "the wife of Marcel, the idol of the people ... of Marcel, the real king of Paris, is envied. They envy the companion of that great citizen. Oh, they should rather pity her.... Tender indulgences ... sweet joys of the hearth, the happiness of the humblest ... since long I know you no more! The artisan, the merchant, their day's labors being done, at least enjoy in the bosom of their families some rest until the morrow. My poor husband, on the contrary, spends his nights at work ... while I, his wife, remain a prey to constant uneasiness night and day, ever fearing for his life or his son's!"

"You have no reason to tremble for the life of Master Marcel, who can not take a step without he is surrounded by a crowd of devoted friends."

"I fear the Regent's hatred, and that of the nobles and prelates."

At that moment Agnes the Bigot, Marguerite's confidential servant, entered the room and said to her mistress: "Madam, the wife of Master Maillart, the councilman, has come to visit you."

"So late! Did you tell her I was home?"

"Yes, madam."

Marguerite made a gesture of impatience and annoyance, dried her tears and said to Denise in an undertone: "You just mentioned envious women.... Petronille Maillart is of the number.... Hide your tears, I pray you, to avoid her drawing wrongful conclusions from our sadness. She is cruelly jealous of the popularity of Marcel; and Maillart, I believe, shares the feelings of his wife."

"Can Maillart be jealous of my uncle, the friend of his childhood!"

"Maillart is a weak man whom his wife dominates."

"Maillart is always speaking about running to arms, and of massacring the nobles and priests."

"Violence is not strength, Denise; the most excited natures usually are the least firm.... But silence! Here is Petronille.... What can be the purpose of a visit at this hour?"

Petronille Maillart entered. She was still in her mourning garb. From the instant of her entrance she darted an inquisitive glance at the wife of Marcel and at Denise, and undoubtedly observed the traces of recent tears, seeing that a smile flitted over her lips. Affecting great sympathy she said:

"Excuse me, Dame Marguerite, for coming to your house at so late an hour; but I wished to speak to you upon serious matters."

"You are always welcome, Dame Petronille."

"I fear not, at this moment. Sorrow loves solitude, and I notice with pain that your eyes and those of your dear niece are still red with tears. Just heaven! Do you entertain any fears for our excellent friend Marcel. Do the people,

perhaps, incline to deny the value of the services he has rendered Paris? Ingratitude of the masses!"

"Be at ease, Dame Petronille," answered Marguerite interrupting her. "Thanks to God, I entertain no fears on the score of my husband. It is true Denise and I feel sad. Shortly before you came in, we were speaking of a friend whose fate is making us uneasy. You have often seen him here. It is Jocelyn the Champion."

"Surely; I remember him well. A veritable Hercules ... was the poor fellow killed?"

"No; we are not ready to believe that such a misfortune has happened. But it is a long time we have not heard from him."

"Nothing more natural, Dame Marguerite. I can now account for your tears.... But let me come to the purpose of my visit, which, seeing the lateness of the hour, must seem strange to you. The curfew has sounded long ago. You know how attached Maillart and I are to you and your husband."

"I feel thankful for your friendship."

"Now, then, the duty of good friends is to speak frankly."

"Certainly, there is nothing more precious than sincere friends. Pray speak, Dame Petronille!"

"Very well, dear Marguerite; your absence from the funeral of poor Perrin Macé has been noticed. I attended the ceremony; you see it on my clothes. In my quality of a councilman's wife I felt bound to render this last homage to the memory of the poor victim of an iniquity."

"Madam ... I can only pity such a victim."

"And do you not revolt at the fate of the unfortunate man?"

"That great iniquity has revolted my husband. In his quality of the first magistrate of the town, he was bound to head the procession."

"First magistrate of the town!" rejoined Dame Petronille with ill-suppressed bitterness. "Yes, until his successor is elected. Any one of the councilmen can be chosen provost. The election decides that."

"Surely," answered Marguerite, exchanging looks with Denise who had resumed her sewing. "My husband's duty," continued Marcel's wife, "was first to protest against the crime of the Regent's courtiers by solemnly attending the funeral of Perrin Macé.... As to me, Dame Petronille, knowing that it is not the custom for women to assist at these sad ceremonies, I stayed at home."

"But do people care for custom in such grave circumstances?" cried Maillart's wife. "One consults only his heart, as I did. Dressed in black from head to foot, I joined the funeral procession, moaning and weeping all the tears I had. I thought I would let you know it as a friend, my dear Dame Marguerite. It is much to be regretted that you did not follow my example."

"Each is the judge of his own conduct, Madam."

"No doubt, when none is concerned but ourselves. But in this matter, your husband, our excellent friend Marcel, was also concerned. I therefore fear that, under the circumstances, you have done him great harm in the popular esteem."

"What is it you mean?"

"Oh, my God! Poor dear dame! Do you think I would have made haste to come to you after curfew if my purpose were not to give you charitable advice?"

"I do not question your good intentions. Marcel himself imparted to the funeral of Perrin Macé the solemn character that has been attached to it. He attended it at the head of the councilmen. In that he fulfilled his duty."

"I know that my husband marched after yours, madam," spitefully rejoined the envious woman, "seeing that in his quality of provost, Master Marcel has precedence over all the councilmen.... He is acknowledged by all as the leader."

"Oh, madam! There is no question of rank," cried Marguerite. "I only meant to say that Marcel attended the funeral."

"Yes; but you did not, Dame Marguerite; and people said so. They remarked: 'See, the wife of Master Maillart, the councilman, follows the hearse of Perrin Macé! Oh! Oh! She does not care about custom, not she! She meant, like her husband, to protest with her presence and her tears against the iniquity of the court. How, then, does it happen that the wife of the first magistrate remains at home? Can it be that Master Marcel takes the action of the

Regent and court less to heart than he pretends? Can it be that, as the proverb puts it, he is trying to run with the hares and hunt with the hounds? Is he secretly laying the pipes for a reconciliation between himself and the court? Can Master Marcel contemplate betraying the people?"

"Oh! That's infamous!" cried out Denise, unable to control her indignation. "To dare accuse Master Marcel of treason because his wife did not attend the funeral procession and parade an affected sorrow!"

"Denise!" Marguerite quickly called out to the impetuous young girl, fearing the conversation, puerile in appearance, would take a still more acrid turn, and entail dangerous results for Marcel.

It was too late. Rising, Dame Petronille addressed Denise in a bitter tone: "Listen, learn, my friend, that my pain, no less than my husband's, was not affectation!"

"Dame Petronille," Marguerite interposed anxiously, "that was not Denise's meaning.... Listen to me ... I pray you."

"Madam," dryly answered Maillart's wife, "I came here to warn you as a true friend of the thoughtless, no doubt, but nevertheless, dangerous rumors against Master Marcel's popularity. These rumors are at this very hour circulating in Paris.... So far from thanking me, I am received here with insult. The lesson is good. I shall profit by it."

"Dame Petronille—"

"Enough, Madam. Neither I nor my husband shall ever again set foot in your house. I meant, like a friend, to point out to you the danger that Master Marcel's good name is running. I have done my duty, let come what may!"

"Dame Petronille," Marguerite answered with sad but severe dignity, "since Marcel consecrated his life to public affairs, there is not a word or action of his that he cannot answer for with head erect. He has done good for good's sake, without even expecting anything from the gratitude of men. He will remain indifferent to their ingratitude. If ever his services are not appreciated, he will take with him into his retirement the consciousness of ever having acted like an honorable man. As to me, I shall bless the day when my husband should quit public affairs so that we may resume our obscure lives and ordinary occupations."

So obvious was the sincerity with which Marguerite expressed herself in speaking of her delight to return to obscurity, that Dame Petronille, furious

at having been unable to wound the woman whom she envied, lost all control of herself. "You err," she declared, "in these days, it does not depend upon a man like Master Marcel to quietly bury himself in a retreat. No! No! When one has been the idol of Paris, you must either keep or lose the confidence of the people. If it is lost, you are looked upon as a traitor. And do you know what is dealt out to traitors? Death!"

"Can the enemies of Marcel have the audacity of pointing at him as a traitor?" cried Marguerite with tears in her eyes. "Do they aim at his life? Come, Dame Petronille, your silence upsets me."

Petronille was about to answer when the voice of Marcel was heard outside the chamber cheerfully announcing: "Marguerite! Denise! I have good news! Good news!" Dame Petronille remained silent, and stiffly bowing, rapidly took her departure without uttering a word.

## CHAPTER V

### CHARLES THE WICKED

Marcel entered. The radiant joy that suffused his face upon entering the house now made room for amazement at the silent and brusque departure of Maillart's wife, who swept by him at the door. He looked at Marguerite and Denise inquiringly, and noticing the disquietude and even alarm depicted on their faces by the odious calumnies of Petronille, he hastened to ask: "What is the matter, Marguerite? Why did our friend's wife leave in that strange manner?"

"Oh, uncle!" broke out the young girl with tears in her eyes. "There are very wicked people ... serpents and vipers."

"They are to be pitied, my child. But I hope you do not refer to wicked people in connection with Maillart's wife?"

"My friend," said Marguerite with embarrassment, "idle talk deserves contempt only. Nevertheless, in times like these idle talk may have serious consequences."

"Well," observed Marcel dejectedly, "I have but an hour to spend with you. I am tired out. I hoped to enjoy some rest. I came full of joy with good news that was to make you happy as it made me. And here it is all spoiled. But these minutes of quiet and relaxation are sweet to me at your side, dear objects of my love."

"These moments are quite rare," said Marguerite sighing, "and they are as precious to us as to you ... do not doubt, beloved Marcel!"

"I know it. Fortunately, you are not one of those spiritless women, whose constant anxieties are a torment to their husbands, who love them and suffer through their uneasiness. No, you are brave. You accept with fortitude the conditions that circumstances raise around us, convinced that my conduct is upright. I see you ever serene, and a smile on your lips. I feel refreshed in your wise and sweet tranquility, and gather new strength for the struggle, for the present my life is one continuous struggle. It is a holy struggle, glorious, fruitful ... but it exhausts ... nevertheless, thanks to you, dear Marguerite, I ever find at our hearth the happy quiet, the confident ease that are to the soul what a peaceful sleep is to the body—"

"Dear Etienne, we shall speak later on the visit of Dame Petronille," Marguerite broke in, fearing to disturb the rest her husband had come in



search of in her company. "You have been announcing a good news.... We are waiting for it."

"Yes, I prefer that," answered the provost with a sigh of relief, taking a seat between his wife and Denise, while the latter quietly removed his hat and cloak. "Coming upstairs I told Agnes to place an additional cover at supper."

"Will our son return this evening from the Bastille of St. Antoine?" quickly inquired Marguerite. "Was that the good news you brought us? We shall be glad to see him."

"No, no! Andre will not return before to-morrow morning. He is to keep watch over night at the Bastille with his company of cross-bowmen. My son must put the example of order in the service. He will neglect none of his duties."

"And who is to take supper with us, uncle?"

"Why, dear Denise?" answered Marcel smiling. "Who? One of our best friends. Guess, if you can."

"Simon the Feather-dealer?... Peter Caillet?... Master Delille?... Philip Giffart?... John Goddard?... Josserand?... John Sorel?..."

"No, Denise. Look not for our guest among my friends of the council. He is not yet old enough to figure in such serious functions. But, so as to help you guess, I shall add that our guest for this evening has just arrived from the country."

"Can it be my old cousin who lives with his daughter at Vaucouleurs? Can he have left the quiet valley of the Meuse to come and see us?"

"No, dear Denise. The friend whom we expect has been away from Paris only a short time. Cudgel your memory."

"A short time?" Denise repeated mechanically, and struck by a sudden thought but hardly daring to indulge it, the poor child grew pale, joined her two trembling hands, and fixing upon her uncle a look at once full of anxiety and hope, she stammered: "Uncle, what is it you say? Can it be?..."

"I shall add that the fate of that friend has recently made us feel uneasy."

"It is he!" cried Denise throwing herself at Marcel's neck. "Can it be?... Jocelyn is back ... God be praised!"

"Jocelyn!" exclaimed Marguerite joining in the surprise and joy of Denise. "Have you seen him? Is he in Paris?"

"Yes; I saw the worthy fellow this morning at the town hall. He is in good health, although he has suffered a good deal during his travels."

The emotion and tears of Denise must be left undescribed. After the first ebullition of joy was over, Marcel said to his wife: "I was presiding at the town hall over the council when one of our sergeants handed me a letter. I opened it and read that Jocelyn requested to speak with me. I ordered him to be taken upstairs to my room, and immediately after the session I hastened thither. Oh, my poor Denise! I confess it. I hardly recognized our friend, he was so changed! He has lost flesh ... his eyes are hollow ... his cheek-bones stick out."

"What happened to him?" asked Denise. "Did he go to fight the English, as my aunt feared. Does he come from prison?"

"He comes from prison, but did not go to war," answered Marcel. "This is what happened: As you know, he left for Nointel in Beauvoisis. After he left Nointel at night, and taking rest for an hour the next morning at Beaumont-sur-Oise, he resumed his journey. A short while after he heard the rapid gallop of a horse approaching behind him; turning he saw a man with a woman on his horse's crupper fleeing before three armed knights who followed at a distance. The couple drew in a few steps from Jocelyn, and the man, a lad of about twenty, said to our friend: 'We are fleeing from the castle of the Sire of Beaumont; he is the guardian of my sister who accompanies me, and he sought to violate her. He is riding after us with his men. You are armed. For pity's sake defend us; help me to protect my sister!...'"

"I know the heart and courage of Jocelyn," said Denise deeply moved. "He surely took the part of the unfortunate girl!"

"Without hesitating, because, as he said to me, in his capacity of champion he could not refuse so good a case. The Sire of Beaumont arrived with his two equerries...."

"And the combat started!" cried Denise joining her hands. "Poor Jocelyn! Alone against three!"

"He was strong enough to overcome them. Unfortunately, however, at the very start of the action one of the combatants dealt him such a furious blow from behind with a mace on the head that Jocelyn's casque was broken. He

fell from his horse unconscious ... and when he awoke he found himself half naked lying on straw, and aching at every limb at the bottom of a dungeon."

"Poor Jocelyn!" said Marguerite. "That dungeon, no doubt, was some prison cell in the castle of Beaumont, whither our wounded friend was transported after the combat, stripped of his arms and in a dying condition?"

"Yes, dear Marguerite; and Jocelyn remained in that cell, a prey to a devouring fever, until his recent release."

"How he must have suffered! But, uncle, how did our poor friend manage to come out?"

"A few days after taking Jocelyn prisoner, the Sire of Beaumont departed with his men to fight the English. Whether he was killed or captured at the rout of Poitiers is not known. But two days ago the Sire of Beaumont's castle was attacked and taken by the troop of a certain Captain Griffith."

"That horrible adventurer, who pushed forward as far as St. Cloud and gave us such a fright?" asked Denise. "I remember you left the city at the head of the militia, ran against and forced him to retreat. Good God! In what hands did poor Jocelyn fall!"

"Be not alarmed, dear child! By a singular accident our friend has had only cause to praise the adventurer. That savage and eccentric warrior seems sometimes to yield to generous impulses. After having, according to their wont, sacked the castle of Beaumont, massacred the men and violated the women, the band delved down into the subterranean passages in quest of booty. Thus they came to Jocelyn's dungeon, broke his chains and lead him to Captain Griffith, who on that day happily happened to be in a good humor. He cross-questioned our friend, and no doubt struck by his brave and robust appearance, despite all his sufferings, made him an offer to enlist in his company. Jocelyn declined. Griffith, who was half in his cups, then ordered Jocelyn to be furnished with clothes and two florins, and, alluding to our friend's thinness said to him: 'When you shall have regained some meat on your bones you will prove a rude customer; if I again run across you I should be pleased to break a lance with you. You are free. Go! And my patron saint, the Devil, be good to you!'"

"That Griffith is a dreadful bandit!" repeated Denise. "And yet I cannot but feel thankful to him for having liberated Jocelyn."

"And then," put in Marguerite, "our friend proceeded straight back to Paris?"

"Yes," answered Marcel sadly, "here another and unexpected sorrow awaited him."

"Oh!" said Denise, "his father's death? It must have been a severe blow to him!"

"Yes; the blow was severe. Picture to yourself what he must have felt. On his arrival, he hastened joyfully to the house of our old friend Lebrenn, the book-seller. There he first learned of his loss.... He spent the whole of yesterday and the night in solitude and mourning. This morning he came to see me at the town hall. This evening we shall be at least able to offer him the consolation of a tried friendship."

Agnes the Bigot came in at this juncture and handed to Marcel a small gold medal enameled in green and bearing the letters "C" and "N," surmounted by a crown. "A man," she announced, "wrapped up to the nose in a cloak and whose eyes are barely visible, is in the shop; he wishes to see Master Marcel without delay; he handed me the medal with orders to bring it to you."

Marcel was visibly surprised at the sight of the medal, and said to his wife: "Dear Marguerite, I shall not be able to enjoy even the short hour of rest that I promised myself. Leave me alone now. Go down with Denise. Jocelyn cannot now be long coming. Do not stay supper for me"; and turning to Agnes the Bigot: "Lead the man upstairs."

"Marcel," said Marguerite uneasily, while the servant withdrew to execute her master's orders, "you are fatigued, and will you not take even time enough for a meal?"

"In a few minutes, when I go down again, I shall take a few mouthfuls before leaving."

"What! Another night!"

"I convoked a night meeting to the convent of the Cordeliers," explained Marcel, assuming a serious expression; "the funeral of Perrin Macé may be the signal for transcendent happenings. We must be ready for all eventualities—"

The provost did not finish the sentence, seeing the closely cloaked man appear at the door led by Agnes. Marguerite left feeling all the more alarmed, the unfinished words of her husband having recalled to her mind the recent conversation with Petronille Maillart. After the departure of the two women, the stranger, first making certain that the door was closed, removed his

cloak and threw it on a chair. The man, extremely small of stature, twenty-five years at the most, and dressed plainly in a buff jacket, was of distinguished and regular features; yet despite the gracefulness of his carriage, the affability of his manners and the almost caressing melody of his voice, there lingered a sardonic and insidious leer in his smile that betrayed the wickedness of his soul and the perversity of his heart. More and more concerned by the man's presence, Marcel seemed to accept his visit as one of those disagreeable duties that men in public life must frequently submit to; nevertheless his icy attitude and his look of suspicion fully revealed the aversion he entertained for his caller, to whom he said: "I did not expect to receive this evening the King of Navarre in my house."

Charles the Wicked—that was the man's well deserved nickname—answered with a smile and with his insinuating voice, that most perfidious of all his charms: "Do not kings pay each other mutual visits? What is there surprising in that Charles, King of Navarre, should pay a visit to Marcel, King of the people of Paris? We are sovereigns, both of us."

"Sire," answered Marcel impatiently, "please to state the purpose of your visit. What do you wish of me? No useless words!"

"You are short of speech."

"Shortness is the language of business. Moreover, it is well to measure the words one utters in your presence."

"Do you, then, continue to mistrust me?"

"Always, more than ever."

"I love frankness."

"Come, to the point, direct, and without mental reservation."

For a moment Charles the Wicked remained silent; then boldly fixing his viper's eyes upon the provost, he answered, slowly weighing each word:

"What do I wish, Marcel? I wish to be King of the French.... This astonishes you!"

"No," answered the provost with a coolness that stupefied Charles the Wicked; "sooner or later you were bound to make the disclosure."

"You foresaw things from a great distance.... How long is it since you foresaw it?"

"Since I saw your creature Robert le Coq, Bishop of Laon, throw himself with ardor on the side of the popular party, and show himself one of the most violent enemies of King John, whose daughter you married—"

"Nevertheless, if my memory does not fail me, you made good use of the influence of the Bishop of Laon in the States General to induce them to accept your famous ordinance of reforms."

"I use any instrument that aids me in doing good."

"And then you break it?"

"If necessary. But Robert le Coq is too subtle to be broken. Nevertheless, despite his finesse, I have penetrated his secret motives."

"And that is?"

"The people of Paris have with their keen eyes and tongues surnamed the Bishop of Laon 'a two-edged dirk;' the people, Sire, are right. By showing himself so hostile to King John, your father-in-law, and afterwards so hostile to the Regent, your brother-in-law, the Bishop of Laon played a double game. He aimed, with the aid of the popular party, to first of all dethrone the reigning dynasty; and then ... to give the crown to you. That is the reason, Sire, why I am not taken by surprise at your admission that you wish to be King of the French."

"What do you think of my pretensions?"

"Your chances are fair of mounting the throne. I am ready to admit that."

"With your help, Marcel?"

"I might enter into your projects."

"Is that true!" cried the King of Navarre, unable to conceal his joy; but after a short moment's reflection, and casting upon the provost a defiant look, he presently proceeded: "Marcel, you are laying a trap for me.... I know how and more than once you have expressed yourself regarding me. Your words were extremely severe."

"Sire, you are called Charles the Wicked. I hold the name fits you. But you are active, subtle, venturesome; you command numerous armed bands; your partisans are powerful; your wealth considerable. You are a force, that, at a given moment, may be useful. For that reason I caused your release from prison where your father-in-law kept you locked up."

"So that I, Charles, King of Navarre, am to be merely an instrument in the hands of Marcel, the cloth merchant."

"Sire, you have your views; I have mine, and I shall express them to you. The Regent, hypocritic and stubborn, mocks at his oaths. He signed and promulgated the reform ordinances; he embraced me in tears, calling me his good father; he swore by God and all the saints that he desired the welfare of the people and that he would loyally adhere to the great measures decreed by the national assembly. The Regent has broken all his promises. His ruse, his well calculated indolence, his ill will, the increasing audacity of the court and the nobility, who rule supreme in their domains, either hamper or prevent the execution of the new edicts. The Regent is secretly inciting the jealousy of a large number of communal cities against Paris, that, as they put it, 'is seeking to govern Gaul'. The nobility in its deliberate inaction, and sheltered by its fortified castles, allows the English to extend their depredations to the very gates of Paris. The royal false money continues to ruin commerce and to destroy credit. Finally, only two days ago, the Regent's favorite caused a bourgeois of Paris to be mutilated and executed under our very eyes, thereby proclaiming the contempt of the court for the laws enacted by the States General. The plan of the court is simple: to tire out the country by disasters: to render impossible the good results that were justly expected from the national assembly, a popular government where the King is no longer master but servant: finally, the court expects that one of these days it can tell the people, whose sufferings will have become intolerable by these machinations: 'Ye people, behold the fruit of your rebellion. In lieu of having remained submissive, as in the past, to the sovereign authority of your kings, you have wished to reign, yourselves, by sending your deputies to the States General; you now pay the penalty of your audacity. May this rough lesson prove to you once more that princes are born to command and the people to obey. And now, pay your taxes and resume your secular yoke with humble repentance!'"

"So help me God! You could not have been better instructed upon the projects of my brother-in-law and his councilors if you had attended their secret meetings! And if they triumph, would you despair?"

"Despair?—For the present, Sire; but I would remain full of hope in the future. The conquest of freedom is as assured as it is slow, laborious and painful.... I do not even now despair of the present. I propose to make a last attempt with the Regent."

"And if you fail, will you come to me?"

"Between two evils, Sire, one is forced to choose the lesser."

"In short, you believe you will find in me what the Regent lacks?"

"You have an immense advantage over him. You wish to become King of the French, while the Regent is that by birth."

"Do you forget my royalty of Navarre?"

"To speak truly, I did forget it, Sire ... just as you forget it for the crown of France. As I was saying, a King by the right of birth looks upon all reform as an encroachment upon his power.... You, on the contrary, look upon the reforms as a means whereby to usurp power. Now, then, however perfidious, however wicked you, Charles the Wicked, may be, I dare you to fail to announce your access to the throne—and that in your own interest—by great and useful measures to the public welfare. That much would be gained ... later, we shall see...."

"And throw me down?"

"I shall work to that end, Sire, with all my powers, the moment you turn from the straight path. You are forewarned."

"And, Master Marcel, you would destroy your own work without scruple?"

"Without scruple! Moreover, better so than as it happened with the first and second dynasties when the stewards of the royal palace or the large feudal seigneurs dethroned the kings and changed dynasties."

"And who would then accomplish the rough task? I would like to know the artisan."

"The people, Sire!... That people, still in its infancy and credulous, must learn that at its breath it can waft away the sovereign masters who impose themselves upon it by force and cunning, and whom the church consecrated. Some day, this very century perhaps, that people will come of age; it will realize the ruinous and superfluousness of the royal power. But



that day is not yet. In our days, the people, ignorant and enslaved to habit, would wish to crown a new master the moment they overthrow an old one. They rely on princes. You, Sire, are one of these predestined beings. You can even pretend to reign over Gaul by virtue of one of your ancestors, who was himself deprived of the crown for the benefit of his cousin Philip of Valois, the father of King John. It is, accordingly, not impossible that you may some day reign over France ... a deplorable possibility ... yet tangible enough!"

"You must have courage to speak that wise to me."

"Instead of telling you the truth, I would otherwise be basely flattering you, whose first thought, if to-morrow you are King, would be to rid yourself of me. I indulge in no illusions on that head."

"Rid myself of you, who would have served me!"

"For that very reason! My presence would be a constant reminder of your debt. But that matters not. Whether I die to-day or to-morrow, whether you be king or not, whether or not my last effort with the Regent fail, whether the court party triumph or is now vanquished—whatever may happen, the future belongs to the popular party even if the present may slip. Yes; whatever people may do, the ordinance of the reforms of 1356 and the sovereign act of the national assembly in this generation will leave imperishable traces behind them. I have sowed too hastily, some say, and they add, 'a slow crop follows a hasty planting.' Be it so! But I have sowed. The seed is in the earth. Sooner or later the future will gather the crop. My task is done. I can die. And now, Sire, I sum up: If I fail in my last attempt with the Regent, I shall take recourse with you. You will be first appointed captain-general of Paris ... it will be your first step towards the throne.... We shall then take measures to lead things to a happy issue, according to our device."

"My first words on coming in were: 'Marcel, I wish to be King of the French.' I had my project. I renounce it to join yours," said Charles the Wicked resuming his cloak. "You are one of those inflexible men who can not be convinced any more than they can be corrupted. I shall not seek to change your views concerning me, nor yet to purchase your alliance. However dangerous it may be to me, I accept it as you offer it. I return to St. Denis to await the event. In case my presence shall be necessary in Paris, write to me and I shall come. I only demand of you absolute secrecy on this interview."

"Our common interests demand secrecy."

"Adieu, Marcel! May God prosper you."

"Adieu, Sire!"

Enveloping himself anew up to his eyes, the King of Navarre left the provost. The latter followed him with his eyes, and after the departure of Charles the Wicked said to himself: "Fatal necessity! To have to aid in the elevation of this man! And yet it may be necessary! The change of dynasty may help me to save Gaul, should the Regent wreck to-morrow my last hope.... Yes, Charles the Wicked, with the view of usurping and keeping the crown, will be compelled to enter the wide path of the reforms that alone can lighten the weight now crushing the townsmen and above all the peasantry. Oh, poor rustic plebs, so patient in your secular martyrdom! Oh, poor Jacques Bonhomme, as the nobility in its insolent haughtiness loves to call you, your day of deliverance is approaching! For the first time united in a common cause with the bourgeoisie, the people of the towns, when you will stand erect, Jacques Bonhomme, in arms as your brothers of the towns, we shall see whether this Charles the Wicked, however execrable a man he may be, will dare to deviate from the path that he is ordered to march!"

A bell rang and recalled Marcel from his reverie. "I shall have barely time to reach the convent of the Cordeliers, in order to prepare our friends for to-morrow's measures ... terrible measures!... yet as legitimate as the law of retaliation ... supreme and unavoidable law in such gloomy days as these, when violence can be opposed and overcome with violence only! Oh! Let the blood fall upon the heads of those who, having driven the people to extremities, have by their conduct provoked these impious struggles!"

Saying this, Marcel descended the stairs to take his leave from his wife, his niece and Jocelyn the Champion, who, at the invitation of the provost was then taking supper with his family, and, gathered around the table, presented a charming picture of peace and good will.

## CHAPTER VI

### AT THE CORDELIERS

After taking some rest at Rufin's lodging, William Caillet accompanied his host to the convent of the Cordeliers, where a large crowd was gathering, greedy to hear Marcel's address. The Cordeliers, a poor monastic order that aroused the profound enviousness of the high and splendidly endowed clergy, had ranked themselves on the side of the people against the court. The large hall of their convent was the habitual place for the holding of large popular mass meetings. Acquainted with the brother who attended the gate, Rufin received from him permission to speak with Marcel in the refectory which he would have to cross on the way to the hall where he was to address the people. The spacious hall, walled and vaulted with stone, and lighted only by the lamps that burned on a sort of tribune situated at one of its extremities, was packed with a dense and impatient crowd, on the front ranks alone of which fell the light of the lamps; the deeper ranks, and in the measure that they stood further and further away from the lighted platform, remained in a semi-obscurity, that deepened into complete darkness at the other end of the hall. The audience consisted of bourgeois and artisans, a large number of whom wore head covers of red and blue, the colors adopted by the popular party, and brooches with the device "To a happy issue."

The two funerals that had taken place during the day, and both the contrast and significance of which were so obvious, formed the subject of conversation with the seething mass. The least clear-sighted among them foresaw a decisive crisis and an inevitable conflict between the court and the people, represented respectively by the Regent and Marcel. Accordingly, the arrival of the latter was awaited with as much impatience as anxiety. A few minutes later Marcel entered by a door near the platform, accompanied by several councilmen, John Maillart among them. Jocelyn the Champion, Rufin the Tankard-smasher and William Caillet brought up the rear. The last of these had just enjoyed a long conversation with Marcel and Jocelyn. Enthusiastic cheers greeted Marcel and the councilmen. The former mounted the platform followed by all the councilmen, except Maillart who remained below, and took seats behind the speaker. In the midst of profound silence, Marcel said:

"My friends, the hour is critical. Let us indulge neither in faint-heartedness nor in illusions. The regent and the court have dropped the mask. This morning, to our solemn protest against the iniquitous and sanguinary act that in defiance of law smote Perrin Macé, the court answered by following

the hearse of John Baillet. This is a challenge.... Let us take up the gauge! Let us make ready for battle."

"Aye! Aye!" came the thundering response from the audience. "The Regent and his courtiers shall not make us retreat."

"For a moment frightened by the firmness of the national assembly", Marcel proceeded, "the Regent granted the reforms and swore to carry them out. The deputies of the towns of Gaul, gathered at Paris in the States General, were, with the loyal aid of the Regent, to rule the whole country wisely and paternally, as the magistrates of the communes rule the towns. Thus there would no longer be any royal and feudal tyranny; no more ruinous prodigalities; no more false money; no more venal justice; no more excessive taxes; no more arbitrary imposts; no more pillaging in the name of the King and princes; no more odious privileges for church and nobility; in short, there would be an end of the infamous and horrible seigniorial rights that cause the heart to rise, and reason to revolt. That is what we wanted; and that is just what the Regent and the court resist energetically."

"Blood and death!" cried Maillart in a loud voice, rising from his seat with violent gesticulation. "They will have to submit; if not we shall massacre every one of them from the Regent down to the last courtier! Death to the traitors! To arms! Let's set fire to the palace and the castles."

A large number applauded the excited words of Maillart; and the man of the furred cap, who insinuated himself into this meeting as he had done in the morning among the crowds that witnessed the funeral procession of Perrin Macé, moved about saying: "Hein, my friends, what an intrepid man is this Master Maillart! He speaks only of blood and massacre! Master Marcel, on the contrary, seems always afraid to compromise himself. It does not surprise me; it is said he has secretly embraced the side of the court."

"Marcel ... betray the people of Paris!" answered several men. "You are raving, good man! Go on your way!"

"All the same," insisted the man of the furred cap, "Marcel keeps quiet and does not respond to the appeal to arms so bravely made by Master Maillart."

"How do you expect Marcel to speak in the midst of all this noise? But, silence! Quiet is being restored. Marcel is about to resume. Let's listen!"

"No criminal weakness," proceeded Marcel; "but neither let there be any blind revenge. Soon perhaps the cry 'To arms!' will resound from one confine of Gaul to the other, both in towns and country!"

"Eh! What do we care about the country?" cried Maillart. "Let's mind our own business. Let's roll up our sleeves and strike without mercy!"

"My friend, your courage carries you away," Marcel answered Maillart in an accent of cordial reproach. "Shall the boon of freedom be the privilege of some only? Are we, the bourgeois and artisans of the towns, the whole people? Are there not millions of serfs, vassals and villeins given up to the mercy of feudal power? Who cares for these unfortunate people? Nobody! Who represents their interests in the States General? Nobody!" And turning to William Caillet, who, standing aside and under the shadow was attentively listening to the provost, he pointed to the poor peasant and added: "No, I was mistaken. On this day the serfs are here represented. Contemplate this old man and listen to me!"

All eyes turned to Caillet, who in his rustic timidity lowered his head. Marcel continued:

"Listen to me, and your hearts, like mine, will boil with indignation. With me you will cry: 'Justice and vengeance! War upon the castles, peace to the cottages!' The history of this vassal is that of all of our brothers of the country. This man had a daughter, the only solace to his sorrows. The name of that child, who was as beautiful as wise, will indicate her candor to you. It is Aveline-who-never-lied. She was affianced to a miller lad, a vassal like herself. By reason of the goodness of his disposition he was called Mazurec the Lambkin. The day of their marriage is set.... But in these days the wife's first night belongs to her seigneur.... The nobles call it the right of first fruits."

"Shame!" cried the audience in furious indignation. "Execrable shame!"

"And this execrable shame are we not the accomplices of by allowing our brothers to remain subject to it?" cried Marcel in a voice that dominated the thrill of anger which ran through the audience. Silence being again restored, Marcel proceeded: "If the bride is homely, or if it so happen that the seigneur is unable to violate her, he puts on the mien of a good prince; he receives money from the bridegroom, and the latter escapes the ignominy. William Caillet, that is the name of the bride's father, that man yonder, wished to ransom his daughter from such shame; in the absence of the seigneur, the bailiff consented to a money indemnity. Caillet sells his only property, a milch-cow, and gives the money to Mazurec, who, with bounding joy, proceeds to the castle to redeem the honor of his wife. A knight happens to cross his path and robs the vassal. The latter reaches the manor in tears and recognizes the robber among the guests of his seigneur, who had just

arrived. The vassal prays for mercy for his wife, and for justice against the robber. 'O, your bride, I am told is beautiful and you charge one of my noble guests with theft,' said the seigneur to him, 'I shall take your bride into my bed, and you shall be punished with death for defaming a knight.' That's not all!" cried Marcel suppressing with a gesture a fresh explosion from the audience whose indignation was rising to highest pitch. "Driven to despair, the vassal assaults his seigneur; he is thrown into prison; the bride is dragged to the castle; she resists her seigneur ... he has the right to have her pinioned. Does he do so? No! He meant to give Jacques Bonhomme a striking lesson. He meant to show that he could take the vassal's wife not only by the right of the strongest but also in the name of the law, of justice and even of that which is most sacred in the world, of God himself! The seigneur indulges this savage pleasure. He files a complaint with the seneschal of Beauvoisis 'against the resistance of the vassal!' The judges meet, and a decision is rendered in the name of right, justice and law in these terms: 'Whereas, the seigneur has the right of first fruits over the bride of his vassal, he shall exercise his right over her; whereas, the bridegroom has dared to revolt against the legitimate exercise of that right, he shall make the amende honorable to his seigneur with arms crossed and upon his knees! Furthermore, whereas the said vassal has charged a knight with robbery, and the latter has demanded to prove his innocence by arms, we decree a judicial combat. According to law, the knight shall combat in full armor and on horseback, the serf on foot and armed with a stick; and if the vassal is vanquished and survives, he shall be drowned as the defamer of a knight.'"

At these last words of Marcel's an explosion of fury broke forth from the audience. Caillet hid his pale and somber face in his hands. Marcel restored quiet and proceeded:

"Justice has spoken; the decree is enforced. The bride is bound and carried to the bed of the seigneur; he dishonors her and then returns her to her husband. The latter makes the amende honorable on his knees before his seigneur; he is thereupon taken to the arena to fight half naked the iron-cased knight.... You may guess the issue of the duel.... The vassal being vanquished, he is put into a bag and thrown into the river.... Such is feudal justice!"

"And to-day," now cried out William Caillet stepping forward, a frightful picture of hate and rage, "my daughter carries in her bosom the child of her seigneur! What shall be done to that child, townsmen of Paris, if born alive? You have wives and daughters and sisters! Answer, what would you do? Is that child of shame to be loved? Is it to be hated as the child of Aveline's

executioner? Should I at the whelp's birth break in his head lest he grow into a wolf? What to do?"

An oppressive silence followed upon the words of William Caillet. None dared answer. Marcel continued:

"This, then, is what is going on at the very gates of our town. The country people are pitilessly left to the mercy of the seigneurs! The women are violated, and the men put to death! We have been the accomplices of the executioners of so many victims; we have been so by our criminal indifference, and to-day we pay the penalty of our selfishness. We, the townspeople, believed we would be strong enough to overcome the seigneurs and the crown; we imagined we could compel them to reform the execrable abuses that oppress us. To-day we should admit that we have thought too highly of our own power. The Regent and his partisans violate their own sworn oaths, and shatter our hopes. Vainly have I, in the name of the States General, again and again requested an audience from the Regent to remind him of his sacred promises. The gates of Louvre remained shut in my face. The audacity of our enemies proceeds from the circumstance that our power ends outside of the gates of our towns. Let us join hands with the serfs of the country; let us cease separating our cause from theirs, and matters will take on a different aspect. We never shall obtain lasting and fruitful reforms without a close alliance with the country folks. If to-morrow at a given signal the serfs should rise in arms against their seigneurs, and the towns against the officers, then no human power would be able to overcome such a mass-uprising. The Regent, the seigneurs and their troops would be swept aside and annihilated by the storm. Then would the peoples of Gaul, resuming possession of their country's soil and re-entering upon their freedom, see before them a future of peace, of grandeur and of prosperity without end.... Do you desire to realize that future by joining hands with our brothers the peasants?"

"Aye! Aye! We will!" cried the councilmen.

"Aye! Aye! We will!" re-echoed from thousands of voices with boundless enthusiasm. "Let's join our brothers of the country. Let our device be theirs also—'To a happy issue,' for townsmen and peasants!"

"Come, poor martyr!" cried Marcel with tears in his eyes and embracing Caillet, who was not less moved than the provost. "I take heaven and the cries that escape from so many generous hearts, moved by the recital of the sufferings of your family, as witnesses to the indissoluble alliance concluded this day between all the children of our mother country! Let us stand united

against our common enemy! Artisans, bourgeois and peasants—each for all, and all for each, and to a happy issue the good cause! War upon the castles!"

Sublime was the sensation, holy the enthusiasm of the crowd at the sight of the provost, dressed in his magisterial robe, closing in his arms the horny-handed serf dressed in rags.

Profoundly moved and even surprised by what he saw and heard, Caillet, despite his rugged nature, almost fainted. Tears streamed down his face. He leaned against the wall to avoid dropping to the floor, while Marcel cried out:

"Let all who desire to lead the good cause to a happy issue meet to-morrow morning arms in hand upon the square of St. Eloi church."

"Count upon us, Marcel," came from the crowd; "we shall all be there! We shall follow you with closed eyes! Long live Marcel! Long live the peasants! To a happy issue! To a happy issue! War on the castles, peace to the huts!" Amid these exclamations the crowd tumultuously evacuated the hall of the Cordeliers.

"Do you see, friends, how far this Marcel goes in his defiance of the people of Paris?" remarked the man of the furred cap to several townsmen near him as they were leaving the hall. "Did you hear him?"

"What did he say that was so bad? Come, now, my good man, you are losing your wits!"

"What did he say? Why, he calls for help to the vagabonds and strollers in the country! Are we not brave enough to do our own work without the support of Jacques Bonhomme? Verily, never before did Master Marcel show so completely the contempt he entertains for us! John Maillart is quite another friend of the people! Long live John Maillart!"



## CHAPTER VII

### POPULAR JUSTICE

It is some time since sunrise. The Regent, who has recently and for good cause moved to the tower of the Louvre, has just risen from his bed, which is located in the rear of a vast chamber, roofed with gilded rafters and magnificently furnished. Rich carpets hang from the walls. A few favorites are accorded the august honor of assisting the treacherous and wily youth, who is reigning over Gaul, in his morning toilet. One of the courtiers, the seigneur of Norville, jealous of his servitude to the prince, is kneeling at his feet in the act of adjusting his long tapering shoes, while, seated on the edge of his bed, his head down, careworn, pensive and twirling his thumbs as was his habit, the Regent mechanically allows himself to be shod. Hugh, the Sire of Conflans and marshal of Normandy, he who presided at the mutilation and execution of Perrin Macé, is conversing in a low voice with Robert, marshal of Champagne, another councilor of the Regent, in the embrasure of a window at the other end of the chamber. After a long time watching his thumbs twirl, the Regent raised his head, called the marshal of Normandy in his shrill voice and asked: "Hugh, at what hour is the barrier of the Seine closed, below the postern that opens on the river bank?"

"Sire, the barrier is closed at nightfall"; and the marshal added sardonically. "Such are the orders of Marcel."

"After nightfall, no vessel can leave Paris?"

"No, Sire. After nightfall no one can leave Paris either by land or water. Such, again, are the orders of Marcel."

"In that case," the Regent replied without looking up and after a moment's reflection, "you will procure a vessel this morning, have it moored outside of the barrier at a little distance from the postern gate at the foot of the little staircase. You and Robert," proceeded the Regent pointing to the marshal of Champagne, "will hold yourselves ready to accompany me. Prudence and discretion."

For a moment the two favorites remained mute with astonishment. The marshal of Normandy broke the silence with the question: "Do you contemplate leaving Paris by night and furtively, Sire? Would you not be leaving the field to that miserable Marcel? Why, by the saints! If that insolent bourgeois annoys you, Sire, follow the advice I have so often given you! Have Marcel and his councilmen hanged as I hanged Perrin Macé! Did

his execution cause Paris to riot? No; not one of the good-for-nothings has dared to kick; they contented themselves with attending in mass the funeral of the hanged fellow. Charge me with relieving you of Marcel along with his gang. It is done quickly."

"Among other scamps that should be hanged high and short," added the marshal of Champagne, "is one Maillart, who is profuse in violent denunciations of the court!"

"Maillart! Allow not a hair on Maillart's head to be touched!" said the Regent with lively interest, while bestowing a sinister and false leer upon the courtiers.

"It will be as you say, Sire," answered the marshal of Normandy, not a little astonished at the prince's words. "We shall spare Maillart. But by God! Order that the other insolent creatures be put to death, Marcel first of all! Your orders shall be executed."

"Hugh," answered the prince, rising on his feet to put on his robe that the seigneur of Norville was pressing upon his master after having shod him, "let the vessel be ready this evening as I ordered. Be punctual. Prudence and discretion."

"You do not then listen to my advice!" cried the marshal almost angrily. "Your clemency for those vile bourgeois will yet be the undoing of you! Your goodness misleads you!"

"My clemency! My goodness!" repeated the prince, casting a sinister look upon the marshal.

Understanding now the secret thoughts of his master, the courtier answered: "If you have decided to mete out prompt justice to that insolent bourgeoisie, why wait so long, Sire?"

"Oh! Oh! Why!" said the young man shrugging his shoulders. He then relapsed into silence, and presently repeated: "Let the vessel be ready this evening."

The Regent's favorites were too well acquainted with the youth's stubbornness and profound powers of dissimulation to endeavor to obtain from him any further light upon his plans. Nevertheless, the marshal of Normandy was about to return to the charge, when an officer of the palace entered and said: "Sire, the seigneur of Nointel and the knight of

Chaumontel request admission to take leave from you, a favor that you have accorded them."

At a sign of the Regent the officer left walking backward, and returned almost immediately accompanied by Conrad of Nointel and the knight of Chaumontel. The trials of war had no wise affected the health of the two seigneurs. The two had been among the first to turn tail at the battle of Poitiers. The groom of the beautiful Gloriande was not leading back to her feet the ten chained English prisoners that she had demanded as the pledge of her future husband's valor.

"Well, Conrad of Nointel, you are leaving the court to return to your seigniory?" said the Regent. "We hope to see you again in more prosperous days. We ever love to number a Neroweg among our faithful vassals, seeing that it is said your family is as old as that of the first Frankish kings. Have you not an elder brother?"

"Yes, Sire. The elder branch of my family inhabits Auvergne, where it owns estates that it owes to the sword of my ancestors, Clovis' companions of war. My father left his castle of Plournel, situated near Nantes, to come to Nointel which reverted to him upon my mother's death. He preferred the neighborhood of Paris and of the court to that of savage Brittany. I am of my father's opinion, and I do not expect ever to return to the domains that I own in that region and which are governed by my bailiffs."

"I rely on your promise. The illustriousness of your house makes me anxious to keep it near my court."

"Sire, I shall return for a double reason. First of all to please the Regent, and also to please my betrothed, the damosel of Chivry, who much desires to see the court. But I must hasten to leave Paris in order to collect the money for my own and my friend's ransom. It is a large sum that we have to pay."

"Then you were both taken by the English?"

"Yes, Sire," answered the knight of Chaumontel; "but seeing that my casque and sword are my only property, Conrad, as a loyal brother in arms, has taken it upon himself to pay for me—"

"Did the English set you free on parole? They are generous enemies."

"Yes, Sire," answered Conrad. "I was taken by the men of the Duke of Norfolk, and he placed our ransom at six thousand florins. But I said to him: 'If you retain me a prisoner, my bailiff will never be able to raise from

my vassals so large a sum; the vigorous hand of their own seigneur is required to seize so much money from those villeins; let me, therefore, return to my domains, and on my faith as a Christian and a knight I shall speedily bring to you the six thousand florins for our ransom."

"And the Englishman accepted?"

"Without hesitation, Sire. Moreover, learning that my seigniory was in Beauvoisis, he said to me: 'You will run in that region across a certain bastard named Captain Griffith, who for some time has been raiding the region of Beauvoisis with his band.'"

"That is so!" exclaimed one of the courtiers. "Fortunately, however, the fortified castles of the seigneurs are protected from the ravages of that chief of adventurers. He falls upon the plebs of the open fields, and his bands put everything to fire and to the sword. He is a savage warrior."

"Well," resumed the Regent with a cruel smile, "let the bourgeois who presume to govern in our stead stop these disasters!" And turning to the Sire of Nointel: "But what has that adventurer of a captain to do with your ransom?"

"It is to him I am to deliver our ransom, together with a letter that the Duke of Norfolk gave me for him."

At this moment the marshal of Normandy, who had inclined his head toward the window, interrupted Conrad, saying: "What noise is that?... I hear near and approaching clamors."

"Clamors!" cried the seigneur of Norville, "who would be so impudent as to clamor in the vicinity of the King's palace? Give the order, Sire, to punish the varlets."

"It is not clamors merely, but threatening cries," put in the marshal of Champagne running to the door which he opened, and through which a wild outburst of furious imprecations penetrated into the royal chamber. Almost at the same time an officer of the palace ran in from the gallery. He was pale and frightened, and came screaming: "Flee, Sire! The people of Paris are invading the Louvre! They have disarmed your guards!"

"Stand by, my friends!" cried the Regent, livid with terror and taking refuge in his bed, behind the curtains of which he sought to hide himself. "Defend me!... The felons mean to kill me!"

At the first signal of danger, the marshals of Normandy and Champagne, the same as a few other courtiers, resolutely drew their swords. Conrad of Nointel and his friend the knight of Chaumontel, however, guided by a valor that was tempered by extreme prudence, searched with their eyes for some issue of escape, while the seigneur of Norville, jumping upon the bed, tried to hide himself behind the same curtain with the Regent. Suddenly another door, one facing that of the gallery, flew open, and a large number of palace officers, prelates and seigneurs, ran in helter-skelter, screaming: "The Louvre is invaded by the people! Marcel is heading a band of murderers.... Save the Regent!"

These cries had hardly been uttered when the courtiers saw Marcel, followed by a compact troop armed with pikes, axes and cutlasses, appear at the other end of the gallery that communicated with the royal apartment. These men, bourgeois and artisans of Paris, uttered not a sound. Only their foot-falls were heard on the stone slabs. The silence of the armed crowd seemed more ominous than its previous clamors. At their head marched the provost, calm, grave and resolute. A few steps behind him came William Caillet armed with a pike, Rufin the Tankard-smasher with a battle mace, and Jocelyn the Champion with drawn sword. During the few seconds that it took Marcel to cross the gallery, the distracted courtiers held a sort of council in broken words. None of the confused and hasty views prevailed. The Regent remained hidden behind the curtains of his bed together with the seigneur of Norville. Trembling and pale but kept from fleeing by a sense of self-respect, the majority of the courtiers crowded back into the furthest corner of the apartment, while the less scrupulous Conrad of Nointel and his friend, having slid themselves near the second door that led to another apartment, prudently took themselves off.

When he presented himself at the threshold of the royal chamber, Marcel met there none to defend it besides the two marshals who stood with drawn swords. Be it, however, that at that supreme moment they felt imposed by the aspect of the provost, or that they realized the uselessness of a struggle that meant inevitable death to themselves, both lowered their swords.

"Where is the Regent?" inquired Marcel in a loud and firm voice. "I wish to speak with him. He has nothing to fear from the people."

The accent of the provost was so sincere and the loyalty of his word was so generally acknowledged, even by his enemies, that yielding both to a sentiment of royal dignity and to the confidence inspired by Marcel's words, the Regent came out from behind the curtains, not a little encouraged at the

same time by the presence of the court people and the quiet demeanor of the armed crowd that had invaded the Louvre.

"Here I am," said the Regent taking a few steps toward Marcel yet unable, despite his powers of dissimulation, to wholly conceal the rage that had succeeded his fright. "What do you want of me? The Regent waits to hear you!"

Marcel turned towards the armed men who had followed him and ordered them with a gesture to guard silence and not to cross the threshold of the royal chamber which he now entered alone. On the other hand, after a short and whispered consultation with his courtiers, the Regent gradually regained composure and addressed the provost in these words: "Your audacity is great!... To enter my palace in arms!"

"Sire! I have long been requesting an interview from you by letters, and failed; I have been compelled to force open your doors in order to make you hear, in the name of the country, the language of sincere severity—"

"To the point," broke in the Regent impatiently. "What do you want? Speak!"

"Sire! The people demand, first of all the loyal enforcement of the reform ordinances which you have signed and promulgated."

"You are called the King of Paris," answered the Regent with a caustic smile; "well, then, rule!... Save the country!"

"Sire! The voice of the national assembly has been heard in Paris and in some other large towns. But your partisans and your officers, sovereign in their seigniories or in the domains which they govern in your name, have banded themselves to prevent the execution of the laws upon which the safety of Gaul depends. Such a state of things must promptly cease, Sire!... Aye, very promptly. The people so wills it."

The Regent turned to the group of prelates and seigneurs at the head of whom stood the Marshal of Normandy; a hurried council was again held by the courtiers who hastened around their chief; and then returning to the provost, the Regent answered haughtily: "Is that your only grievance? Let's hear the rest!!"

"We have imperative demands."

"What else do you want?"

"An act of justice and reparation, Sire! Perrin Macé, a bourgeois of Paris, has been mutilated and then put to death in defiance of right and of law by the order of some of your courtiers.... The seigneur who ordered the execution of an innocent man must be sentenced to death! It is the law of retaliation."

"By the cross of the Saviour!" cried the Regent. "You dare come and demand of me the condemnation and execution of the marshal of Normandy, my best friend!"

"That man is causing your ruin with his detestable advice. He shall expiate his crime."

"Impudent scamp!" cried out the marshal of Normandy in a fit of rage, threatening Marcel with his sword. "You have the audacity to make charges against me!"

"Not another word!" ordered the Regent interrupting his favorite and beckoning him to lower his sword. "It is for me to answer in this place. I order you, Master Marcel, to leave this place, and upon the spot!"

"Sire!" answered the provost with patronizing commiseration, "you are young, my hairs are grey.... Your age is impetuous, mine is calm.... I therefore have the right and the duty to lecture to you. I beseech you in the name of the country, in the name of your crown, to loyally fulfill your promises, and, however painful it may seem to you, to grant the reparation that I demand in the name of justice. Prove in that manner that, when the law is audaciously violated, you punish the guilty, whatever his rank.... Sire! It is still time for you to listen to the voice of equity!—"

"And I tell you, Master Marcel," yelled the Regent furiously, "that it is time, high time, to put an end to your insolent requests! Be gone, instantly!"

"Away with this varlet in rebellion against his King," cried the courtiers, like the Regent re-assured and deceived by the attitude of Marcel's armed escort, that remained mute and motionless, and turning to them the marshal of Normandy called out: "As to you, good people of Paris, who now regret the criminal errand on which this bedeviled rebel has brought you despite yourselves, join us, the true friends of your King, in punishing the treason of this miserable Marcel.... Let his blood fall upon himself!"

The provost smothered a sigh of regret, stepped back a few paces so as to place himself beyond the reach of the marshal's sword, turned to his people and said: "Carry out the orders that brought you here."

These words were hardly uttered when Marcel's armed men, anxious to make amends for the silence and prolonged restraint imposed upon them by his orders, burst loose in an explosion of cries of indignation and of threats that struck the Regent and his courtiers with stupor and consternation. Rufin the Tankard-smasher bolted upon the marshal of Normandy, seized him by the collar and cried: "You had Perrin Macé mutilated and hanged; now you shall be hanged! The gibbet is ready!"

"And this for you, caitiff," responded the marshal, quick as lightning transfixing the student's left arm with a thrust of his sword. "The cord that is to hang me is not yet twisted."

"No, but the iron that will smash you to death is forged, my noble gentleman," answered the student dealing with his mace a furious blow upon the marshal's head. "I have been Rufin the Tankard-smasher; now I am Rufin the Head-smasher!"

The student spoke true. The marshal's skull was crushed; he fell and expired at the Regent's feet bestaining with his blood the latter's robe. During the tumult that ensued, the marshal of Champagne rushed at Marcel dagger in hand. But William Caillet, who had all the while been seeking with burning eyes for the Sire of Nointel from among the brilliant bevy of courtiers, threw himself in front of the provost ahead of Jocelyn, who had darted forward with the same intention, and the old peasant thrust his pike into the bowels of the marshal. The corpse of the courtier rolled upon the floor. Popular vengeance was taken.

The other seigneurs and prelates, who had run to the royal chamber, fled back distracted by the door that had admitted them. When the Regent, who, fainting with terror, had crouched back upon the bed with his face hidden in his hands, looked up again, he found himself alone with Marcel and not far from the prostrate corpses of his two councilors. Marcel's armed men had slowly departed through the gallery together with Caillet, while Jocelyn was engaged near a window in bandaging with his handkerchief the wound of the student.

Finally, protruding under the drapery of the bed behind which he had held himself all the while motionless as a mouse, the feet were seen of the seigneur of Norville, who had lacked even the strength to flee.

"Mercy, Master Marcel!" cried the Regent, trembling with fear and throwing himself at Marcel's feet with arms outstretched in supplication and his face in tears. "Do not kill me; have pity upon me, my good father! Mercy!"



"We have no thought of killing you," Marcel answered, painfully touched by the suspicion; and stooping down to raise the Regent added: "May my name be accursed if such a crime ever entered my mind! Fear not, Sire! Rise! The people of Paris are good."

"Oh, my good father! I beg your pardon on my knees for having ignored your wise counsels and listened to bad advisers." Breaking out into sobs, the young prince added, wringing his hands in despair: "Oh, good God! Alone and so young to be far away from my father, who is held a prisoner, is it any fault of mine if I placed confidence in the men around me?" The Regent's eyes fell upon the corpses of the two marshals. In heart-rending accents he proceeded: "There they are, the men who misled me! They loved me! They knew me since my cradle! But, like myself, they were blind in their error. Oh, good father! Reproach me not for weeping over the fate of these unfortunate men. It is my last adieu to them," and still on his knees, the Regent crouched lower, his face in his hands and continued sobbing—with rage, not repentance.

Although long made acquainted by experience with the Regent's profound duplicity—a degree of duplicity almost incredible at so tender an age—Marcel was deceived by what seemed the sincerity of the young man's distressful accent. His touching prayer, his tears, the sorrow which he did not fear to express at the death of his two councilors—all combined to induce the belief that, frightened by the terrible reprisals that had taken place under his own eyes, the Regent was sincerely contrite at his errors, and that, convinced at last regarding his own interests, which commanded him to break with the evil past, he now really desired to march on the straight path. Marcel congratulated himself on the happy change, and said to Jocelyn in a low voice: "Order our people away from the gallery. Let them leave the palace and assemble under the large window of the Louvre. You and Rufin may stay with me. I shall take the Regent out of this chamber. The sight of the corpses is too painful to him."

Jocelyn and the student executed the orders of Marcel. Crouching on the floor the Regent did not cease moaning and sobbing. The seigneur of Norville left his hiding place without being noticed by the prince, and approaching him on tip-toe whispered in his ear: "Sire, the most faithful of all your servitors is happy of having braved a thousand dangers and deaths sooner than to leave you alone with these bandits and rebels. Allow me, my noble and dear master, to help you to rise."

The Regent obeyed mechanically, and noticing that Marcel, who was just giving his instructions to Jocelyn and Rufin, could neither see nor hear him,

he whispered back to Norville: "Do not leave me. Watch for a moment when I can speak to you without being seen by anybody"; observing thereupon that Marcel was again approaching, while the champion and Rufin both left the room, he uttered a piteous moan, turned to the corpses of the two marshals and muttered in a smothered voice: "Adieu, oh, you who loved me and whose sad errors I shared. May God receive you in his Paradise!"

"Come, Sire, come," said Marcel with kindness, leading the Regent to the gallery; "come, lean upon me!"

The seigneur of Norville followed the prince from whom he did not take his eyes and said to the provost in an undertone: "Oh, Master Marcel! Be the protector, the tutor of my poor young master.... He always had a tender feeling for you!"

"Now, Sire," Marcel said to the Regent after they had gone a little way, "I place confidence in your promise ... I believe in the salutary effect of the terrible example you witnessed. Oh, these painful extremes; but violence fatedly engenders violence!... It now depends upon you, Sire, to prevent the recurrence of similar acts of reprisal. Give the example of respect for the law. All will then look to the law instead of resorting to force, the last recourse of men when they have vainly invoked justice! The present moment is decisive. If you should still belie our hopes ... our new hopes; if unfortunately it should be shown to us that you are incapable or unworthy of ruling under the watchful and severe vigilance of the States General, elected by the nation herself, I tell you sincerely, Sire, the people, finding their patience exhausted, and impatient of further deceit, sufferings, disasters and misery, might respect your life, but they would then choose another King who shall be more thoughtful of the public weal.... You will then cease to reign."

"Oh, good father! Why threaten me! I am a poor young man, and am at your mercy. Have pity upon me!"

"Sire! I do not threaten you. Far from me be such cruelty! I only place things before you such as they are. It depends upon you to help towards the public safety."

"Speak, speak, good father.... I shall obey you as a most respectful son, I swear to you upon my salvation.... Moreover, you shall be my only councilor.... Speak, what do you order?"

"The people are assembled before the Louvre.... They are informed of the death of the marshal of Normandy.... Show yourself at the window.... Say a

few good words to the crowd.... Announce plainly your good resolves.... Declare that the cause of the people is above all yours ... and here, Sire," added Marcel, taking off his hat and offering it to the Regent, "as a token of our alliance, good will and harmony, wear my hat with the popular colors. The inhabitants of Paris will be pleased at this first proof of condescension and agreement."

"Give it to me.... Give it to me," the Regent said with avidity, hastening to don Marcel's hat of red and blue. "A friend like you, my good father ... only such a friend could give me such an advice.... Open the window; I wish to speak to my well beloved people of Paris," added the Regent addressing the seigneur of Norville, who having held himself at a distance during the conversation of Marcel and the prince, now again drew near as ordered. "Open the window wide," said the prince.

"Jocelyn," observed Rufin in a low voice to the champion while the Regent, slowly moving towards the window that the seigneur of Norville hastened to open, seemed to be consulting Marcel, "what do you think of the good resolutions of that youngster?"

"Like Master Marcel, I believe him sincere. Not that I trust in the heart of that royal stripling, but because it is to his interest to follow wise counsel."

"Hm! Hm! To me it looks as if he is playing a comedy. A prince's word is poor guarantee."

"Do you imagine the Regent is so double-faced or so foolish as to try to deceive Master Marcel?"

"As true as Homer is the king of rhapsodists, never was my wench Margot about to play me some scurvy trick without she called me her 'musk-rat,' her 'beautiful king,' her 'gold canary,' and other names no less flattering than deceitful."

"But what connection is there between Margot and the Regent? Quit your fooling!"

"Listen to me to the end. I happen to have an assignment with her for this evening near the Louvre, on the river bank, because by what she says, her friend Jeannette does not want to see me at her house. Very well. I swear by Ovid, the poet beloved of Cupid, Margot acted the gentle puss and induced me to go and inhale the mists of the Seine simply because she had made up her mind to go elsewhere this evening."

"Rufin, let's talk seriously!"

"Seriously, Jocelyn. I fear that the promises of the Regent are like those of Margot! I can assure you, much as the sword thrust I received smarts me devilishly, I would have preferred having pocketed one more in return for having settled the accounts of that puling youngster as I did the accounts of the marshal of Normandy."

"Come, now! Those are excesses worthy only of John Maillart.... But, by the way, did he accompany us hither?"

"No. After he had, despite all your and Marcel's entreaties, driven a few miserable brutes to massacre Master Dubreuil when he crossed our march on his mule, Maillart disappeared. I place no reliance on him. Heaven and earth! That murder was deplorable! The marshals of Normandy and Champagne were enough——"

"Listen!" cried Jocelyn interrupting his friend, and pointing to the Regent, who, having advanced to the balcony, was addressing the people gathered on the street.

"Beloved inhabitants of my good city of Paris," the Regent was saying in a moved and tearful voice, "I appear before you firmly resolved to make amends for my wrongful conduct. I swear by these colors that are your own, and that henceforth will be mine," he added, carrying his hand to the red and blue hat he wore on his head. "The marshal of Normandy, one of my councilors, unjustly ordered the execution of Perrin Macé, an honest bourgeois of Paris. The marshal has just been put to death. May that reparation satisfy you, dear and good Parisians! Let us forget our dissensions; let us join in a common accord for the country's good.... Let us love one another! Let us help one another! I admit my errors! Will you pardon them? Oh, I am so young! Evil councilors led me astray. But I shall henceforth have only one.... That councilor ... here he is!" and the Regent, turning towards Marcel, added: "Good inhabitants of Paris, receive this embrace which I now give you from the bottom of my heart in the person of the great citizen whom we all cherish, whom we all venerate." While pronouncing these last words, the young prince threw himself weeping into the arms of the provost and pressed him to his breast,—the embrace of rulers, a mortal caress!

At the touching spectacle, the enthusiastic clamors of the mobile and credulous mass resounded loud, and prolonged cries of "Long live Marcel!"

"Long live the Regent!" "To a happy issue!" greeted the reconciliation as a happy augury of the future.

Profoundly moved himself, Marcel said to the Regent upon returning with him into the gallery: "Sire, full of hope and of confidence, the people acclaimed with their joyous cries an era of peace, of justice, of grandeur and of prosperity. Do not shatter so many hopes. Good is so easy for you to achieve! It is so beautiful to bequeath to posterity a glorious name, blessed by all."

"My good father!" answered the Regent, panting for breath, "my eyes have been opened to the light; my heart expands.... I am reborn for a new life.... You shall not leave me to-day; only to-night if you must.... Let's go to work.... Let us jointly take prompt, energetic measures.... Oh! Your wishes shall be realized.... I shall bequeath to posterity a name blessed by all.... Come, my good father!" and passing his arm around the neck of Marcel with filial familiarity, the young man took a few steps with him in the gallery towards his cabinet. But suddenly stopping, he added in the most natural manner, as if struck by a thought: "Oh, I forgot!" He then left Marcel and stepped back towards the seigneur of Norville, whom he called. The latter hastened to respond and the Regent whispered to him: "This evening, at nightfall, let a vessel manned with two trusty sailors be ready for me just outside the barrier facing the postern gate of the Louvre.... Gather all my gold and precious stones in a coffer, and keep yourself ready to accompany me. Prudence and discretion!"

"Sire, rely upon me!"

"Well, Jocelyn," said Marcel to the champion during the secret conversation of the Regent and his courtier, "you see it.... My hopes have not been deceived.... The lesson was terrible and salutary. Return home and tell Marguerite that I do not expect to be back until late. I wish to profit on the spot by the young man's repentance. He and I will probably work together a part of the night."

"Pardon me, my good father," said the Regent to the provost, returning to him; "we shall doubtlessly be up late together, and I wished to notify the Queen that I may not see her again to-day"; and again placing his arm around Marcel's neck he said to him while walking towards the cabinet: "Now, to work! Good father, to work! And quickly!"

Thus, followed by the seigneur of Norville, the two quitted the gallery, from which also Jocelyn and Rufin took their departure together.

"After what you have just heard," remarked the champion to the student, "can you still entertain any doubts concerning the Regent's sincerity? Do you still believe he plays a comedy?"

"Do you remember, Jocelyn, that at the University we were in the habit of taking aim with a stone saying: 'If my stone hits, my first wish will be realized?'"

"Rufin!" sadly answered the champion, "since on my arrival in Paris I learned of my father's death, I have lost my sense of humor. As I said to you before, I say now, let us talk seriously, my friend."

"I would not, my worthy Jocelyn, seem to make light of your bereavement; and yet, out of place as my words may seem, they are, by Jupiter, to the point! All I shall say is this: Day before yesterday, my wench Margot gave me, with a good many monkey tricks and pussy purrings, an assignment at the river bank. If Margot is faithful to her promise, I shall then believe the Regent to be sincere in his good resolves; not before."

"The devil take the fool!" said Jocelyn impatiently and he walked away ahead of Rufin, who pensively said to himself: "My friend Rufin the Head smasher, you are become as much of a fatalist as a Mohamedan! That's a shameful thing for a free thinker!"

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE HOUR HAS SOUNDED!

Marcel had not yet arrived home although night was far advanced. Marguerite, Denise and William Caillet were seated together in one of the upper chambers of the house. The two women listened with wrapt and grief-stricken attention to the narrative of Jocelyn who had just finished the story of Aveline and Mazurec.

"Delivered from the dungeon in the castle of Beaumont, thanks to the bizarre generosity of Captain Griffith," the champion was saying, "I hastened to Paris, and at my arrival," added the young man unable to contain his tears, "I learned of the death of my venerated father."

"Ah! At least he loved you with his last breath," said Denise sharing the emotions of Jocelyn. "Your father came here almost every day, and we only spoke of you."

"Let that thought console you, Jocelyn," observed Marguerite. "Your father considered you an exemplary son."

"I know it, Dame Marguerite; and the thought does afford me some consolation in my bereavement. Before dying my father gave me a proof of the confidence he placed in my respect and affection. He made an important revelation."

"On what?" asked Marguerite.

"I told you of the profound interest that Mazurec inspired me with, Mazurec, the husband of Caillet's daughter," answered Jocelyn with deep emotion. "Well, then, after the last revelation made by my father, I can doubt no longer that Mazurec is my brother!"

"Are you certain?" Marguerite and Denise cried in one voice. "That unfortunate lad, that martyr, your brother!"

"Is it possible?" asked Caillet in turn and no less astonished. "How do you know it?"

"When my mother died," explained Jocelyn, "I was a child and my father quite young. One evening, some four or five years later, as he was entering Paris, he found on the road a young peasant woman lying on the ground unconscious and bleeding of a wound. Moved by compassion, he raised and

carried her to a neighboring inn. The young woman regained consciousness and informed him that she was a vassal of the Bishop of Paris, and that, having lost her mother since early childhood, she was then fleeing from a merciless step-mother who that same day came near killing her. The young woman was named Gervaise. Touched by her youth, her misfortune and her beauty, my father apprenticed her to a washerwoman who lived near us. He often visited his protégé. Both loved each other, and one day Gervaise informed my father that she carried under her heart the fruit of their joint indiscretion. My father, as an honest man, realized his duty, but being at that season forced to leave Paris on a trip, promised Gervaise under oath to marry her upon his return. Several weeks, a month and two passed by and my father did not return—"

"But he was a man incapable of violating a sacred promise," interjected Marguerite. "During the long years that we knew your father, we learned to appreciate the straightforwardness of his nature and the goodness of his heart. Undoubtedly some serious accident must have kept him away."

"Almost at the end of his journey, my father was attacked by a band of highwaymen. He was robbed, wounded and left for dead on the road."

"And that prevented him from communicating with Gervaise?"

"He was picked up and for a long time he languished between life and death. The unhappy woman thought herself deserted. The consequences of her error began to betray her weakness. A prey to shame and despair she left Paris!"

"Her condition should have earned the sympathy of people."

"Barely convalescent, my father hastened to write to Gervaise announcing his speedy return. But when he arrived she had disappeared. Despite all the inquiries that he instituted, he never succeeded in finding her again. Her disappearance was a great sorrow to him, and remorse haunted him the rest of his days. Such was his confession in a letter that he wrote to me shortly before his death, and in which he conjured me, if by some accident, impossible to foresee, I should meet Gervaise or her child, to atone for the injury that he had involuntarily done to both."

"And thus, thanks to a strange coincidence," observed Marguerite, "you now feel certain that the unhappy Mazurec, whose distressing story you have told us, is indeed your brother?"



"I can have no doubt. After leaving Paris, Gervaise arrived in Beauvoisis begging for her bread, shortly before giving birth to Mazurec, and he himself told me that his mother's name was Gervaise; that she was blonde; that her eyes were black, and that she had a little scar above the left eye-brow. The description corresponds exactly with that which my father left me of the poor creature. The scar came from a blow that she received from her step-mother. Finally, by naming her son Mazurec, one of my father's names, the poor woman furnished the last link to the chain of evidence."

"Your father was at least saved a bitter sorrow," remarked Denise sadly, "of never having learned the horrible fate of Gervaise's son."

Steps were at that moment heard mounting the stairs. Marguerite listened attentively, and quickly rising and stepping to the door exclaimed: "It is Marcel! God be praised!" and turning in a low voice to Denise who had followed her: "I could hardly conceal my uneasiness; my husband's late absence was seriously alarming me. May God be praised for his return!"

The provost entered, and after answering the tender caresses of his wife and niece, said to them: "I suppose you think I am tired of the night at work with the Regent, yet never have I felt so easy in mind and so light of heart. Happiness is such a sweet recreation! I was profoundly happy to see that young man return to the path of duty and equity as if by enchantment, and express regret at his errors, and promise to atone for them. Well was I in the right to say that we must never despair of youth."

"Then, my friend," asked Marguerite, "the Regent did not deceive your last hopes?"

"He went beyond them. We have just taken prompt and energetic measures looking to the realization of the just and fruitful reforms that were enacted last year by the national assembly. We shall now appeal to the nation's courage and devotion to put an end to the disastrous war with the English. We are to call, not upon the nobility only, but upon the whole people—peasants, townsmen and artisans—to take up arms in this holy war. That great triumph is to be the signal for the deliverance of our rustic brothers," added Marcel reaching out his hand to Caillet. "Yes, those who will have gloriously vanquished and chased away the enemy, having become free men by their victory, are for ever after to be free from the tyranny of the seigneurs who have not even known how to protect our native country. Oh, my friend, how many agonies and sufferings does not that hope wipe off from my heart and mind! The hope of seeing Gaul at last victorious and free, peaceful and prosperous!"

"Master Marcell! Treason!... Treason!" suddenly resounded from a voice rushing up the stairs. The provost held his breath, all others in the chamber trembled with fear, and Rufin the Tankard-smasher rushed in breathless, repeating: "Treason!... Master Marcel, treason!"

"Who betrays?" cried Jocelyn. "Speak!"

"Do you remember this morning at the Louvre?" answered Rufin. "I told you then that if Margot, my wench, keeps the appointment she made with me, I shall then believe in the sincerity of the Regent, but not before!"

"Young man," put in Marcel with severity, seeing his wife and niece blush at the amorous confidences of the student, "is it for the purpose of cracking bad jokes that you have come to alarm my household?"

"The news I bring will be an apology, Master Marcel," respectfully answered Rufin mopping his forehead that streamed with perspiration; "the Regent has fled from Paris...."

"The Regent has fled!" cried Marcel stupefied. "Impossible! It is hardly half an hour since I was with him."

"And that is less time than he needed to descend from the Louvre, to go out by the postern gate that opens upon the river outside of the barrier and to jump upon a skiff that was waiting for him!"

"You are dreaming!" replied Jocelyn, while Marcel seemed thunderstruck, unable to understand what he heard. "You are dreaming, my gay Rufin, or you have just left some tavern the fumes of whose wine have upset your mind."

"By Bacchus, the god of wine, and by Morpheus, the god of slumbers!" cried the student, "I am as certain that I am wide awake as that I am not drunk! I saw the Regent with my two eyes step into the vessel, and with my two ears I heard the Regent say to the friend who accompanied him: 'I leave this accursed town, and I swear not to set foot in it again until Marcel, the councilmen and the other chiefs of rebels shall have paid with their heads for their insolent audacity and for the revolt of these accursed Parisians.' Is that clear enough? Moreover, would I dare come here and tell yarns to Master Marcel, whom I admire and respect as much as any one could? And above all when, in the teeth of the privileges of the University, he had me housed at the Chatelet, together with my chum Nicholas the Thin-skinned because of the racket we made one night on the street?" Noticing that despite certain irrelevant details of his report, the people in the chamber

began to attach faith to his words, Rufin continued, while Marcel seemed racked with painful astonishment and a prey to overpowering indignation: "As I was telling you, I had an assignation with my wench Margot, on the river bank, outside the barriers. Tired of waiting in vain for this fallacious creature, I was about to leave when I perceived a lighted lantern on the other side of the barrier and just under the postern of the Louvre. Knowing as well as anybody that the vaulted corridor of that issue runs out on one of the stairs of the large tower, a suspicion flashed through my mind. The night was silent. At the risk of drowning and of going to Pluto to meet Margot, only this time on the borders of the Styx, I reached the stairs by clambering along the poles and the chain of the barriers. At that moment the bearer of the lantern, who must have meant to make sure that the vessel was there, re-entered the palace. I slid along the wall of the Louvre up to the postern and there, screened by the gate which was left open, I soon heard a voice saying: 'Come, come, Sire; the vessel and the two boats are near the shore.' At which the Regent answered in the way I have just stated to Master Marcel—I leave the accursed town, and I swear not to set foot in it again until Marcel, the councilmen and the other chiefs of rebels shall have paid with their heads for their insolent audacity and for the revolt of these accursed Parisians.' The Regent and his companion marched quietly to the bank of the river, and soon the sound of oars told me that the boat was leaving rapidly. It vanished in the darkness of the night." Turning to Jocelyn with a triumphant air, the student remarked: "Well, what did I tell you this morning? You took me for a fool! And now you see the Regent has fled from Paris threatening the inhabitants with vengeance! By the bowels of the Pope! The belief in fatalism is a great thing!"

Learning that Marcel was now running fresh dangers, Marguerite exchanged glances of anxiety with Denise, while seeking to conceal her alarm from her husband lest she increased his worries. On the other hand, foreseeing that the Regent's treason would hasten the uprising of the rustic serfs, Caillet shrugged his shoulders with sinister gladness. Finally, Marcel, with his arms crossed upon his breast, his head lowered, his lips contracted with a bitter smile, broke the silence with these words uttered deliberately: "When we parted the Regent said to me: 'My good father, I beseech you, go and take a little rest; night is falling; I desire to-morrow early to renew our work with fresh ardor. Go and take rest, my good father, and you will enjoy as much as myself the restful sleep that will come to us from knowledge of having done right.' Such were the last words I had from that young man."

"Oh, Marcel," said Marguerite, "how will you not regret the confidence you placed in him!"

"Let us never regret having had faith in the repentance of a man. If we do, we shall become merciless. Moreover, there are treasons so black and monstrous that in order to suspect them one must be almost capable of committing them." After another short interval of contemplative silence Marcel resumed: "I hoped to save Gaul fresh bloodshed! Vain hope! That unhappy fool wants war! How much is he not to be pitied for being so ill-advised!"

"You pity him!" cried Marguerite; "and yet his last words threatened you with death!"

"Dear wife; if my head were all that was at stake, I would not enter into a terrible struggle to preserve it. I have achieved things that sooner or later will bear fruit. My share in this world has been handsome and large. I am ready to quit life. It is not my head that I would dispute to the Regent, it is the lives of our councilmen, it is the lives of a mass of our fellow townsmen, all of them menaced by the merciless revenge of the court! What I wish to defend is our freedom so dearly bought by our fathers; what I wish to secure is the enfranchisement of those millions of serfs who are driven to extremities by the tyranny of the seigneurs. Finally, what I aim at is the welfare of Gaul, to-day exhausted and moribund! The dice are cast. The Regent and seigneurs want war! They shall have war!... a terrible war!... Such a war as human memory does not recall!" Saying this, Marcel sat down at a table and rapidly wrote a few lines upon a parchment.

"No!" replied William Caillet in a tremor of rage. "No; never will that have been seen that will be seen now! Up, Jacques Bonhomme!" cried the old peasant in savage exaltation. "Up! Seize the fagot! Fall to! Take in the harvest, Jacques Bonhomme, and be not dainty about it! Take up your scythe in your bare arms—the short and sharp scythe! Let not a blade be left to be gleaned after you!" and reaching out his trembling hand to Marcel, the serf added: "Adieu, I depart well satisfied. By to-morrow evening I shall be in the country. At dawn of the next day Jacques Bonhomme will be up and doing in Beauvoisis, in Picardy, in Laonnais and in many other districts!"

"Postpone your departure just one hour," answered Marcel while sealing the letter he had just written. "I am going to the Louvre. You shall depart at my return."

"My friend," exclaimed Marguerite in alarm, "what do you want at the Louvre?"

"To make certain of the Regent's departure, although the account given by Rufin leaves me no doubt on that head. I wish, before resorting to terrible extremes, to be absolutely certain of the Regent's treason."

As Marcel was uttering the last words, Agnes the Bigot entered precipitately and delivered to her master a letter that one of the town sergeants had just brought in great haste. Marcel took the letter, read it quickly and cried: "The councilmen have assembled at the town hall and expect me. One of them, instructed by a man connected with the palace on the flight of the Regent, ran to the Louvre, assured himself of the fact, and hastily convoked the council. No doubt now. The Regent's treason is confirmed." Delivering to Jocelyn the letter he had just written, Marcel said to him: "Take horse, and carry this letter to the King of Navarre at St. Denis. Wait for no answer."

"I shall jump on your horse's crupper, Jocelyn," cried Caillet. "I shall that way reach the country a few hours sooner."

"Done!" said the champion; and turning to Marcel: "After I shall have delivered your letter to the King of Navarre, I shall pursue my route with Caillet to join by brother Mazurec."

"It is your duty, go!" answered Marcel stretching his arms out to Jocelyn. "Embrace me. Who knows whether we shall ever again meet!" And after having pressed the champion to his breast, he took the hand of Denise who turned away her head to hide her tears, and added: "Whatever may befall me, Denise shall be your wife upon your return; you could have no worthier mate, nor could she choose a worthier husband; may heaven grant that I assist at your wedding. If later any danger should threaten you, you will find a safe retreat in Lorraine at Vaucouleurs with the relatives of my niece."

Breaking out into tears and almost fainting, but supported by Marguerite, Denise stretched out her hand to Jocelyn who covered it with kisses, while Marcel said to Caillet: "Now, the hour has sounded! To arms, Jacques Bonhomme! Peasants, artisans, townsmen, all for each! Each for all! To the happy issue of the good cause!"

"To the happy issue of the good cause!" rejoined the serf shaking with impatience. "To an evil issue the cause of the seigneurs and their clergy! Up, Jacques Bonhomme! War upon the castles!"

"And I," cried the student addressing Caillet while Marcel was giving his last instructions to Jocelyn, "I also will accompany you. I have shins of steel to tire out a horse. I shall ride ahead of Jocelyn's steed. To a happy issue the

good cause! I represent the alliance of the University with the rustic folks. Rufin the Tankard-smasher was my name of peace; Rufin the Head-smasher becomes my name of war! And by the god Sylvanus, the genius of the fields and forests, I shall make havoc in this sylvan war! Forward! Forward!..."

A few minutes later William Caillet departed from Marcel's domicile accompanied by the champion and the student, all three bound for Beauvoisis.

**PART III**  
**THE JACQUERIE**

**CHAPTER I**

**CAPTAIN GRIFFITH AND HIS CHAPLAIN**

The morning after William Caillet, Jocelyn the Champion and Rufin the Tankard-smasher left Paris, a band of English adventurers, commanded by Captain Griffith, and who for some time had been raiding the region of Beauvoisis, was marching under a balmy May sun in the direction of the village of Cramoisy. The men, about a hundred all told, and armed with weapons of different descriptions, marched in disorder with the exception of about fifty archers who carried on their shoulders their six-foot-long ash bows, a favorite weapon with the English, and which they handled with such dexterity that at the battle of Poitiers ten thousand of them were enough to put to rout the army of King John, consisting of more than forty thousand men commanded by the élite of the French nobility.

Several empty carts, hitched to horses and oxen and led by peasants who had been pressed into Captain Griffith's band under pain of death, were intended for the prospective booty. The English sold to the contiguous towns the proceeds of their thefts from the castles, as well as the droves of cattle that they took from the fields. In these towns the raiders were certain of purchasers for the sufficient reason that whoever refused was hanged on the spot. Captain Griffith affected a lordly generosity towards his customers in consenting to leave with them the spoils of his thieving exploits in exchange for moneys that it was in his power to rob them of. In his quality of the bastard of a great lord, the Duke of Norfolk, he prided himself of acting courteously, "as a true Englishman," according to his favorite phrase, and not scurvily like so many other leaders of mercenary bands.

Captain Griffith—a man in the full vigor of his age, robust and corpulent, and with hair and beard of a reddish blonde—rode at the head of his archers, the élites of his troop. Although in full armor, he had hung his casque on the pommel of his saddle, and now wore on his head a bonnet of fox-skin. Boldness, incontinence and a sort of cruel joviality stood out from the features of the Englishman that wore a rubicund tint from the potations and meats that he was in the habit of swallowing in enormous quantities. The morning air having sharpened his appetite, if ever it can be said to have been satisfied, the bastard of Norfolk was picking a ham, and from time to time lovingly resorted to a wine pouch that also hung from the pommel of

his saddle. At his side rode his lieutenant, whom with impious mockery he styled his "Chaplain." Guilty of all the crimes on the calendar, Captain Griffith took, like Rolf the Norman pirate before him, a diabolical delight in all manner of sacrilege.

The Chaplain, a hulky scamp with a toper's face and as vigorous of bone as his Captain, wore under his iron coat of mail a monk's gown and on his head a steel helmet.

"My son," said he to the bastard of Norfolk, "without meaning to offend you, I shall have to call your attention to the fact that this is the third time you put your wine pouch to your mouth without offering your brother in Beelzebub to quench his thirst."

"What have you eaten, Chaplain, to make you so thirsty?"

"By the devil! I have been eating with my eyes the ham that you have been devouring with your teeth."

"Why, then, quench your thirst by seeing me drink! Your health, friend!"

"Sacrilege! To refuse wine to a thirsty chaplain! I would prefer, for the sake of your salvation, to see you again journey a whole day on a stretch in a chariot drawn by St. Patrick, the abbot, and his 'chapter.'"

"Pshaw!" hissed Griffith; "there were relays."

"True, several relays, each of twelve monks, and they were successively hitched. It was in your favor."

"There, devil's Chaplain, drink! Drink to my amorous exploits!"

After having kept for a seemingly interminable time his lips glued to the orifice of the pouch that the Captain had passed over to him, the Chaplain detached them for a moment, not so much for the purpose of answering his worthy chief as for the purpose of taking breath. Breathing heavily, he asked: "What amorous exploits? Sacred or profane ones?" and then proceeded to quaff.

"I mean that winsome tavern-keeper, who escaped us at the pillage of the little town of Nointel. Since that day, the pretty ankles of the brunette have not ceased trotting in my brain. As sure as I am Norfolk's bastard," added the Captain while the Chaplain continued to drain the contents of the pouch at long draughts, "there are two things that I would sell my soul to



Beelzebub for. First, to snatch up that luscious tavern-keeper, second to fight with that tall scamp whom we released from the dungeons of Beaumont. He was then but a bag of bones, but when he will have been fattened up, I would wager your neck, Chaplain, that there is not the likes of him in this whole poltroon country of Gaul. I am tired of seeing only puny knights at the point of my lance whom I run down as if they were nine-pins. What a set of cowards these French noblemen are!"

At this point, the lieutenant, who had never ceased drinking, emitted a long gurgling sound, while with his free hand he pointed to a small troop of armed foot-men headed by a rider, and who pursued a route that somewhat led away from that of the English, but that ran out upon the same clearance at the top of a hill. The rider who led the foot-men, ordered a halt, and galloping over the meadow approached the English troop with his right hand up as a sign that he had no hostile intentions. Fearing, nevertheless, some ambuscade, Captain Griffith also ordered his troop to halt, but he placed his archers in line, donned his casque, took his long stout lance from the hands of one of his men, and seeing the Chaplain still clinging to the pouch of wine struck it from his lips with so dexterous a lance thrust that, slightly grazing the drinker's nose, the weapon hurled the pouch ten paces off. "You have watered quite enough!" he said with a gruff laugh.

"Fortunately the pouch is now empty," said the Chaplain wiping his mouth with the back of his right hand; "not a drop has been lost."

The unknown rider approached the while, but suddenly reined in seeing the archers, as was their wont before shooting their bolts, plant their left feet in the center of their bows in order to bend them.

"I come as a friend!"

"Who are you?" demanded the bastard of Norfolk. "What do you want?"

"I am the bailiff of the Sire of Nointel, the seigneur of these domains. I wish to speak with the valiant Captain Griffith."

"I am he.... What do you want?"

"Sir, is it you who have just pillaged the burghs and villages of our seigneur, the Sire of Nointel?"

"Would you, perchance, want to prevent me?"

"On the contrary, Sir; I have come in the name of my seigneur to offer you the advice of my old experience in order to help you to collect ransom from these villeins. Jacques Bonhomme is a wily customer; he has hiding places where he keeps his coin under shelter, and even provisions and cattle."

"Chaplain," the Captain broke in upon the bailiff, "we shall have to cut the ears of this fellow who comes here to mock us. Draw your cutlass and give him absolution for his sins."

"Sir, listen to me, and you will be convinced that I am not joking!" cried the bailiff. "Are you the son of the Duke of Norfolk?"

"A bastard son by my mother's virtue. But seeing she bestowed upon me a good fist, good eyes and good teeth I hold her quits. I remain noble from one side."

"The Duke your father knows that you hold the field in this region, and he is charmed with your prowesses. He wrote so to my master."

"A short time ago, on the occasion of one of my archers' return to Guyenne, I wrote to my father: 'My lord, in your life you gave me nothing but a kick with your left foot which I still feel; but I am none the less your affectionate bastard who is doing havoc in Gaul and who signs himself—Captain Griffith.'"

"Sir," said the bailiff handing a letter to the Captain, "here is the answer of the noble Duke, your father."

Greatly astonished, Captain Griffith broke the seal on the parchment and read: "One of the poltroon French knights whom I took prisoner at the battle of Poitiers will deliver this letter to you and also six thousand florins for his ransom. You are a fine scamp. Persevere in your exploits—Norfolk."

"What a father!" exclaimed the Chaplain raising his hands to heaven. "What a son!"

"Six thousand florins!" cried Captain Griffith. "Well! The good man must have remembered my worthy mother"; and addressing the bailiff he asked: "Where are the six thousand florins?"

"In the purses of the vassals of my seigneur, the Sire of Nointel, who was taken prisoner at the battle of Poitiers by the noble Duke of Norfolk. But, oh! My master is ruined by the costs of war and not a florin in the castle. But he gave his word as a Christian and a knight to pay his ransom to your father

or to you, Sir. He will keep his word. It is an established custom that the vassals must ransom their seigneurs when taken prisoner. I therefore come, Sir Captain, to offer to you, by order of my master what little service I can render to you to the end of aiding you in collecting the sum, a very difficult thing to do without our aid. If you want a proof, all you have to do is to follow me not far from here, and you will see something that will greatly astonish you."

Captain Griffith, whose curiosity was now pricked, started his horse at the pace of the bailiff's, and resuming its march the troop descended the flank of the hill at whose foot lay the straggling village of Cramoisy, consisting of about three hundred cottages and houses. The silence of the tomb reigned in these homes. They were deserted, and the open doors showed their interiors to be empty and bare. Stupefied, Captain Griffith reined in his horse and said to the bailiff:

"By the devil! Where are the inhabitants of these shanties?"

"The other villages of this seigniory are as deserted as this one. You will find there, Sir, neither women, nor men, nor children, nor cattle," answered the bailiff. "There are left, as you see, only the four walls of the houses. You will, therefore, find it difficult to collect here even the smallest fraction of your six thousand florins. Jacques Bonhomme is a sly fox; he had wind of your coming and has run into the earth to escape you. But, to a sly fox a sly limehound. I know the burrow of Jacques Bonhomme. Follow me, Sir."

"Where to? Whither do you lead us?"

"Only one league from here.... But we shall have to descend from our horses at the outskirts of the forest. You can leave there the gross of your troop. A dozen of your archers will be enough for the job I have in mind. The risk is slight."

"Why would you have me descend from horseback, and leave behind the bulk of my troop?"

"It will, in the first place, be impossible for us to ride on horseback over the quagmires, jungles and bogs that we shall have to cross in order to arrive at the hiding place of Jacques Bonhomme. In the second place, the fox has a sharp ear. The noise made by a large troop would give him the alarm."

"Captain," suggested the Chaplain, "suppose this scamp were but leading us into an ambushade?"

"Chaplain, never did Griffith recoil before danger," was the Captain's answer; "moreover, if this bailiff with a marten's snout should deceive us, let him be forewarned. At the first suspicion of treachery we shall promptly hack him to pieces."

"That's right," returned the Chaplain. "Let's march! His skin answers for our lives."

"March!" ordered Captain Griffith, and guided by the bailiff, who had been rejoined by his men, the troop left the village of Cramoisy and wended its way towards a forest, the skirt of which drew its length along the horizon.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FOX'S BURROW

About two leagues from the village of Cramoisy, and in the thickest of the seigniorial forest of Nointel, is a vast subterranean grotto, cut into the chalky rock that offers little resistance to the pick and the mattock. The cavern dates from the far-back troubled days when the Norman pirates were in the habit of rowing up the Somme, the Seine and the Oise and raiding the surrounding lands. Such of the serfs whose dire misery did not reach the pitch of constraining them to join the Normans, and who sought to escape the flood of pillage and massacre, had dug the underground place of refuge. Carrying thither their little havings, and even cattle, they remained hidden until the pirates left the country. Similar places were in later years contrived in almost all parts of Gaul by the vassals of the nobility for the purpose of escaping the brigandage of the English, of the robber bands and of the bands of mercenaries who devastated the provinces, finally also to escape the extortions of the seigneurs that now became intolerable, seeing that Jacques Bonhomme was forced to pay the ransom of their masters who had been taken prisoners at the battle of Poitiers. In other regions of Gaul the peasants withdrew with their families upon rafts which they anchored midstreams of rivers, and which frequently were either submerged or carried away by the floods to be finally swamped with the wretched mass of humanity that they bore. Never before had desolation and panic reached such a pitch in the unfortunate country; the huts were almost all abandoned, the fields uncultivated and a famine was apprehended similar to that which desolated Gaul in the year 1000.

The underground retreat whither the inhabitants of Cramoisy and several other villages of the seignior of Nointel took refuge consists of a long vault, at the extremity and to the right and left of which are several other galleries in which cattle, goats and sheep are crowded. A well, used for a drinking trough, is dug in the center of the principal gallery. Above, an opening, partially masked with stones and underbrush, admits some light and air to the dark and icy asylum that oozes with the moisture of the earth. There, more than a thousand people crowded together—men, women and children who fled from their homes. The milk of the cattle, a few handfuls of rye or wheat pounded between two stones entertain rather than appease the tortures of hunger. A steaming, suffocating and nauseous heat, produced by the agglomeration of people and cattle, pervades the gloomy place. Now plaintive wails are heard, then the outbursts of violent quarrels, such as are certain to break out among semi-savages whom suffering exasperates. Wan and half naked children, who, however, preserve the carelessness of their

age, played at this moment at the edge of the well which just happened to be lighted by a ray of sunlight that filtered through the rocks and underbrush which concealed the only air-hole of the vault. That sun ray also lighted a group of three persons, huddled together in a dug-out near the well. The three persons were Aveline, Alison and Mazurec.

When the little village of Nointel was pillaged by the troupe of Captain Griffith, the handsome tavern-keeper succeeded in saving what moneys she had and fled to Cramoisy where she joined Aveline. Learning there that the English were still ravaging the neighborhood, she joined the peasants in their flight to the underground retreat.

Aveline, now far advanced in pregnancy, expected every day to be delivered of the child of her disgrace and the fruit of the iniquity perpetrated upon her by her seigneur. Barely covered in a few rags, she lay on the cold and bare earth. Ever sympathetic, Alison held upon her knees the languishing and pale head of the young girl, whose thinness had now become shocking. Her hollow cheeks imparted monstrous size to her eyes, which she attached beseechingly upon Mazurec, engaged at the moment in sharpening upon a stone the teeth of a pitch-fork while muttering to himself: "William is long in returning from Paris; we are waiting for him so as to start the massacre ... sacred reprisals!"

Thus muttering to himself, Mazurec continued sharpening his fork. He had become a hideous sight. Having lost his right eye since the judicial combat with the knight of Chaumontel, the now hollow, quivering and half closed eyelids on that side of his face exposed a blood-clotted cavity. His crushed nose is a mass of scars, purplish like his torn-up upper lip which exposes his broken teeth. His long matted hair falls upon the ragged goat-skin jacket which he wears and from which protrude his nervy, but now haggard arms. Attaching upon her husband a beseeching look, Aveline said to him in a weak and sad voice: "Mazurec, if I give birth to a child before dying ... promise me not to kill it!... Answer me ... I beseech you in God's name.... Have mercy on the innocent creature."

"I promise nothing," answered the vassal in a hollow voice without stopping from his work; "we shall see what's to be done."

"He will kill the innocent child, Dame Alison!" cried Aveline weeping and hiding her head.

"Keep still!" replied Mazurec with the mien of a tiger that rendered his face still more frightful; "Keep still, or I may believe you are proud of having a child of your seigneur."

Aveline answered with a hysterical sob, while Alison cried indignantly: "Wretch, you will yet be the cause of your wife's death!"

"I had as lief she was dead as alive ... as to the child she now carries ... he shall not live ... I shall smother the noble whelp."

"Well, then, why don't you kill both mother and child. That would be less cruel than to kill Aveline by little and little as you are doing!" And looking at Mazurec with eyes of angry reproach, Alison added: "Oh, Mazurec the Lambkin, the unfortunate girl whose death you now wish, once made your heart bound with joy when you passed the door at which she used to spin!"

At these words which recalled to Mazurec the spring-tide of his love, days that were sweet even to the wretched serf, the young man broke down in tears, threw the fork aside, and closely embracing his wife, whose pale face he covered with kisses, he said: "Pardon me, my poor Aveline!... Oh, my blood has turned to gall ... I have suffered so much.... I still suffer so much.... Pardon me, my dear wife!"

Mazurec was uttering these words when suddenly the species of air-hole above the well was almost wholly obstructed with large stones that were being rolled about by the men of the bailiff of Nointel, and the bailiff himself, applying his mouth as closely as he could to the little opening that was left, shouted down into the cavity: "All of you, vassals of the parish of Cramoisy and neighboring villages, you are taxed, as your quota of the ransom of our very noble, very high, very dear and very powerful seigneur, the sum of one thousand florins; the other parishes of the seigniorship shall be similarly taxed. Rummage around your purses quickly so that you meet the sum demanded. You have hiding places where you bury your valuables. Choose quickly between death and your money. If within the time it shall take me to utter a 'pater' and an 'ave,' one of you does not come out with the money, you will all be smoked to death like so many foxes in their burrow, after which the corpses will be rifled."

The bailiff stopped; the air-hole was tightly closed with clods of earth; and the cavern was plunged into utter darkness.

"Oh, my God! What's going to happen? Leave me not Mazurec," cried Aveline in a tremor and throwing her arms around her husband who jumped up the

better to hear the announcement made by the bailiff, and which, repeated from mouth to mouth by the vassals, left them steeped in gloomy silence. The unhappy serfs clung all the more tightly to their little coin, their last resource, the only fruits left to them of their crushing labors and homicidal privations, seeing that they had succeeded in saving it from the rapacity of their seigneurs only by dint of untold privations and nameless devices, often struggling against the torture itself that was frequently inflicted upon them in the hope of wringing from them the disclosure of the hiding places where they kept their little treasure buried. The first shock being over, cries of indignation and revolt resounded in the cavern. The noise increased more and more.

"We leave our homes to live in holes like wild beasts, and we are hunted down even here!"

"To be pillaged by the English, and be forced besides to pay for the ransom of our seigneurs!"

"No! No! Let them choke us with smoke, let them burn us, let them massacre us.... They shall get not one denier from us!"

"We shall throw our few remaining sous into the well, sooner than deliver them to our butcher!"

It did not take the bailiff long to say his "pater" and "ave." Seeing none of the serfs coming out of the cavern to bring him the sum demanded, he ordered the burrow of Jacques Bonhomme to be smoked. The work was easily done. The cavern was entered by a narrow and steep passage cut into the rock. The Englishmen of Captain Griffith and the retinue brought by the bailiff heaped up at the mouth of the entrance a mass of dry leaves and branches, set fire to the same, and with the aid of their long lances shoved on the brasier a heap of green branches the thick and acrid smoke of which soon filled the interior of the cavern, the only opening that could have allowed the smoke to escape having been tightly closed in advance.

Ghastly was the scene that ensued. Suffocated and blinded by the black and pungent smoke, the vassals were a prey to distracting pain. The cattle, submitted to the identical trial, became furious, broke their ropes and rolled in the darkness amid the crowd whom they trampled under foot or gored with their horns. The wails of women and children, the imprecations of men, the lowing of the cattle made an infernal concert. Several of the serfs succeeded in groping their way to the well and threw themselves in to escape prolonged torture; others threw themselves headlong towards the



mouth of the cavern, but smothered by the thick smoke and the flames that entered the passage and that now converted the entrance into a furnace, dropped down into the middle of the flames and were consumed; others again threw themselves down flat upon the ground, scratched the earth with their nails and, burying their faces in the earth imagined in their wild delirium they could thus take breath; lastly not a few were the mothers who, wishing to spare their children a long agony, strangled them quickly to death.

Mazurec held Aveline tightly in his arms while he shuddered at the thought of the horrible death that awaited her. The tender sentiments of their happier days took possession of his heart and mind and he racked his brain for a means of escape. It was in vain. Long worn out by misery and sorrow, the young woman was not equal to so rude an additional strain. In her death agony she fastened her lips to Mazurec's as though, wishing to escape suffocation, she strove to inhale her husband's breath.

By degrees her hold on him was relaxed, with one convulsive effort she embraced her husband and then her arms dropped by her side.

"Dead!" shrieked the serf; "dead and unavenged, my dearly beloved Aveline!"

"You can still revenge her and save us both and many more of these unfortunates," came panting from Alison, who still preserved her senses and energy. "Let us hasten!" continued the tavern-keeper with an ever more oppressed voice. "Let us endeavor to get out of here; ... I shall give the bailiff three hundred florins that I have sewn in my clothes; ... he will allow us to escape; ... if he does not, kill him; ... take your pitch-fork; ... it lies there.... Let's flee!..."

Mazurec emitted a cry of savage joy. The imminence of danger and the hope of revenge increased his strength tenfold. He seized the fork with his right hand, with his left he dragged Alison after him, and guided by the ruddy glow at the mouth of the cavern, the vassal plied his fork so as to clear a passage through the crowd that ran about delirious. Some he threw down, others he walked over. Finally he reached the approaches of the burning pile near which a number of corpses lay strewn. Dropping the hand of Alison and hitting upon a plan that had occurred to none during the general panic, Mazurec thrust his pitch-fork into the midst of the burning pile, scattered it, threw some of it behind him, opened a passage to himself, cleared the space which was covered with burning embers, and after a few bounds found himself at the issue of the cavern. For a moment Mazurec stood still inhaling the free air; his strength returned speedily; and making one last effort he

rushed out. At the unexpected sight of Mazurec, foaming at the mouth with rage and brandishing his fork, both the Englishmen and the bailiff's men drew back in terror. Mazurec lost no time; he rushed upon the bailiff, buried the fork in the bowels of his seigneur's menial, threw him down, and, maddened with rage, trampled him under foot while he again and again thrust his pitch-fork into the bailiff's breast, his face and every part of his body that he could reach, uttering at every thrust: "This is for your having dragged Aveline to your master's bed!... This is for your having now smothered Aveline to death!"

At the sight of the terrific spectacle Captain Griffith broke out in a loud guffaw saying: "I take this expert poker under my protection. I admire his dexterity in the use of his pitch-fork!" In the midst of these exclamations Captain Griffith suddenly remained silent, then clapping his hands he proceeded in new ecstasy: "By the devil! Here are my two beautiful black eyes and plump ankles! Oh, this time you will not escape me, my belle! Mine be your treasures!"

The English captain uttered these cries at the sight of Alison, who now appeared at the entrance of the cavern, pale, with disheveled hair, her clothes half burnt, breathing fast and so feeble that she was unable to walk except supporting herself by the rocks that lay near by. Captain Griffith, without being moved at the lamentable aspect of the woman, and listening only to his own amorous suggestions, made one bound at his prey, took her in his arms and cried: "This time I hold you! Now you are mine!"

"Mercy!" cried Alison, struggling to free herself. "I shall give you all the money I have.... Mercy!"

"Love first, money afterwards!" was the answer of Norfolk's bastard carrying Alison off.

"Help, Mazurec! Help!" cried the tavern-keeper as loudly as her weak voice allowed her. But Mazurec, exasperated with suffering and now drunk with bloodshed and the transports of revenge, continued to hack with his pitch-fork the corpse of the bailiff, and heard not the appeal of Alison.

Suddenly, stepping out of a thick bush and appearing on the top of a rocky eminence, Jocelyn the Champion precipitated himself upon the ravisher, followed by Adam the Devil, William Caillet, Rufin the Tankard-smasher and several serfs armed with axes, forks and scythes. This small troop, attracted by the cries of Alison, had rushed forward ahead of a large number of

revolted peasants, who, crossing a denser part of the forest, marched slower.

"Here I am, my charming hostess!" cried Jocelyn, leaping from rock to rock, sword in hand; "here I am ... ready to defend you!"

"My Hercules of the castle of Beaumont!" exclaimed Captain Griffith, drawing his sword at the sight of Jocelyn whom he immediately recognized; and relinquishing Alison he rushed, sword in hand, at Jocelyn, saying: "Only to-day I requested but two things from Satan: to embrace that belle and to find you again a little fattened, my sturdy boy! Let's commence with you; the belle shall have her turn!"

"I have not yet gathered much meat on my bones," responded the champion, intrepidly attacking the bastard of Norfolk, "but you shall not be long in admitting that my wrist has not yet lost any of its strength."

A mad combat was immediately engaged in between the champion and the Captain, while Caillet, Adam the Devil, Rufin and several of the serfs who accompanied them, threw themselves furiously upon Captain Griffith's Chaplain and the archers who had come with him when he left the gross of his troop near the skirt of the forest, as the bailiff had advised.

"Kill, kill the English!... Death to the English!"

Overpowered and crushed by numbers, cut to pieces with the scythes, disemboweled with the forks, knocked down with the hatchets, not one of Captain Griffith's men escaped the carnage. After heroically defending himself against Adam the Devil, who was armed with a short scythe and against Rufin who wielded a long sword, the Chaplain fell under their blows. His attention being now drawn again from his frenzy against the corpse of the bailiff by the arrival of the peasants who came with Caillet, Mazurec turned to them and brandishing his fork first joined their side of the combat; but struck with a sudden thought, he climbed the hillock where the air-hole had been contrived over the cavern, and which had recently been closed by the orders of the bailiff of Nointel. With the assistance of his fork he rolled off the stones from the aperture, and the smoke, now finding an issue, escaped therefrom in thick and black puffs. Climbing down, Mazurec disappeared within the cavern.

At that moment, though wounded in the arm, Jocelyn was holding Captain Griffith to the ground with both his knees pressing on the Englishman's

chest, and was looking for the dagger at his belt to bury it in his throat saying: "You shall die, English dog, who do not respect even dying women!"

"As true as you are the best blade that I have yet met in this country, my only regret is that I leave that belle behind!"

Such were the last words of the bastard of Norfolk. At the same moment Mazurec issued from the cavern with the corpse of Aveline in his arms, saying:

"William Caillet, here is your daughter and my wife. All of you who have wives, children, parents or friends step into that cavern. Look for them among the dead and dying. Our seigneur, the Sire of Nointel, had us smoked in our refuge because we refused to contribute money towards his ransom!"

At this announcement a large number of peasants ran into the cavern, while Caillet approached Mazurec, who still held his wife's body in his arms, and calmly said: "Lay her down on the grass.... We shall dig her grave." But the words were hardly uttered by the old man than throwing himself down beside the lifeless body of his daughter, he broke out in convulsive sobs while kissing her cold face.

"I have cried so much that I have no tears left," said Mazurec contemplating the spectacle with a dry and fiery eye, while Adam the Devil silently dug Aveline's grave with the aid of his short scythe.

A clump of roots and trees had until now concealed the sad spectacle from Jocelyn, who, not having noticed his brother in the heat of the combat, sat down on the grass supported by Rufin, and left his arm to be attended by Alison. Always brave and helpful, despite the different emotions that stormed through her heart, the tavern-keeper had ripped up her neck-cloth, and kneeling down beside Jocelyn, looked upon him with tenderness while staunching his wound.

"When we first met, you won my case; to-day I owe to you life and honor. How can I ever repay such a debt. Oh, I know too well how you condemn money to offer you three hundred franks that I have sewed in my skirt."

"Do you wish, dear and good hostess, to repay your debt? Go to Paris. When you arrive there, ask where Master Marcel lives. Everybody will show you the place. Tell his wife that I have been slightly wounded and that there is no danger. That will assure Dame Marcel and also her niece ... my betrothed."

"Oh, you are betrothed, Sir!" exclaimed Alison with some confusion, and gulping down a sigh, she added in an unsteady voice: "May God protect your love! I shall do as you say. I shall go to Paris ... I shall calm the anxieties of the girl you love. In her place I would be happy, indeed.... Oh, so happy to be reassured regarding him whom I love," saying which Alison lowered her head to conceal a furtive tear that shone on her beautiful black eyes.

"Oh, Jocelyn!" Rufin said in a low voice, charmed with the grace and kindness of Alison, "a comely and honest body like that is worth a hundred Margots."

"Dear hostess!" resumed Jocelyn after a moment's reflection, "Will you allow me to give you advice? In times like these, a woman who travels alone runs great dangers. Take this friend of mine, Rufin, for your escort."

"Jocelyn," said the student with a lively movement, "I wish to remain with you to fight the nobility."

"You fought bravely despite the wound that you received only day before yesterday, and which still gives you much pain. You can render our cause a great service by returning and notifying Marcel that the peasants are in arms in this province and that William Caillet has given the signal for the uprising. Marcel awaits this news to act.... And if he has any confidential message for me, he will send it through you. You will then rejoin me in Beauvoisis. You will be easily able to learn the whereabouts of Caillet's troops, which I shall not leave"; and seeing that the student was about to yield, Jocelyn added in a low voice: "Despite the indiscretions of your youth, you are an upright fellow; promise me that you will guard Alison as you would your own sister."

"I promise, Jocelyn; and you can trust my word! I shall be a good guardian to Alison."

Suddenly a tremor ran over Jocelyn. He had just noticed Mazurec and Caillet carrying the body of Aveline. He understood what had happened, profound sorrow depicted itself upon his face, and kneeling down he said: "Kneel, Rufin ... kneel, my good hostess ... I shall have to wait till after this funeral to inform Mazurec that I am his brother."

Adam the Devil had finished digging the grave of Aveline. Caillet and Mazurec, holding the body by the shoulders and feet, laid it down in the tomb. The peasants who witnessed the ceremony fell upon their knees. The funeral of the poor female serf piously performed under the vault of the

forest in the midst of the heaped-up rocks at the mouth of the cavern—the immense tomb of so many other victims—was a spectacle of mournful grandeur. Everything contributed to render the scene terrible and imposing. There lay the mutilated and bloody members of the bailiff, the pitiless executer of the Sire of Nointel's orders; yonder were strewn the corpses of the English, no less execrated than the seigneurs by the people of the fields; further at a distance was the kneeling crowd of serfs, bare-headed, clad in rags, holding strange and murderous weapons in their hands, and hardly able to restrain their fury; finally there were the father and the husband laying with their own hands into her grave her who should have been the solace of the former's old age and the joy and love of the latter's youth!

As soon as the body of the dead girl was laid in the fosse, Adam the Devil began filling it up with earth, while William Caillet standing at the head of his daughter's sepulchre and holding Mazurec to his breast cried out in a voice that pulled at the heart-strings of all present:

"Adieu, my daughter! Adieu, my poor Aveline! You who never lied! You who never did wrong! Adieu! For evermore adieu!" and raising his trembling hands heavenward, the old peasant proceeded solemnly: "I swear here by the body of my child whom I have buried with my own hands! By the bones of our friends and our relatives whose grave is that cavern! By the sufferings that we endure! By the blood and the sweat of our forefathers! I shall revenge my daughter! I shall revenge our fathers! I shall revenge our race for the tortures it has endured! War upon the castles, without let or mercy!"

Carried away by these words, the surrounding serfs rose to their feet, and brandishing their staves, their scythes, their forks and their axes, all responded in chorus with a voice that the echoes of the forest answered back: "Vengeance!" "Justice!"

In the meantime the peasants who had run into the cavern were coming back with terror marked on their faces: "Dead.... They are all dead or dying! Women and children, old and young ... all are dead!"

"All dead!" Caillet repeated in a terrific voice, "the little children! The women! The old men and the young! All dead! Up, Jacques Bonhomme! Up, my Jacques! Let the Jacquerie commence!"

"It shall commence with the castle of Chivry," cried Adam the Devil. "Our seigneur is to be this very day at the castle of Chivry to wed the gorgeous Gloriande ... on the day of the tourney she laughed at Mazurec!... It will now

be your turn to laugh at the haughty damosel.... Up, my Jacques, let the Jacquerie commence!"

"Ha! Ha! The belle Gloriande!" Mazurec repeated with a ferocious and semi-delirious laughter. "I shall appear before her with one eye knocked out and my nose crushed! Oh! The gorgeous Gloriande!... What a fright she'll have!... Her husband took my bride.... Up, up, my Jacques! The Jacquerie commences!... War upon the castles!"

The revolted peasants tumultuously followed Caillet, Adam the Devil and Mazurec across the forest crying: "To Chivry.... Up, Jacques.... The Jacquerie commences!"

"Good-bye, hostess!" said Jocelyn rising and preparing to follow Mazurec. "Good-bye, Rufin. Guard with the solicitude of a brother this worthy woman who confides herself to your protection."

"I trust your friend," answered Alison, "because you told me to trust him."

"I swear," put in the student deeply moved, "that you can trust me as fully as you would Jocelyn himself, pretty hostess."

"Good-bye, Rufin; I shall join my brother, disclose to him the bonds that unite us, and battle at his side. Once more, good-bye, Alison. Say to Dame Marcel and to Denise, my betrothed, that if I do not see them again, my last thoughts will have been to them. As to you, Rufin, say to Marcel that the peasants of this province are at work exterminating the seigneurs."

"Good-bye, Jocelyn," Rufin answered sadly, extending his hand to his friend. "If Master Marcel should have any message for you I shall ask him to commission me to bring it to you!"

Once more the champion pressed his friend's hand and hastened to join the Jacques whose vociferations were heard in the distance. Before following the student, the good Alison knelt down at the grave of Aveline and amidst tears bade the last adieu to the ill-starred young woman.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CASTLE OF CHIVRY

The castle of Chivry, situated about three leagues from Nointel, and like almost all other feudal manors, built on the brow of a precipitous mountain, has nothing to fear from an attack from without. Defended both by a hundred men-at-arms and its own natural position, it can resist a long siege. For such an attack, artillery and other engines of war would have been requisite. The interior magnificence of this seigniorial edifice matches its defensive strength. Among its many sumptuous features is the throne hall, or hall of honor, which presents a dazzling sight. Its rafters, painted and gilded, glisten under the blue of the ceiling. Rich hanging carpets cover the walls, and enormous fire-places of sculptured stone, where whole trunks of trees are burned, rise at the two extremities of the vast apartment which is lighted by ten ogive windows of glass bearing armorial designs. The hall, virtually a gallery, is two hundred feet long, by one hundred wide—vast dimensions, indispensable to the state ceremonies which the stewards of the Sire of Chivry, as is the custom, attend mounted on horseback, entering by one of the doors of the hall, and solemnly carrying on the silver platters the "dishes of honor" such as peacocks and roasted pheasants, prepared with their own heads, and out-spread tails and wings, or gigantic pastries representing the seigniorial manor, ornamented with an escutcheon painted in lively colors—a glorious dish that the pages place on the table before the queen of the feast, and that must be cut by the equerry.

On this day, a brilliant company—the nobles, seigneurs and dames, damosels and children of the neighboring estates—assembled in the throne hall of the castle of Chivry, and pressed around the beautiful Gloriande, who sat triumphant on the throne—a sort of raised seat covered and canopied with gold brocades. Never did the damosel seem more superb and brilliant in the eyes of her admirers. Her attire was dazzling. Her black hair, braided with a thread of pearls and carbuncles, is half hid under her virginal bride's veil. Her robe of white velvet, embroidered with silver, boldly exposes her breast and plump arms. A scarf of Oriental silk, fringed with pearls, girds her supple and well-shaped waist. With brilliant eyes, pink cheeks and smiling lips, Gloriande receives the compliments of the noble assemblage who congratulate her on her wedding, the celebration of which is soon to be announced by the bell of the castle's chapel. The aged Count of Chivry enjoys the happiness of his daughter and the homage she is the recipient of. Nevertheless, despite the gladness denoted by her face, from time to time Gloriande puckers up her black eyebrows, while throwing impatient looks towards the doors of the gallery. Noticing one of these looks of impatience,



the Count of Chivry says to his daughter smiling: "Be at ease ... Conrad will soon be here.... There he is.... Behold your bridegroom! What a noble presence!"

At the moment when the noble seigneur was saying these words a triumphant procession entered the spacious hall. Clarion players opened the march with a bravoure, they were followed by the pages bearing the livery of Nointel who in turn were followed by the seigneur's equerries. These led ten hideous looking men in chains. Their faces and skulls, smoothly shaven, are of dark brown color. Sad and dejected, they hold their heads down. They are clad in new white and green blouses, the armorial colors of the house of Chivry. From time to time the captives noisily clank their chains and emit lamentable moanings. Behind them marches the Sire of Nointel, superbly astride of a charger, with visor down, lance in hand and accoutred in battle armor. At his side but on foot marches Gerard of Chaumontel, also in full armor and seeming to share his friend's glory. The cheers of the noble assemblage greet the procession, and the radiant Gloriande, whose cheeks are now red with pride, rises from her seat and waving her handkerchief cries:

"Glory to the victor! Honor to the bravest gallant!"

"Glory to the victor!" is echoed back by the noble assemblage. "Honor to the bravest gallant! Long live the seigneur of Nointel!"

The Sire of Nointel descends from his horse, raises the visor of his casque and while his equerries beckon the captives to kneel down, he delivers himself of the following sentence:

"My lady-love ordered me to go to war against the English and to bring ten prisoners to her feet. The duty of all gallant knights is to obey the queen of their thoughts. Here are the ten English soldiers that I took at the battle that we have fought. And I, a captive of the god of love, now lead these chained men to the feet of my lady-love."

These chivalrous and gallant words threw the assemblage into transports of enthusiasm. The Sire of Nointel bows his head and proceeds:

"These prisoners belong to my lady-love. Let her dispose of them at her sovereign will."

"Seeing that my valiant knight requests me to decide over the fate of these prisoners," answered Gloriande, "I order that they be delivered of their chains ... and that they be set free! The day of my marriage shall be a day of

joy for all"; and extending her hand to Conrad who drops on one knee before his bride, she proceeds: "Here is my hand, Sire of Nointel. I can give it to no more valorous a knight."

"Happy day to the wedded couple!" cries the assemblage. "Glory and happiness to Gloriande of Chivry and Conrad of Nointel!"

While the brilliant company was thus manifesting its share in the gladness of the young couple, the Count of Chivry approached the knight of Chaumontel and asked him in a low voice:

"Gerard, what devil of Englishmen are these fellows.... Why, they are dark as moles!"

"Sir Count," gravely answered the knight, "these scamps are of the English tribe of Ratamorphrydich!"

"How do you call that tribe?" again inquired the aged seigneur stupefied at the barbarous name; "I never heard of it before."

"The Ratamorphrydich," explained the knight, "are one of the most ferocious tribes of northern England. They are supposed to descend from a gypsy or Syrian colony that migrated from Moscovy to the shores of Albion upon the back of marine horses."

"Well! Well!" rejoined the aged count enraptured at the geographic knowledge of the knight. "That is a very complete and clear explanation."

The bell of the castle's chapel now sounded, and the seigneur of Chivry said to the knight: "This is the first peal of the wedding mass. Oh, Gerard, this is a beautiful day for my old years ... doubly beautiful because it shines in otherwise sad times."

"But it seems, Sire, that you have no cause to complain of the events. Conrad returns to you covered with laurel. True enough, he is a paroled prisoner of the English, but at this very moment his vassals are emptying their purses for his ransom. He is beloved by your daughter, whom he adores. Your castle, well fortified and provisioned, and defended by a courageous garrison, has nothing to fear from either the English or the marauding bands. Jacques Bonhomme, still sore at every limb from the lesson he received last year at the tourney of Nointel, dare not raise his nose above the ditches where he is at work for you. You may live in peace and contentment. Long live love, and let the future take care of itself!"

"Father," said Gloriande to the Count of Chivry, "the bell has sounded the second call for mass.... Let us start."

"Very well, my impatient bride," the Count replied smiling upon his daughter, "give your hand to Conrad and we shall start for the altar."

"Oh, father, do you know that Conrad spoke of me to the Regent, our Sire? The young and lovely prince wishes to see me at court.... We shall have time to order three dresses, one of brocade, the other of silver ... the third laminated in flower work."

"You may order ten dresses, twenty if you wish, and of the richest. Nothing is too beautiful for Gloriande of Chivry when she makes her appearance at court! It is well to show those kings, who seek to crowd the seigneurs, that we are as great seigneurs as themselves. You shall not lack for money. My bailiffs shall levy a double tax upon my vassals in honor of your wedding, as is customary. But here comes another impatient hot-blood who implores you to take pity on his martyrdom," gaily added the Count pointing at Conrad who now approached. The Sire of Nointel lovingly took the hand of his bride, the procession formed and, followed by the pages and equerries, the noble assembly marched to the chapel of the manor.

The English prisoners, who had been freed of their chains by the order of Gloriande, brought up the rear. While crossing the threshold of the gallery a large newly sharpened knife with a coarse wooden handle dropped from the blouse of one of the prisoners.

"Adam the Devil," whispered another prisoner, "pick up your knife before it attracts the attention of the soldiers."

## CHAPTER IV

### "JACQUERIE! JACQUERIE!"

The marriage of the damosel of Chivry with the seigneur of Nointel took place in the morning. In the afternoon, the large number of guests invited to the brilliant wedding were gathered in the large throne hall, now transformed into a banquet room. The banquet was continued deep into the evening, and was now nearing its end. For the last six hours the noble guests had been doing ample honor to the interminable meal. While Jacques Bonhomme barely preserves existence with decayed beans and water, the seigneurs eat fit to split their stomachs. It was so at the nuptials of the belle Gloriande. The first course, intended to open the appetite, consisted of citrons, fruit cooked in vinegar, sour cherries, salted dishes, salads and other toothsome preparations. The second course was of lobster patties, cream almonds, soups of meat, of rice, of oats, of wheat, of macaroni, of fricandelles, each served in the different colors that expert cooks impart to them and that please the eyes of the gourmands—soups in white, in blue, in yellow, in red, in green or of golden hue were spread in harmonious combinations. The third course had roasts with sauce, and what a variety of sauces!—cinnamon, nutmeg, raisin, jennet, rose, flower—all these sauces likewise colored differently. The fourth course consisted of pastries of all sorts, of boars, of deer, monstrous pastries that held, floating on goose fat, a whole stuffed lamb, finally tarts of rose leaves, of cherries, of chestnuts, and in the middle of all these a monumental fabric of pastry three feet high, representing the donjon-keep, the towers and the ramparts of the noble manor of Chivry. The long table loaded down with costly plate which reflected one another by the light of wax candles presented the aspect of gladsome disorder. The flagons and silver decanters, filled with spiced wines and circulating from hand to hand, redoubled the conviviality of the hour. Some of the guests grew unsteady in their seats, their heads swimming in the fumes of approaching drunkenness. The cheeks and eyes of several of the dames and their daughters, even without having celebrated Gloriande's nuptials to a Bacchic excess, had become purple and inflamed; their breasts heaved, and they laughed boisterously at the licentious stories told by the seigneurs who sat near and drank out of the same cup with them. Outside of the banquet table, the servants, and even the men-at-arms, were sharing the convivial joys of their masters, and celebrated the nuptials of their seigneur's daughter with deep potations of beer, cider, and even wine. Many were asleep in the profound slumbers of inebriety.

Alone Gloriande and her bridegroom have remained free from the effects of the overfeeding and drinking. Their intoxication is sweeter. They love each

other, and soon the hour would come for their retirement. From time to time they exchanged furtive glances of impatience. Ardent are the looks of Conrad; troubled those of Gloriande. Her beautiful bosom undulates attractively the necklace of pearls and diamonds that rests upon it. She even frowns and shrugs her white shoulders upon hearing her father, now in an advanced stage of intoxication, bellowing at the top of his voice for silence and announcing that he would sing an old drinking song of twenty-eight verses, and each couple, drinking from the same goblet, was to empty it at each couplet, after which the bride and bridegroom would be ceremoniously conducted by her maids of honor to the bridal chamber, whose door opened into the hall. At her father's proposition to sing twenty-eight verses, a proposition that was received with general acclaim, Gloriande cast a desolate look upon Conrad, and the latter, turning to his friend Chaumontel, whispered in his ear: "The devil take the drunken old man ... along with his song."

"By the way," answered the half intoxicated knight, laughing loudly, "the old man asked me this morning how our English prisoners happened to be dark as moles;" and turning from the Count of Chivry the knight reflected a moment and then proceeded: "But, Conrad, were there not originally eleven rustics instead of ten that we picked up near the forest, from which they had just issued with forks, scythes and axes? They said they were hunting for a wolf that caused them much damage. Ah! Ah! I must still laugh when I think of our capture.... By the devil.... It was eleven and not ten rustics that we caught.... How does it come that, being eleven, there should only be ten now?"

"Do you forget that one of them ran away on the road?"

"That's a ray of light!" cried Gerard, counting on his fingers with the gravity of a drunken man. "The rustics were eleven. Good.... One of them escapes.... Consequently there should be only ten left! Conrad, you are the brightest of mortals!"

At that moment the seigneur of Chivry struck up the fourth couplet of his Bacchic song. No longer could the beautiful Gloriande endure her amorous martyrdom. She exchanged a few signs of intelligence with Conrad, and almost immediately uttered a slight cry, while seizing her father's arm, near whom she was seated. The old seigneur abruptly broke off his song and said to Gloriande, in blank amazement:

"What is the matter, dear daughter? Are you not well?"

"I feel giddy; I am not well; I shall withdraw to my room."

"My dearly beloved Gloriande," said the Sire of Nointel, rising quickly, "allow me to accompany you."

"Yes, I wish you would, Conrad.... I shall take some air at the window of my room.... I think that will do me good."

"Come, my children," said the seigneur of Chivry, resignedly, "I shall start my song all over again at to-morrow's feast;" and then added: "Let the maids of honor kindly accompany the bride, according to custom, as far as the door of the nuptial chamber."

At these words several of the young ladies regretfully quitted the knights near whom they sat and surrounded the bride, while Conrad walked around the immense table to join his wife, and two pages threw open the doors of the bridal chamber, brilliantly lighted by torches of perfumed wax. The nuptial couch was seen at the end of the chamber, surmounted with an armorial canopy, and half concealed behind curtains of tapestry that glistened with silver thread. Suddenly the voice of Gerard of Chaumontel, more and more intoxicated, was heard crying:

"Noble dames and damosels, I request leave to prove to you that I am a man ... of singular powers of divination!"

"Prove it! Prove it!" gayly came from the guests. "Prove it to us, to-night! We listen! Give us the proof!"

"Last year," proceeded Gerard, "on the day of the tourney of Nointel, where all of you were present, and where Jacques Bonhomme kicked some capers, Conrad ordered several of the scamps to be hanged, and to drown the one whom I vanquished in a judicial combat, all according to usage and custom."

"I very much would like to see a villein drown," cried a lad of eleven years, son of the Sire of Bourgeuil. "I have seen villeins whipped, I have seen their ears cropped, I have seen them hanged and quartered, but never have I seen any drowned. Father, ... will you not have a villein drowned ... for me to see?... I would like to see a villein drowned.... I have taken the fancy."

"My son," the Sire of Bourgeuil answered the child in a magisterial tone, "your interruption is unbecoming. You should have waited till the knight finished before expressing your wish to me."

"Well," continued Gerard of Chaumontel, "the rustic whom I vanquished, at the moment of taking his first and last bath, cried out to me with the voice of a devil who has caught cold: 'You cause me to be drowned, you shall be drowned!' and to Conrad: 'You outraged my wife, your wife shall be outraged!'"

"The knight of Chaumontel is tipsy," murmured several guests.

"Such lugubrious stories about hanging and drowning are out of place at a wedding."

"Enough, Sir knight! Enough!"

"Drink your wine in peace, good Sir!"

"Wait till I prove it to you ... how I am a man of singular powers of divination," continued Gerard. But the hisses drowned his voice, and the Sire of Nointel, shivering despite himself at the mournful recollection now evoked by his friend, took the hand of Gloriande whom the maids of honor surrounded and said to her while marching towards the nuptial chamber: "Listen not to the fool; he is tipsy.... Come, my beloved.... Love awaits us."

Suddenly an equerry appeared like a specter at the large door of the hall. His face was livid and his body streamed blood. He took two steps forward, swayed on his feet and dropped down upon the stone slabs which he reddened with his blood. With his last dying breath he uttered these words "My seigneur.... Oh, my seigneur.... Save yourself!"

At the spectacle a cry of horror and fear leaped from every mouth. The belle Gloriande, seized with terror, threw herself into Conrad's arms. The guests, pale and stupefied, were for an instant struck silent, while from the distance a formidable noise seemed to approach. Another equerry, also pale as a ghost and bleeding, ran in screaming in a broken voice:

"Treason!... Treason!... The English prisoners have cut the throats of the guards at the main gate of the castle.... They opened it to a furious multitude.... The assailants are here!"

Immediately the cry of "Jacquerie! Jacquerie!" repeated from hundreds of throats, resounded outside the banquet hall, and the glasses of the windows, beaten in with axes and pitchforks, flew in all directions with a wild rush.

A numerous band of Jacques, led by Adam the Devil and his blackened companions who had performed the rôle of English prisoners in that same hall that same morning, now rushed in through the doors and broken windows. Guided by an identical impulse, the terror-stricken noble assemblage crowded towards the principal door expecting to escape at that issue. Their exit was, however, intercepted by William Caillet and Mazurec, who appeared at the threshold at the head of still another band of Jacques armed with staves, scythes, forks and axes. Almost all these peasants in arms were vassals of the seigneurs of Chivry and Nointel. At the sight of the wan, savage, blood-stained, half-naked mob, bearing on their bodies the impress of serfdom, the dames and damosels uttered cries of terror and huddled together in wild panic into the extreme corner of the hall. The seigneurs, having according to usage doffed their armor to don their gala dress, seized the table knives and the flagons of glass and silver to defend themselves. The joyous fumes of wine that at first confused their minds were soon dissipated and they ranked themselves into an improvised barrier before the women.

William Caillet swung his axe three times. At that signal the tumultuous clamors of the Jacques was hushed by little and little until the silence became profound, disturbed only by exclamations and moans from the affrighted noble women.

"My Jacques!" cries Caillet. "You brought ropes along. First of all bind fast all the noblemen; kill on the spot whoever resists; but keep alive the father and the husband of the bride; also to keep alive the knight of Chaumontel. We have an account to settle with them."

"I shall take charge of those three," said Adam the Devil. "Follow me, my alleged Englishmen. Get the ropes ready."

The vassals flew upon the seigneurs. A few of them offered a desperate resistance and were killed, but the larger number of the knights, demoralized and terror-stricken by the suddenness of the attack allowed themselves to be bound. Among these were the aged seigneur of Chivry, Gerard of Chaumontel and the Sire of Nointel, the last of whom was torn from the arms of his bride. More furious than frightened, Gloriande gave a loose to imprecations and insults that she hurled at the revolted serfs. Adam the Devil seized and overpowered her, tearing in the attempt her wedding dress to shreds, and tied her hands behind her back, while with refined ferocity he observed:



"To each his turn, my noble damosel.... Last year you laughed at us at the tourney of Nointel.... Now it is our turn to laugh at you, my amorous belle!"

"This English prisoner knows me!" exclaimed Gloriande. "Is all this but a horrible dream? Conrad, revenge your wife!"

"I am a vassal of the seigniory of Nointel, and not an Englishman, my belle," answered Adam the Devil. "The rôle of prisoner was imposed upon us by your noble husband, your valiant knight, the Sire of Nointel, too much of a coward to make real prisoners. He met us just outside of the forest and ordered us under pain of hanging to accompany him hither and be the accomplices of his trick upon you by figuring as the English prisoners that he was to lead to you from the battle that was fought. We consented to the masquerade. It helped us in our plan to enter your father's castle. One of us, managing to escape on the road, took to our companions the order to draw near the manor by nightfall. We cut the throats of the guards, lowered the bridge and let our Jacques in. Now we are going to laugh at you, my belle ... just as you laughed at us at the tourney of Nointel! It is now our turn to feast."

Gloriande allowed Adam the Devil to speak without interrupting him. And shuddering with painful indignation she cried: "Conrad lied.... Conrad is a coward!"

"Yes, your nobleman of a husband is a liar and a coward," rejoined Adam the Devil, dragging Gloriande towards the other extremity of the hall. "A beauty like you deserves a braver husband. I shall take you to the kind of lover you have been dreaming of."

Gloriande of Chivry forgot for a moment the dangers that beset her and the terror that had begun to seize her mind. Overwhelmed by the idea, horrible to her pride, that Conrad of Nointel was a coward, she let herself be dragged without resistance towards the other end of the hall.

In the center of the Jacques who had formed a circle stood William Caillet reclining on the handle of his heavy axe; near him were Jocelyn the Champion with his arms across his breast, and Mazurec the Lambkin, now the widower of Aveline—who-never-lied. Only partly clad in rough sheep-skin, his hair matted, his arms bare and blood-bespattered, with the cavity of one eye hollow, his nose crushed, his upper lip split—the serf presented a repulsive aspect. Adam the Devil pushed Gloriande towards Mazurec saying: "There is your new husband! Come, my pretty lass, embrace your lord and master!"

At the sight of the disfigured serf Gloriande drew back and uttered a cry of fright; but terror palsied her brain when she saw Mazurec slowly advancing upon her with his one eye burning with hatred, and laying his callous hand upon her shoulder say in a hollow voice: "In the name of force ... you are mine ... the same as in the name of force my bride Aveline belonged to Conrad of Nointel...."

"What is the monster saying?" muttered the distracted Gloriande drawing back and seeking to free herself from the grasp of the vassal. "Father!... Come to my help, father!"

The noble seigneur of Chivry lay nearby bound hand and foot, the same as Gerard of Chaumontel and Conrad of Nointel, the last of whom, out of his senses with fright and crushed with remorse, neither heard nor saw aught, but was muttering between his teeth: "Have mercy upon me, my Lord God!... I am a great sinner.... I repent having outraged that vassal's bride...."

"Help, father!" Gloriande continued to cry, ever seeking to escape the grip of Mazurec, whose nails, now long and bent like those of a bird of prey, dug deep into the flesh of the Sire of Nointel's bride and held her firmly while he exclaimed: "This noble damosel is mine!"

"Vassal!" cried the seigneur of Chivry gasping for breath and addressing Caillet: "You are the chief of these bandits; save my daughter's life and honor and I promise to pardon you.... Be merciful.... I swear by the living God, I shall remit the punishment that your crimes deserve!"

"Noble seigneur," replied the chief of the Jacques with ominously sinister calmness, "the wedding day of the child whom we love is a beautiful day! It is a beautiful day for the nobles—"

"Oh, indeed I believed this morning that the wedding day of my daughter Gloriande would be a beautiful day for me."

"So did I imagine on the morning of the day when my daughter Aveline—who never-lied wedded.... A vassal has a father's heart.... I tenderly loved my daughter.... She was a sweet and pure girl, the pride of my miserable life.... Your son-in-law, the Sire of Nointel, had my daughter dragged to his bed ... the next day he returned her to me!"

"The Sire of Nointel only exercised the right he has over all brides who are not noble!... It is his right of first fruits.... It is the feudal law!"

"Conrad of Nointel exercised a right that he derived from force.... To-day the Jacques are stronger, and they will, in turn, exercise their right," answered Caillet without abandoning his savage calmness. "Mazurec, my daughter's bridegroom sought to resist the ignomy she was threatened with.... In punishment for his rebellion he was compelled to make the amende honorable on his knees before his seigneur.... Yesterday my daughter, together with so many other victims, was smothered to death by the smoke that the bailiff of the Sire of Nointel ordered the cavern in which they had taken refuge to be filled with.... 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!' ... So says Scripture.... The Sire of Nointel has outraged the bride of Mazurec the Lambkin.... Now the bride of the Sire of Nointel belongs to Mazurec."

The Jacques greeted the sentence of their chief with triumphant acclaim, while with one kick Adam the Devil broke open the door of Gloriande's nuptial chamber, and by the light of the torches of perfumed wax that burned within from massive candlesticks of silver, the Jacques saw the dazzling interior of the apartment.

Painting with terror Gloriande still struggled with Mazurec who dragged her to the nuptial couch. "Father! Deliver me!" cried the agonized belle.

"Thus did Aveline call me to her help," said William Caillet with his foot on the Count of Chivry. "You shall drain the cup to the lees!"

"Oh, death! rather than to witness such atrocities!" cried the Sire of Nointel. "Heaven and earth! To see that miserable vassal dare to lay hands upon Gloriande! The scamp is tearing down the curtains! He means to violate my bride!"

"Oh! Oh! You are a rebel!" cried Adam the Devil laughing loudly. "We now sentence you to make the amende honorable on both knees before your master and seigneur, Jacques Bonhomme, in the person of Mazurec; and you shall beg his pardon for having insulted him ... for calling him scamp!"

"Conrad, let us know how to die!" cried the knight of Chaumontel. "We shall soon be revenged upon these scamps; not one of them will escape the lances of the knights."

Jocelyn the Champion, who had until then stood by an impassive witness, now stepped forward and heavily laying his iron gauntlet upon the knight's shoulder said to him: "You fought cased in iron against my brother Mazurec who was half naked and armed only with a stick. I have decided that you shall now fight him, yourself half naked and armed with a stick, he cased in

iron. If you are vanquished you shall be thrown into a bag and drowned. To-day, from appellee, Jacques Bonhomme has become appellant."

"But before the combat," cried Adam the Devil, "let us take supper, my Jacques; the table is set; plenty of wine is still left in the flagons; also meats on the dishes!... Let us feast before the eyes of these seigneurs, the fathers, brothers or husbands of yonder dames and damosels!... Fall to, my Jacques! Long live love and wine! After the feast we shall lock up this whole nobility, men, women and children, in the underground prisons of the castles! The ruins of the burnt-down manor shall be their fitting tombstone.... Fall to, Jacques Bonhomme.... Long live love and wine, and ours be the dames and damosels of these nobles!"

## CHAPTER V

### THE ORVILLE BRIDGE

Night is about to yield to day; the moon is setting; the first glimmerings of dawn begin to crimson the eastern sky. The troop of Jacques, who fired the manor of Chivry after putting its noble tenants to the sword, is now marching towards the bridge that spans the Orville river, and from which, the year before, tied in a bag, Mazurec was thrown into the water. At the head of the troop march William, Mazurec, Jocelyn and Adam the Devil. Behind them follow the Jacques leading the Sire of Nointel and the knight of Chaumontel, half naked, unarmed and pinioned. His head covered with the casque, clad in the cuirass and coat of mail, and armed with the dagger and sword of the knight of Chaumontel, Mazurec marches between Jocelyn the Champion and Caillet. Halting at the crest of the hill they had just ascended, and which commanded a wide view of the surrounding country, the latter cried pointing in several directions of the horizon that was either lighted with flames or darkened with black clouds:

"Do you see the castles of Chivry, of Bourgeuil, of Saint-Prix, of Montsorin, of Villiers, of Rochemur and so many others, aye, so many others, set this night on fire, sacked and their noble masters put to the sword by bands of revolted serfs?... Do you hear the village bells summoning the serfs to arms?... They sound still! They are summoning the Jacques to the hunt of the nobles!"

Indeed, the hurried peals of the bells, loudly sounding from a large number of villages that lay scattered in the fields and forests, reached the hill, carried thither by the morning breeze. The horizon, reflecting the flames that were devouring so many feudal manors, itself seemed on fire. Hardly were the first rays of the sun able to penetrate the thickness of the somber mass of smoke.

"The sight is worth the music!" remarked Adam the Devil listening to the sound of the bells. Crossing his arms behind him, spreading out his legs, and poising himself on his robust loins he swept with an eager eye the flaming curtain of the distant conflagrations. "There they are on fire and in ruins, those proud donjons cemented in the blood and the sweat of our people, and that for centuries have been the terror of our fathers! Ha! Ha! Ha!" and laughing boisterously the serf proceeded: "What mournful scenes must now be enacting at those manors!"

"At this hour," observed Caillet, "in Beauvoisis, in Laonnais, in Picardy, in Vermandois, in Champagne, everywhere, in the Isle of France, Jacques Bonhomme is making similar bonfires! Everywhere the nobility and their supporting priests are being massacred!"

"I wish I could see all the fires!" exclaimed Adam the Devil, raising his head. "I would like to hear all the cries uttered by these nobles!"

"Oh!" observed Jocelyn, with profound sorrow, "if the cries of our fathers, the male and female serfs and vassals, who for so many hundreds of years have endured martyrdom, could reach us across the centuries!... Oh! if the cries of our mothers, borne down by serfdom, starved in misery, and outraged by the seigneurs, could now reach us across these many centuries.... If that could be, then the frightful concert of maledictions, of imprecations and of cries of pain that would reach us would drown that which now goes up from these feudal strongholds!... The hour of justice has come at last!"

"Brother," said Mazurec, sad and dejected, while hastening his steps so as to leave Caillet and Adam the Devil behind and snatch a few moments of privacy with Jocelyn, "I have an admission to make to you ... and perhaps also to pray your indulgence for a weakness of my heart.... When I had dragged the bride of Conrad into her nuptial chamber ... and after the door was closed behind us, Gloriande threw herself at my feet, and with joined hands she implored mercy. I said to myself: 'My poor Aveline must have prayed for mercy ... she must have suffered terribly.' I wept at the thought of Aveline; I forgot my hatred and my vengeance. Seeing me weep, Gloriande redoubled her supplications. I then said to her: 'In my condition of serf I had but one joy in the world, the love of Aveline-who-never-lied.... She was outraged by my seigneur, your bridegroom.... After months of suffering and despair she died, smothered by smoke in the cavern of Nointel shortly before being delivered of the child of her shame.... It seems to me I see my poor Aveline, on her knees, like you now, asking for mercy.... It is her whom I pity.... You need not fear me!' And Gloriande took my hands in hers, kissed and moistened them with her tears.... She begged me to allow her to escape by a secret passage. I consented. I remained in the room, thinking of Aveline until they set fire to the castle. I did not wish to outrage my seigneur's bride.... Vengeance would not have restored to me my lost happiness."

"Oh, my poor brother! Gentle soul! Generous heart!" answered Jocelyn, deeply moved. "You whom nature made Mazurec the Lambkin and whom your master's ferocity transformed into Mazurec the Wolf! You were born to love, not to hate! Oh, you speak truly! Vengeance does not return the lost

happiness! Sublime martyr, you need no indulgence for your generous conduct! Your heart did not fail you; it inspired itself with the principle of mercy proclaimed by the young carpenter of Nazareth!" And seeing that Adam the Devil and Caillet were approaching, Jocelyn added, in a low voice: "Brother, let none know that you respected Gloriande; above all, Conrad must, for his punishment, believe that his bride was dishonored!" Turning then to Caillet, who had just joined the two, Jocelyn observed: "We shall soon be at the Orville bridge. Our friends are anxious we should reach the spot quickly. The work of punishment is not yet finished."

The slanting rays of the sun now glisten in the rapid waters of the Orville that the previous year had swallowed up Mazurec pinioned and tied in a bag. On its banks still stand the trunks of the old willow trees from which were hanged the serfs caught in the riot of the tourney. The morning breeze agitates the reeds that concealed Adam the Devil and Jocelyn during the preparations for the death of Mazurec, and from behind which they had succeeded in rescuing him.

The Jacques arrived at the bridge, crossed it and stepped upon the broad meadow in the middle of which the last year's tourney given by the seigneur of Nointel was held. They halted there. A large number of them had been spectators of the passage of arms, and had afterwards witnessed the judicial duel between Mazurec and the knight of Chaumontel. Obedient to the orders of Caillet, several peasants proceeded to cut it with their scythes young tree branches, that they stuck in the ground, forming an enclosure about thirty feet square, in imitation of the fence or barrier of tourneys. The enclosure being ready, the Jacques crowded in dense ranks around it.

At a signal, William Caillet approached the men who led the pinioned Sire of Nointel and the knight of Chaumontel. The latter, though pale, still preserved his resoluteness; the former, however, looking dejected and discouraged, was now a prey to superstitious terror. He sees verified the sinister prophecy of his vassal, who the year before had said to him: "You have outraged my bride, your bride shall be outraged."

Of all his attire, the Sire of Nointel has preserved only his jerkin and velvet shoes, now in shreds from the roughness of the road. Cold drops of perspiration gather at his temples. Caillet addresses him: "Last year my daughter was forcibly placed in your bed ... last night Mazurec, the wronged bridegroom whom we saved from the watery grave that you decreed to him, returned outrage for outrage.... My daughter and many other victims died an atrocious death in the cavern of the forest of Nointel, last night your bride and many other nobles died in the underground dungeons of the castle of

Chivry that Jacques Bonhomme set on fire.... But that is not yet enough. Mazurec was sentenced to make the amende honorable to you because he insulted you; seeing that you insulted Mazurec when he dragged away your wife, you shall now make the amende honorable on your knees before Mazurec. If you refuse," added Caillet, seeing the enraged seigneur stamp the ground with his feet, "if you refuse, I shall then sentence you to the same death that you have inflicted upon several of your vassals. Two young and strong trees shall be bent, you shall be tied by the feet to the one and by the arms to the other, the saplings will then be let free to straighten themselves up again.... You are forewarned, Sire of Nointel!"

"I witnessed the death of my friend Toussaint the Heavy-bell, who was dismembered in that manner by your orders between two oak saplings!" interposed Adam the Devil. "I know exactly how it must be done in order to manage that torture successfully. Now choose between the amende honorable or the death we just described."

"Submit, Conrad!" said the knight of Chaumontel, with bitter disdain. "Let us submit to the extreme limit of the excesses of these varlets. We will be revenged. Oh, soon again the casque will resume the upperhand over the woolen cap, and the lance over the fork."

Shivering with dismay at the threatened torture, Conrad of Nointel answered his friend in a hoarse voice: "Gerard, do not leave me alone!"

"I shall be your faithful companion to the end," answered the knight. "We have joyously emptied more than one cup together, we shall die together."

Led by Jacques, the two nobles were placed in the center of the enclosure, around which stood the revolted vassals. Many of them had also witnessed the amende honorable of Mazurec, who, now armed in the armor of the knight of Chaumontel, is standing near the center of the lists, reclining on his long sword.

"On your knees!" ordered Adam the Devil to the Sire of Nointel, and pressing down with his strong hands the seigneur's shoulders, he made him drop on his knees at the feet of Mazurec. "And now, noble seigneur, repeat my words:

"Seigneur Jacques Bonhomme, I blame myself and humbly repent having used unseemly words against you when last night you dragged my noble bride...."



Outbursts of laughter, jeers and cat-calls from the Jacques greeted these words, which recalled to the Sire of Nointel both the forfeiture of his happiness and the disgrace of his bride. He shrank together, emitted a roar of pain, and burning tears dropped from his eyes while grinding his teeth he muttered: "Death and massacre!"

"That is quite painful, is it not, Sire of Nointel," suggested Caillet, "to be forced to beg pardon on one's knees for having wished to resist the outrage that is racking your mind? Poor Mazurec the Lambkin went through this shame only last year, as you are doing now!... It is justice!... Stay on your knees!"

"Come, let's hurry!" resumed Adam the Devil, "make the amende honorable on your knees before Jacques Bonhomme, if not, you shall be dismembered on the spot, my noble Sire!"

The Sire of Nointel answered only with a fresh roar of rage, writhing in his bonds: "Oh, my unhappy life!"

"Conrad," said Gerard, "repeat the empty words, yield to these cowardly varlets. What can you do against force? There is nothing but to submit."

"Never!" cried the Sire of Nointel, in a frenzy of rage. "Sooner a thousand deaths! To ask pardon of that miserable serf ... when before my own eyes he dragged away my bride ... my beautiful and proud Gloriande ...," and breaking out again in a cry of rage: "Blood and massacre! A minute ago I felt overwhelmed.... I now feel hell burning in my breast.... Oh, if only I were free ... I would tear these varlets to pieces with my nails and teeth! I would put them through a thousand deaths!"

"Sire of Nointel, if upon your knees you make the amende honorable to Mazurec, I shall then put a sword in your hand," said Jocelyn the Champion slowly drawing near. "I promise to fight with you, and you will then at least die as a man. Come, on your knees!"

"True?" mumbled Conrad, his mind wandering with despair and rage, "you will give me a sword?... I shall be able to die seeing the blood of one of you flow ... you miserable rebels!"

Seizing the naked sword that his brother held in his hand, Jocelyn took it and threw it on the ground a few paces from Conrad, and planting his foot upon the blade said: "Make the amende honorable—you will then be unbound and you may take this sword ... then there shall be a combat to the death between us two, son of Neroweg!"

"Come, my handsome Sir," resumed Adam the Devil addressing Conrad, "come, repeat after me—'Seigneur Jacques Bonhomme, I blame myself and humbly repent....'"

"Seigneur Jacques Bonhomme," repeated Conrad of Nointel in a voice strangling with rage and casting a furtive look at the sword only the sight of which imparted to him the necessary strength to perform the revolting expiatory act. "Seigneur Jacques Bonhomme, I blame myself and humbly repent.... Shame and humiliation!"

"Having used unseemly words against you, Seigneur Jacques Bonhomme," proceeded Adam the Devil amidst new outbursts of laughter and jeers from the Jacques, "when last night you were about to outrage my bride on the nuptial bed ... my belle Gloriande of Chivry."

"No, no, never," cried Conrad of Nointel, foaming at the mouth, "I never shall repeat those infamous words!"

Jocelyn took off and threw his casque at a distance, unbuckled his steel corselet, threw away his armlets, pulled off his leather jerkin, preserving only that part of his armor that covered his thighs and lower extremities, removed his shirt, leaving his breast bare, and said to the Sire of Nointel: "Here is flesh to bore holes through, if you can.... I am wounded in the thigh ... that evens up your chances; moreover, I swear I shall strike only at your breast; yes, I swear it, as truly as, freeman or serfs, my ancestors have during the centuries that rolled over us crossed swords with yours!"

"Oh, you dog whom my ancestors conquered.... I shall kill you!" cried Conrad of Nointel nearly delirious. Retaining his posture on his knees before Mazurec, he muttered, gasping for breath: "I repent, seigneur Jacques Bonhomme ... of having used unseemly words ... against you ... when you sought ... to outrage ... my bride in her nuptial bed...."

"The belle Gloriande of Chivry, and pronounce the name distinctly," said Adam the Devil. "Now, hurry up!"

"The ... belle ... Gloriande ... of ... Chivry ..." repeated Conrad, as if tearing the words from his breast.

"High, puissant and redoubtable seigneur of Nointel, Jacques Bonhomme pardons you for the outrage he perpetrated upon you!" now put in Mazurec in the midst of a fresh explosion of triumphant laughter and contemptuous jeers uttered by the Jacques.

"The sword! The sword!" cried Conrad rising livid and fearful with rage, but with his hands still pinioned behind him, and addressing Jocelyn. "You promised me blood ... yours ... or mine.... I wish to die seeing blood.... To the sword, to the sword!"

"Remove his bonds," said the champion with his feet still on the sword that lay on the ground and drawing his own.

While the Jacques were unfastening the bonds that held the arms of the seigneur of Nointel, the knight of Chaumontel took a step towards his friend and said to him: "Farewell, Conrad ... you are blinded with rage ... you are weakened by the trials of last night ... you will be killed by that Hercules ... a champion by profession.... But we shall be revenged."

"I killed!" cried the Sire of Nointel with a ghostly smile. "No, no; it is I who will kill the dog.... I will cut the vagabond's throat!"

"Recommend your soul to St. James," said Gerard in a penetrating voice to Conrad; "an invocation to him is sovereign in cases of duels."

"Oh, I shall invoke my hatred," replied Conrad twitching his arms that Adam the Devil was about to unloosen. But Jocelyn made a sign to his companion to wait a moment before untying the Sire of Nointel, and then turning to the revolted serfs he made to them this vigorous and terse address:

"It is now eleven hundred years ago ... one of my ancestors, Schavanoch the Soldier—the foster brother of Victoria the Great, the emperor woman who predicted the enfranchisement of Gaul—fought against one of the chiefs of the Frankish hordes who then threatened to invade Gaul, our mother country; that Frankish chieftain was called Neroweg the Terrible Eagle, and he was the ancestor of the Sire of Nointel, whom you there see before you.... Two centuries later, the Franks, thanks to the complicity of the Bishop of Rome, had succeeded in conquering Gaul and in reducing her inhabitants to a condition of most cruel slavery; our land thereupon became a prey to our conquerors, and we moistened it with our sweat, our tears and our blood.... During the first years of the Frankish conquest, Karadeuk the Bagaude, the ancestor of both Mazurec and myself, a revolted slave, fought with Neroweg, Count of Auvergne, count by the right of rapine and murder. That Neroweg had subjected to a cruel torture Loysik the Working-Hermit and Ronan the Vagre, sons of Karadeuk the Bagaude. Bagaudie and Vagrerie were the Jacquerie of those days. Vagres and Bagaudes revenged themselves then as the Jacques do now for the oppression of the seigneurs. In that fight between Karadeuk the Bagaude and the Count Neroweg, Neroweg fell under

the axe of Karadeuk.... Coming down to three centuries ago, another of my ancestors, Den-Brao the Mason was buried alive together with several other serfs, his fellow workmen, by Neroweg IV, Count of Plouernel in Brittany."

"That noble thereby buried together with Den-Brao the secret of an underground passage that they had been made to construct, leading from the feudal manor into the forest. The grandson of Den-Brao, who remained a serf of the seigniory of Plouernel, was called Fergan the Quarryman. Neroweg VI kidnapped a son of Fergan for the purpose of applying the child to the bloody sorceries of a witch. Fergan succeeded in rescuing his child, but he witnessed the murder of his two relatives Bezenecq the Rich and Bezenecq's daughter Isoline. Unable to pay an enormous ransom imposed upon him by Neroweg VI, Bezenecq perished under the torture, while Isoline, the witness of her father's torment, became insane and died. Then came the days of the Crusades. Fergan and his seigneur met face to face and alone in the middle of the desert of Syria. Fergan could have killed him by surprise, but he fought him and vanquished.... Finally, only a year ago, my brother Mazurec the Lambkin has seen his bride dishonored by the Sire of Nointel, the scion of the Nerowegs of old, he forced my brother to make him the amende honorable at his feet, and thereupon to fight half naked with the knight of Chaumontel in full armor. Vanquished in this unequal combat and sentenced to be drowned in a bag, Mazurec would have perished but for Adam the Devil and myself, who succeeded in drawing him out of the river betimes, but his wife, Aveline-who-never-lied, died an atrocious death only a few days ago. The history of my family's sufferings is the history of the families of us all, the enslaved and oppressed of your class, Sire of Nointel, during so many centuries! Aye, among the thousands upon thousands of revolted vassals, who at this hour are running to arms, there is not one whose family has not undergone what mine has! The narrative of Mazurec's family and mine is theirs also. Do you now understand the treasury of hatred and of vengeance that has been heaping up from century to century in the indignant breast of Jacques Bonhomme? Do you understand that from age to age the fathers bequeathed this hatred to their children as the only heritage left to them by servitude? Do you understand that the vassal has a frightful account to settle with his seigneur? Do you understand how, in his turn, Jacques Bonhomme has no mercy and no pity? Do you, finally, understand that if at this moment, instead of fighting you, I were to kill you like a wolf caught in a trap, the act would be just? You have but one life, but innumerable are the lives of the Gauls taken by you, and much larger yet those taken by your class!"

An explosion of fury from the Jacques marked the close of these words. Sufficiently exasperated against the Sire of Nointel, they felt that the

narrative of Jocelyn's family was that of the martyrdom on earth endured by Jacques Bonhomme.

"Death to the seigneur!... Death without combat!" repeated the insurgents. "Death to him, like a wolf caught in a trap!"

"Vassal, you promised to fight with me!" cried Conrad of Nointel. "Of what use are these ancient stories?"

"Do you repudiate the acts of your ancestors? Do you repudiate your class?"

"Even with your sword at my throat I shall to the very end pronounce myself proud of belonging to the warrior class that has held you under the whip and the stick, ye miserable serfs.... Even dying would I smite your faces!"

With a wafture of his hand Jocelyn restrains a fresh explosion of fury from the Jacques, and says to Adam the Devil: "Deliver the seigneur of his bonds.... Once more in the course of the centuries a son of Joel and a son of Neroweg shall take each other's measure, sword in hand!"

"And may my stock again meet yours to the undoing of your own!" answered Conrad of Nointel in a hollow voice. "The elder branch of my family still occupies its domains in Auvergne ... and my father's brother has sons! The race of the Nerowegs will reappear across the ages!"

"Battle!... Battle!" said Jocelyn. "It shall be a battle to the death, without quarter or mercy.... Battle!"

"And also I, brother, shall have neither pity nor mercy for that thief, the cause of all my misfortunes!" cried Mazurec, pointing at the knight of Chaumontel, and added: "Adam, untie also his hands. There is room enough here for a double combat. My brother shall have the seigneur.... I shall take this thief of a knight. Give me a pitch-fork, the fork is the lance of Jacques Bonhomme."

Freed of his bonds and clad only in his shirt and hose, Gerard of Chaumontel receives from William Caillet a stick to defend himself with, and from Adam the Devil a rude push that throws him in front of Mazurec, who, protected from head to foot by the knight's own armor, holds up his three-pronged and sharp fork.

"Come up, you double thief!" Mazurec called out; "must I step forward to meet you?"

The Jacques, grasps his stick with both hands and forcing a smile on his lips answers: "The heralds-at-arms have not yet given the signal."

In the meantime, Conrad of Nointel, whose arms have been unbound, stooped down to seize the sword from which Jocelyn had not yet lifted his foot.

"One moment!" cried the champion, always with his foot firmly on the sword. "Sire of Nointel, look me in the face ... if you dare!"

Conrad raised his head, fastened his glistening eyes upon his adversary and asked: "What do you want?"

"Worthy Sire, I wish to goad you to the combat. I mistrust your courage. You fled like a coward at the battle of Poitiers, and a minute ago you referred to me as a vile slave fit only for the whip and the cane—"

"And I say so again!" yelled Conrad turning red and white with rage, "you vagabond!"

"Take this for the insult!" came from Jocelyn like a flash while buffeting the livid face of Conrad of Nointel. "These slaps are the goad I promised you. Even if you were more cowardly than a hare, fury will now serve you instead of courage!" Saying this Jocelyn made a leap backward, placing himself on his guard and leaving the sword on the ground free. Crazed with rage, Conrad of Nointel seized the weapon and rushed upon Jocelyn at the very moment that, armed with his stick, Gerard of Chaumontel was rapidly retreating before the approaching prongs of Mazurec's fork.

"Infamous thief!" cried the vassal pressing the knight with his fork; "I had more courage than you.... I threw myself under the feet of your horse, and seized you hand to hand!"

"My Jacques!" cried out Adam the Devil seeing the knight of Chaumontel still retreating before Mazurec, "cross your scythes behind that knight of cowardice; let him fall under your iron if he tries to escape Mazurec's fork."

The Jacques followed Adam the Devil's suggestion; at the same time that Mazurec ran forward with his fork Gerard of Chaumontel perceived a formidable array of scythes rise behind him.

"Cowardly varlets! Infamous scamps! You abuse your strength!"

"And you, worthy knight," answered Adam the Devil, "did not you abuse your strength when you fought on horseback and in full armor against Mazurec half naked and with only a stick to defend himself?"

During this short dialogue, the Sire of Nointel was impetuously charging upon Jocelyn. Rendered dexterous in the handling of the sword by the practice of the tourneys, young, agile and vigorous, he aims many an adroit blow at Jocelyn, who, however, parries them all like a consummate gladiator, while pricking his adversary with the contemptuous remark. "To know how to handle a sword so well, and yet to retreat so pitifully at the battle of Poitiers! What a shame!"

With a rapid step back Jocelyn evades at that instant a dangerous thrust of Conrad of Nointel's sword, retorts with a vigorous pass, smites his adversary on the shoulder and, to his great astonishment, sees him suddenly roll on the ground, seem to stiffen his members, and then remain motionless.

"What?" observed the champion lowering his sword, "dead with so little? Beaten down so quickly?"

"Brother, look out ... it probably is a ruse!" cried Mazurec, at whom Gerard of Chaumontel had finally aimed so furious a blow with his stick that it broke into splinters against the iron casque on the vassal's head. "Without the casque I would now be a dead man. Oh! that's a good practice you knights have of fighting so well armed against half naked Jacques Bonhomme!" Although somewhat dazed by the shock, Mazurec plunged his fork into the bowels of the robber knight, who fell blaspheming. Observing that Conrad still remained motionless on the ground, Mazurec repeated the warning: "Look out, brother! It is a ruse!"

And so it was. Astonished at the fall of his adversary Jocelyn was stooping over him when the Sire of Nointel suddenly rose on his haunches, seized the champion's leg with one hand, and with the other sought to stab his adversary in the flank with a dagger that he had kept concealed in his hose. Taken by surprise and pulled by a leg, Jocelyn lost his balance.

"Viper!" cried Jocelyn dropping his sword and falling upon Conrad whose hand he struggled to overpower. "I was on the look-out.... I thought your death was feigned!" and wresting the dagger from Conrad's hand, Jocelyn plunged it in his adversary's breast: "Die, thou son of the Nerowegs!"

"Gerard!" muttered Conrad, dying, "I ... was wrong ... in violating the vassal's wife.... Oh, Gloriande!"

Hardly had Jocelyn stepped aside from the corpse of the Sire of Nointel when his vassals, so often the victims of his cruelty, precipitated themselves upon the arena, and plying their forks, scythes and axes with savage fury on the still warm body of their recent tyrant, mutilated it beyond recognition. In the meantime, aided by other Jacques, Adam the Devil raised the knight of Chaumontel, who, though mortally wounded by the thrust of Mazurec's fork, was still alive, and called out: "Fetch the bag and ropes!"

A peasant brought a bag with which they had provided themselves at the castle of Chivry. The bleeding body of the knight of Chaumontel was placed within and tied fast so as to allow his cadaverous head to stick out, and the bundle was carried to the Orville bridge.

"Do you recall my prophecy," Mazurec asked the knight, with a diabolical smile; "I prophesied you would be drowned."

Gerard of Chaumontel uttered a deep moan. A superstitious terror now overpowered him. His wonted haughtiness was no more. In a fainting voice he murmured: "Oh, St. James, have pity upon me.... Oh, St. James, intercede for me.... with our Lord and all his saints.... I am justly punished.... I stole the vassal's purse.... Oh, Lord, Oh, Lord, have pity upon me!"

Arrived at the Orville bridge, the peasants threw the bagged body of the knight of Chaumontel into the river amid the frantic cheers of the Jacques, who exclaimed: "May thus perish all seigneurs!"



## CHAPTER VI

### ON TO CLERMONT!

Tarrying a moment on the Orville bridge, which the Jacques had left on the march to join other bands and proceed in stronger force against other seigniories, Jocelyn noticed a rider approaching at full gallop. A few minutes later he recognized the rider to be Rufin the Tankard-smasher, who soon reined in near the bridge, followed at a distance by a considerable number of insurgents.

Jumping off his horse Rufin said to Jocelyn: "I learned from the peasants coming up behind me that there was a large gathering of Jacques at this place; I thought I would find you among them and hastened hither to deliver to you a letter from Master Marcel.... Great events are transpiring in Paris."

Jocelyn eagerly took the missive, and while he read it, Rufin the Tankard-smasher went on saying: "By Jupiter! The company of an honorable woman brings good luck. When I used to have Margot on my arms, I always ran up against some accident; on the other hand, nothing could have been happier than this trip of mine to Paris with Alison the Huffy, who, I fancy, is huffy only at Cupid. We arrived in Paris without accident, and Dame Marguerite received Alison with great friendship. Oh, my friend! I worship that tavern-keeper. Fie! What an improper term! No! That Hebe! And was not Hebe the Olympian tavern-keeper? Oh, if Alison would only have me for her husband, we would set up a lovely tavern, intended especially for the students of the University. The shield would be splendid. It would exhibit Greek and Latin verses appealing to the toppers, such as: "Like Bacchus does——"

Jocelyn here interrupted the student, saying with much animation after he had finished Etienne Marcel's letter: "Rufin, I return with you to Paris; the provost has orders for me. Mazurec is revenged. Everywhere the Jacques are rising according to the information that reaches Marcel from the provinces. The formidable movement must now be directed and utilized. The Jacquerie must be organized. Wait for me a minute. I shall be back immediately."

Jocelyn thereupon called to Adam the Devil, Mazurec and William Caillet, who had also remained behind, took them aside and said: "Marcel calls me to his side. The Regent has withdrawn to Compiègne; he has declared Paris out of the pale of the law and is preparing to march upon the city at the head of the royal troops; they are waiting for him, and will give him a warm reception. All the communal towns, Meaux, Amiens, Laon, Beauvais, Noyons, Senlis are in arms. Everywhere the peasants are rising and the

bourgeois and guild corporations are joining them. The King of Navarre is captain-general of Paris. The man deserves the nickname of 'Wicked,' nevertheless he is a powerful instrument. Marcel will break him if he deviate from the right path and refuse to bow before the popular sovereignty. The hour of Gaul's enfranchisement has sounded at last. In order to carry the work to a successful issue, the Jacquerie will have to be regulated. These scattered and dispersed bands must gather together, must discipline their forces and form an army capable of coping, first with that of the Regent, and then with the English. We must first crush the inside foe and then the foreign one."

"That is right," said Caillet, thoughtfully. "Ten scattered bands can not accomplish much; the ten together can. I am known in Beauvoisis. Our Jacques will follow me wherever I lead them. Once the seigneurs are exterminated, we shall fall upon the English, a vermin that gnaws at the little that seigneurs and their clergy leave us."

"Yesterday's butcheries have opened my appetite," cried Adam the Devil, brandishing his scythe. "We shall mow down the English to the last man. Death to all oppressors!"

"The crop will be fine if we mow together," replied Jocelyn. "Meaux, Senlis, Beauvais and Clermont are awaiting the Jacques with open arms. Their gates will be opened to the peasants. These will find there food and arms."

"Iron and bread! We need no more!" put in William Caillet. "And what is Marcel's plan?"

"These fortified cities, occupied by the Jacques and the armed bourgeoisie, will hold the Regent's troops in check in the provinces," answered Jocelyn. "The other sections of the country are to organize themselves similarly. Now, listen well to Marcel's instructions. The King of Navarre is on our side because he expects with the support of the popular party to dethrone the Regent. He occupies Clermont with his troops. Thence he is to proceed to Paris and meet the royal army under the walls of the city. He needs reinforcements. Marcel mistrusts him. Now, then, you are to gather all the bands of Jacques into a body and proceed to Clermont at the head of eight thousand men. You can then join Charles the Wicked without fear, although he is never to be trusted. But as his own forces barely number two thousand foot soldiers and five hundred horsemen, in case of treason they would be crushed by the Jacques, who would out-number them four to one."

"Agreed," answered William Caillet, after carefully listening to the champion, "and from Clermont are we to march straight to Paris?"

"Upon your arrival at Clermont you will receive further instructions from Marcel. To overpower the nobility, dethrone the Regent and chase the foreigners from our soil—that is the provost's programme. When the campaign shall be over, the hour of Jacques Bonhomme's enfranchisement will have come. Delivered from the tyranny of the seigneurs and the pillaging of the English, free, happy and at peace, the peasant will then be able to enjoy the fruits of his arduous labors and will be able to taste without molestation the sweet pleasures of the hearth.... Yes, you William Caillet, you Adam the Devil, you Mazurec, and so many others who have been wounded in your tenderest feelings, you will have been the last martyrs of the seigneurs and clergy, you will be the liberators of your kind."

"Jocelyn, whatever may now happen, vanquisher or vanquished, I can die in peace. My daughter is revenged!" said William Caillet. "I promise to lead more than ten thousand men to the walls of Clermont. The blood of the seigneurs and their priests who have outraged us, the conflagrations of their castles and churches, from which they issued to oppress us, will mark the route of the Jacques."

"Marcel recalls me to Paris; I shall return to him; but you will meet me at Clermont, where I shall convey to you further instructions." And pressing Mazurec to his heart: "Adieu, my brother, my poor brother! We shall soon meet again. William, I leave him with you. Watch over the unfortunate lad!"

"I love him as I did my daughter! She will be the topic of our conversation. And we shall fight like men who no longer care for life."

After this exchange of adieus, Jocelyn turned back to Paris with Rufin the Tankard-smasher on the crupper of his horse.

## CHAPTER VII

### CLERMONT

Charles the Wicked, King of Navarre, occupied at Clermont, in the province of Beauvoisis, the castle of the count of the place—a vast edifice one of whose towers dominated the square called the "Suburb." The first floor of the donjon, lighted by a long ogive window, formed a large circular hall. There, near a table, sat Charles the Wicked. It was early morning. The prince asked one of his equerries:

"Has the scaffold been erected?"

"Yes, Sire, you can see it from this window. It is just as you ordered it."

"What face do the bourgeois make?"

"They are in consternation; all the shops are closed; the streets are deserted."

"And the masses?... the artisans.... Are they heard to murmur?"

"Sire, after yesterday's massacre, there are none more of the poorer class to be seen ... neither on the streets nor the squares.... The people are scarce."

"But some must still be left."

"Those that are left are in consternation and stupor like the bourgeois."

"All the same, let my Navarrians keep sharp watch at the gates of the town, on the ramparts and on the streets. Let them kill on the spot any bourgeois, peasant or artisan who dares this morning to put his nose outside of his house."

"The order has been given, Sire. It will be carried out."

"And the chiefs of those accursed Jacques?"

"They remain impassive, Sire!"

"Blood of Christ! They will become livelier, and that soon.... Has a trevet been procured. Let the executioner hold himself ready."

"Yes, Sire. Everything is prepared according to your orders."

"Let everything be ready at the stroke of seven."

"All shall be ready, Sire."

Charles the Wicked reflected a moment, and then resumed, taking up an enameled medallion with his monogram that lay near him on the table: "Did the man arrive who was arrested at the gates last night, and who sent me this medallion?"

"Yes, Sire. He has just been brought in unarmed and pinioned, as you ordered. He is kept under watch in the lower hall. What is your pleasure?"

"Let him be brought up."

The equerry stepped out. Charles the Wicked rose, and approached the window that opened upon the square where the scaffold was erected. After throwing it partly open so as to be able to look out, he reclosed it and returned to his seat near the table, his lips contracted with a sinister smile. He had barely sat down again when the equerry returned preceding the archers in the middle of whom walked Jocelyn the Champion with his hands bound behind his back and his face inflamed with anger. The prince made a sign to the equerry, who thereupon withdrew with the Navarrians, leaving Charles the Wicked and Jocelyn alone, the latter, however, still pinioned.

"Sire, I am the victim either of a mistake or of unworthy treason!" cried Jocelyn. "For the sake of your honor, I hope it is a mistake.... Order me to be unbound."

"There is no mistake in the case."

"Then it is treason! To disarm me! To pinion me!... Me, the carrier of the medallion that I sent to you together with a letter that I brought to you from Master Marcel! That is treason, Sire! Disgraceful felony!"

"There is in all this neither mistake nor felony. A truce with your imprudent words!"

"What else is it?"

"A simple measure of prudence," coolly answered Charles the Wicked; "you signed the letter 'Jocelyn the Champion'.... Is that your name and profession?"

"Yes, Sire; I am a defender of the oppressed."

"Did Marcel send you to me?"

"I told you so, and proved it by forwarding the medallion. What do you want of me? Ask; I shall answer."

"What is the purpose of your message?"

"You shall know it when you will have set me free of my bonds."

"The bonds do not tie your tongue ... seems to me! You can answer very well as you are."

"You ignore my character of ambassador! I have come in that capacity."

"That's subtle ... but be careful; the minutes are precious; your message is certainly important.... Its success may be endangered by a prolonged silence."

"Sire, I came to you, if not as a friend, still as an ally. You treat me like an enemy. Master Marcel will be thankful for my reserve——"

"Very well," said Charles the Wicked, ringing a bell. The call was forthwith answered by the equerry. "Let this man be taken outside of the town, and the gates closed after him. Do not allow him in again."

After a brief struggle with himself, Jocelyn resumed: "However outrageous be the reception you give an envoy of Marcel, I shall speak and fulfill my mission."

At another sign from the King of Navarre, the equerry stepped out again and the former said to Jocelyn: "What is your message?"

"Master Marcel charged me to say to you, Sire, that it was time to open the campaign; the Regent's army is marching upon Paris; all the vassals are up in arms; numerous troops of Jacques must be approaching Clermont to join you. Indeed, I am astonished at not having met any Jacques."

"By what gate did you enter Clermont? From what side did you cross the walls?"

"By the gate of the Paris road. It was dark when I arrived and sent you one of the archers who arrested me."

"You spoke with no soldier?"

"I was locked up alone in one of the turrets of the rampart. I could speak with nobody. I communicated only with your archers."

"Proceed ... with your message."

"Marcel wishes to know what your plan of campaign will be when your troops have been reinforced by eight or ten thousand Jacques, who, according to our information, may any time arrive in Clermont."

"We shall speak about that presently.... First tell me what the public sentiment is in Paris. Are more rebellions feared?"

"The adversaries of Marcel and partisans of the Regent are very active. They seek to mislead the population by imputing to the revolt all the ills that the city suffers from. Royal troops seized Etamps and Corbeil to prevent the arrival of grains in Paris and starve out the city. Marcel took the field with the bourgeois militia, and after a murderous conflict he threw the royalists back and secured the subsistence of Paris. But the provost's adversaries are redoubling their underhand manoeuvres with a view to bring a portion of the bourgeoisie back to the Regent. The people, more accustomed to privations, are easily resigned; full of hope in the future that is to bring them deliverance, they weaken neither in energy nor in devotion to Marcel, especially since the tidings of the revolts of the Jacques reached Paris. The vassals of the whole valley of Montmorency are now in revolt ..."; but suddenly breaking off, Jocelyn said: "Sire, order these bonds to be removed from my hands; they are a disgrace to me and to you.... You treat me like a prisoner!"

"You were saying that the Regent's partisans are active? Is not Maillart among the leaders in that movement?"

"No ... at least not openly. The avowed leaders of the court party are all nobles; among them is the knight of Charny and the knight James of Pontoise. Prompt and resolute action is necessary. Your chances of reigning over Gaul are excellent if you come to the help of the Parisians, take the field against the forces of the Regent, and utilize, as Master Marcel suggests, the powerful aid offered by the Jacquerie. Next to the clergy and the seigneurs, there are no more implacable enemies of the peasants than the English. Marcel's purpose in encouraging the insurrections of the Jacques and organizing their bands is above all to hurl them in mass against the English in the name of the country that the invaders are ravaging with their predatory bands, and to drive them from our soil. Triumph is assured if the present enthusiasm of the Jacques is utilized by turning it into that sacred

channel towards the safety and deliverance of the country. That is the reason, Sire, why Master Marcel has been seeking to effect the junction of the Jacques with the forces that you command."

"Our friend Marcel," Charles the Wicked observed caustically, "made an excellent choice of allies for me in the revolted peasants!" saying which he rang the bell. The equerry entered and left after the prince had whispered a few words in his ear.

"Sire," again remonstrated Jocelyn, "your manners are mysterious. Are you hatching some other plot against me? You may be frank; I am in your power."

"There is no plot hatching," coolly answered Charles the Wicked, shrugging his shoulders. "I am merely taking precautions to insure the quiet and calmness of our interview as becomes people like ourselves."

"Sire, have I perchance failed in calmness and quiet? My language is self-possessed."

"So far ... you are right ... but presently your moderation may be put to a severe test ... my precautions are wise——"

The entrance of two other robust equerries in the company of the prince's confidante interrupted his last words, and without Jocelyn, whose hands were tied, being able to offer any effective resistance, he was thrown on the floor, where, however, despite his being pinioned, he resented the treatment with Herculean though vain efforts to disengage himself from his assailants.

"By God! You are a Hercules ... what athletic vigor you display! Am I wrong if I take precautions against the consequences of our further interview, despite your assurances of calmness and moderation?"

Not without much difficulty the three equerries finally succeeded in binding Jocelyn's legs as firmly as his arms. When that was done, Charles the Wicked said: "Place the envoy on the settee near the window. He may sit up or lie down, as he chooses.... You may now go."

Again alone with Jocelyn, who was writhing in impotent rage, the prince pursued: "Our interview can now proceed peacefully."

"Oh, Charles the Wicked, every day you strive to justify your name!" cried Jocelyn. "My suspicions did not deceive me. You have some infamous act of treason to inform me of!"



Nonchalantly shrugging his shoulders, the prince answered: "Vassal, if I did you the honor of fearing you I would have had you hanged before this.... If I was betraying Marcel I would be at Compiègne beside the Regent.... You are not hanged, and I am not at Compiègne! Let us now tranquilly resume the conversation that was interrupted when you were speaking about the Jacques.... Well, now, the Jacques did come in bands.... The worthy allies of your friend Marcel came——"

"Here to Clermont?"

"They came here ... to Clermont, in the number of eight or ten thousand."

"Where are they?"

"Oh! Oh!... Where are they?" Charles the Wicked answered back with a Satanic leer. "Where are they?... That is an embarrassing question, that is!... Since man is man it has been the despair of those who seek to fathom the secret of where we go ... when we leave this world.... They are where we all shall go!"

"What is that? The Jacques?——"

"They are where we all shall go.... Do you not understand me?"

"Dead!?" cried Jocelyn, stupefied with terror. "Dead! Massacred! My God!"

"Come, keep cool.... Listen to the details of the adventure ... you are to transmit it to your friends."

"This man frightens me!" thought Jocelyn, a cold perspiration bathing his forehead. "Is it some trap he is laying for me?"

"The Jacques came," resumed Charles the Wicked, "those wild beasts that pillage and burn down castles, massacre priests and seigneurs, outrage women, and pitilessly cut the throats of children, to the end, as these devils put it, of annihilating the nobility!"

"Oh, God!" cried Jocelyn, sitting up, "the reprisals of Jacques Bonhomme lasted one day ... his martyrdom centuries!——"

"Vassal!" the King of Navarre haughtily interrupted Jocelyn, "the rights of the conqueror over the conquered, of the seigneur over the serf, are absolute and from heaven!... A villein or peasant in revolt deserves death. It is the feudal law."

The champion shivered, and looking fixedly at the King of Navarre said: "Charles the Wicked, you will not let me leave this place alive; you would be a lost man if I carried your words to Marcel!"

"You will leave this place alive," coldly answered the prince, "and besides my words, you will report the facts to Marcel."

A prey to irrepressible agony, Jocelyn fell back upon the settee and Charles the Wicked proceeded:

"You will first of all tell Marcel that, however wily he may be, I have not been his dupe. The chiefs of the Jacques whom he sent to me as auxiliaries were expected to become my watchers, and, if need be, my butchers ... if I deviated from the path marked out by that insolent bourgeois. I was in his hands, said he to me, but an 'instrument that he would break if need be'.... Very well! I have broken one of Marcel's redoubtable instruments.... I have annihilated the Jacquerie ... and at this very moment my friends, Gaston Phoebus, the Count of Foix and the Captal of Buch are crushing in Meaux the last coils of that serpent of revolt that sought to rise against the nobility——"

"The Jacquerie crushed! annihilated!" exclaimed Jocelyn, more and more beside himself. But returning to his first suspicion, he gathered voice to say: "Charles the Wicked, you are the most cunning man on earth ... you are laying some trap for me.... If the Jacques came to Clermont to the number of eight or ten thousand, you were not in command of sufficient forces to exterminate them."

"Sir envoy, you are too hasty in your conclusions. Listen first, you will then be able to judge. I promised facts to you. Here they are. Yesterday, towards noon, I was apprised of the approach of the Jacques. The bourgeoisie of Clermont and the corporation of artisans, infected with the old communal leaven, went out to meet the malefactors and to feast them. I encouraged their plans, and while the Jacques halted in the valley near Clermont, three of their chiefs presented themselves at the drawbridge demanding to entertain me."

"What were their names?"

"William Caillet ... Adam the Devil ... and Mazurec the Lambkin.... I ordered the three Jacques chiefs to be brought to me; I received them with great courtesy; I touched their hands, called them my comrades and gave them fraternal embraces. We agreed that, obedient to Marcel's wishes, they

should be my auxiliaries, and that we would speedily start on the march to Paris. In the meantime their men were to remain encamped in the valley. After issuing their orders to this effect, the three chiefs conferred with me upon the plan of campaign. So said, so done. The three chiefs returned to their encampment to order matters and came back to me. My first act then was to throw all three into prison. I knew that, deprived of their chiefs, the execrable bandits were half overcome. I then sent one of my officers, the Sire of Bigorre, to inform the Jacques that at the conference I had with their chiefs, they desired that their men should immediately begin to exercise themselves with my archers and cavalymen, in order to accustom themselves to military manoeuvres. The Jacques tumbled into the trap, gladly accepted the proposition, and were formed into battalions."

Noticing the indignation and rage of Jocelyn, that betrayed themselves through his involuntary twitchings in his bonds, Charles the Wicked interrupted his narrative for a moment in order to interject the remark: "I congratulate myself more and more upon having had you bound fast. Waste not your fury. It will soon have stronger matter upon which to expend itself.... I now proceed.... The bourgeois and artisan guilds of Clermont had tapped a large number of barrels to feast their friends the Jacques with. Their hilarity was soon complete. With loud cries the Jacques called for their first exercise in military marching. The Sire of Bigorre, an able captain, commanded the manoeuvre. He did it in such a way that, after a few marches and countermarches, the Jacques found themselves huddled and crowded together like a herd of cattle at the bottom of the valley, an easy mark to my archers stationed on the surrounding eminences, while my cavalry occupied the only two issues from which the fleers could escape out of the deep hollow."

"You princes are experts at massacres!" cried Jocelyn, in bitter despair.

"It was a regular slaughter of wolves," answered Charles the Wicked. "The Jacques, like stupid and ferocious brutes, and full of vain-glory at parading before the bourgeois of Clermont, put out their chests, and carried their staves, forks and scythes with as much pride as if they carried the noble arms of knighthood; they even applauded the excellent order of my men-at-arms who held the crests round about the hollow in which they were penned up. Suddenly the clarions gave a signal. The music greatly delighted the revolted varlets. But their delight is soon ended. At the clarion's first notes my archers bent their bows and a hail storm of murderous bolts, shot by my soldiers from above into the compact mass of Jacques in the hollow, decimated the bandits. A panic took possession of the savage herd; the brutes sought to flee by the two issues in the valley; but there they found

themselves face to face with my five hundred cavalrymen, cased in iron, who, with lances, swords and iron maces furiously charged upon the canaille, while my archers continued riddling with their bolts both the flanks of the band and those who sought to climb up the hill.... It was a superb slaughter.... The ground was heaped with the dead!"

Jocelyn uttered a hollow groan. Charles the Wicked smiled satisfied and proceeded:

"Nothing more cowardly can be conceived than those varlets after their first exaltation. Such was their fright, as told me by the Sire of Bigorre, that they allowed themselves to be killed like sheep; they fell upon their knees, bared their throats to the swords, their breasts to the arrows and their heads to the iron maces. In short, all those whom iron did not pierce were smothered under the corpses. A large number of bourgeois and town plebs, spectators of the slaughter, and also crowded down in the valley, shared the fate of their comrade Jacques Bonhomme. Thus with one blow I relieved myself of the peasants and of the town plebs together with a considerable number of communal bourgeois. I now hold their town in my power, and keep it. That is their affair with me. And, now, Sir ambassador, tell Marcel in my name no more to mix up the Jacques in our operations. There are now few of these ferocious beasts left; moreover, they are evil companions. You shall presently be freed of your bonds and your horse shall be returned to you. Should you doubt my words and wish to make sure of the facts before returning to Paris, go out by the side of the valley, look around, and, above all, close your nose ... the carcasses of those accursed Jacques are beginning to emit rank odors."

Forgetting in his rage that he was pinioned, Jocelyn turned to rush upon Charles the Wicked. The prince, however, proceeded smiling as before:

"Ungrateful fellow.... You would strangle me.... Yet you ignore how generous I have been.... I have saved the lives of the three chiefs of that band of raving wolves.... Do you doubt it?" he inquired, answering a painful sigh that escaped from the breast of Jocelyn, whose thoughts ran upon his brother; "you question my clemency and generosity!"

"Could it be true?" cried Jocelyn, yielding to a vague hope; "did my brother Mazurec really escape?"

"If you talk calmly instead of bellowing like a staked steer, I shall give you my word as a knight that you will see your brother."

"Mazurec lives.... I shall see him!"

"He lives.... You will see him ... upon the word of a knight. But let us talk sensibly. We must now consider the means by which Marcel and I can co-operate in the accomplishment of our common projects."

"Marcel will not co-operate with the butcher of so many innocent victims!" cried Jocelyn. "Marcel will not ally himself with you, who just told me that all rebellious vassals deserve death!... The fatal alliance he entered into with you, compelled thereto by stress of circumstances, is now forever sundered. It has been a terrible lesson. It will enlighten the people who seek the support of princes in the struggle against their oppressors."

"You slander Marcel's good judgment, whose political sagacity none appreciates more than I. That clothier is a master-man. Do you know what he will answer you when, back to Paris, you will have reported to him the carnage of the Jacquerie?"

"Oh, indeed I do!"

"He will say this: 'The bourgeoisie and the Jacquerie were my army; I expected to discipline it and to be able to say to the King of Navarre: "My army is superior to yours; accept my conditions; let us jointly march against the Regent; I promise you his crown if you consent to submit to the national assembly as the supreme power. If you prefer allying yourself with the Regent, do so. The bourgeoisie holds the towns, the Jacquerie the country. I do not fear you." But here is the Jacquerie, the bulk of my army, annihilated.' Marcel will thoughtfully add: 'The disaster is irreparable. I now have but one of two courses open: either submission to the Regent, and deliver up to him my head and the heads of my friends, or promote the projects of the King of Navarre, who has an army capable of coping with the royal forces. Accordingly, instead of dictating terms to the King of Navarre, I am compelled to accept his terms.' That is what Marcel will say."

"Marcel will never betray the cause to which he has devoted his life."

"So far from betraying the cause of the people, he will insure the execution of a part of his programme. Do you take me for fool enough to ignore that, inevitably—Marcel said so to me, and he spoke truly—inevitably, if I mount the throne, I am compelled to carry out the larger part of the reforms that that redresser of wrongs has been pushing so many years? Would not the bourgeois sooner or later rebel against me as they have done against the Regent if I did not grant them greater freedom? Marcel furthermore said to

me with his usual good sense: 'You, Sire, who covet the crown, will see in every reform measure only a means to confirm you upon the throne; the Regent, on the contrary, considers every measure of reform as a curtailment of his hereditary sovereign rights.'"

"Charles the Wicked, if such are your plans, if each of your words is not a lie or does not hide some trap, why did you massacre the Jacques? Why did you crush that popular uprising? Was it not bound to insure the freedom of Gaul and chase away the English?"

"Do you take me for a simpleton? What would there be left for me to reign over if Gaul were entirely free? What would become of the nobility? No, no! Whether I like it or not, I shall be compelled to grant a large number of reforms that may satisfy the bourgeoisie; I would not resign myself to the rôle of a passive instrument of the national assembly, as Marcel proposes, but I shall want to rule jointly with the assembly; and I would put forth all my efforts to end the English war. But as to raising Jacques Bonhomme from his condition—not at all! If I tried it I would turn every seigneur into an enemy. Jacques Bonhomme shall remain Jacques Bonhomme. Who would be left to fill the royal treasury if I enfranchised Jacques Bonhomme? Who would there be left to be taxed at will? The enfranchisement of Jacques Bonhomme would be the end of both nobility and royalty!... Those pests of bourgeois franchises, that issued from the execrable communes, are themselves enough of a menace to the throne.... This being all understood, you will say to Marcel that as early as to-morrow I shall begin collecting the several divisions of my army, and that I shall march upon Paris, whose gates shall be open to me.... Finally, in order to settle this and some other matters, you will tell him to meet me at Saint-Ouen, where I shall be in the evening of the day after to-morrow."

The merciless logic of Charles the Wicked only redoubled the horror that he inspired Jocelyn with, and the latter was about to give vent to it when the hour of seven was struck from afar by the parochial church of Clermont. With his usual smile the prince observed:

"I promised you that you would see your brother.... You are about to see him. And I want to let you know how I discovered your relationship. I ordered a fellow who is all ears to be concealed in a secret closet of the prison of the three chiefs of the Jacquerie. He was instructed to spy upon the scamps. In that way he heard one of them say to his accomplices, that he regretted he could not see his brother Jocelyn the Champion and friend of Marcel once more. When I this morning received the letter signed

'Jocelyn,' announcing yourself as the envoy of the provost, I easily discovered your relationship with the Jacques."

"Where is my brother? Where is that poor Mazurec? Have me carried before him."

"You will see him! Did I not pledge you my word as a knight?... But do not forget to notify Marcel that I expect to see him at Saint-Ouen day after tomorrow evening. And may the devil take you!"

The King of Navarre left the room. A few minutes after his departure the door was again opened and Jocelyn joyfully turned expecting to see his brother enter. He hoped in vain. It was one of the equerries.

"Your master assured me that I would see my brother, Mazurec," said Jocelyn, an unaccountable feeling of anxiety creeping over him.

The equerry opened the window near which the champion had been deposited and pointing to it said: "Look out of this window. Our Sire is faithful to his promise," and he withdrew, locking the door after him.

Seized with a terrible presentiment, Jocelyn leaned towards the window as far as his bound limbs allowed him, and the following ghastly scene was enacted before his eyes:

Below the window, about thirty feet down, is a vast square surrounded with houses and into which two streets run out, both of which are barred with strong cordons of soldiers charged to keep the inhabitants of the town from entering the square. At one end of the square and not far from Jocelyn's window rises a wide scaffold. In the middle of the scaffold stands a stake with a stool attached, at either side of which is a block on which a sharp-pointed pile is firmly fastened. Several executioners are busy on the scaffold. Some are attaching iron chains to the center stake; others are standing around a cooking-stove turning on the burning coals, with the help of tongs, one of those iron trevets or tripods used by the peasants to cook their porridge in the fire-place. The trevet begins to be red hot; some of the executioners engaged near the stove kneel down and blow upon the fire to keep up the flames.

Presently, trumpets are heard approaching from the direction of one of the two streets; the cordon of soldiers posted at the mouth of that street part and allow a passage to a first squad of archers. Between this and the second squad, William Caillet, Adam the Devil and Mazurec the Lambkin are seen marching with firm tread. Mazurec is only half clad in an old hose of goat-

skin; the two other peasants wear the ancient Gallic "blause" or blouse, wooden shoes and woolen cap. It was not thought necessary to pinion them. Adam and Mazurec have each an arm on the shoulder of William Caillet, who is placed between the two. Thus joined in one embrace, the three men march with heads erect, intrepid looks and resolute carriage towards the scaffold erected for their last martyrdom.

The archers who compose the rear-guard of the escort spread themselves over the place, with their bows ready and their eyes searching the windows of the surrounding houses. One of the lattices clicks open, and instantly two arrows fly and disappear through the aperture, followed by an agonizing cry within. The two archers immediately re-fit their bows. They are executing the orders they received from their chiefs. The town people occupying the houses around the square had been forbidden to appear at their windows during the execution of the three chiefs of the Jacquerie. The three are now at the foot of the scaffold.

Gasping for breath, his face moist with cold perspiration, horrified and desperate at the sight of such a spectacle, Jocelyn feels his head swimming. He seems oppressed by a horrible nightmare. He distinguishes the faces; he hears the voice of Mazurec, of Adam, of Caillet exchanging a supreme adieu on the scaffold, while the executioners around them are making ready. William Caillet takes the hands of Adam and Mazurec and cries out in a strong voice that reaches the champion's ears:

"Firm, my Jacques! Firm to the end! Adam, your wife is revenged!... Mazurec, our Aveline is revenged!... Our relatives and friends, smothered to death in the cavern of the forest of Nointel are avenged.... The executioners are about to torture and put us to death. What does it matter? Our death will not return life to the noble dames and seigneurs who fell under our blows in the midst of their happiness. They sorrowed to leave life ... not so with us, with us whose lives are brimful of sorrows and tears!... The Jacquerie has revenged us!... Some day others will finish what we began!... Firm, my Jacques! Firm to the end!"

"Oh, Jacques Bonhomme, for so many centuries a martyr!" responded Adam and Mazurec in savage enthusiasm. "The Jacquerie has revenged you!... Others will finish what we began!... Firm, my Jacques!... Firm to the end!"

The executioners, engaged in their last dispositions, feel no concern at what the three peasants may say. Their words can find no echo upon that deserted place. As soon as the iron trevet is at white heat, one of the tormentors cried: "Ready! We are ready for the job!"



The archers chain the three Jacques fast to the platform of the scaffold and deliver them to the executioners. These seize William Caillet and bind him down upon the seat attached to the stake in the center of the two blocks with sharp-pointed piles. Mazurec and Adam are stripped of their clothes except their hose, their hands are tied behind their backs and they are led to the two blocks. One of the executioners pulls off the woolen cap that covers the grey-headed William Caillet, while another seizes with a pair of tongs the little trevet, turns it upside down with its feet in the air, and placing the white-hot iron on the skull of the aged peasant cries out: "I crown thee King of the Jacques!"

Caillet bellows with the insufferable pain; his hair takes fire, the skin of his forehead shrivels, runs blood and rips open under the pressure of the incandescent iron. The axes of two other executioners rise over Mazurec and Adam, who are now on their knees each before one of the blocks.

"Brother!" cries Jocelyn the Champion, overcoming the nightmare pressure on his chest that suffocated and extinguished his voice; "Brother!"

At the heart-rending cry, Mazurec quickly raises and turns his head towards the window from which the cry proceeded. But that very instant the glint of the descending axe of the executioner flashes in Jocelyn's eyes; his brother's body sinks upon and his head rolls over the scaffold, reddening it with its blood. The champion is seized with a vertigo; his heart fails him; and he falls unconscious upon the floor.

When Jocelyn recovered consciousness he found himself unbound and stretched upon a pallet of straw in a lower hall. An archer mounted guard over him near a lamp. It was night. Gathering his thoughts as if he had awakened from some troubled dream, the champion soon recalled the horrible reality. The archer informed him that he was found unconscious by the equerries of the prince in the hall of the tower, had been transported to that place, and, after a fit of delirium, had fallen into profound torpor. The archer also informed him that his horse and arms were to be returned to him, and that he could leave Clermont whenever he wished. Jocelyn requested the archer to take him to one of the officers of the King of Navarre, hoping to obtain permission to render a pious homage to Mazurec. The prince granted the request, and Jocelyn, leaving the castle, proceeded to the place of the execution. By the light of the moon he mounted the scaffold which was guarded by soldiers. The corpses of the three Jacques were to remain exposed during the whole of the next day. After his torture, William Caillet had been beheaded like his two companions. His head and theirs were stuck to the points of the piles that surmounted the blocks. Jocelyn

religiously kissed the icy forehead of his brother Mazurec, and turning to descend the scaffold, his foot struck against the iron trevet which had fallen down after the decapitation of William Caillet.

"This instrument of torture and witness of my brother's martyrdom shall join the relics of our family," said Jocelyn the Champion to himself, picking up and concealing the trevet under his cloak. He then hastened to his horse that was held ready at the gate of Clermont and left the town, hastening to rejoin Etienne Marcel in Paris.

## **PART IV**

### **JOHN MAILLART**

#### **CHAPTER I**

##### **THE WAYS OF ENVY**

About a month had elapsed since the death of William Caillet, Adam the Devil and Mazurec the Lambkin.

Denise, the niece of Etienne Marcel and betrothed to Jocelyn the Champion, has retired to a large apartment over the cloth shop of the provost and is busy sewing by a lamp. Uneasiness is depicted on the sweet face of the young maid. From time to time she stays her needle and listens towards the window through which the confused talk and hurrying steps of large numbers of people on the street penetrate into the room. Gradually the noise on the street subsided and silence reigned again. These evidences of the excitement that agitated Paris greatly alarmed Denise.

"My God!" she exclaimed. "The tumult augments. My aunt Marguerite has not yet returned. Where can she have gone to? Why did she borrow the cloak of Agnes our servant? Why the disguise? Why did she conceal her head under a cowl? Can she have gone to the town-hall, where my uncle and Jocelyn have been since morning?" At the thought of the champion, Denise blushed, sighed and proceeded: "Oh, should there be any danger, Jocelyn will watch over my uncle Marcel as he would have done over his own father.... But the prolonged absence of my aunt causes me mortal anxiety.... May God guard her...."

Agnes the Bigot, the old domestic of the house, entered the room precipitately, and said to Denise whom she had known since her birth: "For the last hour I have noticed three men of sinister looks on our street. They never stray far from our door. I watched them through the lattices. Off and on they consult in a low voice and then separate again. One of them has now planted himself on the left, the second to the right of the door, and the third opposite.... They must have been sent to spy upon the people who enter and leave the house."

"Such spyings seem to me ominous; I shall notify my aunt as soon as she returns."

"I think this is she," answered the servant. "I heard the shop door open and close; that must be madam."

Indeed Marguerite Marcel soon entered the room. She threw far from her a cowed cloak that she had on, and said to Agnes: "Leave us."

The provost's wife threw herself into a chair; she was exhausted with fatigue and emotion. Her dejection, the pallor of her visage and the visible palpitation of her bosom redoubled the fears of Denise who was about to interrogate her aunt, when the latter, making an effort over herself suppressed her agitation and said to Denise collectively:

"Courage, my child; courage!"

"Oh, heaven!... Aunt ... have we any new misfortune to deplore? What has happened now?"

"No ... not at present; but to-morrow; perhaps this very evening." Marguerite stopped short for a moment, and then proceeded with still greater calmness and decision: "I paid a tribute to weakness; I now feel strong again; I am now prepared for the worst.... I shall at least know by resignation how to rise to the height of the man whose name I bear! Oh, never was an honorable man more unworthily misunderstood, or attacked in more cowardly fashion!"

"Then Master Marcel is exposed to new perils?"

"My presentiments did not deceive me. What I have just learned by myself confirms them. A plot is hatching against Marcel and his partisans. Perhaps his own life and the lives of his friends are at stake. Let the worst come! At the hour of danger Marcel will do his duty and I mine.... I shall stand by my husband unto death."

Marguerite pronounced these last words in an accent of such mournful determination that a cry of astonishment and fright escaped from Denise.

"My resolution astonishes you, poor child!" resumed Marcel's wife. "To-day you see me full of courage! And yet last year ... even as late as yesterday ... I admitted to you my agony and the fears that every day beset me at the mere thought of the dangers that my husband ran. I then minded only his fatigue, I then only objected to the overwhelming labors that barely left him two hours of rest a night, I then looked back regretfully to the days when, a stranger to political affairs, he busied himself only with the affairs of our own cloth business. Our then obscurity at least saved us the sad spectacle of the hatreds and the envy that have since been unchained against Marcel's glory and popularity."

"Oh, aunt, you speak truly! Do you remember that wicked and envious Petronille Maillart? Thank God she never came back since the day of the funeral of Perrin Macé! We have been spared her presence!"

"I now have no doubt that her husband is one of the leaders in the plot that is hatching against Marcel."

"Master Maillart!... Uncle's childhood friend! He who only the other day was so loudly protesting his affection for him!"

"Maillart is a weak man; he yields to his wife's influence over him, and she is consumed with envy. She envied in me the wife of the man whom the idolizing people called the King of Paris. In those days I would have sacrificed Marcel's glory to his repose ... his genius to his safety! The slightest popular commotion made me fear for him.... I was then weak and cowardly.... But to-day, when he is pursued by hatred, ingratitude and iniquity, I feel strong, brave and withal proud of being the wife of that great citizen. I feel capable of proving to him my devotion unto death."

"Oh, may heaven prevent that your devotion be put to so terrible a test! But how did you learn about the plot?"

"I determined this evening to put an end to my suspense, and to ascertain the actual facts regarding the popular sentiment towards Marcel. I wrapped myself in that mantle to prevent being discovered, and moved among numerous groups that gathered in our quarter."

"I now understand it all. And you learned directly...."

"Things that cause me to foresee an imminent and fearful crisis. The life of Marcel is in great danger."

"Good God! May you not be mistaken?"

"No! The privations, the sufferings and the ills that follow in the wake of the painful conquest of freedom are laid to Marcel's door. My husband is at once attacked by the emissaries of the court party and by those of the party of Maillart. These emissaries circulate among the poor people, who, credulous of evil as well as of good, are fickle in their affections, and whimsical in their hatred. It is harped upon to them that all the evils of these days would have been avoided if Councilman Maillart, 'the true friend of the people,' had been listened to; others preach prompt submission to the Regent as the only means to a speedy end of our public disasters. 'What does the Regent, after all, demand,' ask his backers, 'What does he exact in return for his pardon?"

Only eight hundred thousand gold pieces for the ransom of King John and the heads of the leaders of the revolt and of its principal partisans! Would it be paying too dearly with a little shame, a little gold and a little blood for the peace of the city?"

"Great God!" cried Denise, pale and trembling, "who are the leaders of the revolt whose heads the Regent demands?"

"They are Marcel ... my son ... our best friends ... all honorable people, devoted to the public weal, adversaries of oppression and iniquity ... uncompromising enemies of the English, who are ravaging our unhappy land, and who would have put Paris to fire and sword were not Paris protected by the fortifications that it owes to Marcel's foresight and zeal! The people to-day seem to have forgotten the services that my husband has rendered the city; they seem to have forgotten that they owe to Marcel the reforms that have been imposed upon the Regent and which guarantee them against rapine and violence from the side of the court."

"Can it be possible that the people are guilty of such ingratitude against Master Marcel?"

"My husband's soul is too large, his spirit too just to have been swayed in his public acts by expectations of gratitude. How often has he not said to me: 'Let us do what is right and just, such acts are their own reward.' Marcel is prepared for any emergency. Nevertheless, thinking that my observations might be of benefit to him, I stepped into the house of our friend Simon the Feather-dealer who lives not far from the town-hall, and I wrote to my husband what I had seen and heard. My letter was carried to him by a trusty man——" but observing that the tears that Denise had long been suppressing now inundated her face, Marguerite interrupted her report, inquiring tenderly: "Why do you weep, dear Denise?"

"Oh, aunt! I have neither your strength nor your courage.... The thought of the dangers that threaten Master Marcel ... and our friends ... overwhelm me with fear!"

"Poor child! You are thinking of Jocelyn, your lover? He is a true friend of ours."

"Should there be a riot or a fight, he will rush into the thickest ... to save Marcel."

"I regret, for the sake of your happiness, dear child, that I ever called you to Paris. Had you not come, you would now be living peacefully at Vaucouleurs, away from this center of trouble and strife."

At this instant Agnes the Bigot re-entered, preceding a person whom she announced, saying: "Dame Maillart has come, she assures me, in order to render you a great service. She wishes to speak to you without delay."

"I do not wish to see her!" cried Marguerite, impatiently. "I detest the sight of that woman. I refuse to receive her!"

"Madam, she says she came to render you a great service," answered the servant, sorry for having involuntarily crossed her mistress' wishes. "I thought I was doing right to allow her to come up; it is now unfortunately too late——"

Indeed, Petronille Maillart appeared at that moment at the door of the room. Triumphant and barely controlled hatred betrayed itself in the looks that the councilman's wife cast upon Marguerite. But assuming a mild and kind voice she approached the object of her envy.

"Good evening, Dame Marcel; good evening, poor Dame Marcel."

"This affectation of sympathy conceals some odious perfidy," thought Denise, whose face was still wet with tears. "I do not like to afford this wicked woman the spectacle of my sorrow."

The young maid left the room, together with the servant. Alone with the councilman's wife, Marguerite addressed her dryly:

"I am greatly astonished to see you here, madam; our friendly relations must cease."

"I understand your astonishment, poor Dame Marguerite, seeing we have not met since the day of the funeral of Perrin Macé. Oh, Master Marcel's popularity was then immense; people called him then the King of Paris ... they swore by him ... he was looked upon as the saviour of the city——"

"Madam, I beg you to speak less of the past and more of the present.... Make your visit short. What do you want of me?"

"First of all to beg you to forget the little quarrel we two had on the day of the funeral of Perrin Macé. Next I come to render a great service to poor Master Marcel."

"My husband excites nobody's pity ... he does not need your services."

"Alack! I wish I could leave you in that error, Dame Marguerite. But I must tell you the truth, and inform you, seeing you are not aware of it, that you no longer are the 'Queen of Paris' as you were in the days when Master Marcel was the King. Even at the risk of wounding your legitimate pride, I must add against my will that your husband's position has become desperate.... I feel distressed at the sorrow that overwhelms you——"

"Your excellent heart is unnecessarily alarmed, Dame Petronille. Do not mind my sorrow."

"Unfortunately, however, I am certain of what I say."

"Madame, I greatly mistrust both your protestations and your confidences."

"You do not seem to be informed on what is transpiring in Paris."

"I know that there are wicked and envious people in Paris."

"I know you too well, Dame Marguerite, to imagine that a wise and discreet person like yourself would reproach me with being envious——"

"Indeed, I would not venture, madam.... I would indeed not venture——"

"And you would be right. What is there in your present fate to be envied. A storm is beating down upon you."

"Envious people do not need much to be envious about. They envy even the calmness and courage derived from a clean conscience, when misfortune is on!"

"You admit it?... Misfortune has come upon you and your husband?" cried the councilman's wife triumphantly, and for a moment forgetting her rôle of hypocrite. But recalling herself, she added cajolingly: "The avowal at least makes me hope that you will accept the services of my husband."

Realizing the gravity of the last words of the councilman's wife, Marguerite fixed a penetrating look upon her and answered:

"Did Master Maillart send you to offer his services to my husband? Whence such solicitude?"



"Have the two not been friends since their childhood? Is the friendship of youth ever forgotten? You have earned our affection."

"It is so at least with generous hearts. But if Master Maillart wishes to render a service to my husband, why should he send you, madam? Does he not meet Marcel daily at the town-hall?"

"Since last evening, neither Maillart nor any of his friends have set foot at the town-hall ... and for good reasons. And for another reason he would not set foot here. That is why he has commissioned me to come and offer you his advice and services."

"What does he advise ... what are his services?"

"Maillart advises your husband to secretly leave Paris this very night."

"We now know the advice; it implies a great resolution.... As to the service ... what is it?"

"My husband offers to favor Marcel's flight if you adopt his advice."

"And how?"

"Maillart will send a trusty man to your house towards midnight. He shall accompany your husband. He is to wrap himself up well so as not to be recognized, and confidently follow our emissary, who is charged to see him safely off.... But your husband must be absolutely alone, otherwise our emissary will refuse to conduct him."

"It seems to me that in his eagerness to advise and serve, Master Maillart forgets that Marcel and the town council—the governors, as they are called—are still masters of Paris. The captains of tens and the guards at the gates still obey them. If it should happen—a thing that I consider impossible—that my husband should contemplate quitting his post at the moment of danger, he would take horse with some of his friends, and would order whatever gate of Paris he chose to be opened.... He has the right and the power to do so."

"You would be right if Master Marcel's orders would be obeyed, if these were still the days when, lording it over all Paris, he had the first place at all ceremonies.... But the times have changed, good Dame Marguerite. At this very hour in which I am speaking to you, your husband's authority is about to be ignored. If he tried to order one of the gates of Paris to be opened, his action would confirm the rumors concerning his treason. People would cry:

'Hold the traitor! Death to the traitor!' A hundred avenging arms would rise, and Master Marcel would fall under their blows dead, disfigured, bleeding, butchered!... His body would be torn to pieces.... That would then be his fate!"

"Enough! Enough!" stammered Marguerite, shivering and hiding her face in her hands. "This is horrible. Hold your tongue!"

"Would not such a death be awful, dear Dame Marguerite? Therefore, in order to save his friends from such a fate, my husband charged me to come and offer you his services."

Despite the poor opinion in which she held Maillart and his wife, whose envy she was aware of, Marguerite did not imagine that the proposition of the councilman, one of Marcel's oldest friends and, like himself, of the popular party, could conceal a trap or a snare. Marguerite even took it for a token of sincere pity, easily supposable from the part of envious people at the moment of their triumph over a rival. Moreover, did not the state of public opinion in Paris, on which Marguerite had that very evening sought to assure herself, but too well confirm the words of the councilman's wife on the subject of Marcel's increasing unpopularity? On the other hand, Marguerite was too well acquainted with her husband's force of character and his energy not to feel assured that, unless he was reduced to utter extremities, he never would decide to leave Paris as a fugitive. Nevertheless, the hour of that terrible extremity might arrive. In that case Maillart's offer was not to be despised. These thoughts rapidly flashed through Marguerite's mind. She remained pensive and silent for a moment, while the councilman's wife observed her closely and anxiously awaited her answer.

"Dame Maillart," finally answered Marguerite, "I wish to believe, I believe in the generous impulses that dictated the tender of services that you have just made me in the name of your husband."

"Then, it is understood?" said the councilman's wife, with an eagerness that should have excited Marguerite's suspicion. "The emissary will be here at midnight. Let your husband follow him without taking any companion.... He must have no escort.... That is understood."

"Allow me, Dame Petronille. I can not go so far as to accept your offer in my husband's name. He alone is the judge of his conduct. He gave me reasons to believe that he would be here this evening to take a few hours' rest. If my expectations prove true, I shall soon see him.... I shall notify him of Master

Maillart's proposition. Ask your husband to send his emissary here at midnight. My husband will decide."

"He should not hesitate a moment. Believe me, poor Dame Marguerite, you must exert your whole influence upon your husband, and decide him to avail himself of the one opportunity of escape left to him. He is in great danger."

At this juncture Denise entered the room affecting great hurry and said: "Aunt, Dame Alison wishes to see you privately; she has no time to wait." To these words Denise added a significant gesture conveying to Marguerite the hint to seize the opportunity for putting an end to the visit of the detested Dame Petronille.

Marguerite understood the thoughts of her niece, and said to the councilman's wife: "Please excuse me, there is a visitor I must receive."

"Adieu, good Dame Marcel," said the councilman's wife, taking a step towards the door. "Fail not to remember my advice.... We must know how to resign ourselves to what can not be prevented.... The days follow, but do not resemble each other.... For the rest you understand me. Good evening, dear Dame Marguerite, I wish you happier days. May God preserve you and yours!"

As always, not envy here followed hatred, but hatred envy. Born of the rankling enviousness that the unworthy entertain for the worthy, Petronille Maillart was consumed with malevolent hatred for the man and woman whose ruin she was plotting. Casting upon Marguerite the furtive look of a viper, Dame Petronille took her leave.

## CHAPTER II

### LAST DAY AT HOME

The handsome tavern-keeper, who now entered in response to the summons of Denise, looked neat and prim as ever. Her beautiful black eyes, her white teeth, her comely shape, above all her golden heart—all justified the partiality of the student Rufin for this amiable and honorable woman to the total eclipse of Margot. Finally, thanks to Jocelyn, Alison had not only saved her honor from the clutches of Captain Griffith, but also quite a round sum of gold, sewed in her skirt, from the rapacity of the English. Jocelyn the Champion, once Alison's defender against Simon the Hirsute and later her liberator, when exposed to the libertinage of the bastard of Norfolk, had inspired her with sentiments more tender than merely those of gratitude. Nevertheless, apprized of the engagement of Denise and Jocelyn, the young woman struggled bravely against the promptings of her heart, and seeking to free her mind from the affectionate thoughts that crowded upon her, had found pleasure in observing that, despite his turbulence, Rufin the Tankard-smasher lacked neither devotion, nor heart, nor brightness, nor yet external attractions. Thus, since the day when, fleeing from the horrors of the war that desolated Beauvoisis, she had taken refuge in Paris near the family of the provost to whom she had been recommended by Jocelyn, Alison often met the student in her little lodgings at the inn where she housed, and it often occurred to her that, despite his name, which sounded particularly unpleasant in a tavern-keeper's ear, Rufin the Tankard-smasher might after all not make a bad husband. Moreover, her vanity was not a little flattered by the hope of herself opening a tavern, whose principal customers would be the students of the University of Paris. Received with kindness by Marguerite and Denise, Alison entertained for both a deep sense of gratitude. On this evening she had hastened to Marcel's house in the hope of being of service to them. Observing the signs of uneasiness depicted on the tavern-keeper's face, Marguerite said to her affectionately, taking her hands:

"Good evening, dear Alison ... you look alarmed.... Tell us the cause of your trouble."

"Oh, Dame Marguerite! I have but too much reason for being alarmed, if not for myself, yet for you"; and interrupting herself she added: "First of all, and so as not to forget the circumstance, I must warn you that coming in I saw three men enveloped in cloaks who seem to be in hiding on some ambuscade. These men seem to have evil intents."

"Agnes, our servant, also noticed them," said Denise; "we are forewarned."

"They are no doubt spies," replied Marguerite. "But Marcel need not fear the consequences of being spied upon. Whatever he does is in the public interest, and none of his acts need concealment. Nevertheless, seeing that hatred now dogs his steps ... the information may be useful."

"It is distressing to me, Dame Marguerite, to bring what may be bad news to you, who received me so kindly upon my arrival from Beauvoisis."

"Our friend Jocelyn recommended you to us; he informed us of your misfortunes and of your tender care of that ill-starred Aveline. Our good wishes in your behalf were but natural. But what is the matter?"

"This evening I was looking out of the window of my room at the tumult of the people in the street, because you must know there is an unusual agitation this evening on the streets of Paris, when a young man all out of breath, handed me this note from Rufin the Tankard-smasher."

Alison drew from her corsage a slip of paper which she passed to Marguerite, who nervously seizing it began to read it aloud:

"As true as Venus in her Olympian beauty...."

"Skip that, skip that, Dame Marguerite! Begin at the fourth or fifth line," said Alison, blushing and smiling at once. "Those are but flourishes that Master Rufin amuses himself with. Lose no more time over them than I did myself.... That worthy fellow should have abstained from his roguishness when writing upon such serious subjects."

After having run her eyes over the first lines of the epistle, during which the student displayed his amorous and mythological vein, Marguerite arrived at the essential portion of the missive:

" ... Hurry to the house of Master Marcel; if he is not at home, tell his honored wife to have him warned not to leave the town-hall without a strong escort. I am on the track of a plot against him. So soon as I shall have positive proofs I shall go either to Master Marcel's house, or to the town-hall to inform him of my discovery. Above all, let him be on his guard against Councilman Maillart. He has no more mortal enemy. He ought to order his arrest on the spot ... just as I would on the spot have your heart for my prison whose turnkey is the gentle bantling Cupid."

"Skip all that also, Dame Marguerite; those are some more flourishes. There is nothing more of importance. I am not a little surprised at seeing master student mix up folly with serious matter in that manner."

"Serious, indeed! Very serious!... This letter increases my apprehensions," answered Marguerite, trembling; and recalling her recent conversation with the councilman's wife, she thought to herself: "Could the councilman's offer be a snare?... And still I can not yet accept the existence of quite so horrible a plot!"

"My God!" cried Denise bitterly, "and yet uncle, despite all our presentiments, always answers us when we mention to him our suspicions regarding Maillart: 'He is not a bad sort of a man; only he is wholly under the influence of his wife, who is devoured with vanity. Do not judge him unjustly.'"

"Dear Alison," rejoined Marguerite after a few moments' reflection, "did you question the messenger who brought you the letter?"

"Indeed, madam ... I asked where he had left Master Rufin."

"What answer did he make?"

"That the student was in a tavern near the arcade of St. Nicholas when he handed him the letter."

As Alison was uttering the last words, two men wrapped to the eyes in cloaks entered the room. Marguerite immediately recognized her husband and Jocelyn the Champion. As they were throwing off their wraps, Marguerite cried: "At last, here you are!" and unable longer to control her emotions, she threw her arms around Marcel's neck, while Denise gave her hand to her lover, who respectfully took it to his lips. Under his armor Jocelyn wore a black jacket, a piece of clothing that he had assumed since the day that he witnessed the execution of Mazurec the Lambkin. Sad and pale, the face of Jocelyn betokened the grief that beset his mind. After tenderly embracing Marcel, who effusively returned her caresses, Marguerite said, delivering to him Rufin the Tankard-smasher's letter:

"My friend, take notice of what this latter contains; our good Alison just brought it to me in great haste."

Marcel read the letter in a low voice in the midst of the profound silence of all present, while Marguerite, his niece and Alison attentively watched his face. He remained calm throughout. He even smiled at the mythological flourishes of the student. When he had finished the letter he returned it to Alison, saying kindly:

"I thank you for your anxiety to bring me the missive, Dame Alison; our friend Rufin is wrongly alarmed."

"Nevertheless, my friend," put in Marguerite with intense seriousness, "what about the plot that the student mentions, and on the track of which he says he is?"

"Rufin must have exaggerated to himself the importance of some insignificant fact, my dear Marguerite."

"But ... did you notice what he said about Maillart?"

"Last evening Maillart affectionately shook me by the hand when leaving the town-hall after a discussion in which his opinion differed from mine. 'Men,' said he to me, 'may differ, but the bonds of old friendship are indissoluble,' he added."

Jocelyn confirmed the episode, but Marguerite insisted, the disclosures of the student having gone far to confirm her suspicions against the councilman. "Marcel," said the alarmed wife, "Maillart's wife was here this evening ... she came to propose a place of refuge for you in case of danger—"

"The generous offer does not surprise me."

"A man is to come here this midnight ... you are to follow him alone ... well wrapt in your mantle," said Marguerite with emphasis. "Alone ... do you hear, Marcel?... and he is to conduct you to a place whence you shall be able to flee without danger."

"This is too much kindness," Marcel answered with a smile. "I am grateful for the offer; I do not think of fleeing, that is certain.... We never have been so near the triumph."

"What!" cried Marguerite encouraged by new hope. "Is that true? And yet, why all this commotion.... Why this tumult in Paris ... why these alarming rumors?" And her apprehensions that for an instant had been allayed by the reassuring words of her husband, again regaining the upperhand, she proceeded sadly: "The precaution that you as well as Jocelyn took of enveloping yourselves in these cloaks, no doubt for the purpose of not being recognized on the street—all these things contribute to make me fear that you are deceiving yourself ... or that out of consideration for me, you are concealing the true state of things."

"Aunt forgot to tell you that three men seem to have been watching our house all evening," said Denise, and it did not escape her that Jocelyn seemed struck by the circumstance.

"And I also," observed Alison, "noticed at entering that there seemed to be three spies near the house. Their presence is strange."

"My friend," said Marguerite, seeking to detect from her husband's face whether his feeling of safety was real or assumed, "I sent you this evening a note that I wrote to you at our friend's, Simon the Feather-dealer. I there informed you of my impressions on my personal observations, and urged you to take precautionary measures."

"I received your letter, my dear wife," said Marcel, tenderly taking Marguerite's hands. "You trust me, do you not?... Very well; believe me when I assert that your fears are unfounded. Better than anybody else do I know what is going on in Paris this evening. Are our enemies active? I let them talk, certain that I shall lead my work to a happy issue, as my device proclaims. For the rest, is not my presence here the best proof of my confidence in the situation? Upon receipt of your letter I decided to leave the town-hall for a moment in order to come and calm your fears, to comfort you, and also to beg of you not to alarm yourself if it should happen that I do not return home all day to-morrow.... To-morrow grave matters will be decided. And to sum up," Marcel proceeded, cheerfully, "as I mean to overthrow all your objections, you dear, timid soul, I shall add that it was partly due to my modesty that I enveloped myself in that cloak. I meant to reach here and return without being stopped twenty times on the street by the cheers of the people. Despite the envy and hatred of some of the bourgeois partisans of the Regent, Marcel continues to be loved by the people of Paris."

"And you would not doubt it, Dame Marguerite," added Jocelyn, "if you had heard, as I did, the addresses delivered to-day by the trades guilds, all of which came to pledge their loyalty to Master Marcel."

Jocelyn's words, the cheerful and serene physiognomy of the provost and the tone of conviction that marked his words, somewhat allayed the fears of Marguerite and Denise, the latter of whom said to Marcel: "Your presence suffices to encourage us, dear uncle, just as the sight of the physician sometimes suffices to allay the pains of a patient."

"My worthy Jocelyn," Marcel said, cheerfully, turning to the champion, "that applies to you as much as to me ... you happy and beloved lover!"



"Dear Denise," said the champion to the blushing maid, "the mourning for my poor brother has put off our marriage.... I do not very much regret the circumstance when I consider that in these days of turmoil I could not have devoted all my time to you. But believe Master Marcel; better days are approaching. Need I tell you that they are the subject of my ardent wishes, seeing that they will witness our union?"

"Dame Alison," cordially put in Marcel, "since marriage is the topic of the conversation, take pity on the amorous martyrdom of poor Rufin.... He is a good and loyal heart, despite some transports of youth that earned for him the nickname of 'Tankard-smasher.' I feel quite sure that the wholesome influence of a kind and honorable woman like yourself would make an excellent husband of him. It would be a double pleasure to me to see you and Rufin, Denise and Jocelyn, approach the altar the same day. What say you?"

"That needs thinking over," answered Alison, meditatively. "That needs much thinking over, Master Marcel. For the rest," she proceeded, with a blush and a sigh, "I say neither 'yes' nor 'no'.... I wish to consult Dame Marguerite."

"Rufin's prospects are good," rejoined the provost. "The woman who says not nay ever has a strong wish to say aye."

"Marcel would not be so cheerful and jovial did he actually believe himself and his partisans on the eve of grave dangers," thought Marguerite, now more and more reassured by the turn of gaiety her husband's words had taken. "I must have attached exaggerated importance to what I heard this evening. My husband is right. Even when his popularity is strongest, calumny pursues him. Maillart may be yielding simultaneously both to envy and the more generous feelings prompted by old friendship. He may believe in the loss of popularity by Marcel and enjoy the idea, and yet wish to save him. That wicked Petronille has merely thrown poison into an offer that, in itself, is honorable. If it were otherwise, Maillart would be the vilest of men, and that I am not ready to believe. Such a degree of perversity would exceed the bounds of possibility——"

"Denise," said the provost, kissing his niece on the forehead, "order a lamp to be taken into my cabinet. I have some documents to finish." Turning to his wife, whom he also kissed on the forehead: "I shall see you again before I leave," and taking Jocelyn by the arm: "Come, we have work to attend to."

Denise hastened to carry a lamp into Marcel's cabinet, where she left her uncle and her lover closeted together.

## CHAPTER III

### DARKENING SHADOWS

Once alone in his cabinet with Jocelyn, Marcel sank into profound pensiveness. The cheerful serenity that had pervaded his bearing during the conversation with his wife was now replaced by an expression of melancholic seriousness. For a few minutes he contemplated in silence his studious retreat, the witness of the meditations of his riper years. Finally, leaning over a large table that was strewn with parchments, he emitted a sigh and said to Jocelyn:

"How many nights have I not spent here, elaborating by the light of this little lamp the plans of reform that some day, hap now what hap may, will be the solid basis for the emancipation of our people, the evangelium of the rights of the citizen!... Here have been spent the happiest, the most beautiful days of my life!... What a pure joy did I not then taste!... Sustained by my ardent love for justice and right, and enlightened by the lessons of the past, I soared upward to the sublimest theories of freedom!... I then was ignorant of the deceptions, the evils, the delays, the struggles, the storms that the practice and application of truth inevitably engender!... I then saw truth in its radiant simplicity!... I did not then reckon with human passions!... But that matters not!... Truth is absolute.... Sooner or later it imposes itself upon humanity that ever is on the march, progresses and improves itself...."

Jocelyn listened to Marcel in mute reverence. He now beheld that illustrious man wrapt with pensive brow in ever deeper meditation. A few instants later, Marcel stepped towards an oaken trunk that age had blackened. He opened it, took out several rolls of parchment, lay them on the table, pushed a stool near and sat down to write. His virile and characterful face betrayed by degrees increasing sadness, and, to Jocelyn's surprise several tears dropped from the provost's eyes upon the lines that he was writing. Tears from so great a man, from a man of such energy, endowed with ancient stoicism, profoundly impressed the champion. Jocelyn's heart ached, and he began to suspect Marcel's motives for the affectation of safety that he had shortly before displayed before his family. Jocelyn saw him dry his tears and seal the parchment with black wax, using for that purpose the impress of a large gold ring that he wore on his finger, after which, placing the scroll together with the others that he had taken from the trunk, he made one package of all, sealed them together and replaced them in the trunk. He then locked it, and giving the key to Jocelyn, said to him deliberately:

"Keep this key safe.... I charge you to deliver it to my wife and to tell her, in case certain events should happen, that she will find in that trunk, together with my testament and some other papers that it is well to keep, a letter for herself ... written by me this evening ... written for my beloved Marguerite...."

"Master Marcel," Jocelyn answered, a cold shudder running over his frame, "these are lugubrious preparations."

"Lugubrious?... no ... but prudent.... I have fulfilled my sacred duty.... I now find myself in a singular frame of mind.... The latest happenings, those of to-day, cast over my mind, not any doubt upon the decision I should take, but considerable uncertainty on the head of the means to be adopted. Never yet have I been so in need of a clearness of judgment as now, when I must take some supreme and irrevocable step. I imagine that by talking over the general condition of things, these will stand out more clearly before me. Thought expressed in words becomes preciser, while mute it often fades from one thing to another and is lost to the goal in mind. Therefore, listen to me, and if in the rough sketch that I shall present any omission should strike you, any point should seem obscure, tell me so.... It is a friendly duty that I now conjure you to fulfill."

"I listen, Master Marcel."

"Upon your return from Clermont—pardon that I open the wound of your private sorrow—I also wept over the death of your unfortunate brother—upon your return from Clermont, you informed me of the massacre of the Jacques. The following day we learned that the Captal of Buch and the Count of Foix exterminated at Meaux another considerable troop of revolted peasants. Finally, recovering from the stupor into which these formidable insurrections had struck it, the nobility gathered its forces and running over the country it put a mass of serfs, men, women and children, to frightful tortures and to death, whether these sympathized with the Jacquerie or not, and set their villages on fire. That settled, at least for a long time to come, all thought of an alliance between the townfolks and the country people. The destruction of the Jacquerie reduces the bourgeoisie to its own forces in its struggle against the Regent. The bourgeoisie has, thereupon, no choice but either to accept the unequal fight or deliver itself to Charles the Wicked, and instead of dictating terms to him, accept those that he may choose to dictate to us."

"That was the calculation of the blood-thirsty knave. He said so explicitly to me at Clermont."

"Nevertheless, by massacring the Jacques, skillful politician though Charles the Wicked be, he deprived himself of powerful auxiliaries against the Regent, whose forces are far superior to those of his own. He may fail in his calculations."

"The scoundrelly prince! Had he followed your generous advice, his own hands, re-inforced by thousands of armed peasants and thousands of bourgeois, would by now have crushed the royal troops. And profiting by the general enthusiasm of the people, who are as exasperated at the English as at the seigneurs, Charles the Wicked would now be chasing the foreigners from our soil and would ascend the throne in the midst of the acclamations of a people whom he would govern placing before them the example of submission to the national assembly."

"Such was the glorious mission that opened before Charles the Wicked. It is not yet too late if he would only have the courage, the wisdom and the loyalty to devote himself body and soul to so noble an aim. I shall presently explain that. At present, however, he is, just as ourselves, no other than a rebel against the loyal authority of the Regent. The latter disposes of considerable forces. He has on his side the monarchic tradition, which in the eyes of the people runs back into the night of the ages; he has on his side the royal name, the courtiers, the clergy, the royal officers, the administrators of the revenue and of justice, in short, all those who live upon abuses and exactions—a huge clientage that imparts formidable strength to the Regent. Charles the Wicked is too clear-sighted not to have realized by now all that he lost by destroying the Jacquerie, and how slight his chances now are of usurping the crown. He must have thought of an eventual settlement with the Regent in case our cause, to whose side he still seems to lean, should be seriously compromised, or actually lost."

"Do you believe that Charles the Wicked has actually negotiated with the Regent?"

"Everything makes me think so. The conduct of the King of Navarre during these last days reveals a man who is wavering between ambition to ascend the throne and the fear of a defeat which he would have to pay for with his life and the loss of his domains. He sends us a few insignificant reinforcements, but refuses to enter Paris. He has accepted the title of captain-general of our city, but the queen, his mother, has frequent interviews with the Regent. The hour is critical. The court party exploits at our expense and with its habitual perfidy the present national calamities whose original causes are the insane prodigalities of the court itself. King John and his creatures have driven both towns and country districts to

desperation with their acts of rapine and violence and their unbearable imposts. A revolution broke out. We conquered radical reforms. These were expected to inaugurate an era of peace and prosperity unequalled in the annals of the land, because liberty is at once well-being and independence. But liberty is complete only with the possession of the instruments of work."

"A profound truth, Master Marcel. Tyranny ever engenders servitude, and servitude misery. Only by freeing them from seigniorial tyranny could the insurrection of the serfs insure to these the enjoyment of the fruits of the earth which they now cultivate for their own butchers."

"Yes, but all revolution is arduous and rough. It cannot overnight remedy ills that are the fatal inheritance of the past. Sometimes such ills are even temporarily aggravated by the remedial revolution, as the cauterized wound for a while smarts worse than before. These ills, these sufferings, have been carried to their extreme by the ravages of the English after the battle of Poitiers. The people have valiantly endured them, placing their confidence in the revolution of 1357. The city council, presided over by myself, the 'governors' in short, as the body is called, have been forced to exercise a temporary dictatorship, often to resort to energetic and even terrible measures in order to make front against the English at our gates, and the court party inside of our walls. The people at first accepted the dictatorship for the sake of the safety of the city, but they have since fallen away when they found that we could not instantly meet their expectations of material well-being. The people are tired of dictatorship, and now in their credulous despair they lend ear to the mischievous words of their own enemies! They are ready to withdraw from the struggle instead of finishing the work of emancipation! The people now deplore their rebellion; they are ready to curse the councilmen who have sacrificed their repose and their property, and even exposed their lives in the effort of emancipation. They imagine that by humbly submitting to the Regent, that by meekly resuming their yoke, the ills they now suffer from will vanish. Perchance to-morrow the people will be dragging me to the scaffold, me who so recently was their idol!" After a few seconds of silence the provost resumed: "To sum up, we can now barely count with the support of the masses; Charles the Wicked is a doubtful ally; the Regent a formidable adversary."

"Unhappily the manifestations of the defection of the people, whom the manoeuvres of the Regent's party have done their best to promote, have struck me during the last few days. Must all hope be given up, Master Marcel?"

"No! No! I merely wished to establish the critical aspect of our situation. But all is not lost. By virtue of their very fickleness the people are capable of sudden revulsions. A considerable section of the bourgeoisie, firmly resolved to carry our work to a happy issue, in the language of my device, will go with us to the end, whatever the dangers be that menace our lives and property in case of failure. We still can make our influence felt among the masses; we can arouse their enthusiasm, wrench them free from their acquiescence in the enemy's suggestions, adopt terrible measures against these, and gain a decisive victory over the Regent. But seeing that the Jacquerie is annihilated, it would be insane to undertake such a struggle without the support of Charles the Wicked. This, then, is our last resource. This very night I shall induce the prince to declare himself against the Regent, and sufficiently compromise himself so as to force him to the alternative of vanquishing with us and ruling, or of losing both his life and his property should the Regent prevail. If he accepts my propositions, then Charles the Wicked, having staked his head for a crown, will enter Paris at the head of his Navarrians. We shall make a supreme effort; we shall arouse the people and shall take the field against the Regent. If we are victorious, we shall then rouse against the English the peasants that have escaped the vengeance of the nobility. The foreigner will be beaten back; delivered from her domestic and her foreign foes, Gaul will delegate her sovereignty to Charles of Navarre under control of the national assembly. Our provinces will then form a powerful confederation with us as the center."

"Such a result would be admirable. But would Charles the Wicked keep his promise once he is crowned King of France? Will he submit to the laws of the States General?"

"He would have submitted to all our conditions before the annihilation of the Jacquerie which was a counterpoise to his bands of mercenaries. But when he mounts the throne the force of circumstances will compel him to keep a large number of the reforms very much like a gift of joy. Thus a part of our conquests over the royalty will have been assured. Nor is that all. The masses, still steeped in ignorance are slavish. Accustomed through centuries to being governed despotically by a prince of royal lineage, they can arrive only by degrees at free government under elective magistrates, as were the communal towns at the time of their enfranchisement. But experience will be gradually gained. Is not the mere fact of the overthrow of one dynasty and the setting up of a new at the will of the citizens, an immense step forward? The divine prestige of the royalty will have received a death-blow. The power of choosing a sovereign implies the right to depose him. And, finally, let us not lose sight of this, always supposing that Charles the Wicked succeeds in the war: Gaul will be delivered of the English; after

that, whatever may happen, the nobility will preserve the memory of the formidable insurrection of the Jacques; it will feel itself compelled to ease the yoke, realizing that, driven again to extremities, Jacques Bonhomme might again wield the fork, the scythe and the torch."

"Aye, Master Marcel, the future is bright ... provided Charles the Wicked openly pronounces against the Regent, and we triumph."

"I have weighed everything, calculated everything. If we succumb in this supreme conflict, Charles the Wicked will share our defeat and, like us, will pay for his rebellion with his head. He is, at best, a wicked prince; the Regent will return to Paris just as he would inevitably do if the King of Navarre refuses to embrace our cause. It would be an act of folly to try to oppose the Regent without him. Let us examine this last hypothesis. Aiming at putting an end to the hesitations of Charles the Wicked, I have forced him to decide this very night—"

"This very night?"

"At one o'clock to-morrow morning I shall await the King of Navarre at the St. Antoine gate. I declared to him yesterday at St. Denis that I shall no longer count with him, and shall look upon him as a traitor if at the hour I mentioned he does not appear at the rendezvous so as to enter Paris with me and to solemnly announce to-morrow at the town-hall his adherence to our cause, and the support of his arms. We are left to our own forces if Charles the Wicked fails to put in his appearance to-night."

"What did he answer you, Master Marcel?"

"He answered me in his usual manner, that he would think it over. Now, then, if the fear of losing his domains and of risking his head carries the day over his ambition, he will go and throw himself at the feet of the Regent and will offer him his services in atonement for his past conduct. The Regent has great interest in temporizing with such an adversary. He will grant him pardon, and the two will march upon Paris at the head of their combined troops. Our city will then fall back under the monarchic yoke."

"Then, Master Marcel," cried Jocelyn, "let us call to arms all the stout-hearted people of the city; let us then close our gates and lock ourselves behind our ramparts that are now so well fortified by your foresight and zeal; let us be killed to the last man; let not the Regent re-enter his capital but through the breach that he will have to make over our corpses!"

"Such a resolution is heroic. But you forget the horrors that follow the capture of a city by assault. You forget Meaux delivered to the flames by the Captal of Buch and the Count of Foix; the women assaulted, old men and children slaughtered or perishing in the flames! Shall I deliver Paris to such a fate, Paris the head and heart of Gaul? No! To attempt to resist the Regent without the assistance of Charles the Wicked would be to expose ourselves to annihilation. Let us prefer a salutary sacrifice to a sterile heroism. Even our defeat will be fruitful."

"Master Marcel, I do not understand you now."

"Whatever the stubbornness and duplicity of the Regent may be, the terrible lessons he has received will not be lost upon him. A fugitive before the popular uprising, he was forced to leave the palace of the Louvre furtively ... he has seen himself on the point of losing his crown. If, thanks to the submission of the Parisians, he should re-enter the city, however he may seek to satiate his vengeance and satisfy his royal pride, he will feel compelled to observe certain reforms. These, no doubt, will be less numerous than Charles the Wicked would have accepted in order to consolidate his usurpation. Nevertheless, whatever they be and however few, these reforms will remain safe to posterity, our revolution will have borne some fruit, the burden that weighed upon the people will have been lightened. Do you grasp my sense?... What is it that astonishes you?"

"In order to satisfy the resentment of the Regent and slake his vengeance, the heads of the chiefs of the rebellion will be demanded."

"Some heads will be demanded!" answered Marcel with Spartan simplicity. "Yes, the Regent will demand my own head first of all and also the heads of the governors, the principal leaders in the rebellion.... Very well! We shall deliver our heads to the Regent.... My friends and I are in accord upon that.... This conversation elucidates, as I expected of it, the facts that are to be considered, and confirms me in my resolution. At one in the morning I shall proceed to the gate of St. Antoine, where I shall expect to meet Charles the Wicked. If he fails to come, I shall take horse and ride to the Regent's camp at Charenton. I shall offer him my life; if that does not suffice him, I shall offer him the lives of my friends: they have authorized me to dispose of their heads. In exchange, I shall demand of the prince the observances of the reforms sworn to in 1357. I shall demand a good deal so as to obtain something.... These reforms will smooth the day for the advent of our plan of government, based upon the federation of the provinces and the permanence of the sovereign national assemblies that will at first delegate the appearance of a crown to a phantom king, and later, by wholly suppressing



the idol, suppress royalty itself. The government of free Gaul, free and confederated, will then be again what it was at the time of the invasion of Cæsar, as we learn from history and as one of your family's legends confirms."

"At the time of the abolition of the commune of Laon and of so many other municipal republics that Louis the Lusty destroyed, my ancestor Fergan the Quarryman said to his son, who despaired of the future: 'Hope, my child, hope!... Have faith in the slow, painful but irresistible progress of the race.' He spoke truly! Thanks to your genius, I might have seen in this very century the municipal government of the old communes—free, benevolent and wise governments—applied no longer to one town only but to all Gaul. Be praised for having promoted such a step forward."

"That is my dream! Social unity and administrative uniformity. Political rights made commensurate with civic rights. The principles of authority transferred from the crown to the nation. The States General changed into a national assembly under the control of the people of the towns and the country, and the living forces of the nation; and the popular sovereignty attested by the overthrow of one dynasty and the transfer of the crown to another, until the day of the total suppression of the royalty, the last vestige of the Frankish conquest!... That was my dream! Time will change the dream into reality. May be I stepped in advance of my century.... Is that wrong?... That government of the future will have been practiced three years!... Our children will place all the stronger reliance in the prospect of their deliverance when, instructed by the past, they will know that their fathers actually held their deliverance in their own hands; that, having one day assumed their freedom, they bent and chased away the royal incumbent, and that, if they relapsed under the yoke, it was because on the eve of final triumph they yielded to discouragement; it was because, after having overcome formidable obstacles, they grew faint-hearted at the moment of reaching the ultimate goal. The lesson will be great and profitable to our children. Perchance the death of myself and my friends may render the lesson all the more striking! Our death will have been as fruitful as our life!... The scaffold will crown it!"

## CHAPTER IV

### PLOTTERS UNCOVERED

Wrapt in wonderment and admiration, Jocelyn was contemplating the noble figure of Etienne Marcel that now seemed transfigured in the brilliancy of the sentiments he had given utterance to, when a knock was heard at the door. Jocelyn opened and Denise said to him:

"Jocelyn, your friend Rufin wishes to speak to you without delay."

"Master Marcel," the champion observed, "it must be about the plot that Rufin thinks to have discovered."

"My child, tell Rufin to come in," said the provost to his niece.

Rufin entered immediately. He was deeply agitated: "Master Marcel," he said, "I believe the goddess Fortuna served me as well this time as she did the night I discovered the flight of the Regent"; and drawing a letter from his pocket he handed it over to Marcel, adding: "Be kind enough to post yourself thereon; if the message is to be judged by the messenger, it bodes nothing good."

Marcel took the letter, broke the seal, trembled when he recognized the hand that wrote it, and carefully read its contents, while Jocelyn, leading the student to the outer end of the cabinet, said to him in a low voice:

"How did you get the letter, friend Rufin?"

"By Hercules! I got it ... by the force of my fist! without, however, forgetting the aid that my chum Nicholas the Thin-skinned and two Scotch students lent me. I became acquainted with the last two about a year ago in a contest over the flagrant superiority of the rhetoric of Fichetus over that of Faber. Our discussion having turned from oral to manual, to all the greater honor of rhetoric, I preserved a striking souvenir of their fists—"

"The minutes are precious, Rufin; grave matters are at stake; I beseech you, come to the point."

"This evening, towards nightfall, I was walking on Oysters-are-fried-here street, totally oblivious of the perfumes exhaled by the fries, although I had dined only on a herring, and thinking only of that treasure, that pearl, or rather of that bouquet of roses that Dame Venus, her godmother, christened by the succulent name of Alison—"

"For heaven's sake, Rufin!"

"Keep cool; I shall bid my soul hold its tongue. I shall come to the point. Well, then, I noticed a large crowd at the other end of the street; I elbowed my way in and reached its front ranks. There I saw a certain large-boned scamp with a furred cap whom I had come across before and knew to be a bitter partisan of Maillart. The said large-boned scamp was perorating against Master Marcel, attributing to him all the ills we are suffering from and crying: 'We must put an end to the tyranny of the governors. The Regent's army is gathered at Charenton and is about to march upon us. The Regent is furious. He wishes to set fire to his good city of Paris and slaughter its townsmen. Maillart, the true friend of the people, is alone able to make a front against the Regent or to negotiate with him and thus save the city from the ruin that threatens it.'"

"Always that Maillart!"

"Such language exasperated me. I was on the point of breaking out and confounding the man of the furred cap whose words, I must say so, were having their effect upon the mob. Some of them had even begun to vituperate Master Marcel and the governors, when suddenly I heard someone behind me say in Latin: 'The water begins to boil, the fish must now be thrown in,' and another voice answered, also in Latin: 'Then let us hasten to notify the master cook.' Seeking to fathom the mysterious meaning of these parables, I turned towards my Latinists at the moment when they began to cry, this time in French: 'Good luck to Maillart, to the devil with Marcel! He is a criminal! A traitor! He plots with the Navarrians! Good luck to Maillart! He alone can put an end to our ills!' A portion of the crowd took up the cries, whereupon the lumbering scamp of the furred cap closed his peroration and came down from the box on which he had been perched. The two Latinists then approached him, and while the crowd was dispersing my three gentlemen stepped aside and conducted an animated discussion. I did not lose sight of them; the three walked on together and I followed, catching these broken words that they let drop: 'rendezvous,' 'horse,' 'arcade of St. Nicholas.' You know how even at mid-day the arcade of St. Nicholas is dark and deserted. Night was falling fast. The idea struck me that my three worthies might be having some suspicious rendezvous at that secluded spot, because the mysterious Latin words would not leave my head. 'The water begins to boil' might mean the boiling of the popular rage; 'the fish that was to be thrown in the boiling water,' might mean Master Marcel; finally, 'the cook who was to be notified'—"

"Might be the Regent or Maillart," put in Jocelyn. "I do not believe your penetration was at fault. It is a credit to your sagacity."

"And the words 'horse,' 'rendezvous,' 'arcade of St. Nicholas' might mean some messenger on horseback was waiting for my three worthies at that secluded spot. I know the place. Often did Margot.... But I shall drop Margot! I said to myself on the contrary: 'Oh, if now, instead of following the lumbering scamp of the furred cap to the spot so propitious to love, I followed the divine Alison—'"

The champion again made an impatient gesture, took his friend by the arm, and pointed significantly towards the other end of the chamber where Marcel sat with his forehead leaning on his hand, contemplating the letter that he had just finished reading, and a smile at once bitter and sorrowful playing around his lips. The student grasped Jocelyn's meaning and proceeded in a still lower voice:

"I have quick legs. I put them to use and made a short cut on the run across St. Patern to arrive before my three men at the arcade of St. Nicholas. The place was dark as an oven. I listened, but heard nothing. I know the place. Groping about I found a niche where one time stood the statue of the saint. I vanished in the cavity, and awaited at all hazards. I was well repaid. About fifteen minutes later steps were heard under the vault and I recognized the voice of the man of the furred cap whispering: 'Haloa ... haloa! John Four-Sous', and presently a voice answered: 'He has not yet arrived ... the devil take the loafer!' 'No time is lost,' answered a third voice, 'he only needs three hours to reach here from Charenton on horseback; he will not fail.'"

"The situation is grave," said Jocelyn. "It is at Charenton that the Regent has his headquarters. There must be some treasonable plot on foot."

"Exactly. So you can imagine how I congratulated myself on my discovery. Evidently there was a plot hatching with the court party. John Four-Sous finally arrived by the other side of the entrance of the arcade and the man of the furred cap asked him: 'Are you ready to leave?' 'Yes, my horse stands saddled in the stable of the inn of The Three Monkeys.' 'Very well; here is the letter,' came from the man of the furred cap, 'Make haste to arrive at the royal encampment; deliver the letter to the seneschal of Poitou; he will understand.' 'But will they allow me to leave the city?' asked the messenger. 'Fear not,' he is answered, 'the gate of St. Antoine is this evening guarded by men of our side; Master Maillart is to be there himself; you shall give for pass-word "Montjoie, the King and Duke"; that will let you through. To horse, now, to horse!' After that the man of the furred cap and his two

companions walked off by one entrance and John Four-Sous by the other. I left the niche where I had taken St. Nicholas' place, and followed the messenger of whom I got a clear view when the light of the moon fell upon him outside the vault. The scamp was tall, sinewy and well armed. I made up my mind to seize the letter that he carried. How to do it? I was still revolving the matter when I saw him enter the tavern of The Three Monkeys. I imagined he was going for his horse in the stable. Not at all! John Four-Sous, being a man of foresight, called for supper before starting on his journey, and through the open door I saw him comfortably anchored at a table. Bacchus willed it that I had often emptied more than one tankard at the tavern of The Three Monkeys without smashing them after drinking. I knew the inn-keeper, a worthy fellow belonging to Marcel's party. I immediately dropped a few lines to the divine Alison whom Dame Venus ... attached to her chariot...."

"We know all about that ... come to the point."

"Uncertain of what success I might meet, I wished at least to forewarn Master Marcel, and that so soon as possible, that something was hatching against him. The inn-keeper undertook to forward my note to Alison's inn, and presently.... Blessed be the goddess Fortuna, whom do I see enter but my chum Nicholas the Thin-skinned, in the company of the Scotch students, with whom I had once fistically discussed the merits of the rhetoric of Fichetus. They came to drink some spiced wine. With the corner of my eyes I was taking in John Four-Sous devouring his ample supper. My plan was formed. I communicated it to my friends and the inn-keeper, confiding to them the suspicions that I entertained, and which the incident of the arcade of St. Nicholas confirmed. Nothing simpler than my project: Pick up a quarrel with John Four-Sous, fall upon him, take possession of the letter, and lock up the scamp in the cellar of The Three Monkeys so as to keep him from giving the alarm to Maillart's party. So said, so done.... I approached John Four-Sous' table and started quarrelling with him. He gave me an insolent answer. I jumped at his throat and Nicholas the Thin-skinned rummaged through the fellow's pockets, and seized the letter, and—"

The student's account was interrupted by Marcel, who after a long and thorough reflection, rose from his seat, and stepping towards Jocelyn said:

"I spoke to you of my quandary; this letter would have put an end to it had not my resolution been previously taken. Do you know who wrote this letter?"

"No, Master Marcel; who is its author? A friend or an enemy?"

"My oldest friend," answered the provost with deep concern and disgust, "John Maillart! This letter proves that for some time, and despite his affectation of devotion for the popular cause and his violent language against the court, Maillart was secretly negotiating with the royalist party whose chiefs in Paris are the Sire of Charny and the knight James of Pontoise, for the nobility, with Maillart and the old councilmen Pastorel and John Alphonse for the bourgeoisie. These are our worst enemies."

"Master Marcel," asked Jocelyn, "will not you and the governors take rigorous measures against these traitors?"

"They dare to conspire within our walls!" added the student. "They seek to lead astray a credulous people! They deserve death!"

"It will have been brought on by our enemies themselves! They must be stricken down with terror. They invoke frightful vengeance upon Paris!" replied Marcel. "Yes, Maillart, keeping the Regent informed upon our intestine dissensions, upon the discouragement inspired among the masses by the agents of the court, upon the hatred that they have incited against us, beseeches the prince to march upon Paris, and assures him that the people are tired of suffering. He assures him that a movement in his favor will break out within our walls so soon as he approaches. He informs the prince that he and his partisans will be on guard to-night and to-morrow at the gate of St. Antoine, and that they will open the gates to him. Finally, he expresses the hope of being able to deliver me to the Regent, me whom he calls 'the soul of the revolution.'"

"There can be no longer any doubt!" exclaimed Jocelyn horrified. "So that when Maillart's wife came here this evening to offer means for your escape to Dame Marguerite she only was laying a trap for you."

"Aye," broke in Marcel with a look of contempt, "she was laying a trap for me. I was to trust the loyalty of my oldest friend ... I was to go alone to his house ... and there he was to take me prisoner and deliver me to the Regent at his entry into Paris!"

"Treason and cowardice!" cried the student indignantly. "What a female monster! Oh, I judged her rightly from her hypocritical lamentations at the funeral of Perrin Macé."

"The envy and pride that devour her have lost Maillart," rejoined the provost. "The vanity of that insensate woman has driven her husband to crime and

to deep baseness. That man without character and without convictions reminds the seneschal in his letter that the Regent promised him a patent of nobility in consideration of the services he is rendering the court party!... That is the Maillart that was incessantly reproaching me for not exterminating the members of the court party who remained in Paris!... He could not find words enough to throw at the nobility!"

"Oh, Master Marcel," cried Jocelyn, "and your blood was to be the price for the ennobling of that infamous wretch!"

"This act of betrayal wounds me doubly ... I know mankind. Nevertheless, I resisted up to this moment the belief that Maillart could be guilty of such felony.... He, the friend of my infancy.... But now, to work. There is now no longer any doubt, nor can there now be any question what step to take.... The reaction of the court party will be merciless.... Our only chance of escape lies in the support of the King of Navarre ... and in the vigorous measures that we must now take against these implacable enemies."

"Master Marcel," Jocelyn whispered to the provost, "if Charles the Wicked does not put in his appearance at the rendezvous of this evening, what will you do then?"

"I shall ride at a gallop to deliver to the Regent my own head and the heads of the governors ... Our blood will slake the young prince's thirst for vengeance and he will spare Paris."

A great noise, at first from a distance, was heard rapidly approaching along the street. Presently distinct cheers were heard: "Good luck to Marcel!" "To a happy issue, to a happy issue!" "Good luck to Marcel!" and almost at the same time Marguerite entered her husband's cabinet saying: "Simon the Feather-dealer, Philip Giffart, Consac and other friends are in arms in the street with a large number of faithful partisans cheering for you. Our friends consider it prudent to come for you and escort you to the town-hall."

"Good-bye, Marguerite, dear and beloved wife!" said Marcel with profound but well-controlled emotion, thinking that this was perhaps the last time he might press to his heart the companion of his life. "Adieu ... and may we soon meet again!"

"Oh, my friend, these cheers that acclaim you with enthusiasm reassure me ... Our friends are guarding you."

Fear nothing; I shall see you again to-morrow ... Adieu!... Adieu once more!" repeated Marcel, who despite his courage, felt his heart breaking at the

moment of a separation that might be eternal. Giving a last embrace to Marguerite, Marcel descended to the street. There he was met by several of the councilmen in the midst of a large crowd of partisans whose sympathetic acclamations redoubled at the sight of their idol. Discouragement had, it was true, gained over a majority of the people. Nevertheless Marcel could still count upon many devoted and intrepid hearts.

"Friends!" Marcel cried out aloud to the councilmen, "we shall not go to the town-hall, but to the gate of St. Antoine. I shall tell you more on the way."

The words were caught by one of the three men who all during the evening had never left the approaches to Marcel's house. The spy said to his companions:

"Let one of you hurry to the Sire of Charny and notify him that Marcel is going with his men to the gate of St. Antoine. The other of you run ahead of the bandits and notify Master Maillart that they are coming. I shall follow them at a distance and watch their movements. Let each be at his post and well armed."



## CHAPTER V

### THE GATE OF ST ANTOINE

The clock had sounded the first hour of morning from the church in the quarter of St. Antoine. Just before sinking below the horizon the moon still shed enough light to brighten with a fringe of silver the topmost battlement of the two high towers that defend the gate of St. Antoine, towards which Etienne Marcel was wending his way accompanied by the councilman Philip Giffart and Jocelyn, and holding two keys in his hands. The other magistrates and a group of their partisans had posted themselves, at the request of the provost, in a house near the ramparts. The profoundest silence reigned near a wide and dark vaulted passage that led to the gate of the city. A man leading a horse by the bridle followed Marcel at a little distance.

"This is the decisive moment," Marcel was saying to his companions. "If Charles the Wicked has come to our rendezvous, we then have a chance of success ... if not, I shall mount that horse and ride to Charenton to deliver myself to the Regent!"

Hardly had Marcel finished pronouncing these words when two sentinels, posted outside the dark passage which he was about to enter, called out: "Montjoie, the King and Duke!" and almost at the same moment appeared John Maillart stepping forward. At the sight of his old friend, whose infamous treason he was now acquainted with, Marcel stopped indignant and the following exchange of words took place:

"Marcel," said the councilman in an imperious voice, "Marcel, what business brings you here at this hour? You should now be at the town-hall!"

"What business is that of yours," answered Marcel. "I am here to guard the safety of the town, whose government is in my hands."

"By God!" cried Maillart imperceptibly drawing nearer to Marcel. "By God! You cannot be here for anything good!" and turning to the two sentinels who stood motionless a few steps off: "You see it; Marcel holds in his hands the keys of the gate.... It is to betray us!"

"You miserable and abominable scamp," cried Marcel, "you lie in your throat!"

"No, traitor, it is you who lie!" replied Maillart, and suddenly raising a short axe that he had held concealed behind his back, he leaped with one bound

at the provost crying: "To me, my friends! Death to Marcel! Death to him and his partisans! They are all traitors!" Before Jocelyn or Philip Giffart could foresee and parry the sudden charge, Maillart dealt so furious a blow at Marcel's head that he staggered and fell bathed in blood.

At Maillart's cry, "To me, my friends!" the passageway, until then dark, was suddenly illumined by several lanterns that had been kept under the cloaks of their carriers. By the glimmering light a large number of men were seen, all armed with pikes, halberds and cutlasses. Among them were the Sire of Charny, the knight James of Pontoise and the councilman Pierre Dessessarts. Hardly had Marcel dropped under the axe of Maillart than the troop of assassins issued forth from their ambushade, and crying: "Montjoie, the King and Duke!" precipitated themselves upon the provost to despatch him. Marcel, his skull cleaved in two and his face covered with blood, sought to regain his feet with the help of Jocelyn and Philip Giffart. These made heroic efforts to defend the wounded man, but they were soon thrown down with him and all three riddled with sword thrusts and axe blows. The other governors and several of their partisans, who were posted in reserve at a nearby house where they were to await the issue of Marcel's rendezvous with the King of Navarre, hearing the increasing tumult and cries of "Montjoie, the King and Duke!" rushed to the gate of St. Antoine intending to come to the aid of the provost. Their red and blue head-covers pointed them out to the fury of the murderers. Their heroic defence was soon overcome and they were all butchered like their chief. But the rage of Maillart and of the Sire of Charny was not yet appeased.

"To death with all the enemies of our Sire, the Regent!" cried the seigneur. "We know where they are burrowing. Let us run to their houses. We shall kill them in their beds!"

"To death!" responded John Maillart brandishing his axe. "To death with the partisans of Marcel! To death with all the communiers!"

"Montjoie, the King and Duke!" repeated in chorus the armed band. "Death to the red and blue!"

"Friends!" cried the seigneur of Charny, "the body of the knight of Conflans, a victim of the popular party, was exposed in the Student's Dale. Let now the body of Marcel be exposed in the same place.... Carry him on your shoulders."

"To-morrow the body shall be placed on a hurdle and dragged through the mud to the Louvre which our beloved Sire, the Regent, was forced to leave in

sight of Marcel's threats. After that let the carcass of the felon be thrown into the river—unworthy sepulchre for a Christian," added John Maillart, and he said to himself, thinking of his wife: "Petronille will no longer reproach me with being under the provost; Petronille will no longer be eaten up with jealousy; Petronille will no longer hear that Marguerite is the wife of the 'King of Paris' ... and I shall have a title of nobility."

The orders of the Sire of Charny and Maillart were carried out. The corpse of the provost was picked out from among his dead friends. Four men carried on their shoulders the disfigured remains of the great citizen, and marching by the light of torches, the funeral cortège wended its way to the Student's Dale brandishing their arms and shouting:

"Death to the partisans of the governors!"

"Death to the red and blue!"

"Montjoie, the King and Duke!"

#### EPILOGUE.

The hatred of Etienne Marcel's enemies pursued him beyond the grave. His corpse, taken to the Student's Dale, remained there the whole day exposed to the insults and the jeers of the fickle and ingrate mass whose enfranchisement and happiness he had labored to attain. The day after his death his bloody and mutilated remains were thrown upon a hurdle, dragged towards the Seine and hurled into the river in front of the Louvre. Such was that great man's sepulchre.

The principal leaders of the popular party, to the number of sixty, among whom were Simon the Feather-dealer, Cousac and Pierre Caillart, were executed by orders of John Maillart and the Sire of Charny, now become joint dictators. These executions being over, the dictators delegated Simon Maillart, a brother of the councilman, the councilmen Dessessarts and John Pastorel, to appear before the Regent and notify the young prince that he could re-enter his good town of Paris, now submissive and penitent. The Regent answered the delegation: "That will be gladly done." Accompanied by a numerous cavalcade, the Regent left the bridge at Charenton and re-entered the Louvre where, in the language of the chronicler of the time, "he found John Maillart, whom he greatly esteemed and loved."

"As the Regent," the chronicler proceeds, "was crossing a certain street on his way to the Louvre, a workingman had the daring to call out aloud: 'By

God, Sire, if my advice had been taken, you would not now be entering here. But nothing will be done for you."

These and some other instances showed, to the honor of humanity, that ingratitude, defection and the fickleness of the masses—the fruits of their ignorance and secular subjection—offered at least pleasing exceptions. The memory of Marcel remained alive and sacred in the hearts of many loyal to the popular cause. Despite the triumph of the court party, several conspiracies were started looking to the overthrow of the throne and intended to revenge upon the Regent the death of the venerated Etienne Marcel. The last of these conspiracies was organized by a rich Paris bourgeois, Martin Pisdœ. He mounted the scaffold and paid with his head for his religious devotion to the memory of Marcel.

Jocelyn the Champion had been left for dead near the gate of St. Antoine in the midst of a heap of corpses. Informed the same night by popular rumors of the assassination of the provost and his partisans, Rufin the Tankard-smasher and Alison the Huffy hastened to the place of the massacre in order to ascertain Jocelyn's fate. They found him covered with wounds, ready to expire, and carried him to a charitable person in the neighborhood where, thanks to their untiring care he was rescued from death. Protected by the obscurity of his name, he long remained hidden in that asylum where a surgeon, a friend of Rufin, visited him. Only slowly did he regain his strength.

Marguerite learned of her husband's death from emissaries sent by John Maillart, who came that same night to arrest her at her house. Taken to prison, the unfortunate woman vainly implored permission to bury Marcel with her own hands. The supreme consolation was denied her, and she was later made acquainted with the ignominies inflicted on her husband's corpse. She soon died in captivity. The property of Etienne Marcel was confiscated for the benefit of the Regent.

Alison, always compassionate, offered Denise, who now found herself helpless and without means, to share with her the chamber she occupied at her inn. Often the two called to see Jocelyn the Champion in his secret retreat. Among other wounds an axe-stroke deprived him forever of the use of his right arm. When his other wounds were completely healed, he married Denise; on the same day Dame Alison married Rufin the Tankard-Smasher.

Jocelyn had inherited a little patrimony, thanks to which he could almost wholly cover the indispensable needs of himself and wife, a fortunate circumstance seeing that the weakness consequent upon his wounds did

not allow him to pursue his profession of champion. The only relative left to Denise lived near the frontier of Lorraine in the town of Vaucouleurs. Jocelyn decided to move hither. Despite the little notice he had drawn upon himself during the late revolt, it would have been imprudent on his part to prolong his stay in Paris after his recovery, seeing that the re-action of the court party was implacable. Jocelyn sold his patrimony, took, not without deep regret, leave from Rufin the Tankard-smasher and Alison, and escaping a hundred dangers from the bands of English soldiers and marauders who then ravaged Gaul, he reached the town of Vaucouleurs with Denise and settled there.

THE END