Droll Stories — Volume 3 eBook

Droll Stories — Volume 3 by Honoré de Balzac

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Page 1

PERSEVERANCE IN LOVE

During the first years of the thirteenth century after the coming of our Divine Saviour there happened in the City of Paris an amorous adventure, through the deed of a man of Tours, of which the town and even the king's court was never tired of speaking. As to the clergy, you will see by that which is related the part they played in this history, the testimony of which was by them preserved. This said man, called the Touranian by the common people, because he had been born in our merry Touraine, had for his true name that of Anseau. In his latter days the good man returned into his own country and was mayor of St. Martin, according to the chronicles of the abbey of that town; but at Paris he was a great silversmith.

But now in his prime, by his great honesty, his labours, and so forth, he became a citizen of Paris and subject of the king, whose protection he bought, according to the custom of the period. He had a house built for him free of all quit-rent, close the Church of St. Leu, in the Rue St. Denis, where his forge was well-known by those in want of fine jewels. Although he was a Touranian, and had plenty of spirit and animation, he kept himself virtuous as a true saint, in spite of the blandishments of the city, and had passed the days of his green season without once dragging his good name through the mire. Many will say this passes the bounds of that faculty of belief which God has placed in us to aid that faith due to the mysteries of our holy religion; so it is needful to demonstrate abundantly the secret cause of this silversmith's chastity. And, first remember that he came into the town on foot, poor as Job, according to the old saying; and unlike all the inhabitants of our part of the country, who have but one passion, he had a character of iron, and persevered in the path he had chosen as steadily as a monk in vengeance. As a workman, he laboured from morn to night; become a master, he laboured still, always learning new secrets, seeking new receipts, and in seeking, meeting with inventions of all kinds. Late idlers, watchmen, and vagrants saw always a modest lamp shining through the silversmith's window, and the good man tapping, sculpting, rounding, distilling, modeling, and finishing, with his apprentices, his door closed and his ears open. Poverty engendered hard work, hard work engendered his wonderful virtue, and his virtue engendered his great wealth. Take this to heart, ye children of Cain who eat doubloons and micturate water. If the good silversmith felt himself possessed with wild desires, which now in one way, now another, seize upon an unhappy bachelor when the devil tries to get hold of him, making the sign of the cross, the Touranian hammered away at his metal, drove out the rebellious spirits from his brain by bending down over the exquisite works of art, little engravings, figures of gold and silver forms, with which he appeased the anger of

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his Venus. Add to this that this Touranian was an artless man, of simple understanding, fearing God above all things, then robbers, next to that of nobles, and more than all, a disturbance. Although if he had two hands, he never did more than one thing at a time. His voice was as gentle as that of a bridegroom before marriage. Although the clergy, the military, and others gave him no reputation for knowledge, he knew well his mother's Latin, and spoke it correctly without waiting to be asked. Latterly the Parisians had taught him to walk uprightly, not to beat the bush for others, to measure his passions by the rule of his revenues, not to let them take his leather to make other's shoes, to trust no one farther then he could see them, never to say what he did, and always to do what he said; never to spill anything but water; to have a better memory than flies usually have; to keep his hands to himself, to do the same with his purse; to avoid a crowd at the corner of a street, and sell his jewels for more than they cost him; all things, the sage observance of which gave him as much wisdom as he had need of to do business comfortably and pleasantly. And so he did, without troubling anyone else. And watching this good little man unobserved, many said,

"By my faith, I should like to be this jeweller, even were I obliged to splash myself up to the eyes with the mud of Paris during a hundred years for it."

They might just as well have wished to be king of France, seeing that the silversmith had great powerful nervous arms, so wonderfully strong that when he closed his fist the cleverest trick of the roughest fellow could not open it; from which you may be sure that whatever he got hold of he stuck to. More than this, he had teeth fit to masticate iron, a stomach to dissolve it, a duodenum to digest it, a sphincter to let it out again without tearing, and shoulders that would bear a universe upon them, like that pagan gentleman to whom the job was confided, and whom the timely arrival of Jesus Christ discharged from the duty. He was, in fact, a man made with one stroke, and they are the best, for those who have to be touched are worth nothing, being patched up and finished at odd times. In short, Master Anseau was a thorough man, with a lion's face, and under his eyebrows a glance that would melt his gold if the fire of his forge had gone out, but a limpid water placed in his eyes by the great Moderator of all things tempered this great ardour, without which he would have burnt up everything. Was he not a splendid specimen of a man?

With such a sample of his cardinal virtues, some persist in asking why the good silversmith remained as unmarried as an oyster, seeing that these properties of nature are of good use in all places. But these opinionated critics, do they know what it is to love? Ho! Ho! Easy! The vocation of a lover is to go, to come, to listen, to watch, to hold his tongue, to talk, to stick in a corner, to make himself big,

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to make himself little, to agree, to play music, to drudge, to go to the devil wherever he may be, to count the gray peas in the dovecote, to find flowers under the snow, to say paternosters to the moon, to pat the cat and pat the dog, to salute the friends, to flatter the gout, or the cold of the aunt, to say to her at opportune moments “You have good looks, and will yet write the epitaph of the human race.” To please all the relations, to tread on no one’s corns, to break no glasses, to waste no breath, to talk nonsense, to hold ice in his hand, to say, “This is good!” or, “Really, madam, you are very beautiful so.” And to vary that in a hundred different ways. To keep himself cool, to bear himself like a nobleman, to have a free tongue and a modest one, to endure with a smile all the evils the devil may invent on his behalf, to smother his anger, to hold nature in control, to have the finger of God, and the tail of the devil, to reward the mother, the cousin, the servant; in fact, to put a good face on everything. In default of which the female escapes and leaves you in a fix, without giving a single Christian reason. In fact, the lover of the most gentle maid that God ever created in a good-tempered moment, had he talked like a book, jumped like a flea, turned about like dice, played like King David, and built for the aforesaid woman the Corinthian order of the columns of the devil, if he failed in the essential and hidden thing which pleases his lady above all others, which often she does not know herself and which he has need to know, the lass leaves him like a red leper. She is quite right. No one can blame her for so doing. When this happens some men become ill-tempered, cross, and more wretched than you can possibly imagine. Have not many of them killed themselves through this petticoat tyranny? In this matter the man distinguishes himself from the beast, seeing that no animal ever yet lost his senses through blighted love, which proves abundantly that animals have no souls. The employment of a lover is that of a mountebank, of a soldier, of a quack, of a buffoon, of a prince, of a ninny, of a king, of an idler, of a monk, of a dupe, of a blackguard, of a liar, of a braggart, of a sycophant, of a numskull, of a frivolous fool, of a blockhead, of a know-nothing, of a knave. An employment from which Jesus abstained, in imitation of whom folks of great understanding likewise disdain it; it is a vocation in which a man of worth is required to spend above all things, his time, his life, his blood, his best words, besides his heart, his soul, and his brain; things to which the women are cruelly partial, because directly their tongues begin to go, they say among themselves that if they have not the whole of a man they have none of him. Be sure, also, that there are cats, who, knitting their eyebrows, complain that a man does but a hundred things for them, for the purpose of finding out if there be a hundred, at first seeing that in everything they desire the most thorough spirit of conquest and tyranny. And this high jurisprudence has always flourished among the customs of Paris, where the women receive more wit at their baptism than in any other place in the world, and thus are mischievous by birth.

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But our silversmith, always busy at his work, burnishing gold and melting silver, had no time to warm his love or to burnish and make shine his fantasies, nor to show off, gad about, waste his time in mischief, or to run after she-males. Now seeing that in Paris virgins do not fall into the beds of young men any more than roast pheasants into the streets, not even when the young men are royal silversmiths, the Touranian had the advantage of having, as I have before observed, a continent member in his shirt. However, the good man could not close his eyes to the advantage of nature with which were so amply furnished the ladies with whom he dilated upon the value of his jewels. So it was that, after listening to the gentle discourse of the ladies, who tried to wheedle and to fondle him to obtain a favour from him, the good Touranian would return to his home, dreamy as a poet, wretched as a restless cuckoo, and would say to himself, “I must take to myself a wife. She would keep the house tidy, keep the plates hot for me, fold the clothes for me, sew my buttons on, sing merrily about the house, tease me to do everything according to her taste, would say to me as they all say to their husbands when they want a jewel, ’Oh, my own pet, look at this, is it not pretty?’ And every one in the quarter will think of my wife and then of me, and say ‘There’s a happy man.’ Then the getting married, the bridal festivities, to fondle Madame Silversmith, to dress her superbly, give her a fine gold chain, to worship her from crown to toe, to give her the whole management of the house, except the cash, to give her a nice little room upstairs, with good windows, pretty, and hung around with tapestry, with a wonderful chest in it and a fine large bed, with twisted columns and curtains of yellow silk. He would buy her beautiful mirrors, and there would always be a dozen or so of children, his and hers, when he came home to greet him.” Then wife and children would vanish into the clouds. He transferred his melancholy imaginings to fantastic designs, fashioned his amorous thoughts into grotesque jewels that pleased their buyers well, they not knowing how many wives and children were lost in the productions of the good man, who, the more talent he threw into his art, the more disordered he became. Now if God had not had pity upon him, he would have quitted this world without knowing what love was, but would have known it in the other without that metamorphosis of the flesh which spares it, according to Monsieur Plato, a man of some authority, but who, not being a Christian, was wrong. But, there! these preparatory digressions are the idle digressions and fastidious commentaries which certain unbelievers compel a man to wind about a tale, swaddling clothes about an infant when it should run about stark naked. May the great devil give them a clyster with his red-hot three-pronged fork. I am going on with my story now without further circumlocution.

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This is what happened to the silversmith in the one-and-fortieth year of his age. One Sabbath-day while walking on the left bank of the Seine, led by an idle fancy, he ventured as far as that meadow which has since been called the Pre-aux-Clercs and which at that time was in the domain of the abbey of St. Germain, and not in that of the University. There, still strolling on the Touranian found himself in the open fields, and there met a poor young girl who, seeing that he was well-dressed, curtsied to him, saying “Heaven preserve you, monseigneur.” In saying this her voice had such sympathetic sweetness that the silversmith felt his soul ravished by this feminine melody, and conceived an affection for the girl, the more so as, tormented with ideas of marriage as he was, everything was favourable thereto. Nevertheless, as he had passed the wench by he dared not go back, because he was as timid as a young maid who would die in her petticoats rather than raise them for her pleasure. But when he was a bowshot off he bethought him that he was a man who for ten years had been a master silversmith, had become a citizen, and was a man of mark, and could look a woman in the face if his fancy so led him, the more so as his imagination had great power over him. So he turned suddenly back, as if he had changed the direction of his stroll, and came upon the girl, who held by an old cord her poor cow, who was munching grass that had grown on the border of a ditch at the side of the road.

“Ah, my pretty one,” said he, “you are not overburdened with the goods of this world that you thus work with your hands upon the Lord’s Day. Are you not afraid of being cast into prison?”

“Monseigneur,” replied the maid, casting down her eyes, “I have nothing to fear, because I belong to the abbey. The Lord Abbot has given me leave to exercise the cow after vespers.”

“You love your cow, then, more than the salvation of your soul?”

“Ah, monseigneur, our beast is almost the half of our poor lives.”

“I am astonished, my girl, to see you poor and in rags, clothed like a fagot, running barefoot about the fields on the Sabbath, when you carry about you more treasures than you could dig up in the grounds of the abbey. Do not the townspeople pursue, and torment you with love?”

“Oh, never monseigneur. I belong to the abbey”, replied she, showing the jeweller a collar on her left arm like those that the beasts of the field have, but without the little bell, and at the same time casting such a deplorable glance at our townsman that he was stricken quite sad, for by the eyes are communicated contagions of the heart when they are strong.

“And what does this mean?” he said, wishing to hear all about it.

And he touched the collar, upon which was engraved the arms of the abbey very distinctly, but which he did not wish to see.

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“Monseigneur, I am the daughter of an homme de corps; thus whoever unites himself to me by marriage, will become a bondsman, even if he were a citizen of Paris, and would belong body and goods to the abbey. If he loved me otherwise, his children would still belong to the domain. For this reason I am neglected by everyone, abandoned like a poor beast of the field. But what makes me most unhappy is, that according to the pleasure of monseigneur the abbot, I shall be coupled at some time with a bondsman. And if I were less ugly than I am, at the sight of my collar the most amorous would flee from me as from the black plague.”

So saying, she pulled her cow by the cord to make it follow her.

“And how old are you?” asked the silversmith.

“I do not know, monseigneur; but our master, the abbot, has kept account.”

This great misery touched the heart of the good man, who had in his day eaten the bread of sorrow. He regulated his pace to the girl’s, and they went together towards the water in painful silence. The good man gazed at the fine forehead, the round red arms, the queen’s waist, the feet dusty, but made like those of a Virgin Mary; and the sweet physiognomy of this girl, who was the living image of St. Genevieve, the patroness of Paris, and the maidens who live in the fields. And make sure that this Joseph suspected the pretty white of this sweet girl’s breasts, which were by a modest grace carefully covered with an old rag, and looked at them as a schoolboy looks at a rosy apple on a hot day. Also, may you depend upon it that these little hillocks of nature denoted a wench fashioned with delicious perfection, like everything that the monks possess. Now, the more it was forbidden our silversmith to touch them, the more his mouth watered for these fruits of love. And his heart leaped almost into his mouth.

“You have a fine cow,” said he.

“Would you like a little milk?” replied she. “It is so warm these early days of May. You are far from the town.”

In truth, the sky was a cloudless blue, and glared like a forge. Everything was radiant with youth, the leaves, the air, the girls, the lads; everything was burning, was green, and smelt like balm. This naive offer, made without the hope of recompense, though a byzant would not have paid for the special grace of this speech; and the modesty of the gesture with which the poor girl turned to him gained the heart of the jeweller, who would have liked to be able to put this bondswoman into the skin of a queen, and Paris at her feet.

“Nay, my child, I thirst not for milk, but for you, whom I would have leave to liberate.”

“That cannot be, and I shall die the property of the abbey. For years we have lived so, from father to son, from mother to daughter. Like my ancestors, I shall pass my days on this land, as will also my children, because the abbot cannot legally let us go.”

“What!” said the Touranian; “has no gallant been tempted by your bright eyes to buy your liberty, as I bought mine from the king?”

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“It would cost too dear; thus it is those whom at first sight I please, go as they came.”

“And you have never thought of gaining another country in company of a lover on horseback on a fleet courser?”

“Oh yes. But, monseigneur, if I were caught I should be hanged at least; and my gallant, even were he a lord, would lose more than one domain over it, besides other things. I am not worth so much; besides, the abbey has arms longer than my feet are swift. So I live on in perfect obedience to God, who has placed me in this plight.”

“What is your father?”

“He tends the vines in the gardens of the abbey.”

“And your mother?”

“She is a washerwoman.”

“And what is your name?”

“I have no name, dear sir. My father was baptised Etienne, my mother is Etienne, and I am Tiennette, at your service.”

“Sweetheart,” said the jeweller, “never has woman pleased me as you please me; and I believe that your heart contains a wealth of goodness. Now, since you offered yourself to my eyes at the moment when I was firmly deliberating upon taking a companion, I believe that I see in you a sign from heaven! And if I am not displeasing to you, I beg you to accept me as your friend.”

Immediately the maid lowered her eyes. These words were uttered in such a way, in so grave a tone, so penetrating a manner, that the said Tiennette burst into tears.

“No, monseigneur, I should be the cause of a thousand unpleasantnesses, and of your misfortune. For a poor bondsmaid, the conversation has gone far enough.”

“Ho!” cried Anseau; “you do not know, my child, the man you are dealing with.”

The Touranian crossed himself, joined his hands, and said—

“I make a vow to Monsieur the Saint Eloi, under whose invocation are the silversmiths, to fashion two images of pure silver, with the best workmanship I am able to perform. One shall be a statue of Madame the Virgin, to this end, to thank her for the liberty of my dear wife; and the other for my said patron, if I am successful in my undertaking to liberate the bondswoman Tiennette here present, and for which I rely upon his assistance. Moreover, I swear by my eternal salvation, to persevere with courage in this

affair, to spend therein all I process, and only to quit it with my life. God has heard me," said he. "And you, little one," he added, turning towards the maid.

"Ha! monseigneur, look! My cow is running about the fields," cried she, sobbing at the good man's knees. "I will love you all my life; but withdraw your vow."

"Let us to look after the cow," said the silversmith, raising her, without daring yet to kiss her, although the maid was well disposed to it.

"Yes," said she, "for I shall be beaten."

And behold now the silversmith, scampering after the cursed cow, who gave no heed to their amours; she was taken by the horns, and held in the grip of the Touranian, who for a trifle would have thrown her in the air, like a straw.

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“Adieu, my sweet one! If you go into the town, come to my house, over against St Leu’s Church. I am called Master Anseau, and am silversmith to the King of France, at the sign of St. Eloi. Make me a promise to be in this field the next Lord’s-Day; fail not to come, even should it rain halberds.”

“Yes, dear Sir. For this I would leap the walls, and, in gratitude, would I be yours without mischief, and cause you no sorrow, at the price of my everlasting future. Awaiting the happy moment, I will pray God for you with all my heart.”

And then she remained standing like a stone saint, moving not, until she could see the good citizen no longer, and he went away with lagging steps, turning from time to time further to gaze upon her. And when he was far off, and out of her sight, she stayed on, until nightfall, lost in meditation, knowing not if she had dreamed that which had happened to her. Then she went back to the house, where she was beaten for staying out, but felt not the blows. The good silversmith could neither eat nor drink, but closed his workshop, possessed of this girl, thinking of nothing but this girl, seeing everywhere the girl; everything to him being to possess this girl. Now when the morrow was come, he went with great apprehension towards the abbey to speak to the lord abbot. On the road, however, he suddenly thought of putting himself under the protection of one of the king’s people, and with this idea returned to the court, which was then held in the town. Being esteemed by all for his prudence, and loved for his little works and kindnesses, the king’s chamberlain—for whom he had once made, for a present to a lady of the court, a golden casket set with precious stones and unique of its kind—promised him assistance, had a horse saddled for himself, and a hack for the silversmith, with whom he set out for the abbey, and asked to see the abbot, who was Monseigneur Hugon de Sennecterre, aged ninety-three. Being come into the room with the silversmith, waiting nervously to receive his sentence, the chamberlain begged the abbot to sell him in advance a thing which was easy for him to sell, and which would be pleasant to him.

To which the abbot replied, looking at the chamberlain—

“That the canons inhibited and forbade him thus to engage his word.”

“Behold, my dear father,” said the chamberlain, “the jeweller of the Court who has conceived a great love for a bondswoman belonging to your abbey, and I request you, in consideration of my obliging you in any such desire as you may wish to see accomplished, to emancipate this maid.”

“Which is she?” asked the abbot of the citizen.

“Her name is Tiennette,” answered the silversmith, timidly.

“Ho! ho!” said the good old Hugon, smiling. “The angler has caught us a good fish! This is a grave business, and I know not how to decide by myself.”

“I know, my father, what those words mean,” said that chamberlain, knitting his brows.

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“Fine sir,” said the abbot, “know you what this maid is worth?”

The abbot ordered Tiennette to be fetched, telling his clerk to dress her in her finest clothes, and to make her look as nice as possible.

“Your love is in danger,” said that chamberlain to the silversmith, pulling him on one side. “Dismiss this fantasy. You can meet anywhere, even at Court, with women of wealth, young and pretty, who would willingly marry you. For this, if need be, the king would assist you by giving you some title, which in course of time would enable you to found a good family. Are you sufficiently well furnished with crowns to become the founder of a noble line?”

“I know not, monseigneur,” replied Anseau. “I have put money by.”

“Then see if you cannot buy the manumission of this maid. I know the monks. With them money does everything.”

“Monseigneur,” said the silversmith to the abbot, coming towards him, “you have the charge and office representing here below the goodness of God, who is often clement towards us, and has infinite treasures of mercy for our sorrows. Now, I will remember you each evening and each morning in my prayers, and never forget that I received my happiness at your hands, if you aid me to gain this maid in lawful wedlock, without keeping in servitude the children born of this union. And for this I will make you a receptacle for the Holy Eucharist, so elaborate, so rich with gold, precious stones and winged angels, that no other shall be like it in all Christendom. It shall remain unique, it shall dazzle your eyesight, and shall be so far the glory of your altar, that the people of the towns and foreign nobles shall rush to it, so magnificent shall it be.”

“My son,” replied the abbot “have you lost your senses? If you are so resolved to have this wench for a legal wife, your goods and your person belong to the Chapter of the abbey.”

“Yes, monseigneur, I am passionately in love with this girl, and more touched with her misery and her Christian heart than even with her perfections; but I am,” said he, with tears in his eyes, “still more astonished at your harshness, and I say it although I know that my fate is in your hands. Yes, monseigneur, I know the law; and if my goods fall to your domain, if I become a bondsman, if I lose my house and my citizenship, I will still keep that engine, gained by my labours and my studies, on which lies there,” cried he, striking his forehead “in a place of which no one, save God, can be lord but myself. And your whole abbey could not pay for the special creations which proceed therefrom. You may have my body, my wife, my children, but nothing shall get you my engine; nay, not even torture, seeing that I am stronger than iron is hard, and more patient than sorrow is great.”

So saying, the silversmith, enraged by the calmness of the abbot, who seemed resolved to acquire for the abbey the good man’s doubloons, brought down his fist upon an oaken chair and shivered it into fragments, for it split as under the blow of a mace.

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“Behold, monseigneur, what kind of servant you will have, and of an artificer of things divine you will make a mere cart-horse.”

“My son,” replied the abbot, “you have wrongfully broken my chair, and lightly judged my mind. This wench belongs to the abbey and not to me. I am the faithful servant of the rights and customs of this glorious monastery; although I might grant this woman license to bear free children, I am responsible for this to God and to the abbey. Now, since there was here an altar, bondsmen and monks, *id est*, from time immemorial, there has never occurred the case of a citizen becoming the property of the abbey by marriage with a bondswoman. Now, therefore, is there need to exercise the right, and to make use of it so that it would not be lost, weakened, worn out, or fallen into disuse, which would occasion a thousand difficulties. And this is of higher advantage to the State and to the abbey than your stones, however beautiful they be, seeing that we have treasure wherewith to buy rare jewels, and that no treasure can establish customs and laws. I call upon the king’s chamberlain to bear witness to the infinite pains which his majesty takes every day to fight for the establishment of his orders.”

“That is to close my mouth,” said the chamberlain.

The silversmith, who was not a great scholar, remained thoughtful. Then came Tiennette, clean as a new pin, her hair raised up, dressed in a robe of white wool with a blue sash, with tiny shoes and white stockings; in fact, so royally beautiful, so noble in her bearing was she, that the silversmith was petrified with ecstasy, and the chamberlain confessed he had never seen so perfect a creature. Thinking there was too much danger in this sight for the poor jeweller, he led him into the town, and begged him to think no further of the affair, since the abbey was not likely to liberate so good a bait for the citizens and nobles of the Parisian stream. In fact, the Chapter let the poor lover know that if he married this girl he must resolve to yield up his goods and his house to the abbey, consider himself a bondsman, both he and the children of the aforesaid marriage; although, by a special grace, the abbey would let him his house on the condition of his giving an inventory of his furniture and paying a yearly rent, and coming during eight days to live in a shed adjoining the domain, thus performing an act of service. The silversmith, to whom everyone spoke of the cupidity of the monks, saw clearly that the abbot would incommutably maintain this order, and his soul was filled with despair. At one time he determined to burn down the monastery; at another, he proposed to lure the abbot into a place where he could torment him until he had signed a charter for Tiennette’s liberation; in fact a thousand ideas possessed his brain, and as quickly evaporated. But after much lamentation he determined to carry off the girl, and fly with her into her a sure place

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from which nothing could draw him, and made his preparations accordingly; for once out of the kingdom, his friends or the king could better tackle the monks and bring them to reason. The good man counted, however, without his abbot, for going to the meadows, he found Tiennette no more there, and learned that she was confined in the abbey, and with much rigour, that to get at her it would be necessary to lay siege to the monastery. Then Master Anseau passed his time in tears, complaints, and lamentations; and all the city, the townspeople, and housewives, talked of his adventure, the noise of which was so great, that the king sent for the old abbot to court, and demanded of him why he did not yield under the circumstances to the great love of the silversmith, and why he did not put into practice Christian charity.

“Because, monseigneur,” replied the priest, “all rights are knit together like the pieces of a coat of mail, and if one makes default, all fail. If this girl was taken from us against our wish, and if the custom were not observed, your subjects would soon take off your crown, and raise up in various places violence and sedition, in order to abolish the taxes and imposts that weigh upon the populace.”

The king’s mouth was closed. Everyone was eager to know the end of this adventure. So great was the curiosity that certain lords wagered that the Touranian would desist from his love, and the ladies wagered to the contrary. The silversmith having complained to the queen that the monks had hidden his well-beloved from his sight, she found the deed detestable and horrible; and in consequence of her commands to the lord abbot it was permitted to the Touranian to go every day into the parlour of the abbey, where came Tiennette, but under the control of an old monk, and she always came attired in great splendour like a lady. The two lovers had no other license than to see each other, and to speak to each other, without being able to snatch the smallest atom of pleasure, and always grew their love more powerful.

One day Tiennette discoursed thus with her lover—“My dear lord, I have determined to make you a gift of my life, in order to relieve your suffering, and in this wise; in informing myself concerning everything I have found a means to set aside the rights of the abbey, and to give you all the joy you hope for from my fruition.”

“The ecclesiastical judge has ruled that as you become a bondsman only by accession, and because you were not born a bondsman, your servitude will cease with the cause that makes you a serf. Now, if you love me more than all else, lose your goods to purchase our happiness, and espouse me. Then when you have had your will of me, when you have hugged me and embraced me to your heart’s content, before I have offspring will I voluntarily kill myself, and thus you become free again; at least you will have the king on your side, who, it is said, wishes you well. And without doubt, God will pardon me that I cause my own death, in order to deliver my lord spouse.”

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“My dear Tiennette,” cried the jeweller, “it is finished—I will be a bondsman, and thou wilt live to make my happiness as long as my days. In thy company, the hardest chains will weigh but lightly, and little shall I reck the want of gold, when all my riches are in thy heart, and my only pleasure in thy sweet body. I place myself in the hands of St. Eloi, will deign in this misery to look upon us with pitying eyes, and guard us from all evils. Now I shall go hence to a scrivener to have the deeds and contracts drawn up. At least, dear flower of my days, thou shalt be gorgeously attired, well housed, and served like a queen during thy lifetime, since the lord abbot leaves me the earnings of my profession.”

Tiennette, crying and laughing, tried to put off her good fortune and wished to die, rather than reduce to slavery a free man; but the good Anseau whispered such soft words to her, and threatened so firmly to follow her to the tomb, that she agreed to the said marriage, thinking that she could always free herself after having tasted the pleasures of love.

When the submission of the Touranian became known in the town, and that for his sweetheart he yielded up his wealth and his liberty, everyone wished to see him. The ladies of the court encumbered themselves with jewels, in order to speak with him, and there fell upon him as from the clouds women enough to make up for the time he had been without them; but if any of them approached Tiennette in beauty, none had her heart. To be brief, when the hour of slavery and love was at hand, Anseau remolded all of his gold into a royal crown, in which he fixed all his pearls and diamonds, and went secretly to the queen, and gave it to her, saying, “Madame, I know not how to dispose of my fortune, which you here behold. Tomorrow everything that is found in my house will be the property of the cursed monks, who have had no pity on me. Then deign, madame, to accept this. It is a slight return for the joy which, through you, I have experienced in seeing her I love; for no sum of money is worth one of her glances. I do not know what will become of me, but if one day my children are delivered, I rely upon your queenly generosity.”

“Well said, good man,” cried the king. “The abbey will one day need my aid and I will not lose the remembrance of this.”

There was a vast crowd at the abbey for the nuptials of Tiennette, to whom the queen presented the bridal dress, and to whom the king granted a licence to wear every day golden rings in her ears. When the charming pair came from the abbey to the house of Anseau (now serf) over against St. Leu, there were torches at the windows to see them pass, and a double line in the streets, as though it were a royal entry. The poor husband had made himself a collar of gold, which he wore on his left arm in token of his belonging to the abbey of St. Germain. But in spite of his servitude the people cried out, “Noel!

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Noel!" as to a new crowned king. And the good man bowed to them gracefully, happy as a lover, and joyful at the homage which every one rendered to the grace and modesty of Tiennette. Then the good Touranian found green boughs and violets in crowns in his honour; and the principal inhabitants of the quarter were all there, who as a great honour, played music to him, and cried to him, "You will always be a noble man in spite of the abbey." You may be sure that the happy pair indulged an amorous conflict to their hearts' content; that the good man's blows were vigorous; and that his sweetheart, like a good country maiden, was of a nature to return them. Thus they lived together a whole month, happy as the doves, who in springtime build their nest twig by twig. Tiennette was delighted with the beautiful house and the customers, who came and went away astonished at her. This month of flowers past, there came one day, with great pomp, the good old Abbot Hugon, their lord and master, who entered the house, which then belonged not the jeweller but to the Chapter, and said to the two spouses:—

"My children, you are released, free and quit of everything; and I should tell you that from the first I was much struck with the love which united you one to the other. The rights of the abbey once recognised, I was, so far as I was concerned, determined to restore you to perfect enjoyment, after having proved your loyalty by the test of God. And this manumission will cost you nothing." Having thus said, he gave them each a little tap with his hand on the cheek. And they fell about his knees weeping tears of joy for such good reasons. The Touranian informed the people of the neighbourhood, who picked up in the street the largesse, and received the predictions of the good Abbott Hugon.

Then it was with great honour, Master Anseau held the reins of his mule, so far as the gate of Bussy. During the journey the jeweller, who had taken a bag of silver, threw the pieces to the poor and suffering, crying, "Largesse, largesse to God! God save and guard the abbot! Long live the good Lord Hugon!" And returning to his house he regaled his friends, and had fresh wedding festivities, which lasted a fortnight. You can imagine that the abbot was reproached by the Chapter, for his clemency in opening the door for such good prey to escape, so that when a year after the good man Hugon fell ill, his prior told him that it was a punishment from Heaven because he had neglected the sacred interests of the Chapter and of God.

"If I have judged that man aright," said the abbot, "he will not forget what he owes us."

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In fact, this day happening by chance to be the anniversary of the marriage, a monk came to announce that the silversmith supplicated his benefactor to receive him. Soon he entered the room where the abbot was, and spread out before him two marvellous shrines, which since that time no workman has surpassed, in any portion of the Christian world, and which were named “Vow of a Steadfast Love.” These two treasures are, as everyone knows, placed on the principal altar of the church, and are esteemed as an inestimable work, for the silversmith had spent therein all his wealth. Nevertheless, this wealth, far from emptying his purse, filled it full to overflowing, because so rapidly increased his fame and his fortune that he was able to buy a patent of nobility and lands, and he founded the house of Anseau, which has since been held in great honour in fair Touraine.

This teaches us to have always recourse to God and the saints in all the undertakings of life, to be steadfast in all things, and, above all, that a great love triumphs over everything, which is an old sentence; but the author has rewritten it because it is a most pleasant one.

CONCERNING A PROVOST WHO DID NOT RECOGNISE THINGS

In the good town of Bourges, at the time when that lord the king disported himself there, who afterwards abandoned his search after pleasure to conquer the kingdom, and did indeed conquer it, lived there a provost, entrusted by him with the maintenance of order, and called the provost-royal. From which came, under the glorious son of the said king, the office of provost of the hotel, in which behaved rather harshly my lord Tristan of Mere, of whom these tales oft make mention, although he was by no means a merry fellow. I give this information to the friends who pilfer from old manuscripts to manufacture new ones, and I show thereby how learned these Tales really are, without appearing to be so. Very well, then, this provost was named Picot or Picault, of which some made picotin, picoter, and picoree; by some Pitot or Pitaut, from which comes *pitance*; by others in Languedoc, Pichot from which comes nothing comes worth knowing; by these Petiot or Petiet; by those Petitot and Petinault, or Petiniaud, which was the masonic appellation; but at Bourges he was called Petit, a name which was eventually adopted by the family, which has multiplied exceedingly, for everywhere you find “*des Petits*,” and so he will be called Petit in this narrative. I have given this etymology in order to throw a light on our language, and show how our citizens have finished by acquiring names. But enough of science.

This said provost, who had as many names as there were provinces into which the court went, was in reality a little bit of a man, whose mother had given him so strange a hide, that when he wanted to laugh he used to stretch his cheeks like a cow making

water, and this smile at court was called the provost's smile. One day the king, hearing this proverbial expression used by certain lords, said jokingly—

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“You are in error, gentlemen, Petit does not laugh, he’s short of skin below the mouth.”

But with his forced laugh Petit was all the more suited to his occupation of watching and catching evil-doers. In fact, he was worth what he cost. For all malice, he was a bit of a cuckold, for all vice, he went to vespers, for all wisdom he obeyed God, when it was convenient; for all joy he had a wife in his house; and for all change in his joy he looked for a man to hang, and when he was asked to find one he never failed to meet him; but when he was between the sheets he never troubled himself about thieves. Can you find in all Christendom a more virtuous provost? No! All provosts hang too little, or too much, while this one just hanged as much as was necessary to be a provost.

This good fellow had for his wife in legitimate marriage, and much to the astonishment of everyone, the prettiest little woman in Bourges. So it was that often, while on his road to the execution, he would ask God the same question as several others in the town did—namely, why he, Petit, he the sheriff, he the provost royal, had to himself, Petit, provost royal and sheriff, a wife so exquisitely shapely, said dowered with charms, that a donkey seeing her pass by would bray with delight. To this God vouchsafed no reply, and doubtless had his reasons. But the slanderous tongues of the town replied for him, that the young lady was by no means a maiden when she became the wife of Petit. Others said she did not keep her affections solely for him. The wags answered, that donkeys often get into fine stables. Everyone had taunts ready which would have made a nice little collection had anyone gathered them together. From them, however, it is necessary to take nearly four-fourths, seeing that Petit’s wife was a virtuous woman, who had a lover for pleasure and a husband for duty. How many were there in the town as careful of their hearts and mouths? If you can point out one to me, I’ll give you a kick or a half-penny, whichever you like. You will find some who have neither husband nor lover. Certain females have a lover and no husband. Ugly women have a husband and no lover. But to meet with a woman who, having one husband and one lover, keeps to the deuce without trying for the trey, there is the miracle, you see, you greenhorns, blockheads, and dolts! Now then, put the true character of this virtuous woman on the tablets of your memory, go your ways, and let me go mine.

The good Madame Petit was not one of those ladies who are always on the move, running hither and thither, can’t keep still a moment, but trot about, worrying, hurrying, chattering, and clattering, and had nothing in them to keep them steady, but are so light that they run after a gastric zephyr as after their quintessence. No; on the contrary, she was a good housewife, always sitting in her chair or sleeping in her bed, ready as a candlestick, waiting for her lover when her husband went out, receiving the husband when the lover had gone. This dear woman never thought of dressing herself only to annoy and make other wives jealous. Pish! She had found a better use for the merry time of youth, and put life into her joints in order to make the best use of it. Now you know the provost and his good wife.

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The provost's lieutenant in duties matrimonial, duties which are so heavy that it takes two men to execute them, was a noble lord, a landowner, who disliked the king exceedingly. You must bear this in mind, because it is one of the principal points of the story. The Constable, who was a thorough Scotch gentleman, had seen by chance Petit's wife, and wished to have a little conversation with her comfortably, towards the morning, just the time to tell his beads, which was Christianly honest, or honestly Christian, in order to argue with her concerning the things of science or the science of things. Thinking herself quite learned enough, Madame Petit, who was, as has been stated, a virtuous, wise, and honest wife, refused to listen to the said constable. After certain arguments, reasonings, tricks and messages, which were of no avail, he swore by his great black *coquedouille* that he would rip up the gallant although he was a man of mark. But he swore nothing about the lady. This denotes a good Frenchman, for in such a dilemma there are certain offended persons who would upset the whole business of three persons by killing four. The constable wagered his big black *coquedouille* before the king and the lady of Sorel, who were playing cards before supper; and his majesty was well pleased, because he would be relieved of this noble, that displeased him, and that without costing him a Thank You.

"And how will you manage the affair?" said Madame de Sorel to him, with a smile.

"Oh, oh!" replied the constable. "You may be sure, madame, I do not wish to lose my big black coquedouille."

"What was, then, this great coquedouille?"

"Ha, ha! This point is shrouded in darkness to a degree that would make you ruin your eyes in ancient books; but it was certainly something of great importance. Nevertheless, let us put on our spectacles, and search it out. *Douille* signifies in Brittany, a girl, and *coque* means a cook's frying pan. From this word has come into France that of *coquin*—a knave who eats, licks, laps, sucks, and fritters his money away, and gets into stews; is always in hot water, and eats up everything, leads an idle life, and doing this, becomes wicked, becomes poor, and that incites him to steal or beg. From this it may be concluded by the learned that the great coquedouille was a household utensil in the shape of a kettle used for cooking things."

"Well," continued the constable, who was the Sieur of Richmond, "I will have the husband ordered to go into the country for a day and a night, to arrest certain peasants suspected of plotting treacherously with the English. Thereupon my two pigeons, believing their man absent, will be as merry as soldiers off duty; and, if a certain thing takes place, I will let loose the provost, sending him, in the king's name, to search the house where the couple will be, in order that he may slay our friend, who pretends to have this good cordelier all to himself."

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“What does this mean?” said the Lady of Beaute.

“Friar . . . fryer . . . an *equivoque*,” answered the king, smiling.

“Come to supper,” said Madame Agnes. “You are bad men, who with one word insult both the citizens’ wives and a holy order.”

Now, for a long time, Madame Petit had longed to have a night of liberty, during which she might visit the house of the said noble, where she could make as much noise as she liked, without waking the neighbours, because at the provost’s house she was afraid of being overheard, and had to content herself well with the pilferings of love, little tastes, and nibbles, daring at the most only to trot, while what she desired was a smart gallop. On the morrow, therefore, the lady’s-maid went off about midday to the young lord’s house, and told the lover—from whom she received many presents, and therefore in no way disliked him—that he might make his preparations for pleasure, and for supper, for that he might rely upon the provost’s better half being with him in the evening both hungry and thirsty.

“Good!” said he. “Tell your mistress I will not stint her in anything she desires.”

The pages of the cunning constable, who were watching the house, seeing the gallant prepare for his gallantries, and set out the flagons and the meats, went and informed their master that everything had happened as he wished. Hearing this, the good constable rubbed his hands thinking how nicely the provost would catch the pair. He instantly sent word to him, that by the king’s express commands he was to return to town, in order that he might seize at the said lord’s house an English nobleman, with whom he was vehemently suspected to be arranging a plot of diabolical darkness. But before he put this order into execution, he was to come to the king’s hotel, in order that he might understand the courtesy to be exercised in this case. The provost, joyous at the chance of speaking to the king, used such diligence that he was in town just at that time when the two lovers were singing the first note of their evening hymn. The lord of cuckoldom and its surrounding lands, who is a strange lord, managed things so well, that madame was only conversing with her lord lover at the time that her lord spouse was talking to the constable and the king; at which he was pleased, and so was his wife—a case of concord rare in matrimony.

“I was saying to monseigneur,” said the constable to the provost, as he entered the king’s apartment, “that every man in the kingdom has a right to kill his wife and her lover if he finds them in an act of infidelity. But his majesty, who is clement, argues that he has only a right to kill the man, and not the woman. Now what would you do, Mr. Provost, if by chance you found a gentleman taking a stroll in that fair meadow of which laws, human and divine, enjoin you alone to cultivate the verdure?”

“I would kill everything,” said the provost; “I would scrunch the five hundred thousand devils of nature, flower and seed, and send them flying, the pips and apples, the grass and the meadow, the woman and the man.”

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“You would be in the wrong,” said the king. “That is contrary to the laws of the Church and of the State; of the State, because you might deprive me of a subject; of the Church, because you would be sending an innocent to limbo unshriven.”

“Sire, I admire your profound wisdom, and I clearly perceive you to be the centre of all justice.”

“We can then only kill the knight—Amen,” said constable, “Kill the horseman. Now go quickly to the house of the suspected lord, but without letting yourself be bamboozled, do not forget what is due to his position.”

The provost, believing he would certainly be Chancellor of France if he properly acquitted himself of the task, went from the castle into the town, took his men, arrived at the nobleman’s residence, arranged his people outside, placed guards at all the doors, opened noiselessly by order of the king, climbs the stairs, asks the servants in which room their master is, puts them under arrest, goes up alone, and knocks at the door of the room where the two lovers are tilting in love’s tournament, and says to them—

“Open, in the name of our lord the king!”

The lady recognised her husband’s voice, and could not repress a smile, thinking that she had not waited for the king’s orders to do what she had done. But after laughter came terror. Her lover took his cloak, threw it over him, and came to the door. There, not knowing that his life was in peril, he declared that he belonged to the court and to the king’s household.

“Bah!” said the provost. “I have a strict order from the king; and under pain of being treated as a rebel, you are bound instantly to receive me.”

Then the lord went out to him, still holding the door.

“What do you want here?”

“An enemy of our lord the king, whom we command you to deliver into our hands, otherwise you must follow me with him to the castle.”

This, thought the lover, is a piece of treachery on the part of the constable, whose proposition my dear mistress treated with scorn. We must get out of this scrape in some way. Then turning towards the provost, he went double or quits on the risk, reasoning thus with the cuckold:—

“My friend, you know that I consider you but as gallant a man as it is possible for a provost to be in the discharge of his duty. Now, can I have confidence in you? I have here with me the fairest lady of the court. As for Englishmen, I have not sufficient of one to make the breakfast of the constable, M. de Richmond, who sends you here. This is

(to be candid with you) the result of a bet made between myself and the constable, who shares it with the King. Both have wagered that they know who is the lady of my heart; and I have wagered to the contrary. No one more than myself hates the English, who took my estates in Piccadilly. Is it not a knavish trick to put justice in motion against me? Ho! Ho! my lord constable, a

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chamberlain is worth two of you, and I will beat you yet. My dear Petit, I give you permission to search by night and by day, every nook and cranny of my house. But come in here alone, search my room, turn the bed over, do what you like. Only allow me to cover with a cloth or a handkerchief this fair lady, who is at present in the costume of an archangel, in order that you may not know to what husband she belongs."

"Willingly," said the provost. "But I am an old bird, not easily caught with chaff, and would like to be sure that it is really a lady of the court, and not an Englishman, for these English have flesh as white and soft as women, and I know it well, because I've hanged so many of them."

"Well then," said the lord, "seeing of what crime I am suspected, from which I am bound to free myself, I will go and ask my lady-love to consent for a moment to abandon her modesty. She is too fond of me to refuse to save me from reproach. I will beg her to turn herself over and show you a physiognomy, which will in no way compromise her, and will be sufficient to enable you to recognise a noble woman, although she will be in a sense upside down."

"All right," said the provost.

The lady having heard every word, had folded up all her clothes, and put them under the bolster, had taken off her chemise, that her husband should not recognise it, had twisted her head up in a sheet, and had brought to light the carnal convexities which commenced where her spine finished.

"Come in, my friend," said the lord.

The provost looked up the chimney, opened the cupboard, the clothes' chest, felt under the bed, in the sheets, and everywhere. Then he began to study what was on the bed.

"My lord," said he, regarding his legitimate appurtenances, "I have seen young English lads with backs like that. You must forgive me doing my duty, but I must see otherwise."

"What do you call otherwise?" said the lord.

"Well, the other physiognomy, or, if you prefer it, the physiognomy of the other."

"Then you will allow madame to cover herself and arrange only to show you sufficient to convince you," said the lover, knowing that the lady had a mark or two easy to recognise. "Turn your back a moment, so that my dear lady may satisfy propriety."

The wife smiled at her lover, kissed him for his dexterity, arranging herself cunningly; and the husband seeing in full that which the jade had never let him see before, was

quite convinced that no English person could be thus fashioned without being a charming Englishwoman.

“Yes, my lord,” he whispered in the ear of his lieutenant, “this is certainly a lady of the court, because the towns-women are neither so well formed nor so charming.”

Then the house being thoroughly searched, and no Englishman found, the provost returned, as the constable had told him, to the king’s residence.

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“Is he slain?” said the constable.

“Who?”

“He who grafted horns upon your forehead.”

“I only saw a lady in his couch, who seemed to be greatly enjoying herself with him.”

“You, with your own eyes, saw this woman, cursed cuckold, and you did not kill your rival?”

“It was not a common woman, but a lady of the court.”

“You saw her?”

“And verified her in both cases.”

“What do you mean by those words?” cried the king, who was bursting with laughter.

“I say, with all the respect due to your Majesty, that I have verified the over and the under.”

“You do not, then, know the physiognomies of your own wife, you old fool without memory! You deserve to be hanged.”

“I hold those features of my wife in too great respect to gaze upon them. Besides she is so modest that she would die rather than expose an atom of her body.”

“True,” said the king; “it was not made to be shown.”

“Old coquedouille! that was your wife,” said the constable.

“My lord constable, she is asleep, poor girl!”

“Quick, quick, then! To horse! Let us be off, and if she be in your house I’ll forgive you.”

Then the constable, followed by the provost, went to the latter’s house in less time than it would have taken a beggar to empty the poor-box.

“Hullo! there, hi!”

Hearing the noise made by the men, which threatened to bring the walls about their ears, the maid-servant opened the door, yawning and stretching her arms. The constable and the provost rushed into the room, where, with great difficulty, they succeeded in waking the lady, who pretended to be terrified, and was so soundly asleep that her eyes were full of gum. At this the provost was in great glee, saying to the

constable that someone had certainly deceived him, that his wife was a virtuous woman, and was more astonished than any of them at these proceedings. The constable turned on his heel and departed. The good provost began directly to undress to get to bed early, since this adventure had brought his good wife to his memory. When he was harnessing himself, and was knocking off his nether garments, madame, still astonished, said to him—

“Oh, my dear husband, what is the meaning of all this uproar—this constable and his pages, and why did he come to see if I was asleep? Is it to be henceforward part of a constable’s duty to look after our . . .”

“I do not know,” said the provost, interrupting her, to tell her what had happened to him.

“And you saw without my permission a lady of the court! Ha! ha! heu! heu! hein!”

Then she began to moan, to weep, and to cry in such a deplorable manner and so loudly, that her lord was quite aghast.

“What’s the matter, my darling? What is it? What do you want?”

“Ah! You won’t love me any more are after seeing how beautiful court ladies are!”

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“Nonsense, my child! They are great ladies. I don’t mind telling you in confidence; they are great ladies in every respect.”

“Well,” said she, “am I nicer?”

“Ah,” said he, “in a great measure. Yes!”

“They have, then, great happiness,” said she, sighing, “when I have so much with so little beauty.”

Thereupon the provost tried a better argument to argue with his good wife, and argued so well that she finished by allowing herself to be convinced that Heaven has ordained that much pleasure may be obtained from small things.

This shows us that nothing here below can prevail against the Church of Cuckolds.

ABOUT THE MONK AMADOR, WHO WAS A GLORIOUS ABBOT OF TURPENAY

One day that it was drizzling with rain—a time when the ladies remain gleefully at home, because they love the damp, and can have at their apron strings the men who are not disagreeable to them—the queen was in her chamber, at the castle of Amboise, against the window curtains. There, seated in her chair, she was working at a piece of tapestry to amuse herself, but was using her needle heedlessly, watching the rain fall into the Loire, and was lost in thought, where her ladies were following her example. The king was arguing with those of his court who had accompanied him from the chapel—for it was a question of returning to dominical vespers. His arguments, statements, and reasonings finished, he looked at the queen, saw that she was melancholy, saw that the ladies were melancholy also, and noted the fact that they were all acquainted with the mysteries of matrimony.

“Did I not see the Abbot of Turpenay here just now?” said he.

Hearing these words, there advanced towards the king the monk, who, by his constant petitions, rendered himself so obnoxious to Louis the Eleventh, that that monarch seriously commanded his provost-royal to remove him from his sight; and it has been related in the first volume of these Tales, how the monk was saved through the mistake of Sieur Tristan. The monk was at this time a man whose qualities had grown rapidly, so much so that his wit had communicated a jovial hue to his face. He was a great favourite with the ladies, who crammed him with wine, confectioneries, and dainty dishes at the dinners, suppers, and merry-makings, to which they invited him, because every host likes those cheerful guests of God with nimble jaws, who say as many words as they put away tit-bits. This abbot was a pernicious fellow, who would relate to the

ladies many a merry tale, at which they were only offended when they had heard them; since, to judge them, things must be heard.

“My reverend father,” said the king, “behold the twilight hour, in which ears feminine may be regaled with certain pleasant stories, for the ladies can laugh without blushing, or blush without laughing, as it suits them best. Give us a good story—a regular monk’s story. I shall listen to it, i’faith, with pleasure, because I want to be amused, and so do the ladies.”

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“We only submit to this, in order to please your lordship,” said the queen; “because our good friend the abbot goes a little too far.”

“Then,” replied the king, turning towards the monk, “read us some Christian admonition, holy father, to amuse madame.”

“Sire, my sight is weak, and the day is closing.”

“Give us a story, then, that stops at the girdle.”

“Ah, sire!” said the monk, smiling, “the one I am thinking of stops there; but it commences at the feet.”

The lords present made such gallant remonstrances and supplications to the queen and her ladies, that, like the good Bretonne that she was, she gave the monk a gentle smile, and said—

“As you will, my father; but you must answer to God for our sins.”

“Willingly, madame; if it be your pleasure to take mine, you will be a gainer.”

Everyone laughed, and so did queen. The king went and sat by his dear wife, well beloved by him, as everyone knows. The courtiers received permission to be seated—-the old courtiers, of course, understood; for the young ones stood, by the ladies’ permission, beside their chairs, to laugh at the same time as they did. Then the Abbot of Turpenay gracefully delivered himself of the following tale, the risky passages of which he gave in a low, soft, flute-like voice:—

About a hundred years ago at the least, there occurred great quarrels in Christendom because there were two popes at Rome, each one pretending to be legitimately elected, which caused great annoyance to the monasteries, abbeys, and bishoprics, since, in order to be recognised by as many as possible, each of the two popes granted titles and rights to each adherent, the which made double owners everywhere. Under these circumstances, the monasteries and abbeys that were at war with their neighbours would not recognise both the popes, and found themselves much embarrassed by the other, who always gave the verdict to the enemies of the Chapter. This wicked schism brought about considerable mischief, and proved abundantly that error is worse in Christianity than the adultery of the Church.

Now at this time, when the devil was making havoc among our possessions, the most illustrious abbey of Turpenay, of which I am at present the unworthy ruler, had a heavy trial on concerning the settlements of certain rights with the redoubtable Sire de Cande, an idolatrous infidel, a relapsed heretic, and most wicked lord. This devil, sent upon earth in the shape of a nobleman, was, to tell the truth, a good soldier, well received at court, and a friend of the Sieur Bureau de la Riviere; who was a person to whom the

king was exceedingly partial—King Charles the Fifth, of glorious memory. Beneath the shelter of the favour of this Sieur de la Riviere, Lord of Cande did exactly as he pleased in the valley of the Indre, where he used to be master of everything, from Montbazon to Usse. You may be sure that his neighbours

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were terribly afraid of him, and to save their skulls let him have his way. They would, however, have preferred him under the ground to above it, and heartily wished him bad luck; but he troubled himself little about that. In the whole valley the noble abbey alone showed fight to this demon, for it has always been a doctrine of the Church to take into her lap the weak and suffering, and use every effort to protect the oppressed, especially those whose rights and privileges are menaced.

For this reason this rough warrior hated monks exceedingly, especially those of Turpenay, who would not allow themselves to be robbed of their rights either by force or stratagem. He was well pleased at the ecclesiastical schism, and waited the decision of our abbey, concerning which pope they should choose, to pillage them, being quite ready to recognise the one to whom the abbot of Turpenay should refuse his obedience. Since his return to his castle, it was his custom to torment and annoy the priests whom he encountered upon his domains in such a manner, that a poor monk, surprised by him on his private road, which was by the water-side, perceived no other method of safety then to throw himself into the river, where, by a special miracle of the Almighty, whom the good man fervently invoked, his gown floated him on the Indre, and he made his way comfortably to the other side, which he attained in full view of the lord of Cande, who was not ashamed to enjoy the terrors of a servant of God. Now you see of what stuff this horrid man was made. The abbot, to whom at that time, the care of our glorious abbey was committed, led a most holy life, and prayed to God with devotion; but he would have saved his own soul ten times, of such good quality was his religion, before finding a chance to save the abbey itself from the clutches of this wretch. Although he was very perplexed, and saw the evil hour at hand, he relied upon God for succour, saying that he would never allow the property of the Church to be touched, and that He who had raised up the Princess Judith for the Hebrews, and Queen Lucretia for the Romans, would keep his most illustrious abbey of Turpenay, and indulged in other equally sapient remarks. But his monks, who—to our shame I confess it—were unbelievers, reproached him with his happy-go-lucky way of looking at things, and declared that, to bring the chariot of Providence to the rescue in time, all the oxen in the province would have to be yoked it; that the trumpets of Jericho were no longer made in any portion of the world; that God was disgusted with His creation, and would have nothing more to do with it: in short, a thousand and one things that were doubts and contumelies against God.

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At this desperate juncture there rose up a monk named Amador. This name had been given him by way of a joke, since his person offered a perfect portrait of the false god Aegipan. He was like him, strong in the stomach; like him, had crooked legs; arms hairy as those of a saddler, a back made to carry a wallet, a face as red as the phiz of a drunkard, glistening eyes, a tangled beard, was hairy faced, and so puffed out with fat and meat that you would have fancied him in an interesting condition. You may be sure that he sung his matins on the steps of the wine-cellar, and said his vespers in the vineyards of Lord. He was as fond of his bed as a beggar with sores, and would go about the valley fuddling, faddling, blessing the bridals, plucking the grapes, and giving them to the girls to taste, in spite of the prohibition of the abbot. In fact, he was a pilferer, a loiterer, and a bad soldier of the ecclesiastical militia, of whom nobody in the abbey took any notice, but let him do as he liked from motives of Christian charity, thinking him mad.

Amador, knowing that it was a question of the ruin of the Abbey, in which he was as snug as a bug in a rug, put up his bristles, took notice of this and of that, went into each of the cells, listened in the refectory, shivered in his shoes, and declared that he would attempt to save the abbey. He took cognisance of the contested points, received from the abbot permission to postpone the case, and was promised by the whole Chapter the Office of sub-prior if he succeeded in putting an end to the litigation. Then he set off across the country, heedless of the cruelty and ill-treatment of the Sieur de Cande, saying that he had that within his gown which would subdue him. He went his way with nothing but the said gown for his viaticum: but then in it was enough fat to feed a dwarf. He selected to go to the chateau, a day when it rained hard enough to fill the tubs of all the housewives, and arrived without meeting a soul, in sight of Cande, and looking like a drowned dog, stepped bravely into the courtyard, and took shelter under a sty-roof to wait until the fury of the elements had calmed down, and placed himself boldly in front of the room where the owner of the chateau should be. A servant perceiving him while laying the supper, took pity on him, and told him to make himself scarce, otherwise his master would give him a horsewhipping, just to open the conversation, and asked him what made him so bold as to enter a house where monks were hated more than a red leper.

“Ah!” said Amador, “I am on my way to Tours, sent thither by my lord abbot. If the lord of Cande were not so bitter against the poor servant of God, I should not be kept during such a deluge in the courtyard, but in the house. I hope that he will find mercy in his hour of need.”

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The servant reported these words to his master, who at first wished to have the monk thrown into the big trough of the castle among the other filth. But the lady of Cande, who had great authority over her spouse, and was respected by him, because through her he expected a large inheritance, and because she was a little tyrannical, reprimanded him, saying, that it was possible this monk was a Christian; that in such weather thieves would succour an officer of justice; that, besides, it was necessary to treat him well to find out to what decision the brethren of Turpenay had come with regard to the schism business, and that her advice was put an end by kindness and not by force to the difficulties arisen between the abbey and the domain of Cande, because no lord since the coming of Christ had ever been stronger than the Church, and that sooner or later the abbey would ruin the castle; finally, she gave utterance to a thousand wise arguments, such as ladies use in the height of the storms of life, when they have had about enough of them. Amador's face was so piteous, his appearance so wretched, and so open to banter, that the lord, saddened by the weather, conceived the idea of enjoying a joke at his expense, tormenting him, playing tricks on him, and of giving him a lively recollection of his reception at the chateau. Then this gentleman, who had secret relations with his wife's maid, sent this girl, who was called Perrotte, to put an end to his ill-will towards the luckless Amador. As soon as the plot had been arranged between them, the wench, who hated monks, in order to please her master, went to the monk, who was standing under the pigsty, assuming a courteous demeanour in order the better to please him, said—

"Holy father, the master of the house is ashamed to see a servant of God out in the rain when there is room for him indoors, a good fire in the chimney, and a table spread. I invite you in his name and that of the lady of the house to step in."

"I thank the lady and lord, not for their hospitality which is a Christian thing, but for having sent as an ambassador to me, a poor sinner, an angel of such delicate beauty that I fancy I see the Virgin over our altar."

Saying which, Amador raised his nose in the air, and saluted with the two flakes of fire that sparkled in his bright eyes the pretty maidservant, who thought him neither so ugly nor so foul, nor so bestial; when, following Perrotte up the steps, Amador received on the nose, cheeks, and other portions of his face a slash of the whip, which made him see all the lights of the Magnificat, so well was the dose administered by the Sieur de Cande, who, busy chastening his greyhounds pretended not see the monk. He requested Amador to pardon him this accident, and ran after the dogs who had caused the mischief to his guest. The laughing servant, who knew what was coming, had dexterously kept out of the way. Noticing this business, Amador suspected the relations of Perrotte and the chevalier,

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concerning whom it is possible that the lasses of the valley had already whispered something into his ear. Of the people who were then in the room not one made room for the man of God, who remained right in the draught between the door and the window, where he stood freezing until the moment when the Sieur de Cande, his wife, and his aged sister, Mademoiselle de Cande, who had the charge of the young heiress of the house, aged about sixteen years, came and sat in their chairs at the head of the table, far from the common people, according to the old custom usual among the lords of the period, much to their discredit.

The Sieur de Cande, paying no attention to the monk, let him sit at the extreme end of the table, in a corner, where two mischievous lads had orders to squeeze and elbow him. Indeed these fellows worried his feet, his body, and his arms like real torturers, poured white wine into his goblet for water, in order to fuddle him, and the better to amuse themselves with him; but they made him drink seven large jugfuls without making belch, break wind, sweat or snort, which horrified them exceedingly, especially as his eye remained as clear as crystal. Encouraged, however, by a glance from their lord, they still kept throwing, while bowing to him, gravy into his beard, and wiping it dry in a manner to tear every hair of it out. The varlet who served a caudle baptised his head with it, and took care to let the burning liquor trickle down poor Amador's backbone. All this agony he endured with meekness, because the spirit of God was in him, and also the hope of finishing the litigation by holding out in the castle. Nevertheless, the mischievous lot burst out into such roars of laughter at the warm baptism given by the cook's lad to the soaked monk, even the butler making jokes at his expense, that the lady of Cande was compelled to notice what was going on at the end of the table. Then she perceived Amador, who had a look of sublime resignation upon his face, and was endeavouring to get something out of the big beef bones that had been put upon his pewter platter. At this moment the poor monk, who had administered a dexterous blow of the knife to a big ugly bone, took it into his hairy hands, snapped it in two, sucked the warm marrow out of it, and found it good.

"Truly," said she to herself, "God has put great strength into this monk!"

At the same time she seriously forbade the pages, servants, and others to torment the poor man, to whom out of mockery they had just given some rotten apples and maggoty nuts. He, perceiving that the old lady and her charge, the lady and the servants had seen him manoeuvring the bone, pushed backed his sleeve, showed the powerful muscles of his arm, placed nuts near his wrist on the bifurcation of the veins, and crushed them one by one by pressing them with the palm of his hand so vigorously that they appeared like ripe medlars. He also crunched them between his teeth, white as the teeth of a dog, husk, shell, fruit, and all, of which he made in a second a mash which he swallowed like honey. He crushed them between two fingers, which he used like scissors to cut them in two without a moment's hesitation.

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You may be sure that the women were silent, that the men believed the devil to be in the monk; and had it not been for his wife and the darkness of the night, the Sieur de Cande, having the fear of God before his eyes, would have kicked him out of the house. Everyone declared that the monk was a man capable of throwing the castle into the moat. Therefore, as soon as everyone had wiped his mouth, my lord took care to imprison this devil, whose strength was terrible to behold, and had him conducted to a wretched little closet where Perrotte had arranged her machine in order to annoy him during the night. The tom-cats of the neighbourhood had been requested to come and confess to him, invited to tell him their sins in embryo towards the tabbies who attracted their affections, and also the little pigs for whom fine lumps of tripe had been placed under the bed in order to prevent them becoming monks, of which they were very desirous, by disgusting them with the style of libera, which the monk would sing to them. At every movement of poor Amador, who would find short horse-hair in the sheets, he would bring down cold water on to the bed, and a thousand other tricks were arranged, such are usually practised in castles. Everyone went to bed in expectation of the nocturnal revels of the monk, certain that they would not be disappointed, since he had been lodged under the tiles at the top of a little tower, the guard of the door of which was committed to dogs who howled for a bit of him. In order to ascertain what language the conversations with the cats and pigs would be carried on, the Sire came to stay with his dear Perrotte, who slept in the next room.

As soon as he found himself thus treated, Amador drew from his bag a knife, and dexterously extricated himself. Then he began to listen in order to find out the ways of the place, and heard the master of the house laughing with his maid-servant. Suspecting their manoeuvres, he waited till the moment when the lady of the house should be alone in bed, and made his way into her room with bare feet, in order that his sandals should not be in his secrets. He appeared to her by the light of the lamp in the manner in which monks generally appear during the night—that is, in a marvellous state, which the laity find it difficult long to sustain; and the thing is an effect of the frock, which magnifies everything. Then having let her see that he was all a monk, he made the following little speech—

“Know, madame, that I am sent by Jesus and the Virgin Mary to warn you to put an end to the improper perversities which are taking place—to the injury of your virtue, which is treacherously deprived of your husband’s best attention, which he lavishes upon your maid. What is the use of being a lady if the seigneurial dues are received elsewhere. According to this, your servant is the lady and you are the servant. Are not all the joys bestowed upon her due to you? You will find them all amassed in our Holy Church, which is the consolation of the afflicted. Behold in me the messenger, ready to pay these debts if you do not renounce them.”

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Saying this, the good monk gently loosened his girdle in which he was incommoded, so much did he appear affected by the sight of those beauties which the Sieur de Cande disdained.

“If you speak truly, my father, I will submit to your guidance,” said she, springing lightly out of bed. “You are for sure, a messenger of God, because you have been in a single day that which I had not noticed here for a long time.”

Then she went, accompanied by Amador, whose holy robe she did not fail to run her hand over, and was so struck when she found it real, that she hoped to find her husband guilty; and indeed she heard him talking about the monk in her servant’s bed. Perceiving this felony, she went into a furious rage and opened her mouth to resolve it into words— which is the usual method of women—and wished to kick up the devil’s delight before handing the girl over to justice. But Amador told her that it would be more sensible to avenge herself first, and cry out afterwards.

“Avenge me quickly, then, my father,” said she, “that I may begin to cry out.”

Thereupon the monk avenged her most monastically with a good and ample vengeance, that she indulged in as a drunkard who puts his lips to the bunghole of a barrel; for when a lady avenges herself, she should get drunk with vengeance, or not taste it at all. And the chatelaine was revenged to that degree that she could not move; since nothing agitates, takes away the breath, and exhausts, like anger and vengeance. But although she were avenged, and doubly and trebly avenged, yet would she not forgive, in order that she might reserve the right of avenging herself with the monk, now here, now there. Perceiving this love for vengeance, Amador promised to aid her in it as long as her ire lasted, for he informed her that he knew in his quality of a monk, constrained to meditate long on the nature of things, an infinite number of modes, methods, and manners of practicing revenge.

Then he pointed out to her canonically what a Christian thing it is to revenge oneself, because all through the Holy Scriptures God declares Himself, above all things, to be a God of vengeance; and moreover, demonstrates to us, by his establishment in the infernal regions, how royally divine a thing vengeance is, since His vengeance is eternal. From which it followed, that women with monks ought to revenge themselves, under pain of not being Christians and faithful servants of celestial doctrines.

This dogma pleased the lady much, and she confessed that she had never understood the commandments of the Church, and invited her well-beloved monk to enlighten her thoroughly concerning them. Then the chatelaine, whose vital spirits had been excited by the vengeance which had refreshed them, went into the room where the jade was amusing herself, and by chance found her with her hand where she, the chatelaine, often had her eye—like the merchants have on their most precious articles, in order to see that they

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were not stolen. They were—according to President Lizet, when he was in a merry mood—a couple taken in flagrant delectation, and looked dumbfounded, sheepish and foolish. The sight that met her eyes displeased the lady beyond the power of words to express, as it appeared by her discourse, of which to roughness was similar to that of the water of a big pond when the sluice-gates were opened. It was a sermon in three heads, accompanied with music of a high gamut, varied in tones, with many sharps among the keys.

“Out upon virtue! my lord; I’ve had my share of it. You have shown me that religion in conjugal faith is an abuse; this is then the reason that I have no son. How many children have you consigned to this common oven, this poor-box, this bottomless alms-purse, this leper’s porringer, the true cemetery of the House of Cande? I will know if I am childless from a constitutional defect, or through your fault. I will have handsome cavaliers, in order that I may have an heir. You can get the bastards, I the legitimate children.”

“My dear,” said the bewildered lord, “don’t shout so.”

“But,” replied the lady, “I will shout, and shout to make myself heard, heard by the archbishop, heard by the legate, by the king, by my brothers, who will avenge this infamy for me.”

“Do not dishonour your husband!”

“This is dishonour then? You are right; but, my lord, it is not brought about by you, but by this hussy, whom I will have sewn up in a sack, and thrown into the Indre; thus your dishonour will be washed away. Hi! there,” she called out.

“Silence, madame!” said the sire, as shamefaced as a blind man’s dog; because this great warrior, so ready to kill others, was like a child in the hands of his wife, a state of affairs to which soldiers are accustomed, because in them lies the strength and is found all the dull carnality of matter; while, on the contrary, in woman is a subtle spirit and a scintillation of perfumed flame that lights up paradise and dazzles the male. This is the reason that certain women govern their husbands, because mind is the master of matter.

(At this the ladies began to laugh, as did also the king).

“I will not be silent,” said the lady of Cande (said the abbot, continuing his tale); “I have been too grossly outraged. This, then, is the reward of the wealth that I brought you, and of my virtuous conduct! Did I ever refuse to obey you even during Lent, and on fast days? Am I so cold as to freeze the sun? Do you think that I embrace by force, from

duty, or pure kindness of heart! Am I too hallowed for you to touch? Am I a holy shrine? Was there need of a papal brief to kiss me? God's truth! have you had so much of me that you are tired? Am I not to your taste? Do charming wenches know more than ladies? Ha! perhaps it is so, since she has let you work in the field without sowing. Teach me the business; I will practice it with those whom I take into my service, for it is settled that I am free. That is as we should be. Your society was wearisome, and the little pleasure I derived from it cost me too dear. Thank God! I am quit of you and your whims, because I intend to retire to a monastery." . . . She meant to say a convent, but this avenging monk had perverted her tongue.

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“And I shall be more comfortable in this monastery with my daughter, than in this place of abominable wickedness. You can inherit from your wench. Ha, ha! The fine lady of Cande! Look at her!”

“What is the matter?” said Amador, appearing suddenly upon the scene.

“The matter is, my father,” replied she, “that my wrongs cry aloud for vengeance. To begin with, I shall have this trollop thrown into the river, sewn up in a sack, for having diverted the seed of the House of Cande from its proper channel. It will be saving the hangman a job. For the rest I will—”

“Abandon your anger, my daughter,” said the monk. “It is commanded us by the Church to forgive those who trespass against us, if we would find favour in the side of Heaven, because you pardon those who also pardon others. God avenges himself eternally on those who have avenged themselves, but keeps in His paradise those who have pardoned. From that comes the jubilee, which is a day of great rejoicing, because all debts and offences are forgiven. Thus it is a source of happiness to pardon. Pardon! Pardon! To pardon is a most holy work. Pardon Monseigneur de Cande, who will bless you for your gracious clemency, and will henceforth love you much; This forgiveness will restore to you the flower of youth; and believe, my dear sweet young lady, that forgiveness is in certain cases the best means of vengeance. Pardon your maid-servant, who will pray heaven for you. Thus God, supplicated by all, will have you in His keeping, and will bless you with male lineage for this pardon.”

Thus saying, the monk took the hand of the sire, placed it in that of the lady, and added —

“Go and talk over the pardon.”

And then he whispered into the husband’s ears this sage advice—

“My lord, use your best argument, and you will silence her with it, because a woman’s mouth it is only full of words when she is empty elsewhere. Argue continually, and thus you will always have the upper hand of your wife.”

“By the body of the Jupiter! There’s good in this monk after all,” said the seigneur, as he went out.

As soon as Amador found himself alone with Perrotte he spoke to her, as follows—

“You are to blame, my dear, for having wished to torment a poor servant of God; therefore are you now the object of celestial wrath, which will fall upon you. To whatever place you fly it will always follow you, will seize upon you in every limb, even after your death, and will cook you like a pasty in the oven of hell, where you will simmer

eternally, and every day you will receive seven hundred thousand million lashes of the whip, for the one I received through you."

"Ah! holy Father," said the wench, casting herself at the monk's feet, "you alone can save me, for in your gown I should be sheltered from the anger of God."

Saying this, she raised the robe to place herself beneath it, and exclaimed—

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“By my faith! monks are better than knights.”

“By the sulphur of the devil! You are not acquainted with the monks?”

“No,” said Perrotte.

“And you don’t know the service that monks sing without saying a word?”

“No.”

Thereupon the monk went through this said service for her, as it is sung on great feast days, with all the grand effects used in monasteries, the psalms well chanted in f major, the flaming tapers, and the choristers, and explained to her the *Introit*, and also the *ite missa est*, and departed, leaving her so sanctified that the wrath of heaven would have great difficulty in discovering any portion of the girl that was not thoroughly monasticated.

By his orders, Perrotte conducted him to Mademoiselle de Cande, the lord’s sister, to whom he went in order to learn if it was her desire to confess to him, because monks came so rarely to the castle. The lady was delighted, as would any good Christian have been, at such a chance of clearing out her conscience. Amador requested her to show him her conscience, and she having allowed him to see that which he considered the conscience of old maids, he found it in a bad state, and told her that the sins of women were accomplished there; that to be for the future without sin it was necessary to have the conscience corked up by a monk’s indulgence. The poor ignorant lady having replied that she did not know where these indulgences were to be had, the monk informed her that he had a relic with him which enabled him to grant one, that nothing was more indulgent than this relic, because without saying a word it produced infinite pleasures, which is the true, eternal and primary character of an indulgence. The poor lady was so pleased with this relic, the virtue of which she tried in various ways, that her brain became muddled, and she had so much faith in it that she indulged as devoutly in indulgences as the Lady of Cande had indulged in vengeances. This business of confession woke up the younger Demoiselle de Cande, who came to watch the proceedings. You may imagine that the monk had hoped for this occurrence, since his mouth had watered at the sight of this fair blossom, whom he also confessed, because the elder lady could not hinder him from bestowing upon the younger one, who wished it, what remained of the indulgences. But, remember, this pleasure was due to him for the trouble he had taken. The morning having dawned, the pigs having eaten their tripe, and the cats having become disenchanted with love, and having watered all the places rubbed with herbs, Amador went to rest himself in his bed, which Perrotte had put straight again. Every one slept, thanks to the monk, so long, that no one in the castle was up before noon, which was the dinner hour. The servants all believed the monk to be a devil who had carried off the cats, the pigs, and also their masters. In spite of these ideas however, every one was in the room at meal time.

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“Come, my father,” said the chatelaine, giving her arm to the monk, whom she put at her side in the baron’s chair, to the great astonishment of the attendants, because the Sire of Cande said not a word. “Page, give some of this to Father Amador,” said madame.

“Father Amador has need of so and so,” said the Demoiselle de Cande.

“Fill up Father Amador’s goblet,” said the sire.

“Father Amador has no bread,” said the little lady.

“What do you require, Father Amador?” said Perrotte.

It was Father Amador here, and Father Amador there. He was regaled like a little maiden on her wedding night.

“Eat, father,” said madame; “you made such a bad meal yesterday.”

“Drink, father,” said the sire. “You are, s’blood! the finest monk I have ever set eyes on.”

“Father Amador is a handsome monk,” said Perrotte.

“An indulgent monk,” said the demoiselle.

“A beneficent monk,” said the little one.

“A great monk,” said the lady.

“A monk who well deserves his name,” said the clerk of the castle.

Amador munched and chewed, tried all the dishes, lapped up the hypocras, licked his chops, sneezed, blew himself out, strutted and stamped about like a bull in a field. The others regarded him with great fear, believing him to be a magician. Dinner over, the Lady of Cande, the demoiselle, and the little one, besought the Sire of Cande with a thousand fine arguments, to terminate the litigation. A great deal was said to him by madame, who pointed out to him how useful a monk was in a castle; by mademoiselle, who wished for the future to polish up her conscience every day; by the little one, who pulled her father’s beard, and asked that this monk might always be at Cande. If ever the difference were arranged, it would be by the monk: the monk was of a good understanding, gentle and virtuous as a saint; it was a misfortune to be at enmity with a monastery containing such monks. If all the monks were like him, the abbey would always have everywhere the advantage of the castle, and would ruin it, because this monk was very strong. Finally, they gave utterance to a thousand reasons, which were like a deluge of words, and were so pluvially showered down that the sire yielded, saying, that there would never be a moment’s peace in the house until matters were settled to the satisfaction of the women. Then he sent for the clerk, who wrote down for

him, and also for the monk. Then Amador surprised them exceedingly by showing them the charters and the letters of credit, which would prevent the sire and his clerk delaying this agreement. When the Lady of Cande saw them about to put an end to this old case, she went to the linen chest to get some fine cloth to make a new gown for her dear Amador. Every one in the house had noticed how this old gown was worn, and it would have been a great shame to leave such a treasure in such a worn-out case. Everyone was eager to work at the gown. Madame cut it, the servant put the hood on, the demoiselle sewed it, and the little demoiselle worked at the sleeves. And all set so heartily to work to adorn the monk, that the robe was ready by supper time, as was also the charter of agreement prepared and sealed by the Sire de Cande.

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“Ah, my father!” said the lady, “if you love us, you will refresh yourself after your merry labour by washing yourself in a bath that I have had heated by Perrotte.”

Amador was then bathed in scented water. When he came out he found a new robe of fine linen and lovely sandals ready for him, which made him appear the most glorious monk in the world.

Meanwhile the monks of Turpenay fearing for Amador, had ordered two of their number to spy about the castle. These spies came round by the moat, just as Perrotte threw Amador’s greasy old gown, with other rubbish, into it. Seeing which, they thought that it was all over with the poor madman. They therefore returned, and announced that it was certain Amador had suffered martyrdom in the service of the abbey. Hearing which the abbot ordered them to assemble in the chapel and pray to God, in order to assist this devoted servant in his torments. The monk having supped, put his charter into his girdle, and wished to return to Turpenay. Then he found at the foot of the steps madame’s mare, bridled and saddled, and held ready for him by a groom. The lord had ordered his men-at-arms to accompany the good monk, so that no accident might befall him. Seeing which, Amador pardoned the tricks of the night before, and bestowed his benediction upon every one before taking his departure from this converted place. Madame followed him with her eyes, and proclaimed him a splendid rider. Perrotte declared that for a monk he held himself more upright in the saddle than any of the men-at-arms. Mademoiselle de Cande sighed. The little one wished to have him for her confessor.

“He has sanctified the castle,” said they, when they were in the room again.

When Amador and his suite came to the gates of the abbey, a scene of terror ensued, since the guardian thought that the Sire de Cande had had his appetite for monks whetted by the blood of poor Amador, and wished to sack the abbey. But Amador shouted with his fine bass voice, and was recognised and admitted into the courtyard; and when he dismounted from madame’s mare there was enough uproar to make the monks as a wild as April moons. They gave vent to shouts of joy in the refectory, and all came to congratulate Amador, who waved the charter over his head. The men-at-arms were regaled with the best wine in the cellars, which was a present made to the monks of Turpenay by those of Marmoustier, to whom belonged the lands of Vouvray. The good abbot having had the document of the Sieur de Cande read, went about saying—

“On these divine occasions there always appears the finger of God, to whom we should render thanks.”

As the good abbot kept on at the finger of God, when thanking Amador, the monk, annoyed to see the instrument of their delivery thus diminished, said to him—

“Well, say that it is the arm, my father, and drop the subject.”

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The termination of the trial between the Sieur de Cande and the abbey of Turpenay was followed by a blessing which rendered him devoted to the Church, because nine months after he had a son. Two years afterwards Amador was chosen as abbot by the monks, who reckoned upon a merry government with a madcap. But Amador become an abbot, became steady and austere, because he had conquered his evil desires by his labours, and recast his nature at the female forge, in which is that fire which is the most perfecting, persevering, persistent, perdurable, permanent, perennial, and permeating fire that there ever was in the world. It is a fire to ruin everything, and it ruined so well the evil that was in Amador, that it left only that which it could not eat—that is, his wit, which was as clear as a diamond, which is, as everyone knows, a residue of the great fire by which our globe was formerly carbonised. Amador was then the instrument chosen by Providence to reform our illustrious abbey, since he put everything right there, watched night and day over his monks, made them all rise at the hours appointed for prayers, counted them in chapel as a shepherd counts his sheep, kept them well in hand, and punished their faults severely, that he made them most virtuous brethren.

This teaches us to look upon womankind more as the instruments of our salvation than of our pleasure. Besides which, this narrative teaches us that we should never attempt to struggle with the Churchmen.

The king and the queen had found this tale in the best taste; the courtiers confessed that they had never heard a better; and the ladies would all willingly have been the heroines of it.

BERTHA THE PENITENT

I
HOW BERTHA REMAINED A MAIDEN IN THE MARRIED STATE

About the time of the first flight of the Dauphin, which threw our good Sire, Charles the Victorious, into a state of great dejection, there happened a great misfortune to a noble House of Touraine, since extinct in every branch; and it is owing to this fact that this most deplorable history may now be safely brought to light. To aid him in this work the author calls to his assistance the holy confessors, martyrs, and other celestial dominations, who, by the commandments of God, were the promoters of good in this affair.

From some defect in his character, the Sire Imbert de Bastarnay, one of the most landed lords in our land of Touraine, had no confidence in the mind of the female of man, whom he considered much too animated, on account of her numerous vagaries, and it may be he was right. In consequence of this idea he reached his old age without a companion, which was certainly not to his advantage. Always leading a solitary life, this said man had no idea of making himself agreeable to others, having only been

mixed up with wars and the orgies of bachelors, with whom he did not put himself out of the way. Thus he

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remained stale in his garments, sweaty in his accoutrements, with dirty hands and an apish face. In short, he looked the ugliest man in Christendom. As far as regards his person only though, since so far as his heart, his head, and other secret places were concerned, he had properties which rendered him most praiseworthy. An angel (pray believe this) would have walked a long way without meeting an old warrior firmer at his post, a lord with more spotless scutcheon, of shorter speech, and more perfect loyalty.

Certain people have stated, they have heard that he gave sound advice, and was a good and profitable man to consult. Was it not a strange freak on the part of God, who plays sometimes jokes on us, to have granted so many perfections to a man so badly apparelled?

When he was sixty in appearance, although only fifty in years, he determined to take unto himself a wife, in order to obtain lineage. Then, while foraging about for a place where he might be able to find a lady to his liking, he heard much vaunted, the great merits and perfections of a daughter of the illustrious house of Rohan, which at that time had some property in the province. The young lady in question was called Bertha, that being her pet name. Imbert having been to see her at the castle of Montbazon, was, in consequence of the prettiness and innocent virtue of the said Bertha de Rohan, seized with so great a desire to possess her, that he determined to make her his wife, believing that never could a girl of such lofty descent fail in her duty. This marriage was soon celebrated, because the Sire de Rohan had seven daughters, and hardly knew how to provide for them all, at a time when people were just recovering from the late wars, and patching up their unsettled affairs. Now the good man Bastarnay happily found Bertha really a maiden, which fact bore witness to her proper bringing up and perfect maternal correction. So immediately the night arrived when it should be lawful for him to embrace her, he got her with a child so roughly that he had proof of the result two months after marriage, which rendered the Sire Imbert joyful to a degree. In order that we may here finish with this portion of the story, let us at once state that from this legitimate grain was born the Sire de Bastarnay, who was Duke by the grace of Louis the Eleventh, his chamberlain, and more than that, his ambassador in the countries of Europe, and well-beloved of this most redoubtable lord, to whom he was never faithless. His loyalty was an heritage from his father, who from his early youth was much attached to the Dauphin, whose fortunes he followed, even in the rebellions, since he was a man to put Christ on the cross again if it had been required by him to do so, which is the flower of friendship rarely to be found encompassing princes and great people. At first, the fair lady of Bastarnay comported herself so loyally that her society caused those thick vapours and black clouds to vanish,

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which obscured the mind of this great man, the brightness of the feminine glory. Now, according to the custom of unbelievers, he passed from suspicion to confidence so thoroughly, that he yielded up the government of his house to the said Bertha, made her mistress of his deeds and actions, queen of his honour, guardian of his grey hairs, and would have slaughtered without a contest any one who had said an evil word concerning this mirror of virtue, on whom no breath had fallen save the breath issued from his conjugal and marital lips, cold and withered as they were. To speak truly on all points, it should be explained, that to this virtuous behaviour considerably aided the little boy, who during six years occupied day and night the attention of his pretty mother, who first nourished him with her milk, and made of him a lover's lieutenant, yielding to him her sweet breasts, which he gnawed at, hungry, as often as he would, and was, like a lover, always there. This good mother knew no other pleasures than those of his rosy lips, had no other caresses that those of his tiny little hands, which ran about her like the feet of playful mice, read no other book than that in his clear baby eyes, in which the blue sky was reflected, and listened to no other music than his cries, which sounded in her ears as angels' whispers. You may be sure that she was always fondling him, had a desire to kiss him at dawn of day, kissed him in the evening, would rise in the night to eat him up with kisses, made herself a child as he was a child, educated him in the perfect religion of maternity; finally, behaved as the best and happiest mother that ever lived, without disparagement to our Lady the Virgin, who could have had little trouble in bringing up our Saviour, since he was God.

This employment and the little taste which Bertha had for the blisses of matrimony much delighted the old man, since he would have been unable to return the affection of a too amorous wife, and desired to practice economy, to have the wherewithal for a second child.

After six years had passed away, the mother was compelled to give her son into the hands of the grooms and other persons to whom Messire de Bastarnay committed the task to mould him properly, in order that his heir should have an heritage of the virtues, qualities and courage of the house, as well as the domains and the name. Then did Bertha shed many tears, her happiness being gone. For the great heart of this mother it was nothing to have this well-beloved son after others, and during only certain short fleeting hours. Therefore she became sad and melancholy. Noticing her grief, the good man wished to bestow upon her another child and could not, and the poor lady was displeased thereat, because she declared that the making of a child wearied her much and cost her dear. And this is true, or no doctrine is true, and you must burn the Gospels as a pack of stories if you have not faith in this innocent remark.

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This, nevertheless, to certain ladies (I did not mention men, since they have a smattering of the science), will still seem an untruth. The writer has taken care here to give the mute reasons for this strange antipathy; I mean the distastes of Bertha, because I love the ladies above all things, knowing that for want of the pleasure of love, my face would grow old and my heart torment me. Did you ever meet a scribe so complacent and so fond of the ladies as I am? No; of course not. Therefore, do I love them devotedly, but not so often as I could wish, since I have oftener in my hands my goose-quill than I have the barbs with which one tickles their lips to make them laugh and be merry in all innocence. I understand them, and in this way.

The good man Bastarnay was not a smart young fellow of an amorous nature, and acquainted with the pranks of the thing. He did not trouble himself much about the fashion in which he killed a soldier so long as he killed him; that he would have killed him in all ways without saying a word in battle, is, of course, understood. The perfect heedlessness in the matter of death was in accordance with the nonchalance in the matter of life, the birth and manner of begetting a child, and the ceremonies thereto appertaining. The good sire was ignorant of the many litigious, dilatory, interlocutory and proprietary exploits and the little humourings of the little fagots placed in the oven to heat it; of the sweet perfumed branches gathered little by little in the forests of love, fondlings, coddlings, huggings, nursing, the bites at the cherry, the cat-licking, and other little tricks and traffic of love which ruffians know, which lovers preserve, and which the ladies love better than their salvation, because there is more of the cat than the woman in them. This shines forth in perfect evidence in their feminine ways. If you think it worth while watching them, examine them attentively while they eat: not one of them (I am speaking of women, noble and well-educated) puts her knife in the eatables and thrusts it into her mouth, as do brutally the males; no, they turn over their food, pick the pieces that please them as they would gray peas in a dovecote; they suck the sauces by mouthfuls; play with their knife and spoon as if they are only ate in consequence of a judge’s order, so much do they dislike to go straight to the point, and make free use of variations, finesse, and little tricks in everything, which is the especial attribute of these creatures, and the reason that the sons of Adam delight in them, since they do everything differently to themselves, and they do well. You think so too. Good! I love you.

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Now then, Imbert de Bastarnay, an old soldier, ignorant of the tricks of love, entered into the sweet garden of Venus as he would into a place taken by assault, without giving any heed to the cries of the poor inhabitants in tears, and placed a child as he would an arrow in the dark. Although the gentle Bertha was not used to such treatment (poor child, she was but fifteen), she believed in her virgin faith, that the happiness of becoming a mother demanded this terrible, dreadful bruising and nasty business; so during his painful task she would pray to God to assist her, and recite *Aves* to our Lady, esteeming her lucky, in only having the Holy Ghost to endure. By this means, never having experienced anything but pain in marriage, she never troubled her husband to go through the ceremony again. Now seeing that the old fellow was scarcely equal to it—as has been before stated—she lived in perfect solitude, like a nun. She hated the society of men, and never suspected that the Author of the world had put so much joy in that from which she had only received infinite misery. But she loved all the more her little one, who had cost her so much before he was born. Do not be astonished, therefore, that she held aloof from that gallant tourney in which it is the mare who governs her cavalier, guides him, fatigues him, and abuses him, if he stumbles. This is the true history of certain unhappy unions, according to the statement of the old men and women, and the certain reason of the follies committed by certain women, who too late perceive, I know not how, that they have been deceived, and attempt to crowd into a day more time than it will hold, to have their proper share of life. That is philosophical, my friends. Therefore study well this page, in order that you may wisely look to the proper government of your wives, your sweethearts, and all females generally, and particularly those who by chance may be under your care, from which God preserve you.

Thus a virgin in deed, although a mother, Bertha was in her one-and-twentieth year a castle flower, the glory of her good man, and the honour of the province. The said Bastarnay took great pleasure in beholding this child come, go, and frisk about like a willow-switch, as lively as an eel, as innocent as her little one, and still most sensible and of sound understanding; so much so that he never undertook any project without consulting her about it, seeing that if the minds of these angels have not been disturbed in their purity, they give a sound answer to everything one asks of them. At this time Bertha lived near the town of Loches, in the castle of her lord, and there resided, with no desire to do anything but look after her household duties, after the old custom of the good housewives, from which the ladies of France were led away when Queen Catherine and the Italians came with their balls and merry-makings. To these practices Francis the First and his successors, whose easy ways did as much harm to the State of France as the goings on of the Protestants lent their aid. This, however, has nothing to do with my story.

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About this time the lord and lady of Bastarnay were invited by the king to come to his town of Loches, where for the present he was with his court, in which the beauty of the lady of Bastarnay had made a great noise. Bertha came to Loches, received many kind praises from the king, was the centre of the homage of all the young nobles, who feasted their eyes on this apple of love, and of the old ones, who warmed themselves at this sun. But you may be sure that all of them, old and young, would have suffered death a thousand times over to have at their service this instrument of joy, which dazzled their eyes and muddled their brains. Bertha was more talked about in Loches then either God or the Gospels, which enraged a great many ladies who were not so bountifully endowed with charms, and would have given all that was left of their honour to have sent back to her castle this fair gatherer of smiles.

A young lady having early perceived that one of her lovers was smitten with Bertha, took such a hatred to her that from it arose all the misfortunes of the lady of Bastarnay; but also from the same source came her happiness, and her discovery of the gentle land of love, of which she was ignorant. This wicked lady had a relation who had confessed to her, directly he saw Bertha, that to be her lover he would be willing to die after a month's happiness with her. Bear in mind that this cousin was as handsome as a girl is beautiful, had no hair on his chin, would have gained his enemy's forgiveness by asking for it, so melodious was his young voice, and was scarcely twenty years of age.

"Dear cousin," said she to him, "leave the room, and go to your house; I will endeavour to give you this joy. But do not let yourself be seen by her, nor by that old baboon-face by an error of nature on a Christian's body, and to whom belongs this beauteous fay."

The young gentleman out of the way, the lady came rubbing her treacherous nose against Bertha's, and called her "My friend, my treasure, my star of beauty"; trying every way to be agreeable to her, to make her vengeance more certain on the poor child who, all unwittingly, had caused her lover's heart to be faithless, which, for women ambitious in love, is the worst of infidelities. After a little conversation, the plotting lady suspected that poor Bertha was a maiden in matters of love, when she saw her eyes full of limpid water, no marks on the temples, no little black speck on the point of her little nose, white as snow, where usually the marks of the amusement are visible, no wrinkle on her brow; in short, no habit of pleasure apparent on her face—clear as the face of an innocent maiden. Then this traitress put certain women's questions to her, and was perfectly assured by the replies of Bertha, that if she had had the profit of being a mother, the pleasures of love had been denied to her. At this she rejoiced greatly on her cousin's behalf—like the good woman she was.

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Then she told her, that in the town of Loches there lived a young and noble lady, of the family of a Rohan, who at that time had need of the assistance of a lady of position to be reconciled with the Sire Louis de Rohan; that if she had as much goodness as God had given her beauty, she would take her with her to the castle, ascertain for herself the sanctity of her life, and bring about a reconciliation with the Sire de Rohan, who refused to receive her. To this Bertha consented without hesitation, because the misfortunes of this girl were known to her, but not the poor young lady herself, whose name was Sylvia, and whom she had believed to be in a foreign land.

It is here necessary to state why the king had given this invitation to the Sire de Bastarnay. He had a suspicion of the first flight of his son the Dauphin into Burgundy, and wished to deprive him of so good a counsellor as was the said Bastarnay. But the veteran, faithful to young Louis, had already, without saying a word, made up his mind. Therefore he took Bertha back to his castle; but before they set out she told him she had taken a companion and introduced her to him. It was the young lord, disguised as a girl, with the assistance of his cousin, who was jealous of Bertha, and annoyed at her virtue. Imbert drew back a little when he learned that it was Sylvia de Rohan, but was also much affected at the kindness of Bertha, whom he thanked for her attempt to bring a little wandering lamb back to the fold. He made much of his wife, when his last night at home came, left men-at-arms about his castle, and then set out with the Dauphin for Burgundy, having a cruel enemy in his bosom without suspecting it. The face of the young lad was unknown to him, because he was a young page come to see the king's court, and who had been brought up by the Cardinal Dunois, in whose service he was a knight-bachelor.

The old lord, believing that he was a girl, thought him very modest and timid, because the lad, doubting the language of his eyes, kept them always cast down; and when Bertha kissed him on the mouth, he trembled lest his petticoat might be indiscreet, and would walk away to the window, so fearful was he of being recognised as a man by Bastarnay, and killed before he had made love to the lady.

Therefore he was as joyful as any lover would have been in his place, when the portcullis was lowered, and the old lord galloped away across the country. He had been in such suspense that he made a vow to build a pillar at his own expense in the cathedral at Tours, because he had escaped the danger of his mad scheme. He gave, indeed, fifty gold marks to pay God for his delight. But by chance he had to pay for it over again to the devil, as it appears from the following facts if the tale pleases you well enough to induce you to follow the narrative, which will be succinct, as all good speeches should be.

II HOW BERTHA BEHAVED, KNOWING THE BUSINESS OF LOVE

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This bachelor was the young Sire Jehan de Sacchez, cousin of the Sieur de Montmorency, to whom, by the death of the said Jehan, the fiefs of Sacchez and other places would return, according to the deed of tenure. He was twenty years of age and glowed like a burning coal; therefore you may be sure that he had a hard job to get through the first day. While old Imbert was galloping across the fields, the two cousins perched themselves under the lantern of the portcullis, in order to keep him the longer in view, and waved him signals of farewells. When the clouds of dust raised by the heels of the horses were no longer visible upon the horizon, they came down and went into the great room of the castle.

“What shall we do, dear cousin?” said Bertha to the false Sylvia. “Do you like music? We will play together. Let us sing the lay of some sweet ancient bard. Eh? What do you say? Come to my organ; come along. As you love me, sing!”

Then she took Jehan by the hand and led him to the keyboard of the organ, at which the young fellow seated himself prettily, after the manner of women. “Ah! sweet coz,” cried Bertha, as soon as the first notes tried, the lad turned his head towards her, in order that they might sing together. “Ah! sweet coz you have a wonderful glance in your eye; you move I know not what in my heart.”

“Ah! cousin,” replied the false Sylvia, “that it is which has been my ruin. A sweet milord of the land across the sea told me so often that I had fine eyes, and kissed them so well, that I yielded, so much pleasure did I feel in letting them be kissed.”

“Cousin, does love then, commence in the eyes?”

“In them is the forge of Cupid’s bolts, my dear Bertha,” said the lover, casting fire and flame at her.

“Let us go on with our singing.”

They then sang, by Jehan’s desire, a lay of Christine de Pisan, every word of which breathed love.

“Ah! cousin, what a deep and powerful voice you have. It seems to pierce me.”

“Where?” said the impudent Sylvia.

“There,” replied Bertha, touching her little diaphragm, where the sounds of love are understood better than by the ears, but the diaphragm lies nearer the heart, and that which is undoubtedly the first brain, the second heart, and the third ear of the ladies. I say this, with all respect and with all honour, for physical reasons and for no others.

“Let us leave off singing,” said Bertha; “it has too great an effect upon me. Come to the window; we can do needlework until the evening.”

“Ah! dear cousin of my soul, I don’t know how to hold the needle in my fingers, having been accustomed, to my perdition to do something else with them.”

“Eh! what did you do then all day long?”

“Ah! I yielded to the current of love, which makes days seem Instants, months seem days, and years months; and if it could last, would gulp down eternity like a strawberry, seeing that it is all youth and fragrance, sweetness and endless joy.”

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Then the youth dropped his beautiful eyelids over his eyes, and remained as melancholy as a poor lady who has been abandoned by her lover, who weeps for him, wishes to kiss him, and would pardon his perfidy, if he would but seek once again the sweet path to his once-loved fold.

“Cousin, does love blossom in the married state?”

“Oh no,” said Sylvia; “because in the married state everything is duty, but in love everything is done in perfect freedom of heart. This difference communicates an indescribable soft balm to those caresses which are the flowers of love.”

“Cousin, let us change the conversation; it affects me more than did the music.”

She called hastily to a servant to bring her boy to her, who came, and when Sylvia saw him, she exclaimed—

“Ah! the little dear, he is as beautiful as love.”

Then she kissed him heartily upon the forehead.

“Come, my little one,” said the mother, as the child clambered into her lap. “Thou art thy mother’s blessing, her unclouded joy, the delight of her every hour, her crown, her jewel, her own pure pearl, her spotless soul, her treasure, her morning and evening star, her only flame, and her heart’s darling. Give me thy hands, that I may eat them; give me thine ears, that I may bite them; give me thy head, that I may kiss thy curls. Be happy sweet flower of my body, that I may be happy too.”

“Ah! cousin,” said Sylvia, “you are speaking the language of love to him.”

“Love is a child then?”

“Yes, cousin; therefore the heathen always portrayed him as a little boy.”

And with many other remarks fertile in the imagery of love, the two pretty cousins amused themselves until supper time, playing with the child.

“Would you like to have another?” whispered Jehan, at an opportune moment, into his cousin’s ear, which he touched with his warm lips.

“Ah! Sylvia! for that I would ensure a hundred years of purgatory, if it would only please God to give me that joy. But in spite of the work, labour, and industry of my spouse, which causes me much pain, my waist does not vary in size. Alas! It is nothing to have but one child. If I hear the sound of a cry in the castle, my heart beats ready to burst. I fear man and beast alike for this innocent darling; I dread volts, passes, and manual exercises; in fact, I dread everything. I live not in myself, but in him alone. And, alas! I

like to endure these miseries, because when I fidget, and tremble, it is a sign that my offspring is safe and sound. To be brief—for I am never weary of talking on this subject—I believe that my breath is in him, and not in myself."

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With these words she hugged him to her breasts, as only mothers know how to hug children, with a spiritual force that is felt only in their hearts. If you doubt this, watch a cat carrying her kittens in her mouth, not one of them gives a single mew. The youthful gallant, who had certain fears about watering this fair, unfertile plain, was reassured by this speech. He thought then that it would only be following the commandments of God to win this saint to love; and he thought right. At night Bertha asked her cousin—-according to the old custom, to which the ladies of our day object—to keep her company in her big seigneurial bed. To which request Sylvia replied—in order to keep up the role of a well-born maiden—that nothing would give her greater pleasure. The curfew rang, and found the two cousins in a chamber richly ornamented with carpeting, fringes, and royal tapestries, and Bertha began gracefully to disarray herself, assisted by her women. You can imagine that her companion modestly declined their services, and told her cousin, with a little blush, that she was accustomed to undress herself ever since she had lost the services of her dearly beloved, who had put her out of conceit with feminine fingers by his gentle ways; that these preparations brought back the pretty speeches he used to make, and his merry pranks while playing the lady's-maid; and that to her injury, the memory of all these things brought the water into her mouth.

This discourse considerably astonished the lady Bertha, who let her cousin say her prayers, and make other preparations for the night beneath the curtains of the bed, into which my lord, inflamed with desire, soon tumbled, happy at being able to catch an occasional glimpse of the wondrous charms of the chatelaine, which were in no way injured. Bertha, believing herself to be with an experienced girl, did not omit any of the usual practices; she washed her feet, not minding whether she raised them little or much, exposed her delicate little shoulders, and did as all the ladies do when they are retiring to rest. At last she came to bed, and settled herself comfortably in it, kissing her cousin on the lips, which she found remarkably warm.

"Are you unwell, Sylvia, that you burn so?" said she.

"I always burn like that when I go to bed," replied her companion, "because at that time there comes back to my memory the pretty little tricks that he invented to please me, and which make me burn still more."

"Ah! cousin, tell me all about this he. Tell all the sweets of love to me, who live beneath the shadow of a hoary head, of which the snows keep me from such warm feelings. Tell me all; you are cured. It will be a good warning to me, and then your misfortunes will have been a salutary lesson to two poor weak women."

"I do not know I ought to obey you, sweet cousin," said the youth.

"Tell me, why not?"

“Ah! deeds are better than words,” said the false maiden, heaving a deep sigh as the *ut* of an organ. “But I am afraid that this milord has encumbered me with so much joy that you may get a little of it, which would be enough to give you a daughter, since the power of engendering is weakened in me.”

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“But,” said Bertha, “between us, would it be a sin?”

“It would be, on the contrary, a joy both here and in heaven; the angels would shed their fragrance around you, and make sweet music in your ears.”

“Tell me quickly, then,” said Bertha.

“Well, then, this is how my dear lord made my heart rejoice.”

With these words Jehan took Bertha in his arms, and strained her hungering to his heart, for in the soft light of the lamp, and clothed with the spotless linen, she was in this tempting bed, like the pretty petals of a lily at the bottom of the virgin calyx.

“When he held me as I hold thee he said to me, with a voice far sweeter than mine, ’Ah, Bertha, thou art my eternal love, my priceless treasure, my joy by day and my joy by night; thou art fairer than the day is day; there is naught so pretty as thou art. I love thee more than God, and would endure a thousand deaths for the happiness I ask of thee!’ Then he would kiss me, not after the manner of husbands, which is rough, but in a peculiar dove-like fashion.”

To show her there and then how much better was the method of lovers, he sucked all the honey from Bertha’s lips, and taught her how, with her pretty tongue, small and rosy as that of a cat, she could speak to the heart without saying a single word, and becoming exhausted at this game, Jehan spread the fire of his kisses from the mouth to the neck, from the neck to the sweetest forms that ever a woman gave a child to slake its thirst upon. And whoever had been in his place would have thought himself a wicked man not to imitate him.

“Ah!” said Bertha, fast bound in love without knowing it; “this is better. I must take care to tell Imbert about it.”

“Are you in your proper senses, cousin? Say nothing about it to your old husband. How could he make his hands pleasant like mine? They are as hard as washerwoman’s beetles, and his piebald beard would hardly please this centre of bliss, that rose in which lies our wealth, our substance, our loves, and our fortune. Do you know that it is a living flower, which should be fondled thus, and not used like a trombone, or as if it were a catapult of war? Now this was the gentle way of my beloved Englishman.”

Thus saying, the handsome youth comported himself so bravely in the battle that victory crowned his efforts, and poor innocent Bertha exclaimed—

“Ah! cousin, the angels are come! but so beautiful is the music, that I hear nothing else, and so flaming are their luminous rays, that my eyes are closing.”

And, indeed, she fainted under the burden of those joys of love which burst forth in her like the highest notes of the organ, which glistened like the most magnificent aurora, which flowed in her veins like the finest musk, and loosened the liens of her life in giving her a child of love, who made a great deal of confusion in taking up his quarters. Finally, Bertha imagined herself to be in Paradise, so happy did she feel; and woke from this beautiful dream in the arms of Jehan, exclaiming—

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“Ah! who would not have been married in England!”

“My sweet mistress,” said Jehan, whose ecstasy was sooner over, “you are married to me in France, where things are managed still better, for I am a man who would give a thousand lives for you if he had them.”

Poor Bertha gave a shriek so sharp that it pierced the walls, and leapt out of bed like a mountebank of the plains of Egypt would have done. She fell upon her knees before her *Prie-Dieu*, joined her hands, and wept more pearls than ever Mary Magdalene wore.

“Ah! I am dead” she cried; “I am deceived by a devil who has taken the face of an angel. I am lost; I am the mother for certain of a beautiful child, without being more guilty than you, Madame the Virgin. Implore the pardon of God for me, if I have not that of men upon earth; or let me die, so that I may not blush before my lord and master.”

Hearing that she said nothing against him, Jehan rose, quite aghast to see Bertha take this charming dance for two so to heart. But the moment she heard her Gabriel moving she sprang quickly to her feet, regarded him with a tearful face, and her eye illumined with a holy anger, which made her more lovely to look upon, exclaimed—

“If you advance a single step towards me, I will make one towards death!”

And she took her stiletto in her hand.

So heartrending was the tragic spectacle of her grief that Jehan answered her—

“It is not for thee but for me to die, my dear, beautiful mistress, more dearly loved than will ever woman be again upon this earth.”

“If you had truly loved me you would not have killed me as you have, for I will die sooner than be reproached by my husband.”

“Will you die?” said he.

“Assuredly,” said she.

“Now, if I am here pierced with a thousand blows, you will have your husband’s pardon, to whom you will say that if your innocence was surprised, you have avenged his honour by killing the man who had deceived you; and it will be the greatest happiness that could ever befall me to die for you, the moment you refuse to live for me.”

Hearing this tender discourse spoken with tears, Bertha dropped the dagger; Jehan sprang upon it, and thrust it into his breast, saying—

“Such happiness can be paid for but with death.”

And fell stiff and stark.

Bertha, terrified, called aloud for her maid. The servant came, and terribly alarmed to see a wounded man in Madame's chamber, and Madame holding him up, crying and saying, "What have you done, my love?" because she believed he was dead, and remembered her vanished joys, and thought how beautiful Jehan must be, since everyone, even Imbert, believed him to be a girl. In her sorrow she confessed all to her maid, sobbing and crying out, "that it was quite enough to have upon her mind the life of a child without having the death of a man as well." Hearing this the poor lover tried to open his eyes, and only succeeded in showing a little bit of the white of them.

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“Ha! Madame, don’t cry out,” said the servant, “let us keep our senses together and save this pretty knight. I will go and seek La Fallotte, in order not to let any physician or surgeon into the secret, and as she is a sorceress she will, to please Madame, perform the miracle of healing this wound so not a trace of it shall remain.

“Run!” replied Bertha. “I will love you, and will pay you well for this assistance.”

But before anything else was done the lady and her maid agreed to be silent about this adventure, and hide Jehan from every eye. Then the servant went out into the night to seek La Fallotte, and was accompanied by her mistress as far as the postern, because the guard could not raise the portcullis without Bertha’s special order. Bertha found on going back that her lover had fainted, for the blood was flowing from the wound. At the sight she drank a little of his blood, thinking that Jehan had shed it for her. Affected by this great love and by the danger, she kissed this pretty varlet of pleasure on the face, bound up his wound, bathing it with her tears, beseeching him not to die, and exclaiming that if he would live she would love him with all her heart. You can imagine that the chatelaine became still more enamoured while observing what a difference there was between a young knight like Jehan, white, downy, and agreeable, and an old fellow like Imbert, bristly, yellow, and wrinkled. This difference brought back to her memory that which she had found in the pleasure of love. Moved by this souvenir, her kisses became so warm that Jehan came back to his senses, his look improved, and he could see Bertha, from whom in a feeble voice he asked forgiveness. But Bertha forbade him to speak until La Fallotte had arrived. Then both of them consumed the time by loving each other with their eyes, since in those of Bertha there was nothing but compassion, and on these occasions pity is akin to love.

La Fallotte was a hunchback, vehemently suspected of dealings in necromancy, and of riding to nocturnal orgies on a broomstick, according to the custom of witches. Certain persons had seen her putting the harness on her broom in the stable, which, as everyone knows is on the housetops. To tell the truth, she possessed certain medical secrets, and was of such great service to ladies in certain things, and to the nobles, that she lived in perfect tranquillity, without giving up the ghost on a pile of fagots, but on a feather bed, for she had made a hatful of money, although the physicians tormented her by declaring that she sold poisons, which was certainly true, as will be shown in the sequel. The servant and La Fallotte came on the same ass, making such haste that they arrived at the castle before the day had fully dawned.

The old hunchback exclaimed, as she entered the chamber, “Now then, my children, what is the matter?”

This was her manner, which was familiar with great people, who appeared very small to her. She put on her spectacles, and carefully examined the wound, saying—

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“This is fine blood, my dear; you have tasted it. That’s all right, he has bled externally.”

Then she washed the wound with a fine sponge, under the nose of the lady and the servant, who held their breath. To be brief, Fallotte gave it as her medical opinion, that the youth would not die from this blow, “although,” said she, looking at his hand, “he will come to a violent end through this night’s deed.”

This decree of chiromancy frightened considerably both Bertha and the maid. Fallotte prescribed certain remedies, and promised to come again the following night. Indeed, she tended the wound for a whole fortnight, coming secretly at night-time. The people about the castle were told by the servants that their young lady, Sylvia de Rohan, was in danger of death, through a swelling of the stomach, which must remain a mystery for the honour of Madame, who was her cousin. Each one was satisfied with this story, of which his mouth was so full that he told it to his fellows.

The good people believe that it was the malady which was fraught with danger; but it was not! it was the convalescence, for the stronger Jehan grew, the weaker Bertha became, and so weak that she allowed herself to drift into that Paradise the gates of which Jehan had opened for her. To be brief, she loved him more and more. But in the midst of her happiness, always mingled with apprehension at the menacing words of Fallotte, and tormented by her great religion, she was in great fear of her husband, Imbert, to whom she was compelled to write that he had given her a child, who would be ready to delight him on his return. Poor Bertha avoided her lover, Jehan, during the day on which she wrote the lying letter, over which she soaked her handkerchief with tears. Finding himself avoided (for they had previously left each other no more than fire leaves the wood it has bitten) Jehan believed that she was beginning to hate him, and straightway he cried too. In the evening Bertha, touched by his tears, which had left their mark upon his eyes, although he had well dried them, told him the cause of her sorrow, mingling therewith her confessions of her terrors for the future, pointing out to him how much they were both to blame, and discoursing so beautifully to him, gave utterance to such Christian sentences, ornamented with holy tears and contrite prayers, that Jehan was touched to the quick by the sincerity of his mistress. This love innocently united to repentance, this nobility in sin, this mixture of weakness and strength, would, as the old authors say, have changed the nature of a tiger, melting it to pity. You will not be astonished then, that Jehan was compelled to pledge his word as a knight-bachelor, to obey her in what ever she should command him, to save her in this world and in the next. Delighted at this confidence in her, and this goodness of heart, Bertha cast herself at Jehan’s feet, and kissing them, exclaimed—

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“Oh! my love, whom I am compelled to love, although it is a mortal sin to do so, thou who art so good, so gentle to thy poor Bertha, if thou wouldst have her always think of thee with pleasure, and stop the torrent of her tears, whose source is so pretty and so pleasant (here, to show him that it was so, she let him steal a kiss)—Jehan, if thou wouldst that the memory of our celestial joys, angel music, and the fragrance of love should be a consolation to me in my loneliness rather than a torment, do that which the Virgin commanded me to order thee in a dream, in which I was beseeching her to direct me in the present case, for I had asked her to come to me, and she had come. Then I told her the horrible anguish I should endure, trembling for this little one, whose movements I already feel, and for the real father, who would be at the mercy of the other, and might expiate his paternity by a violent death, since it is possible that La Fallotte saw clearly into his future life. Then the beautiful Virgin told me, smiling, that the Church offered its forgiveness for our faults if we followed her commandments; that it was necessary to save one’s self from the pains of hell, by reforming before Heaven became angry. Then with her finger she showed me a Jehan like thee, but dressed as thou shouldst be, and as thou wilt be, if thou does but love thy Bertha with a love eternal.”

Jehan assured her of his perfect obedience, and raised her, seating her on his knee, and kissing her. The unhappy Bertha told him then that this garment was a monk’s frock, and trembling besought him —almost fearing a refusal—to enter the Church, and retire to Marmoustier, beyond Tours, pledging him her word that she would grant him a last night, after which she would be neither for him nor for anyone else in the world again. And each year, as a reward for this, she would let him come to her one day, in order that he might see the child. Jehan, bound by his oath, promised to obey his mistress, saying that by this means he would be faithful to her, and would experience no joys of love but those tasted in her divine embrace, and would live upon the dear remembrance of them. Hearing these sweet words, Bertha declared to him that, however great might have been her sin, and whatever God reserved for her, this happiness would enable her to support it, since she believed she had not fallen through a man, but through an angel.

Then they returned to the nest which contained their love but only to bid a final adieu to all their lovely flowers. There can be but little doubt that Seigneur Cupid had something to do with this festival, for no woman ever experienced such joy in any part of the world before, and no man ever took as much. The especial property of true love is a certain harmony, which brings it about that the more one gives, the more the other receives, and vice-versa, as in certain cases in mathematics, where things are multiplied by themselves without end. This problem can only

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be explained to unscientific people, by asking them to look into their Venetian glasses, in which are to be seen thousands of faces produced by one alone. Thus, in the heart of two lovers, the roses of pleasure multiply within them in a manner which causes them to be astonished that so much joy can be contained, without anything bursting. Bertha and Jehan would have wished in this night to have finished their days, and thought, from the excessive languor which flowed in their veins, that love had resolved to bear them away on his wings with the kiss of death; but they held out in spite of these numerous multiplications.

On the morrow, as the return of Monsieur Imbert de Bastarnay was close at hand, the lady Sylvia was compelled to depart. The poor girl left her cousin, covering her with tears and with kisses; it was always her last, but the last lasted till evening. Then he was compelled to leave her, and he did leave her although the blood of his heart congealed, like the fallen wax of a Paschal candle. According to his promise, he wended his way towards Marmoustier, which he entered towards the eleventh hour of the day, and was placed among the novices. Monseigneur de Bastarnay was informed that Sylvia had returned to the Lord which is the signification of le Seigneur in the English language; and therefore in this Bertha did not lie.

The joy of her husband, when he saw Bertha without her waistband—she could not wear it, so much had she increased in size—commenced the martyrdom of this poor woman, who did not know how to deceive, and who, at each false word, went to her Prie-Dieu, wept her blood away from her eyes in tears, burst into prayers, and recommended herself to the graces of Messieurs the Saints in paradise. It happened that she cried so loudly to God that He heard her, because He hears everything; He hears the stones that roll beneath the waters, the poor who groan, and the flies who wing their way through the air. It is well that you should know this, otherwise you would not believe in what happened. God commanded the archangel Michael to make for this penitent a hell upon earth, so that she might enter without dispute into Paradise. Then St. Michael descended from the skies as far as the gate of hell, and handed over this triple soul to the devil, telling him that he had permission to torment it during the rest of her days, at the same time indicating to him Bertha, Jehan and the child.

The devil, who by the will of God, is lord of all evil, told the archangel that he would obey the message. During this heavenly arrangement life went on as usual here below. The sweet lady of Bastarnay gave the most beautiful child in the world to the Sire Imbert, a boy all lilies and roses, of great intelligence, like a little Jesus, merry and arch as a pagan love. He became more beautiful day by day, while the elder was turning into an ape, like his father, whom he painfully resembled. The younger boy was as bright

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as a star, and resembled his father and mother, whose corporeal and spiritual perfections had produced a compound of illustrious graces and marvellous intelligence. Seeing this perpetual miracle of body and mind blended with the essential conditions, Bastarnay declared that for his eternal salvation he would like to make the younger the elder, and that he would do with the king's protection. Bertha did not know what to do, for she adored the child of Jehan, and could only feel a feeble affection for the other, whom, nevertheless she protected against the evil intentions of the old fellow, Bastarnay.

Bertha, satisfied with the way things were going, quieted her conscience with falsehood, and thought that all danger was past, since twelve years had elapsed with no other alloy than the doubt which at times embittered her joy. Each year, according to her pledged faith, the monk of Marmoustier, who was unknown to everyone except the servant-maid, came to pass a whole day at the chateau to see his child, although Bertha had many times besought brother Jehan to yield his right. But Jehan pointed to the child, saying, "You see him every day of the year, and I only once!" And the poor mother could find no word to answer this speech with.

A few months before the last rebellion of the Dauphin Louis against his father, the boy was treading closely on the heels of his twelfth year, and appeared likely to become a great savant, so learned was he in all the sciences. Old Bastarnay had never been more delighted at having been a father in his life, and resolved to take his son with him to the Court of Burgundy, where Duke Charles promised to make for this well-beloved son a position, which should be the envy of princes, for he was not at all averse to clever people. Seeing matters thus arranged, the devil judged the time to be ripe for his mischiefs. He took his tail and flapped it right into the middle of this happiness, so that he could stir it up in his own peculiar way.

III
HORRIBLE CHASTISEMENT OF BERTHA AND EXPIATION OF THE SAME, WHO DIED PARDONED

The servant of the lady of Bastarnay, who was then about five-and-thirty years old, fell in love with one of the master's men-at-arms, and was silly enough to let him take loaves out of the oven, until there resulted therefrom a natural swelling, which certain wags in these parts call a nine months' dropsy. The poor woman begged her mistress to intercede for her with the master, so that he might compel this wicked man to finish at the altar that which he had commenced elsewhere. Madame de Bastarnay had no difficulty in obtaining this favour from him, and the servant was quite satisfied. But the old warrior, who was always extremely rough, hastened into his pretorium, and blew him up sky-high, ordering him, under the pain of the gallows, to marry the girl; which the soldier preferred to do, thinking more of his neck than of his peace of mind.

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Bastarnay sent also for the female, to whom he imagined, for the honour of his house, he ought to sing a litany, mixed with epithets and ornamented with extremely strong expressions, and made her think, by way of punishment, that she was not going to be married, but flung into one of the cells in the jail. The girl fancied that Madame wanted to get rid of her, in order to inter the secret of the birth of her beloved son. With this impression, when the old ape said such outrageous things to her—namely, that he must have been a fool to keep a harlot in his house—she replied that he certainly was a very big fool, seeing that for a long time past his wife had been played the harlot, and with a monk too, which was the worst thing that could happen to a warrior.

Think of the greatest storm you ever saw it in your life, and you will have a weak sketch of the furious rage into which the old man fell, when thus assailed in a portion of his heart which was a triple life. He seized the girl by the throat, and would have killed her there and then, but she, to prove her story, detailed the how, the why, and the when, and said that if he had no faith in her, he could have the evidence of his own ears by hiding himself the day that Father Jehan de Sacchez, the prior of Marmoustier, came. He would then hear the words of the father, who solaced herself for his year's fast, and in one day kissed his son for the rest of the year.

Imbert ordered this woman instantly to leave the castle, since, if her accusation were true, he would kill her just as though she had invented a tissue of lies. In an instant he had given her a hundred crowns, besides her man, enjoining them not to sleep in Touraine; and for greater security, they were conducted into Burgundy, by de Bastarnay's officers. He informed his wife of their departure, saying, that as her servant was a damaged article he had thought it best to get rid of her, but had given her a hundred crowns, and found employment for the man at the Court of Burgundy. Bertha was astonished to learn that her maid had left the castle without receiving her dismissal from herself, her mistress; but she said nothing. Soon afterwards she had other fish to fry, for she became a prey to vague apprehensions, because her husband completely changed in his manner, commenced to notice the likeness of his first-born to himself, and could find nothing resembling his nose, or his forehead, his this, or his that, in the youngest he loved so well.

"He is my very image," replied Bertha one day that he was throwing out these hints. "Know you not that in well regulated households, children are formed from the father and mother, each in turn, or often from both together, because the mother mingles her qualities with the vital force of the father? Some physicians declare that they have known many children born without any resemblance to either father or mother, and attribute these mysteries to the whim of the Almighty."

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“You have become very learned, my dear,” replied Bastarnay; “but I, who am an ignoramus, I should fancy that a child who resembles a monk—”

“Had a monk for a father!” said Bertha, looking at him with an unflinching gaze, although ice rather than blood was coursing through her veins.

The old fellow thought he was mistaken, and cursed the servant; but he was none the less determined to make sure of the affair. As the day of Father Jehan’s visit was close at hand, Bertha, whose suspicions were aroused by this speech, wrote him that it was her wish that he should not come this year, without, however, telling him her reason; then she went in search of La Fallotte at Loches, who was to give her letter to Jehan, and believed everything was safe for the present. She was all the more pleased at having written to her friend the prior, when Imbert, who, towards the time appointed for the poor monk’s annual treat, had always been accustomed to take a journey into the province of Maine, where he had considerable property, remained this time at home, giving as his reason the preparations for rebellion which monseigneur Louis was then making against his father, who as everyone knows, was so cut up at this revolt that it caused his death. This reason was so good a one, that poor Bertha was quite satisfied with it, and did not trouble herself. On the regular day, however, the prior arrived as usual. Bertha seeing him, turned pale, and asked him if he had not received her message.

“What message?” said Jehan.

“Ah! we are lost then; the child, thou, and I,” replied Bertha.

“Why so?” said the prior.

“I know not,” said she; “but our last day has come.”

She inquired of her dearly beloved son where Bastarnay was. The young man told her that his father had been sent for by a special messenger to Loches, and would not be back until evening. Thereupon Jehan wished, is spite of his mistress, to remain with her and his dear son, asserting that no harm would come of it, after the lapse of twelve years, since the birth of their boy.

The days when that adventurous night you know of was celebrated, Bertha stayed in her room with the poor monk until supper time. But on this occasion the lovers—-hastened by the apprehensions of Bertha, which was shared by Jehan directly she had informed him of them—dined immediately, although the prior of Marmoustier reassured Bertha by pointing out to her the privileges of the Church, and how Bastarnay, already in bad odour at court, would be afraid to attack a dignitary of Marmoustier. When they were sitting down to table their little one happened to be playing, and in spite of the reiterated prayers of his mother, would not stop his games, since he was galloping

about the courtyard on a fine Spanish barb, which Duke Charles of Burgundy had presented to Bastarnay. And because young lads like to show off, varlets make themselves bachelors at arms, and bachelors wish to play the knight, this boy was delighted at being able to show the monk what a man he was becoming; he made the horse jump like a flea in the bedclothes, and sat as steady as a trooper in the saddle.

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“Let him have his way, my darling,” said the monk to Bertha. “Disobedient children often become great characters.”

Bertha ate sparingly, for her heart was as swollen as a sponge in water. At the first mouthful, the monk, who was a great scholar, felt in his stomach a pain, and on his palette a bitter taste of poison that caused him to suspect that the Sire de Bastarnay had given them all their quietus. Before he had made this discovery Bertha had eaten. Suddenly the monk pulled off the tablecloth and flung everything into the fireplace, telling Bertha his suspicion. Bertha thanked the Virgin that her son had been so taken up with his sport. Retaining his presence of mind, Jehan, who had not forgotten the lesson he had learned as a page, leaped into the courtyard, lifted his son from the horse, sprang across it himself, and flew across the country with such speed that you would have thought him a shooting-star if you had seen him digging the spurs into the horse’s bleeding flanks, and he was at Loches in Fallotte’s house in the same space of time that only the devil could have done the journey. He stated the case to her in two words, for the poison was already frying his marrow, and requested her to give him an antidote.

“Alas,” said the sorceress, “had I known that it was for you I was giving this poison, I would have received in my breast the dagger’s point, with which I was threatened, and would have sacrificed my poor life to save that of a man of God, and of the sweetest woman that ever blossomed on this earth; for alas! my dear friend, I have only two drops of the counter-poison that you see in this phial.”

“Is there enough for her?”

“Yes, but go at once,” said the old hag.

The monk came back more quickly that he went, so that the horse died under him in the courtyard. He rushed into the room where Bertha, believing her last hour to be come, was kissing her son, and writhing like a lizard in the fire, uttering no cry for herself, but for the child, left to the wrath of Bastarnay, forgetting her own agony at the thought of his cruel future.

“Take this,” said the monk; “my life is saved!”

Jehan had the great courage to say these words with an unmoved face, although he felt the claws of death seizing his heart. Hardly had Bertha drunk when the prior fell dead, not, however, without kissing his son, and regarding his dear lady with an eye that changed not even after his last sigh. This sight turned her as cold as marble, and terrified her so much that she remained rigid before this dead man, stretched at her feet, pressing the hand of her child, who wept, although her own eye was as dry as the Red Sea when the Hebrews crossed it under the leadership of Baron Moses, for it seemed to her that she had sharp sand rolling under her eyelids. Pray for her, ye charitable

souls, for never was woman so agonised, in divining that her lover has saved her life at the

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expense of his own. Aided by her son, she herself placed the monk in the middle of the bed, and stood by the side of it, praying with the boy, whom she then told that the prior was his true father. In this state she waited her evil hour, and her evil hour did not take long in coming, for towards the eleventh hour Bastarnay arrived, and was informed at the portcullis that the monk was dead, and not Madame and the child, and he saw his beautiful Spanish horse lying dead. Thereupon, seized with a furious desire to slay Bertha and the monk's bastard, he sprang up the stairs with one bound; but at the sight of the corpse, for whom his wife and her son repeated incessant litanies, having no ears for his torrent of invective, having no eyes for his writhings and threats, he had no longer the courage to perpetrate this dark deed. After the first fury of his rage had passed, he could not bring himself to it, and quitted the room like a coward and a man taken in crime, stung to the quick by those prayers continuously said for the monk. The night was passed in tears, groans, and prayers.

By an express order from Madame, her servant had been to Loches to purchase for her the attire of a young lady of quality, and for her poor child a horse and the arms of an esquire; noticing which the Sieur de Bastarnay was much astonished. He sent for Madame and the monk's son, but neither mother nor child returned any answer, but quietly put on the clothes purchased by the servant. By Madame's order this servant made up the account of her effects, arranged her clothes, purples, jewels, and diamonds, as the property of a widow is arranged when she renounces her rights. Bertha ordered even her alms-purse be included, in order that the ceremony might be perfect. The report of these preparations ran through the house, and everyone knew then that the mistress was about to leave it, a circumstance that filled every heart with sorrow, even that of a little scullion, who had only been a week in the place, but to whom Madame had already given a kind word.

Frightened at these preparations, old Bastarnay came into her chamber, and found her weeping over the body of Jehan, for the tears had come at last; but she dried them directly she perceived her husband. To his numerous questions she replied briefly by the confession of her fault, telling him how she had been duped, how the poor page had been distressed, showing him upon the corpse the mark of the poniard wound; how long he had been getting well; and how, in obedience to her, and from penitence towards God, he had entered the Church, abandoning the glorious career of a knight, putting an end to his name, which was certainly worse than death; how she, while avenging her honour, had thought that even God himself would not have refused the monk one day in the year to see the son for whom he had sacrificed everything; how, not wishing to live with a murderer, she was about to quit his house, leaving all her property behind her; because, if the honour of the Bastarnays was stained, it was not she who had brought the shame about; because in this calamity she had arranged matters as best she could; finally, she added a vow to go over mountain and valley, she and her son, until all was expiated, for she knew how to expiate all.

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Having with noble mien and a pale face uttered these beautiful words, she took her child by the hand and went out in great mourning, more magnificently beautiful than was Mademoiselle Hagar on her departure from the residence of the patriarch Abraham, and so proudly, that all the servants and retainers fell on their knees as she passed along, imploring her with joined hands, like Notre Dame de la Riche. It was pitiful to see the Sieur de Bastarnay following her, ashamed, weeping, confessing himself to blame, and downcast and despairing, like a man being led to the gallows, there to be turned off.

And Bertha turned a deaf ear to everything. The desolation was so great that she found the drawbridge lowered, and hastened to quit the castle, fearing that it might be suddenly raised again; but no one had the right or the heart to do it. She sat down on the curb of the moat, in view of the whole castle, who begged her, with tears, to stay. The poor sire was standing with his hand upon the chain of the portcullis, as silent as the stone saints carved above the door. He saw Bertha order her son to shake the dust from his shoes at the end of the bridge, in order to have nothing belonging to Bastarnay about him; and she did likewise. Then, indicating the sire to her son with her finger, she spoke to him as follows—

“Child, behold the murderer of thy father, who was, as thou art aware, the poor prior; but thou hast taken the name of this man. Give it him back here, even as thou leavest the dust taken by the shoes from his castle. For the food that thou hast had in the castle, by God’s help we will also settle.”

Hearing this, Bastarnay would have let his wife receive a whole monastery of monks in order not to be abandoned by her, and by a young squire capable of becoming the honour of his house, and remained with his head sunk down against the chains.

The heart of Bertha was suddenly filled with holy solace, for the banner of the great monastery turned the corner of a road across the fields, and appeared accompanied by the chants of the Church, which burst forth like heavenly music. The monks, informed of the murder perpetrated on their well-beloved prior, came in procession, assisted by the ecclesiastical justice, to claim his body. When he saw this, the Sire de Bastarnay had barely that time to make for the postern with his men, and set out towards Monseigneur Louis, leaving everything in confusion.

Poor Bertha, en croup behind her son, came to Montbazon to bid her father farewell, telling him that this blow would be her death, and was consoled by those of her family who endeavoured to raise her spirits, but were unable to do so. The old Sire de Rohan presented his grandson with a splendid suit of armour, telling him to acquire glory and honour that he might turn his mother’s faults into eternal renown. But Madame de Bastarnay had implanted in the mind of her dear son no other idea than of atoning for the harm done, in order to save her and Jehan from eternal damnation. Both then set out for the places then in a state of rebellion, in order to render such service to Bastarnay that he would receive from them more than life itself.

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Now the heat of the sedition was, as everyone knows, in the neighbourhood of Angouleme, and of Bordeaux in Guienne, and other parts of the kingdom, where great battles and severe conflicts between the rebels and the royal armies was likely to take place. The principal one which finished the war was given between Ruffec and Angouleme, where all the prisoners taken were tried and hanged. This battle, commanded by old Bastarnay, took place in the month of November, seven months after the poisoning of Jehan. Now the Baron knew that his head had been strongly recommended as one to be cut off, he being the right hand of Monsiegneur Louis. Directly his men began to fall back, the old fellow found himself surrounded by six men determined to seize him. Then he understood that they wished to take him alive, in order to proceed against his house, ruin his name, and confiscate his property. The poor sire preferred rather to die and save his family, and present the domains to his son. He defended himself like the brave old lion that he was. In spite of their number, these said soldiers, seeing three of their comrades fall, were obliged to attack Bastarnay at the risk of killing him, and threw themselves together upon him, after having laid low two of his equerries and a page.

In this extreme danger an esquire wearing the arms of Rohan, fell upon the assailants like a thunderbolt, and killed two of them, crying, “God save the Bastarnays!” The third man-at-arms, who had already seized old Bastarnay, was so hard pressed by this squire, that he was obliged to leave the elder and turn against the younger, to whom he gave a thrust with his dagger through a flaw in his armour. Bastarnay was too good a comrade to fly without assisting the liberator of his house, who was badly wounded. With a blow of his mace he killed the man-at-arms, seized the squire, lifted him on to his horse, and gained the open, accompanied by a guide, who led him to the castle of Roche-Foucauld, which he entered by night, and found in the great room Bertha de Rohan, who had arranged this retreat for him. But on removing the helmet of his rescuer, he recognised the son of Jehan, who expired upon the table, as by a final effort he kissed his mother, and saying in a loud voice to her—

“Mother, we have paid the debt we owed him!”

Hearing these words, the mother clasped the body of her loved child to her heart, and separated from him never again, for she died of grief, without hearing or heeding the pardon and repentance of Bastarnay.

The strange calamity hastened the last day of the poor old man, who did not live to see the coronation of King Louis the Eleventh. He founded a daily mass in the Church of Roche-Foucauld, where in the same grave he placed mother and son, with a large tombstone, upon which their lives are much honoured in the Latin language.

The morals which any one can deduce from this history are the most profitable for the conduct of life, since this shows how gentlemen should be courteous with the dearly beloveds of their wives. Further, it teaches us that all children are blessings sent by

God Himself, and over them fathers, whether true or false, have no right of murder, as was formerly the case at Rome, owing to a heathen and abominable law, which ill became that Christianity which makes us all sons of God.

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HOW THE PRETTY MAID OF PORTILLON CONVINCED HER JUDGE

The Maid of Portillon, who became as everyone knows, La Tascherette, was, before she became a dyer, a laundress at the said place of Portillon, from which she took her name. If any there be who do not know Tours, it may be as well to state that Portillon is down the Loire, on the same side as St. Cyr, about as far from the bridge which leads to the cathedral of Tours as said bridge is distant from Marmoustier, since the bridge is in the centre of the embankment between Portillon and Marmoustier. Do you thoroughly understand?

Yes? Good! Now the maid had there her washhouse, from which she ran to the Loire with her washing in a second and took the ferry-boat to get to St. Martin, which was on the other side of the river, for she had to deliver the greater part of her work in Chateauneuf and other places.

About Midsummer day, seven years before marrying old Taschereau, she had just reached the right age to be loved, without making a choice from any of the lads who pursued her with their intentions. Although there used to come to the bench under her window the son of Rabelais, who had seven boats on the Loire, Jehan's eldest, Marchandeau the tailor, and Peccard the ecclesiastical goldsmith, she made fun of them all, because she wished to be taken to church before burthening herself with a man, which proves that she was an honest woman until she was wheedled out of her virtue. She was one of those girls who take great care not to be contaminated, but who, if by chance they get deceived, let things take their course, thinking that for one stain or for fifty a good polishing up is necessary. These characters demand our indulgence.

A young noble of the court perceived her one day when she was crossing the water in the glare of the noonday sun, which lit up her ample charms, and seeing her, asked who she was. An old man, who was working on the banks, told him she was called the Pretty Maid of Portillon, a laundress, celebrated for her merry ways and her virtue. This young lord, besides ruffles to starch, had many precious draperies and things; he resolved to give the custom of his house to this girl, whom he stopped on the road. He was thanked by her and heartily, because he was the Sire du Fou, the king's chamberlain. This encounter made her so joyful that her mouth was full of his name. She talked about it a great deal to the people of St. Martin, and when she got back to the washhouse was still full of it, and on the morrow at her work her tongue went nineteen to the dozen, and all on the same subject, so that as much was said concerning my Lord du Fou in Portillon as of God in a sermon; that is, a great deal too much.

"If she works like that in cold water, what will she do in warm?" said an old washerwoman. "She wants du Fou; he'll give her du Fou!"

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The first time this giddy wench, with her head full of Monsieur du Fou, had to deliver the linen at his hotel, the chamberlain wished to see her, and was very profuse in praises and compliments concerning her charms, and wound up by telling her that she was not at all silly to be beautiful, and therefore he would give her more than she expected. The deed followed the word, for the moment his people were out of the room, he began to caress the maid, who thinking he was about to take out the money from his purse, dared not look at the purse, but said, like a girl ashamed to take her wages—

“It will be for the first time.”

“It will be soon,” said he.

Some people say that he had great difficulty in forcing her to accept what he offered her, and hardly forced her at all; others that he forced her badly, because she came out like an army flagging on the route, crying and groaning, and came to the judge. It happened that the judge was out. La Portillone awaited his return in his room, weeping and saying to the servant that she had been robbed, because Monseigneur du Fou had given her nothing but his mischief; whilst a canon of the Chapter used to give her large sums for that which M. du Fou wanted for nothing. If she loved a man she would think it wise to do things for him for nothing, because it would be a pleasure to her; but the chamberlain had treated her roughly, and not kindly and gently, as he should have done, and that therefore he owed her the thousand crowns of the canon. Then the judge came in, saw the wench, and wished to kiss her, but she put herself on guard, and said she had come to make a complaint. The judge replied that certainly she could have the offender hanged if she liked, because he was most anxious to serve her. The injured maiden replied that she did not wish the death of her man, but that he should pay her a thousand gold crowns, because she had been robbed against her will.

“Ha! ha!” said the judge, “what he took was worth more than that.”

“For the thousand crowns I’ll cry quits, because I shall be able to live without washing.”

“He who has robbed you, is he well off?”

“Oh yes.”

“Then he shall pay dearly for it. Who is it?”

“Monseigneur du Fou.”

“Oh, that alters the case,” said the judge.

“But justice?” said she.

“I said the case, not the justice of it,” replied the judge. “I must know how the affair occurred.”

Then the girl related naively how she was arranging the young lord’s ruffles in his wardrobe, when he began to play with her skirt, and she turned round saying—

“Go on with you!”

“You have no case,” said the judge, “for by that speech he thought that you gave him leave to go on. Ha! ha!”

Then she declared that she had defended herself, weeping and crying out, and that that constitutes an assault.

“A wench’s antics to incite him,” said the judge.

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Finally, La Portillone declared that against her will she had been taken round the waist and thrown, although she had kicked and cried and struggled, but that seeing no help at hand, she had lost courage.

“Good! good!” said the judge. “Did you take pleasure in the affair?”

“No,” said she. “My anguish can only be paid for with a thousand crowns.”

“My dear,” said the judge, “I cannot receive your complaint, because I believe no girl could be thus treated against her will.”

“Hi! hi! hi! Ask your servant,” said the little laundress, sobbing, “and hear what she’ll tell you.”

The servant affirmed that there were pleasant assaults and unpleasant ones; that if La Portillone had received neither amusement nor money, either one or the other was due to her. This wise counsel threw the judge into a state of great perplexity.

“Jacqueline,” said he, “before I sup I’ll get to the bottom of this. Now go and fetch my needle and the red thread that I sew the law paper bags with.”

Jacqueline came back with a big needle, pierced with a pretty little hole, and a big red thread, such as the judges use. Then she remained standing to see the question decided, very much disturbed, as was also the complainant at these mysterious preparations.

“My dear,” said the judge, “I am going to hold the bodkin, of which the eye is sufficiently large, to put this thread into it without trouble. If you do put it in, I will take up your case, and will make Monseigneur offer you a compromise.”

“What’s that?” said she. “I will not allow it.”

“It is a word used in justice to signify an agreement.”

“A compromise is then agreeable with justice?” said La Portillone.

“My dear, this violence has also opened your mind. Are you ready?”

“Yes,” said she.

The waggish judge gave the poor nymph fair play, holding the eye steady for her; but when she wished to slip in the thread that she had twisted to make straight, he moved a little, and the thread went on the other side. She suspected the judge’s argument, wetted the thread, stretched it, and came back again. The judge moved, twisted about, and wriggled like a bashful maiden; still this cursed thread would not enter. The girl kept

trying at the eye, and the judge kept fidgeting. The marriage of the thread could not be consummated, the bodkin remained virgin, and the servant began to laugh, saying to La Portillone that she knew better how to endure than to perform. Then the roguish judge laughed too, and the fair Portillone cried for her golden crowns.

“If you don’t keep still,” cried she, losing patience; “if you keep moving about I shall never be able to put the thread in.”

“Then, my dear, if you had done the same, Monseigneur would have been unsuccessful too. Think, too, how easy is the one affair, and how difficult the other.”

The pretty wench, who declared she had been forced, remained thoughtful, and sought to find a means to convince the judge by showing how she had been compelled to yield, since the honour of all poor girls liable to violence was at stake.

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“Monseigneur, in order that the bet made the fair, I must do exactly as the young lord did. If I had only had to move I should be moving still, but he went through other performances.”

“Let us hear them,” replied the judge.

Then La Portillone straightens the thread, and rubs it in the wax of the candle, to make it firm and straight; then she looked towards the eye of the bodkin, held by the judge, slipping always to the right or to the left. Then she began making endearing little speeches, such as, “Ah, the pretty little bodkin! What a pretty mark to aim at! Never did I see such a little jewel! What a pretty little eye! Let me put this little thread into it! Ah, you will hurt my poor thread, my nice little thread! Keep still! Come, my love of a judge, judge of my love! Won’t the thread go nicely into this iron gate, which makes good use of the thread, for it comes out very much out of order?” Then she burst out laughing, for she was better up in this game than the judge, who laughed too, so saucy and comical and arch was she, pushing the thread backwards and forwards. She kept the poor judge with the case in his hand until seven o’clock, keeping on fidgeting and moving about like a schoolboy let loose; but as La Portillone kept on trying to put the thread in, he could not help it. As, however, his joint was burning, and his wrist was tired, he was obliged to rest himself for a minute on the side of the table; then very dexterously the fair maid of Portillon slipped the thread in, saying—

“That’s how the thing occurred.”

“But my joint was burning.”

“So was mine,” said she.

The judge, convinced, told La Portillone that he would speak to Monseigneur du Fou, and would himself carry the affair through, since it was certain the young lord had embraced her against her will, but that for valid reasons he would keep the affair dark. On the morrow the judge went to the Court and saw Monseigneur du Fou, to whom he recounted the young woman’s complaint, and how she had set forth her case. This complaint lodged in court, tickled the king immensely. Young du Fou having said that there was some truth in it, the king asked if he had had much difficulty, and as he replied, innocently, “No,” the king declared the girl was quite worth a hundred gold crowns, and the chamberlain gave them to the judge, in order not to be taxed with stinginess, and said the starch would be a good income to La Portillone. The judge came back to La Portillone, and said, smiling, that he had raised a hundred gold crowns for her. But if she desired the balance of the thousand, there were at that moment in the king’s apartments certain lords who, knowing the case, had offered to make up the sum for her, with her consent. The little hussy did not refuse this offer, saying, that in order to do no more washing in the future she did not mind doing a little hard work now. She gratefully acknowledged the trouble the good judge had taken,

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and gained her thousand crowns in a month. From this came the falsehoods and jokes concerning her, because out of these ten lords jealousy made a hundred, whilst, differently from young men, La Portillone settled down to a virtuous life directly she had her thousand crowns. Even a Duke, who would have counted out five hundred crowns, would have found this girl rebellious, which proves she was niggardly with her property. It is true that the king caused her to be sent for to his retreat of Rue Quinquangrogne, on the mall of Chardonneret, found her extremely pretty, exceedingly affectionate, enjoyed her society, and forbade the sergeants to interfere with her in any way whatever. Seeing she was so beautiful, Nicole Beaupertuys, the king's mistress, gave her a hundred gold crowns to go to Orleans, in order to see if the colour of the Loire was the same there as at Portillon. She went there, and the more willingly because she did not care very much for the king. When the good man came who confessed the king in his last hours, and was afterwards canonised, La Portillone went to him to polish up her conscience, did penance, and founded a bed in the leper-house of St. Lazare-aux-Tours. Many ladies whom you know have been assaulted by more than two lords, and have founded no other beds than those in their own houses. It is as well to relate this fact, in order to cleanse the reputation of this honest girl, who herself once washed dirty things, and who afterwards became famous for her clever tricks and her wit. She gave a proof of her merit in marrying Taschereau, who she cuckolded right merrily, as has been related in the story of The Reproach. This proves to us most satisfactorily that with strength and patience justice itself can be violated.

IN WHICH IT IS DEMONSTRATED THAT FORTUNE IS ALWAYS FEMININE

During the time when knights courteously offered to each other both help and assistance in seeking their fortune, it happened that in Sicily—which, as you are probably aware, is an island situated in the corner of the Mediterranean Sea, and formerly celebrated—one knight met in a wood another knight, who had the appearance of a Frenchman. Presumably, this Frenchman was by some chance stripped of everything, and was so wretchedly attired that but for his princely air he might have been taken for a blackguard. It was possible that his horse had died of hunger or fatigue, on disembarking from the foreign shore for which he came, on the faith of the good luck which happened to the French in Sicily, which was true in every respect.

The Sicilian knight, whose name was Pezare, was a Venetian long absent from the Venetian Republic, and with no desire to return there, since he had obtained a footing in the Court of the King of Sicily. Being short of funds in Venice, because he was a younger son, he had no fancy for commerce, and was for that reason eventually

abandoned by his family, a most illustrious one. He therefore remained at this Court, where he was much liked by the king.

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This gentleman was riding a splendid Spanish horse, and thinking to himself how lonely he was in this strange court, without trusty friends, and how in such cases fortune was harsh to helpless people and became a traitress, when he met the poor French knight, who appeared far worse off that he, who had good weapons, a fine horse, and a mansion where servants were then preparing a sumptuous supper.

“You must have come a long way to have so much dust on your feet,” said the Venetian.

“My feet have not as much dust as the road was long,” answered the Frenchman.

“If you have travelled so much,” continued the Venetian, “you must be a learned man.”

“I have learned,” replied the Frenchman, “to give no heed to those who do not trouble about me. I have learnt that however high a man’s head was, his feet were always level with my own; more than that, I have learnt to have no confidence in the warm days of winter, in the sleep of my enemies, or the words of my friends.”

“You are, then, richer than I am,” said the Venetian, astonished, “since you tell me things of which I never thought.”

“Everyone must think for himself,” said the Frenchman; “and as you have interrogated me, I can request from you the kindness of pointing to me the road to Palermo or some inn, for the night is closing in.”

“Are you then, acquainted with no French or Sicilian gentlemen at Palermo?”

“No.”

“Then you are not certain of being received?”

“I am disposed to forgive those who reject me. The road, sir, if you please.”

“I am lost like yourself,” said the Venetian. “Let us look for it in company.”

“To do that we must go together; but you are on horseback, I am on foot.”

The Venetian took the French knight on his saddle behind him, and said—

“Do you know with whom you are?”

“With a man, apparently.”

“Do you think you are in safety?”

“If you were a robber, you would have to take care of yourself,” said the Frenchman, putting the point of his dagger to the Venetian’s heart.

“Well, now, my noble Frenchman, you appear to be a man of great learning and sound sense; know that I am a noble, established at the Court of Sicily, but alone, and I seek a friend. You seem to be in the same plight, and, judging from appearances, you do not seem friendly with your lot, and have apparently need of everybody.”

“Should I be happier if everybody wanted me?”

“You are a devil, who turns every one of my words against me. By St. Mark! my lord knight, can one trust you?”

“More than yourself, who commenced our federal friendship by deceiving me, since you guide your horse like a man who knows his way, and you said you were lost.”

“And did not you deceive me?” said the Venetian, “by making a sage of your years walk, and giving a noble knight the appearance of a vagabond? Here is my abode; my servants have prepared supper for us.”

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The Frenchman jumped off the horse, and entered the house with the Venetian cavalier, accepting his supper. They both seated themselves at the table. The Frenchman fought so well with his jaws, he twisted the morsels with so much agility, that he showed herself equally learned in suppers, and showed it again in dexterously draining the wine flasks without his eye becoming dimmed or his understanding affected. Then you may be sure that the Venetian thought to himself he had fallen in with a fine son of Adam, sprung from the right side and the wrong one. While they were drinking together, the Venetian endeavoured to find some joint through which to sound the secret depths of his friend's cogitations. He, however, clearly perceived that he would cast aside his shirt sooner than his prudence, and judged it opportune to gain his esteem by opening his doublet to him. Therefore he told him in what state was Sicily, where reigned Prince Leufroid and his gentle wife; how gallant was the Court, what courtesy there flourished, that there abounded many lords of Spain, Italy, France, and other countries, lords in high feather and well feathered; many princesses, as rich as noble, and as noble as rich; that this prince had the loftiest aspirations—such as to conquer Morocco, Constantinople, Jerusalem, the lands of Soudan, and other African places. Certain men of vast minds conducted his affairs, bringing together the ban and arriere ban of the flower of Christian chivalry, and kept up his splendour with the idea of causing to reign over the Mediterranean this Sicily, so opulent in times gone by, and of ruining Venice, which had not a foot of land. These designs had been planted in the king's mind by him, Pezare; but although he was high in that prince's favour, he felt himself weak, had no assistance from the courtiers, and desired to make a friend. In this great trouble he had gone for a little ride to turn matters over in his mind, and decide upon the course to pursue. Now, since while in this idea he had met a man of so much sense as the chevalier had proved herself to be, he proposed to fraternise with him, to open his purse to him, and give him his palace to live in. They would journey in company through life in search of honours and pleasure, without concealing one single thought, and would assist each other on all occasions as the brothers-in-arms did at the Crusades. Now, as the Frenchman was seeking his fortune, and required assistance, the Venetian did not for a moment expect that this offer of mutual consolation would be refused.

"Although I stand in need of no assistance," said the Frenchman, "because I rely upon a point which will procure me all that I desire, I should like to acknowledge your courtesy, dear Chevalier Pezare. You will soon see that you will yet be the debtor of Gauttier de Monsoreau, a gentleman of the fair land of Touraine."

"Do you possess any relic with which your fortune is wound up?" said the Venetian.

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“A talisman given me by my dear mother,” said the Touranian, “with which castles and cities are built and demolished, a hammer to coin money, a remedy for every ill, a traveller’s staff always ready to be tried, and worth most when in a state of readiness, a master tool, which executes wondrous works in all sorts of forges, without making the slightest noise.”

“Eh! by St. Mark you have, then, a mystery concealed in your hauberk?”

“No,” said the French knight; “it is a perfectly natural thing. Here it is.”

And rising suddenly from the table to prepare for bed, Gauttier showed to the Venetian the finest talisman to procure joy that he had ever seen.

“This,” said the Frenchman, as they both got into bed together, according to the custom of the times, “overcomes every obstacle, by making itself master of female hearts; and as the ladies are the queens in this court, your friend Gauttier will soon reign there.”

The Venetian remained in great astonishment at the sight of the secret charms of the said Gauttier, who had indeed been bounteously endowed by his mother, and perhaps also by his father; and would thus triumph over everything, since he joined to this corporeal perfection the wit of a young page, and the wisdom of an old devil. Then they swore an eternal friendship, regarding as nothing therein a woman’s heart, vowing to have one and the same idea, as if their heads had been in the same helmet; and they fell asleep on the same pillow enchanted with this fraternity. This was a common occurrence in those days.

On the morrow the Venetian gave a fine horse to his friend Gauttier, also a purse full of money, fine silken hose, a velvet doublet, fringed with gold, and an embroidered mantle, which garments set off his figure so well, and showed up his beauties, that the Venetian was certain he would captivate all the ladies. The servants received orders to obey this Gauttier as they would himself, so that they fancied their master had been fishing, and had caught this Frenchman. Then the two friends made their entry into Palermo at the hour when the princes and princesses were taking the air. Pezare presented his French friend, speaking so highly of his merits, and obtaining such a gracious reception for him, that Leufroid kept him to supper. The knight kept a sharp eye on the Court, and noticed therein various curious little secret practices. If the king was a brave and handsome prince, the princess was a Spanish lady of high temperature, the most beautiful and most noble woman of his Court, but inclined to melancholy. Looking at her, the Touranian believed that she was sparingly embraced by the king, for the law of Touraine is that joy in the face comes from joy elsewhere. Pezare pointed out to his friend Gauttier several ladies to whom Leufroid was exceedingly gracious and who were exceedingly jealous and fought for him in a tournament of gallantries and wonderful female inventions.

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From all this Gauttier concluded that the prince went considerably astray with his court, although he had the prettiest wife in the world, and occupied himself with taxing the ladies of Sicily, in order that he might put his horse in their stables, vary his fodder, and learn the equestrian capabilities of many lands. Perceiving what a life Leufroid was leading, the Sire de Monsoreau, certain that no one in the Court had had the heart to enlighten the queen, determined at one blow to plant his halberd in the field of the fair Spaniard by a master stroke; and this is how. At supper-time, in order to show courtesy to the foreign knight, the king took care to place him near the queen, to whom the gallant Gauttier offered his arm, to take her into the room, and conducted her there hastily, to get ahead of those who were following, in order to whisper, first of all, a word concerning a subject which always pleases the ladies in whatever condition they may be. Imagine what this word was, and how it went straight through the stubble and weeds into the warm thicket of love.

“I know, your majesty, what causes your paleness of face.”

“What?” said she.

“You are so loving that the king loves you night and day; thus you abuse your advantage, for he will die of love.”

“What should I do to keep him alive?” said the queen.

“Forbid him to repeat at your altar more than three prayers a day.”

“You are joking, after the French fashion, Sir Knight, seeing that the king’s devotion to me does not extend beyond a short prayer a week.”

“You are deceived,” said Gauttier, seating himself at the table. “I can prove to you that love should go through the whole mass, matins, and vespers, with an *Ave* now and then, for queens as for simple women, and go through the ceremony every day, like the monks in their monastery, with fervour; but for you these litanies should never finish.”

The queen cast upon the knight a glance which was far from one of displeasure, smiled at him, and shook her head.

“In this,” said she, “men are great liars.”

“I have with me a great truth which I will show you when you wish it.” replied the knight. “I undertake to give you queen’s fare, and put you on the high road to joy; by this means you will make up for lost time, the more so as the king is ruined through other women, while I shall reserve my advantage for your service.”

“And if the king learns of our arrangement, he will put your head on a level with your feet.”

“Even if this misfortune befell me it after the first night, I should believe I had lived a hundred years, from the joy therein received, for never have I seen, after visiting all Courts, a princess fit to hold a candle to your beauty. To be brief, if I die not by the sword, you will still be the cause of my death, for I am resolved to spend my life in your love, if life will depart in the place whence it comes.”

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Now this queen had never heard such words before, and preferred them to the most sweetly sung mass; her pleasure showed itself in her face, which became purple, for these words made her blood boil within her veins, so that the strings of her lute were moved thereat, and struck a sweet note that rang melodiously in her ears, for this lute fills with its music the brain and the body of the ladies, by a sweet artifice of their resonant nature. What a shame to be young, beautiful, Spanish, and queen, and yet neglected. She conceived an intense disdain for those of her Court who had kept their lips closed concerning this infidelity, through fear of the king, and determined to revenge herself with the aid of this handsome Frenchman, who cared so little for life that in his first words he had staked it in making a proposition to a queen, which was worthy of death, if she did her duty. Instead of this, however, she pressed his foot with her own, in a manner that admitted no misconception, and said aloud to him—

“Sir Knight, let us change the subject, for it is very wrong of you to attack a poor queen in her weak spot. Tell us the customs of the ladies of the Court of France.”

Thus did the knight receive the delicate hint that the business was arranged. Then he commenced to talk of merry and pleasant things, which during supper kept the court, the king, the queen, and all the courtiers in a good humour; so much so that when the siege was raised, Leufroid declared that he had never laughed so much in his life. Then they strolled about the gardens, which were the most beautiful in the world, and the queen made a pretext of the chevalier’s sayings to walk beneath a grove of blossoming orange trees, which yielded a delicious fragrance.

“Lovely and noble queen,” said Gauttier, immediately, “I have seen in all countries the perdition of love have its birth in these first attentions, which we call courtesy; if you have confidence in me, let us agree, as people of high intelligence, to love each other without standing on so much ceremony; by this means no suspicion will be aroused, our happiness will be less dangerous and more lasting. In this fashion should queens conduct their amours, if they would avoid interference.”

“Well said,” said she. “But as I am new at this business, I did not know what arrangements to make.”

“Have you are among your women one in whom you have perfect confidence?”

“Yes,” said she; “I have a maid who came from Spain with me, who would put herself on a gridiron for me like St. Lawrence did for God, but she is always poorly.”

“That’s good,” said her companion, “because you go to see her.”

“Yes,” said the queen, “and sometimes at night.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Gauttier, “I make a vow to St. Rosalie, patroness of Sicily, to build her a gold altar for this fortune.”

“O Jesus!” cried the queen. “I am doubly blessed in having a lover so handsome and yet so religious.”

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“Ah, my dear, I have two sweethearts today, because I have a queen to love in heaven above, and another one here below, and luckily these loves cannot clash one with the other.”

This sweet speech so affected the queen, that for nothing she would have fled with this cunning Frenchman.

“The Virgin Mary is very powerful in heaven,” said the queen. “Love grant that I may be like her!”

“Bah! they are talking of the Virgin Mary,” said the king, who by chance had come to watch them, disturbed by a gleam of jealousy, cast into his heart by a Sicilian courtier, who was furious at the sudden favour which the Frenchman had obtained.

The queen and the chevalier laid their plans, and everything was secretly arranged to furnish the helmet of the king with two invisible ornaments. The knight rejoined the Court, made himself agreeable to everyone, and returned to the Palace of Pezare, whom he told that their fortunes were made, because on the morrow, at night, he would sleep with the queen. This swift success astonished the Venetian, who, like a good friend, went in search of fine perfumes, linen of Brabant, and precious garments, to which queens are accustomed, with all of which he loaded his friend Gauttier, in order that the case might be worthy the jewel.

“Ah, my friend,” said he “are you sure not to falter, but to go vigorously to work, to serve the queen bravely, and give her such joys in her castle of Gallardin that she may hold on for ever to this master staff, like a drowning sailor to a plank?”

“As for that, fear nothing, dear Pezare, because I have the arrears of the journey, and I will deal with her as with a simple servant, instructing her in the ways of the ladies of Touraine, who understand love better than all others, because they make it, remake it, and unmake it to make it again and having remade it, still keep on making it; and having nothing else to do, have to do that which always wants doing. Now let us settle our plans. This is how we shall obtain the government of the island. I shall hold the queen and you the king; we will play the comedy of being great enemies before the eyes of the courtiers, in order to divide them into two parties under our command, and yet, unknown to all, we will remain friends. By this means we shall know their plots, and will thwart them, you by listening to my enemies and I to yours. In the course of a few days we will pretend to quarrel in order to strive one against the other. This quarrel will be caused by the favour in which I will manage to place you with the king, through the channel of the queen, and he will give you supreme power, to my injury.”

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On the morrow Gauttier went to the house of the Spanish lady, who before the courtiers he recognised as having known in Spain, and he remained there seven whole days. As you can imagine, the Touranian treated the queen as a fondly loved woman, and showed her so many terra incognita in love, French fashions, little tendernesses, *etc*., that she nearly lost her reason through it, and swore that the French were the only people who thoroughly understood love. You see how the king was punished, who, to keep her virtuous, had allowed weeds to grow in the grange of love. Their supernatural festivities touched the queen so strongly that she made a vow of eternal love to Montsoreau, who had awakened her, by revealing to her the joys of the proceeding. It was arranged that the Spanish lady should take care always to be ill; and that the only man to whom the lovers would confide their secret should be the court physician, who was much attached to the queen. By chance this physician had in his glottis, chords exactly similar to those of Gauttier, so that by a freak of nature they had the same voice, which much astonished the queen. The physician swore on his life faithfully to serve the pretty couple, for he deplored the sad desertion of this beautiful women, and was delighted to know she would be served as a queen should be—a rare thing.

A month elapsed and everything was going on to the satisfaction of the two friends, who worked the plans laid by the queen, in order to get the government of Sicily into the hands of Pezare, to the detriment of Montsoreau, whom the king loved for his great wisdom; but the queen would not consent to have him, because he was so ungallant. Leufroid dismissed the Duke of Cataneo, his principal follower, and put the Chevalier Pezare in his place. The Venetian took no notice of his friend the Frenchmen. Then Gauttier burst out, declaimed loudly against the treachery and abused friendship of his former comrade, and instantly earned the devotion of Cataneo and his friends, with whom he made a compact to overthrow Pezare. Directly he was in office the Venetian, who was a shrewd man, and well suited to govern states, which was the usual employment of Venetian gentlemen, worked wonders in Sicily, repaired the ports, brought merchants there by the fertility of his inventions and by granting them facilities, put bread into the mouths of hundreds of poor people, drew thither artisans of all trades, because fetes were always being held, and also the idle and rich from all quarters, even from the East. Thus harvests, the products of the earth, and other commodities, were plentiful; and galleys came from Asia, the which made the king much envied, and the happiest king in the Christian world, because through these things his Court was the most renowned in the countries of Europe. This fine political aspect was the result of the perfect agreement of the two men who thoroughly understood each other. The one looked after the pleasures, and was himself the

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delight of the queen, whose face was always bright and gay, because she was served according to the method of Touraine, and became animated through excessive happiness; and he also took care to keep the king amused, finding him every day new mistresses, and casting him into a whirl of dissipation. The king was much astonished at the good temper of the queen, whom, since the arrival of the Sire de Montsoreau in the island, he had touched no more than a Jew touches bacon. Thus occupied, the king and queen abandoned the care of their kingdom to the other friend, who conducted the affairs of government, ruled the establishment, managed the finances, and looked to the army, and all exceedingly well, knowing where money was to be made, enriching the treasury, and preparing all the great enterprises above mentioned.

The state of things lasted three years, some say four, but the monks of Saint Benoist have not wormed out the date, which remains obscure, like the reasons for the quarrel between the two friends. Probably the Venetian had the high ambition to reign without any control or dispute, and forgot the services which the Frenchman had rendered him. Thus do the men who live in Courts behave, for, according to the statements of the Messire Aristotle in his works, that which ages the most rapidly in this world is a kindness, although extinguished love is sometimes very rancid. Now, relying on the perfect friendship of Leufroid, who called him his crony, and would have done anything for him, the Venetian conceived the idea of getting rid of his friend by revealing to the king the mystery of his cuckoldom, and showing him the source of the queen's happiness, not doubting for a moment but that he would commence by depriving Monsoreau of his head, according to a practice common in Sicily under similar circumstances. By this means Pezare would have all the money that he and Gauttier had noiselessly conveyed to the house of a Lombard of Genoa, which money was their joint property on account of their fraternity. This treasure, increased on one side by the magnificent presents made to Montsoreau by the queen, who had vast estates in Spain, and other, by inheritance in Italy; on the other, by the king's gifts to his prime minister, to whom he also gave certain rights over the merchants, and other indulgences. The treacherous friend, having determined to break his vow, took care to conceal his intention from Gauttier, because the Touranian was an awkward man to tackle.

One night that Pezare knew that the queen was in bed with her lover, who loved him as though each night were a wedding one, so skilful was she at the business, the traitor promised the king to let him take evidence in the case, through a hole he had made in the wardrobe of the Spanish lady, who always pretended to be at death's door. In order to obtain a better view, Pezare waited until the sun had risen. The Spanish lady, who was fleet of foot, had a quick eye and a sharp ear, heard footsteps, peeped out, and perceiving the king, followed by the Venetian, through a crossbar in the closet in which she slept the night that the queen had her lover between two sheets, which is certainly the best way to have a lover. She ran to warn the couple of this betrayal. But the king's eye was already at the cursed hole, Leufroid saw—what?

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That beautiful and divine lantern with burns so much oil and lights the world—a lantern adorned with the most lovely baubles, flaming, brilliantly, which he thought more lovely than all the others, because he had lost sight of it for so long a time that it appeared quite new to him; but the size of the hole prevented him seeing anything else except the hand of a man, which modestly covered the lantern, and he heard the voice of Montsoreau saying—

“How’s the little treasure, this morning?” A playful expression, which lovers used jokingly, because this lantern is in all countries the sun of love, and for this the prettiest possible names are bestowed upon it, whilst comparing it to the loveliest things in nature, such as my pomegranate, my rose, my little shell, my hedgehog, my gulf of love, my treasure, my master, my little one; some even dared most heretically to say, my god! If you don’t believe it, ask your friends.

At this moment the lady let him understand by a gesture that the king was there.

“Can he hear?” said the queen.

“Yes.”

“Can he see?”

“Yes.”

“Who brought him?”

“Pezare.”

“Fetch the physician, and get Gauttier into his own room.” said the queen.

In less time than it takes a beggar to say “God bless you, sir!” the queen had swathed the lantern in linen and paint, so that you would have thought it a hideous wound in a state of grievous inflammation. When the king, enraged by what he overheard, burst open the door, he found the queen lying on the bed exactly as he has seen her through the hole, and the physician, examining the lantern swathed in bandages, and saying, “How it is the little treasure, this morning?” in exactly the same voice as the king had heard. A jocular and cheerful expression, because physicians and surgeons use cheerful words with ladies and treat this sweet flower with flowery phrases. This sight made the king look as foolish as a fox caught in a trap. The queen sprang up, reddening with shame, and asking what man dared to intrude upon her privacy at such a moment, but perceiving the king, she said to him as follows:—

“Ah! my lord, you have discovered that which I have endeavoured to conceal from you: that I am so badly treated by you that I am afflicted with a burning ailment, of which my dignity would not allow me to complain, but which needs secret dressing in order to

assuage the influence of the vital forces. To save my honour and your own, I am compelled to come to my good Lady Miraflor, who consoles me in my troubles."

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Then the physician commenced to treat Leufroid to an oration, interlarded with Latin quotations and precious grains from Hippocrates, Galen, the School of Salerno, and others, in which he showed him how necessary to women was the proper cultivation of the field of Venus, and that there was great danger of death to queens of Spanish temperament, whose blood was excessively amorous. He delivered himself of his arguments with great solemnity of feature, voice, and manner, in order to give the Sire de Montsoreau time to get to bed. Then the queen took the same text to preach the king a sermon as long as his arm, and requested the loan of that limb, that the king might conduct her to her apartment instead of the poor invalid, who usually did so in order to avoid calumny. When they were in the gallery where the Sire de Montsoreau resided, the queen said jokingly, “You should play a good trick on this Frenchman, who I would wager is with some lady, and not in his own room. All the ladies of Court are in love with him, and there will be mischief some day through him. If you had taken my advice he would not be in Sicily now.”

Leufroid went suddenly into Gauttier’s room, whom he found in a deep sleep, and snoring like a monk in Church. The queen returned with the king, whom she took to her apartments, and whispered to one of the guards to send to her the lord whose place Pezare occupied. Then, while she fondled the king, taking breakfast with him, she took the lord directly he came, into an adjoining room.

“Erect a gallows on the bastion,” said she, “then seize the knight Pezare, and manage so that he is hanged instantly, without giving time to write or say a single word on any subject whatsoever. Such is our good pleasure and supreme command.”

Cataneo made no remark. While Pezare was thinking to himself that his friend Gauttier would soon be minus his head, the Duke Cataneo came to seize and lead him on to bastion, from which he could see at the queen’s window the Sire de Montsoreau in company with the king, the queen, and the courtiers, and came to the conclusion that he who looked after the queen had a better chance in everything than he who looked after the king.

“My dear,” said the queen to her spouse, leading him to the window, “behold a traitor, who was endeavouring to deprive you of that which you hold dearest in the world, and I will give you the proofs when you have the leisure to study them.”

Montsoreau, seeing the preparations for the final ceremony, threw himself at the king’s feet, to obtain the pardon of him who was his mortal enemy, at which the king was much moved.

“Sire de Monsoreau,” said the queen, turning towards him with an angry look, “are you so bold as to oppose our will and pleasure?”

“You are a noble knight,” said the king, “but you do not know how bitter this Venetian was against you.”

Pezare was delicately strangled between the head and the shoulders, for the queen revealed his treacheries to the king, proving to him, by the declaration of a Lombard of the town, the enormous sums which Pezare had in the bank of Genoa, the whole of which were given up to Montsoreau.

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This noble and lovely queen died, as related in the history of Sicily, that is, in consequence of a heavy labour, during which she gave birth to a son, who was a man as great in himself as he was unfortunate in his undertakings. The king believed the physician's statement, that the said termination to this accouchement was caused by the too chaste life the queen had led, and believing himself responsible for it, he founded the Church of the Madonna, which is one of the finest in the town of Palermo. The Sire de Monsoreau, who was a witness of the king's remorse, told him that when a king got his wife from Spain, he ought to know that this queen would require more attention than any other, because the Spanish ladies were so lively that they equalled ten ordinary women, and that if he wished a wife for show only, he should get her from the north of Germany, where the women are as cold as ice. The good knight came back to Touraine laden with wealth, and lived there many years, but never mentioned his adventures in Sicily. He returned there to aid the king's son in his principal attempt against Naples, and left Italy when this sweet prince was wounded, as is related in the Chronicle.

Besides the high moralities contained in the title of this tale, where it is said that fortune, being female, is always on the side of the ladies, and that men are quite right to serve them well, it shows us that silence is the better part of wisdom. Nevertheless, the monkish author of this narrative seems to draw this other no less learned moral therefrom, that interest which makes so many friendships, breaks them also. But from these three versions you can choose the one that best accords with your judgment and your momentary requirement.

CONCERNING A POOR MAN WHO WAS CALLED LE VIEUX PAR-CHEMINS

The old chronicler who furnished the hemp to weave the present story, is said to have lived at the time when the affair occurred in the City of Rouen.

In the environs of this fair town, where at the time dwelt Duke Richard, an old man used to beg, whose name was Tryballot, but to whom was given the nickname of Le Vieux par-Chemins, or the Old Man of the Roads; not because he was yellow and dry as vellum, but because he was always in the high-ways and by-ways—up hill and down dale—slept with the sky for his counterpane, and went about in rags and tatters. Notwithstanding this, he was very popular in the duchy, where everyone had grown used to him, so much so that if the month went by without anyone seeing his cup held towards them, people would say, "Where is the old man?" and the usual answer was, "On the roads."

This said man had had for a father a Tryballot, who was in his lifetime a skilled artisan, so economical and careful, that he left considerable wealth to his son.

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But the young lad soon frittered it away, for he was the very opposite of the old fellow, who, returning from the fields to his house, picked up, now here, now there, many a little stick of wood left right and left, saying, conscientiously, that one should never come home empty handed. Thus he warmed himself in the winter at the expense of the careless; and he did well. Everyone recognised what a good example this was for the country, since a year before his death no one left a morsel of wood on the road; he had compelled the most dissipated to be thrifty and orderly. But his son made ducks and drakes of everything, and did not follow his wise example. The father had predicted the thing. From the boy's earliest youth, when the good Tryballot set him to watch the birds who came to eat the peas, beans, and the grain, and to drive the thieves away, above all, the jays, who spoiled everything, he would study their habits, and took delight in watching with what grace they came and went, flew off loaded, and returned, watching with a quick eye the snares and nets; and he would laugh heartily at their cleverness in avoiding them. Tryballot senior went into a passion when he found his grain considerably less in a measure. But although he pulled his son's ears whenever he caught him idling and trifling under a nut tree, the little rascal did not alter his conduct, but continued to study the habits of the blackbirds, sparrows, and other intelligent marauders. One day his father told him that he would be wise to model himself after them, for that if he continued this kind of life, he would be compelled in his old age like them, to pilfer, and like them, would be pursued by justice. This came true; for, as has before been stated, he dissipated in a few days the crowns which his careful father had acquired in a life-time. He dealt with men as he did with the sparrows, letting everyone put a hand in his pocket, and contemplating the grace and polite demeanour of those who assisted to empty it. The end of his wealth was thus soon reached. When the devil had the empty money bag to himself, Tryballot did not appear at all cut up, saying, that he "did not wish to damn himself for this world's goods, and that he had studied philosophy in the school of the birds."

After having thoroughly enjoyed himself, of all his goods, there only remained to him a goblet bought at Landict, and three dice, quite sufficient furniture for drinking and gambling, so that he went about without being encumbered, as are the great, with chariots, carpets, dripping pans, and an infinite number of varlets. Tryballot wished to see his good friends, but they no longer knew him, which fact gave him leave no longer to recognise anyone. Seeing this, he determined to choose a profession in which there was nothing to do and plenty to gain. Thinking this over, he remembered the indulgences of the blackbirds and the sparrows. Then the good Tryballot selected for his profession that of begging money at people's

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houses, and pilfering. From the first day, charitable people gave him something, and Tryballot was content, finding the business good, without advance money or bad debts; on the contrary, full of accommodation. He went about it so heartily, that he was liked everywhere, and received a thousand consolations refused to rich people. The good man watched the peasants planting, sowing, reaping, and making harvest, and said to himself, that they worked a little for him as well. He who had a pig in his larder owed him a bit for it, without suspecting it. The man who baked a loaf in his oven often baked it for Tryballot without knowing it. He took nothing by force; on the contrary, people said to him kindly, while making him a present, “Here Vieux par-Chemins, cheer up, old fellow. How are you? Come, take this; the cat began it, you can finish it.”

Vieux par-Chemins was at all the weddings, baptisms, and funerals, because he went everywhere where there was, openly or secretly, merriment and feasting. He religiously kept the statutes and canons of his order—namely, to do nothing, because if he had been able to do the smallest amount of work no one would ever give anything again. After having refreshed himself, this wise man would lay full length in a ditch, or against a church wall, and think over public affairs; and then he would philosophise, like his pretty tutors, the blackbirds, jays, and sparrows, and thought a great deal while mumping; for, because his apparel was poor, was that a reason his understanding should not be rich? His philosophy amused his clients, to whom he would repeat, by way of thanks, the finest aphorisms of his science. According to him, suppers produced gout in the rich: he boasted that he had nimble feet, because his shoemaker gave him boots that do not pinch his corns. There were aching heads beneath diadems, but his never ached, because it was touched neither by luxury nor any other chaplet. And again, that jewelled rings hinder the circulation of the blood. Although he covered himself with sores, after the manner of cadgers, you may be sure he was as sound as a child at the baptismal font.

The good man disported himself with other rogues, playing with his three dice, which he kept to remind him to spend his coppers, in order that he might always be poor. In spite of his vow, he was, like all the order of mendicants, so wealthy that one day at the Paschal feast, another beggar wishing to rent his profit from him, Vieux par-Chemins refused ten crowns for it; in fact, the same evening he spent fourteen crowns in drinking the health of the alms-givers, because it is the statutes of beggary that one should show one’s gratitude to donors. Although he carefully got rid of that of which had been a source of anxiety to others, who, having too much wealth went in search of poverty, he was happier with nothing in the world than when he had his father’s money. And seeing what are the conditions of nobility, he

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was always on the high road to it, because he did nothing except according to his fancy, and lived nobly without labour. Thirty crowns would not have got him out of a bed when he was in it. The morrow always dawned for him as it did for others, while leading this happy life; which, according to the statements of Plato, whose authority has more than once been invoked in these narratives, certain ancient sages had led before him. At last, Vieux par-Chemins reached the age of eighty-two years, having never been a single day without picking up money, and possessed the healthiest colour and complexion imaginable. He believed that if he had persevered in the race for wealth he would have been spoiled and buried years before. It is possible he was right.

In his early youth Vieux par-Chemins had the illustrious virtue of being very partial to the ladies; and his abundance of love was, it is said, the result of his studies among the sparrows. Thus it was that he was always ready to give the ladies his assistance in counting the joists, and this generosity finds its physical cause in the fact that, having nothing to do, he was always ready to do something. His secret virtues brought about, it is said, that popularity which he enjoyed in the provinces. Certain people say that the lady of Chaumont had him in her castle, to learn the truth about these qualities, and kept him there for a week, to prevent him begging. But the good man jumped over the hedges and fled in great terror of being rich. Advancing in age, this great quintessencer found himself disdained, although his notable faculties of loving were in no way impaired. This unjust turning away on the part of the female tribe caused the first trouble of Vieux par-Chemins, and the celebrated trial of Rouen, to which it is time I came.

In this eighty-second year of his age he was compelled to remain continent for about seven months, during which time he met no woman kindly disposed towards him; and he declared before the judge that that had caused the greatest astonishment of his long and honourable life. In this most pitiable state he saw in the fields during the merry month of May a girl, who by chance was a maiden, and minding cows. The heat was so excessive that this cowherdess had stretched herself beneath the shadow of a beech tree, her face to the ground, after the custom of people who labour in the fields, in order to get a little nap while her animals were grazing. She was awakened by the deed of the old man, who had stolen from her that which a poor girl could only lose once. Finding herself ruined without receiving from the process either knowledge or pleasure, she cried out so loudly that the people working in the fields ran to her, and were called upon by her as witnesses, at the time when that destruction was visible in her which is appropriate only to a bridal night. She cried and groaned, saying that the old ape might just as well have played his tricks on her mother, who would have said nothing.

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He made answer to the peasants, who had already raised their hoes to kill him, that he had been compelled to enjoy himself. These people objected that a man can enjoy himself very well without enjoying a maiden—a case for the provost, which would bring him straight to the gallows; and he was taken with great clamour to the jail of Rouen.

The girl, interrogated by the provost, declared that she was sleeping in order to do something, and that she thought she was dreaming of her lover, with whom she was then at loggerheads, because before marriage he wished to take certain liberties: and jokingly, in this dream she let him reconnoiter to a certain extent, in order to avoid any dispute afterwards, and that in spite of her prohibitions he went further than she had given him leave to go, and finding more pain than pleasure in the affair, she had been awakened by Vieux par-Chemins, who had attacked her as a gray-friar would a ham at the end of lent.

This trial caused so great a commotion in the town of Rouen that the provost was sent for by the duke, who had an intense desire to know if the thing were true. Upon the affirmation of the provost, he ordered Vieux par-Chemins to be brought to his palace, in order that he might hear what defence he had to make. The poor old fellow appeared before the prince, and informed him naively of the misfortune which his impulsive nature brought upon him, declaring that he was like a young fellow impelled by imperious desires; that up to the present year he had sweethearts of his own, but for the last eight months he had been a total abstainer; that he was too poor to find favour with the girls of the town; that honest women who once were charitable to him, had taken a dislike to his hair, which had feloniously turned white in spite of the green youth of his love, and that he felt compelled to avail himself of the chance when he saw this maiden, who, stretched at full length under the beech tree, left visible the lining of her dress and two hemispheres, white as snow, which had deprived him of reason; that the fault was the girl’s and not his, because young maidens should be forbidden to entice passers-by by showing them that which caused Venus to be named Callipyge; finally the prince ought to be aware what trouble a man had to control himself at the hour of noon, because that was the time of day at which King David was smitten with the wife of the Sieur Uriah, that where a Hebrew king, beloved of God, had succumbed, a poor man, deprived of all joy, and reduced to begging for his bread, could not expect to escape; that for that matter of that, he was quite willing to sing psalms for the remainder of his days, and play upon a lute by way of penance, in imitation of the said king, who had had the misfortune to slay a husband, while he had only done a trifling injury to a peasant girl. The duke listened to the arguments of Vieux par-Chemins, and said that he was a man of good parts. Then he made his memorable decree, that if, as this beggar declared, he had need of such gratification at his age he gave permission to prove it at the foot of the ladder which he would have to mount to be hanged, according to the sentence already passed on him by the provost; that if then, the rope being round his neck, between the priest and the hangman, a like desire seized him he should have a free pardon.

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This decree becoming known, there was a tremendous crowd to see the old fellow led to the gallows. There was a line drawn up as if for a ducal entry, and in it many more bonnets than hats. Vieux par-Chemins was saved by a lady curious to see how this precious violator would finish his career. She told the duke that religion demanded that he should have a fair chance. And she dressed herself as if for a ball; she brought intentionally into evidence two hillocks of such snowy whiteness that the whitest linen neckerchief would have paled before them; indeed, these fruits of love stood out, without a wrinkle, over her corset, like two beautiful apples, and made one's mouth water, so exquisite were they. This noble lady, who was one of those who rouse one's manhood, had a smile ready on her lips for the old fellow. Vieux par-Chemins, dressed in garments of coarse cloth, more certain of being in the desired state after hanging than before it, came along between the officers of justice with a sad countenance, glancing now here and there, and seeing nothing but head-dresses; and he would he declared, have given a hundred crowns for a girl tucked up as was the cowherdess, whose charms, though they had been his ruin, he still remembered, and they might still have saved him; but, as he was old, the remembrance was not sufficiently recent. But when, at the foot of the ladder, he saw the twin charms of the lady, and the pretty delta that their confluent rotundities produced, the sight so much excited him that his emotion was patent to the spectators.

"Make haste and see that the required conditions are fulfilled," said he to the officers. "I have gained my pardon but I cannot answer for my saviour."

The lady was well pleased with this homage, which, she said, was greater than his offence. The guards, whose business it was to proceed to a verification, believed the culprit to be the devil, because never in their wits had they seen an "I" so perpendicular as was the old man. He was marched in triumph through the town to the palace of the duke, to whom the guards and others stated the facts. In that period of ignorance, this affair was thought so much of that the town voted the erection of a column on the spot where the old fellow gained his pardon, and he was portrayed thereon in stone in the attitude he assumed at the sight of that honest and virtuous lady. The statue was still to be seen when Rouen was taken by the English, and the writers of the period have included this history among the notable events of the reign.

As the town offered to supply the old man with all he required, and see to his sustenance, clothing, and amusements, the good duke arranged matters by giving the injured maiden a thousand crowns and marrying her to her seducer, who then lost his name of Vieux par-Chemins. He was named by the duke the Sieur de Bonne-C------. This wife was confined nine months afterwards of a perfectly formed male child,

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alive and kicking, and born with two teeth. From this marriage came the house of Bonne-C------, who from motives modest but wrong, besought our well-beloved King Louis Eleventh to grant them letters patent to change their names into that of Bonne-Chose. The king pointed out to the Sieur de Bonne-C------ that there was in the state of Venice an illustrious family named Coglioni, who wore three “C------ au natural” on their coat of arms. The gentlemen of the House of Bonne-C------ stated to the king that their wives were ashamed to be thus called in public assemblies; the king answered that they would lose a great deal, because there is a great deal in a name. Nevertheless, he granted the letters. After that this race was known by this name, and founded families in many provinces. The first Sieur de Bonne-C------ lived another 27 years, and had another son and two daughters. But he grieved much at becoming rich, and no longer being able to pick up a living in the street.

From this you can obtain finer lessons and higher morals than from any story you will read all your life long—of course excepting these hundred glorious Droll Tales—namely, that never could adventure of this sort have happened to the impaired and ruined constitutions of court rascals, rich people and others who dig their graves with their teeth by over-eating and drinking many wines that impair the implements of happiness; which said over-fed people were lolling luxuriously in costly draperies and on feather beds, while the Sieur de Bonne-Chose was roughing it. In a similar situation, if they had eaten cabbage, it would have given them the diarrhoea. This may incite many of those who read this story to change their mode of life, in order to imitate Vieux par-Chemins in his old age.

ODD SAYINGS OF THREE PILGRIMS

When the pope left his good town of Avignon to take up his residence in Rome, certain pilgrims were thrown out who had set out for this country, and would have to pass the high Alps, in order to gain this said town of Rome, where they were going to seek the *remittimus* of various sins. Then were to be seen on the roads, and the hostelries, those who wore the order of Cain, otherwise the flower of the penitents, all wicked fellows, burdened with leprous souls, which thirsted to bathe in the papal piscina, and all carrying with them gold or precious things to purchase absolution, pay for their beds, and present to the saints. You may be sure that those who drank water going, on their return, if the landlords gave them water, wished it to be the holy water of the cellar.

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At this time the three pilgrims came to this said Avignon to their injury, seeing that it was widowed of the pope. While they were passing the Rhodane, to reach the Mediterranean coast, one of the three pilgrims, who had with him a son about 10 years of age, parted company with the others, and near the town of Milan suddenly appeared again, but without the boy. Now in the evening, at supper, they had a hearty feast in order to celebrate the return of the pilgrim, who they thought had become disgusted with penitence through the pope not being in Avignon. Of these three roamers to Rome, one had come from the city of Paris, the other from Germany, and the third, who doubtless wished to instruct his son on the journey, had his home in the duchy of Burgundy, in which he had certain fiefs, and was a younger son of the house of Villers-la-Faye (Villa in Fago), and was named La Vaugrenand. The German baron had met the citizen of Paris just past Lyons, and both had accosted the Sire de la Vaugrenand in sight of Avignon.

Now in this hostelry the three pilgrims loosened their tongues, and agreed to journey to Rome together, in order the better to resist the foot pads, the night-birds, and other malefactors, who made it their business to ease pilgrims of that which weighed upon their bodies before the pope eased them of that which weighed upon their consciences. After drinking the three companions commenced to talk together, for the bottle is the key of conversation, and each made this confession—that the cause of his pilgrimage was a woman. The servant who watched their drinking, told them that of a hundred pilgrims who stopped in the locality, ninety-nine were travelling from the same thing. These three wise men then began to consider how pernicious is woman to man. The Baron showed the heavy gold chain that he had in his hauberk to present to Saint Peter, and said his crime was such that he would not get rid of with the value of two such chains. The Parisian took off his glove, and exposed a ring set with a white diamond, saying that he had a hundred like it for the pope. The Burgundian took off his hat, and exhibited two wonderful pearls, that were beautiful ear-pendants for Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, and candidly confessed that he would rather have left them round his wife’s neck.

Thereupon the servant exclaimed that their sins must have been as great as those of Visconti.

Then the pilgrims replied that they were such that they had made a solemn vow in their minds never to go astray again during the remainder of their days, however beautiful the woman might be, and this in addition to the penance which the pope might impose upon them.

Then the servant expressed her astonishment that all had made the same vow. The Burgundian added, that this vow had been the cause of his lagging behind, because he had been in extreme fear that his son, in spite of his age, might go astray, and that he had made a vow to prevent people and beasts alike gratifying their passions in his

house, or upon his estates. The baron having inquired the particulars of the adventure, the sire narrated the affair as follows:—

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“You know that the good Countess Jeane d’Avignon made formerly a law for the harlots, who she compelled to live in the outskirts of the town in houses with window-shutters painted red and closed. Now passing in my company in this vile neighbourhood, my lad remarked these houses with closed window-shutters, painted red, and his curiosity being aroused—for these ten-year old little devils have eyes for everything—he pulled me by the sleeve and kept on pulling until he had learnt from me what these houses were. Then, to obtain peace, I told him that young lads had nothing to do with such places, and could only enter them at the peril of their lives, because it was a place where men and women were manufactured, and the danger was such for anyone unacquainted with the business that if a novice entered, flying chancres and other wild beasts would seize upon his face. Fear seized the lad, who then followed me to the hostelry in a state of agitation, and not daring to cast his eyes upon the said bordels. While I was in the stable, seeing to the putting up of the horses, my son went off like a robber, and the servant was unable to tell me what had become of him. Then I was in great fear of the wenches, but had confidence in the laws, which forbade them to admit such children. At supper-time the rascal came back to me looking no more ashamed of himself than did our divine Saviour in the temple among the doctors.

“‘Whence comes you?’ said I to him.

“‘From the houses with the red shutters,’ he replied.

“‘Little blackguard,’ said I, ‘I’ll give you a taste of the whip.’

“Then he began to moan and cry. I told him that if he would confess all that had happened to him I would let him off the beating.

“‘Ha,’ said he, ’I took care not to go in, because of the flying chancres and other wild beasts. I only looked through the chinks of the windows, in order to see how men were manufactured.’

“‘And what did you see?’ I asked.

“‘I saw,’ said he, ’a fine woman just being finished, because she only wanted one peg, which a young worker was fitting in with energy. Directly she was finished she turned round, spoke to, and kissed her manufacturer.’

“‘Have your supper,’ said I; and the same night I returned into Burgundy, and left him with his mother, being sorely afraid that at the first town he might want to fit a peg into some girl.”

“These children often make these sort of answers,” said the Parisian. “One of my neighbour’s children revealed the cuckoldom of his father by a reply. One day I asked, to see if he was well instructed at school in religious matters, ‘What is hope?’ ’One of

the king’s big archers, who comes here when father goes out,’ said he. Indeed, the sergeant of the Archers was named Hope. My friend was dumbfounded at this, and, although to keep his countenance he looked in the mirror, he could not see his horns there.”

The baron observed that the boy’s remark was good in this way: that Hope is a person who comes to bed with us when the realities of life are out of the way.

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“Is a cuckold made in the image of God?” asked the Burgundian.

“No,” said the Parisian, “because God was wise in this respect, that he took no wife; therefore is He happy through all eternity.”

“But,” said the maid-servant, “cuckolds are made in the image of God before they are horned.”

Then the three pilgrims began to curse women, saying that they were the cause of all the evils in the world.

“Their heads are as empty as helmets,” said the Burgundian.

“Their hearts are as straight as bill-hooks,” said the Parisian.

“Why are there so many men pilgrims and so few women pilgrims?” said the German baron.

“Their cursed member never sins,” replied the Parisian; “it knows neither father nor mother, the commandments of God, nor those of the Church, neither laws divine or human: their member knows no doctrine, understands no heresies, and cannot be blamed; it is innocent of all, and always on the laugh; its understanding is nil; and for this reason do I hold it in utter detestation.”

“I also,” said the Burgundian, “and I begin to understand the different reading by a learned man of the verses of the Bible, in which the account of the creation is given. In this Commentary, which in my country we call a Noel, lies the reason of imperfection of this feature of women, of which, different to that of other females, no man can slake the thirst, such diabolical heat existing there. In this Noel is stated that the Lord God, having turned his head to look at a donkey, who had brayed for the first time in his Paradise, while he was manufacturing Eve, the devil seized this moment to put his finger into this divine creature, and made a warm wound, which the Lord took care to close with a stitch, from which comes the maid. By means of this frenum, the woman should remain closed, and children be made in the same manner in which God made the angels, by a pleasure far above carnal pleasure as the heaven is above the earth. Observing this closing, the devil, wild at being done, pinched the Sieur Adam, who was asleep, by the skin, and stretched a portion of it out in imitation of his diabolical tail; but as the father of man was on his back this appendage came out in front. Thus these two productions of the devil had the desire to reunite themselves, following the law of similarities which God had laid down for the conduct of the world. From this came the first sin and the sorrows of the human race, because God, noticing the devil’s work, determined to see what would come of it.”

The servant declared that they were quite correct in the statements, for that woman was a bad animal, and that she herself knew some who were better under the ground than on it. The pilgrims, noticing then how pretty the girl was, were afraid of breaking their vows, and went straight to bed. The girl went and told her mistress she was harbouring infidels, and told her what they had said about women.

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“Ah!” said the landlady, “what matters it to me the thoughts my customers have in their brains, so long as their purses are well filled.”

And when the servant had told of the jewels, she exclaimed—

“Ah, these are questions which concern all women. Let us go and reason with them. I’ll take the nobles, you can have the citizen.”

The landlady, who was the most shameless inhabitant of the duchy of Milan, went into the chamber where the Sire de La Vaugrenand and the German baron were sleeping, and congratulated them upon their vows, saying that the women would not lose much by them; but to accomplish these said vows it was necessary they should endeavour to withstand the strongest temptations. Then she offered to lie down beside them, so anxious were she to see if she would be left unmolested, a thing which had never happened to her yet in the company of a man.

On the morrow, at breakfast, the servant had the ring on her finger, her mistress had the gold chain and the pearl earrings. The three pilgrims stayed in the town about a month, spending there all the money they had in their purses, and agreed that if they had spoken so severely of women it was because they had not known those of Milan.

On his return to Germany the Baron made this observation: that he was only guilty of one sin, that of being in his castle. The Citizen of Paris came back full of stories for his wife, and found her full of Hope. The Burgundian saw Madame de La Vaugrenand so troubled that he nearly died of the consolations he administered to her, in spite of his former opinions. This teaches us to hold our tongues in hostelries.

INNOCENCE

By the double crest of my fowl, and by the rose lining of my sweetheart’s slipper! By all the horns of well-beloved cuckolds, and by the virtue of their blessed wives! the finest work of man is neither poetry, nor painted pictures, nor music, nor castles, nor statues, be they carved never so well, nor rowing, nor sailing galleys, but children.

Understand me, children up to the age of ten years, for after that they become men or women, and cutting their wisdom teeth, are not worth what they cost; the worst are the best. Watch them playing, prettily and innocently, with slippers; above all, cancellated ones, with the household utensils, leaving that which displeases them, crying after that which pleases them, munching the sweets and confectionery in the house, nibbling at the stores, and always laughing as soon as their teeth are cut, and you will agree with me that they are in every way lovable; besides which they are flower and fruit—the fruit of love, the flower of life. Before their minds have been unsettled by the disturbances of life, there is nothing in this world more blessed or more pleasant than their sayings,

which are naive beyond description. This is as true as the double chewing machine of a cow. Do not expect a man to be innocent after the manner of children, because there is an, I know not what, ingredient of reason in the naivety of a man, while the naivety of children is candid, immaculate, and has all the finesse of the mother, which is plainly proved in this tale.

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Queen Catherine was at that time Dauphine, and to make herself welcome to the king, her father-in-law, who at that time was very ill indeed, presented him, from time to time, with Italian pictures, knowing that he liked them much, being a friend of the Sieur Raphael d'Urbin and of the Sieurs Primatice and Leonardo da Vinci, to whom he sent large sums of money. She obtained from her family—who had the pick of these works, because at that time the Duke of the Medicis governed Tuscany —a precious picture, painted by a Venetian named Titian (artist to the Emperor Charles, and in very high flavour), in which there were portraits of Adam and Eve at the moment when God left them to wander about the terrestrial Paradise, and were painted their full height, in the costume of the period, in which it is difficult to make a mistake, because they were attired in their ignorance, and caparisoned with the divine grace which enveloped them —a difficult thing to execute on account of the colour, but one in which the said Sieur Titian excelled. The picture was put into the room of the poor king, who was then ill with the disease of which he eventually died. It had a great success at the Court of France, where everyone wished to see it; but no one was able to until after the king's death, since at his desire it was allowed to remain in his room as long as he lived.

One day Madame Catherine took with her to the king's room her son Francis and little Margot, who began to talk at random, as children will. Now here, now there, these children had heard this picture of Adam and Eve spoken about, and had tormented their mother to take them there. Since the two little ones at times amused the old king, Madame the Dauphine consented to their request.

"You wished to see Adam and Eve, who were our first parents; there they are," said she.

Then she left them in great astonishment before Titian's picture, and seated herself by the bedside of the king, who delighted to watch the children.

"Which of the two is Adam?" said Francis, nudging his sister Margot's elbow.

"You silly!" replied she, "to know that, they would have to be dressed!"

This reply, which delighted the poor king and the mother, was mentioned in a letter written in Florence by Queen Catherine.

No writer having brought it to light, it will remain, like a sweet flower, in a corner of these Tales, although it is no way droll, and there is no other moral to be drawn from it except that to hear these pretty speeches of infancy one must beget the children.

THE FAIR IMPERIA MARRIED

I
HOW MADAME IMPERIA WAS CAUGHT BY THE VERY NET SHE WAS ACCUSTOMED TO SPREAD FOR HER LOVE-BIRDS

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The lovely lady Imperia, who gloriously opens these tales, because she was the glory of her time, was compelled to come into the town of Rome, after the holding of the council, for the cardinal of Ragusa loved her more than his cardinal's hat, and wished to have her near him. This rascal was so magnificent, that he presented her with the beautiful palace that he had in the Papal capital. About this time she had the misfortune to find herself in an interesting condition by this cardinal. As everyone knows, this pregnancy finished with a fine little daughter, concerning whom the Pope said jokingly that she should be named Theodora, as if to say The Gift Of God. The girl was thus named, and was exquisitely lovely. The cardinal left his inheritance to this Theodora, whom the fair Imperia established in her hotel, for she was flying from Rome as from a pernicious place, where children were begotten, and where she had nearly spoiled her beautiful figure, her celebrated perfections, lines of the body, curves of the back, delicious breasts, and Serpentine charms which placed her as much above the other women of Christendom as the Holy Father was above all other Christians. But all her lovers knew that with the assistance of eleven doctors of Padua, seven master surgeons of Pavia, and five surgeons come from all parts, who assisted at her confinement, she was preserved from all injury. Some go so far as to say that she gained therein superfineness and whiteness of skin. A famous man, of the school of Salerno, wrote a book on the subject, to show the value of a confinement for the freshness, health, preservation, and beauty of women. In this very learned book it was clearly proved to readers that that which was beautiful to see in Imperia, was that which it was permissible for lovers alone to behold; a rare case then, for she did not disarrange her attire for the petty German princes whom she called her margraves, burgraves, electors, and dukes, just as a captain ranks his soldiers.

Everyone knows that when she was eighteen years of age, the lovely Theodora, to atone for her mother's gay life, wished to retire into the bosom of the Church. With this idea she placed herself in the hands of a cardinal, in order that he might instruct her in the duties of the devout. This wicked shepherd found the lamb so magnificently beautiful that he attempted to debauch her. Theodora instantly stabbed herself with a stiletto, in order not to be contaminated by the evil-minded priest. This adventure, which was consigned to the history of the period, made a great commotion in Rome, and was deplored by everyone, so much was the daughter of Imperia beloved.

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Then this noble courtesan, much afflicted, returned to Rome, there to weep for her poor daughter. She set out in the thirty-ninth year of her age, which was, according to some authors, the summer of her magnificent beauty, because then she had obtained the acme of perfection, like ripe fruit. Sorrow made her haughty and hard with those who spoke to her of love, in order to dry her tears. The pope himself visited her in her palace, and gave her certain words of admonition. But she refused to be comforted, saying that she would henceforth devote herself to God, because she had never yet been satisfied by any man, although she had ardently desired it; and all of them, even a little priest, whom she had adored like a saint's shrine, had deceived her. God, she was sure, would not do so.

This resolution disconcerted many, for she was the joy of a vast number of lords. So that people ran about the streets of Rome crying out, "Where is Madame Imperia? Is she going to deprive the world of love?" Some of the ambassadors wrote to their masters on the subject. The Emperor of the Romans was much cut up about it, because he had loved her to distraction for eleven weeks; had left her only to go to the wars, and loved her still as much as his most precious member, which according to his own statement, was his eye, for that alone embraced the whole of his dear Imperia. In this extremity the Pope sent for a Spanish physician, and conducted him to the beautiful creature, to whom he proved, by various arguments, adorned with Latin and Greek quotations, that beauty is impaired by tears and tribulation, and that through sorrow's door wrinkles step in. This proposition, confirmed by the doctors of the Holy College in controversy, had the effect of opening the doors of the palace that same evening. The young cardinals, the foreign envoys, the wealthy inhabitants, and the principal men of the town of Rome came, crowded the rooms, and held a joyous festival; the common people made grand illuminations, and thus the whole population celebrated the return of the Queen of Pleasure to her occupation, for she was at that time the presiding deity of Love. The experts in all the arts loved her much, because she spent considerable sums of money improving the Church in Rome, which contained poor Theodora's tomb, which was destroyed during that pillage of Rome in which perished the traitorous constable of Bourbon, for this holy maiden was placed therein in a massive coffin of gold and silver, which the cursed soldiers were anxious to obtain. The basilic cost, it is said, more than the pyramid erected by the Lady Rhodepa, an Egyptian courtesan, eighteen hundred years before the coming of our divine Saviour, which proves the antiquity of this pleasant occupation, the extravagant prices which the wise Egyptians paid for their pleasures, and how things deteriorate, seeing that now for a trifle you can have a chemise full of female loveliness in the Rue du Petit-Heulen, at Paris. Is it not abomination?

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Never had Madame Imperia appeared so lovely as at this first gala after her mourning. All the princes, cardinals, and others declared that she was worthy the homage of the whole world, which was there represented by a noble from every known land, and thus was it amply demonstrated that beauty was in every place queen of everything.

The envoy of the King of France, who was a cadet of the house of l'Ile Adam, arrived late, although he had never yet seen Imperia, and was most anxious to do so. He was a handsome young knight, much in favour with his sovereign, in whose court he had a mistress, whom he loved with infinite tenderness, and who was the daughter of Monsieur de Montmorency, a lord whose domains bordered upon those of the house of l'Ile Adam. To this penniless cadet the king had given certain missions to the duchy of Milan, of which he had acquitted himself so well that he was sent to Rome to advance the negotiations concerning which historians have written so much in their books. Now if he had nothing of his own, poor little l'Ile Adam relied upon so good a beginning. He was slightly built, but upright as a column, dark, with black, glistening eyes; and a man not easily taken in; but concealing his finesse, he had the air of an innocent child, which made him gentle and amiable as a laughing maiden. Directly this gentleman joined her circle, and her eyes had rested upon him, Madame Imperia felt herself bitten by a strong desire, which stretched the harp strings of her nature, and produced therefrom a sound she had not heard for many a day. She was seized with such a vertigo of true love at the sight of this freshness of youth, that but for her imperial dignity she would have kissed the good cheeks which shone like little apples.

Now take note of this; that so called modest women, and ladies whose skirts bear their armorial bearings, are thoroughly ignorant of the nature of man, because they keep to one alone, like the Queen of France who believed all men had ulcers in the nose because the king had; but a great courtesan, like Madame Imperia, knew man to his core, because she had handled a great many. In her retreat, everyone came out in his true colours, and concealed nothing, thinking to himself that he would not be long with her. Having often deplored this subjection, sometimes she would remark that she suffered from pleasure more than she suffered from pain. There was the dark shadow of her life. You may be sure that a lover was often compelled to part with a nice little heap of crowns in order to pass the night with her, and was reduced to desperation by a refusal. Now for her it was a joyful thing to feel a youthful desire, like that she had for the little priest, whose story commences this collection; but because she was older than in those merry days, love was more fully established in her, and she soon perceived that it was of a fiery nature when it began to make itself felt; indeed, she suffered in her skin

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like a cat that is being scorched, and so much so that she had an intense longing to spring upon this gentleman, and bear him in triumph to her nest, as a kite does its prey, but with great difficulty she restrained herself. When he came and bowed to her, she threw back her head, and assumed a most dignified attitude, as do those who have a love infatuation in their hearts. The gravity of her demeanour to the young ambassador caused many to think that she had work in store for him; equivocating on the word, after the custom of the time.

L'Ile Adam, knowing himself to be dearly loved by his mistress, troubled himself but little about Madame Imperia, grave or gay, and frisked about like a goat let loose. The courtesan, terribly annoyed at this, changed her tone, from being sulky became gay and lively, came to him, softened her voice, sharpened her glance, gracefully inclined her head, rubbed against him with her sleeve, and called him Monsiegneur, embraced him with the loving words, trifled with his hand, and finished by smiling at him most affably. He, not imagining that so unprofitable a lover would suit her, for he was as poor as a church mouse, and did not know that his beauty was the equal in her eyes to all the treasures of the world, was not taken in her trap, but continued to ride the high horse with his hand on his hips. This disdain of her passion irritated Madame to the heart, which by this spark was set in flame. If you doubt this, it is because you know nothing of the profession of the Madame Imperia, who by reason of it might be compared to a chimney, in which a great number of fires have been lighted, which had filled it with soot; in this state a match was sufficient to burn everything there, where a hundred fagots has smoked comfortably. She burned within from top to toe in a horrible manner, and could not be extinguished save with the water of love. The cadet of l'Ile Adam left the room without noticing this ardour.

Madame, disconsolate at his departure, lost her senses from her head to her feet, and so thoroughly that she sent a messenger to him on the galleries, begging him to pass the night with her. On no other occasion of her life had she had this cowardice, either for king, pope, or emperor, since the high price of her favours came from the bondage in which she held her admirers, whom the more she humbled the more she raised herself. The disdainful hero of this history was informed by the head chamber-women, who was a clever jade, that in all probability a great treat awaited him, for most certainly Madame would regale him with her most delicate inventions of love. L'Ile Adam returned to the salons, delighted at this lucky chance. Directly the envoy of France reappeared, as everyone had seen Imperia turn pale at his departure, the general joy knew no bounds, because everyone was delighted to see her return to her old life of love. An English cardinal, who had drained more than one big-bellied flagon, and wished to taste Imperia, went to l'Ile Adam and whispered to him, "Hold her fast, so that she shall never again escape us."

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The story of this remark was told to the pope at his levee, and caused him to remark, *Laetamini, gentes, quoniam surrexit Dominus*. A quotation which the old cardinals abominated as a profanation of sacred texts. Seeing which, the pope reprimanded them severely, and took occasion to lecture them, telling them that if they were good Christians they were bad politicians. Indeed, he relied upon the fair Imperia to reclaim the emperor, and with this idea he syringed her well with flattery.

The lights of the palace being extinguished, the golden flagons on the floor, and the servants drunk and stretched about on the carpets, Madame entered her bedchamber, leading by the hand her dear lover-elect; and she was well pleased, and has since confessed that so strongly was she bitten with love, she could hardly restrain herself from rolling at his feet like a beast of the field, begging him to crush her beneath him if he could. L'Ile Adam slipped off his garments, and tumbled into bed as if he were in his own house. Seeing which, Madame hastened her preparations, and sprang into her lover's arms with a frenzy that astonished her women, who knew her to be ordinarily one of the most modest of women on these occasions. The astonishment became general throughout the country, for the pair remained in bed for nine days, eating, drinking, and embracing in a marvellous and most masterly manner. Madame told her women that at last she had placed her hand on a phoenix of love, since he revived from every attack. Nothing was talked of in Rome and Italy but the victory that had been gained over Imperia, who had boasted that she would yield to no man, and spat upon all of them, even the dukes. As to the aforesaid margraves and burgraves, she gave them the tail of her dress to hold, and said that if she did not tread them under foot, they would trample upon her. Madame confessed to her servants that, differently to all other men she had had to put up with, the more she fondled this child of love, the more she desired to do so, and that she would never be able to part with him; nor his splendid eyes, which blinded her; nor his branch of coral, that she always hungered after. She further declared that if such were his desire, she would let him suck her blood, eat her breasts—which were the most lovely in the world—and cut her tresses, of which she had only given a single one to the Emperor of the Romans, who kept it in his breast, like a precious relic; finally, she confessed that on that night only had life begun for her, because the embrace of Villiers de l'Ile Adam sent the blood to her in three bounds and in a brace of shakes.

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These expressions becoming known, made everyone very miserable. Directly she went out, Imperia told the ladies of Rome that she should die it if she were deserted by this gentleman, and would cause herself, like Queen Cleopatra, to be bitten by an asp. She declared openly that she had bidden an eternal adieu her to her former gay life, and would show the whole world what virtue was by abandoning her empire for this Villiers de l'Ile Adam, whose servant she would rather be than reign of Christendom. The English cardinal remonstrated with the pope that this love for one, in the heart of a woman who was the joy of all, was an infamous depravity, and that he ought with a brief *in partibus*, to annul this marriage, which robbed the fashionable world of its principal attraction. But the love of this poor woman, who had confessed the miseries of her life, was so sweet a thing, and so moved the most dissipated heart, that she silenced all clamour, and everyone forgave her her happiness. One day, during Lent, Imperia made her people fast, and ordered them to go and confess, and return to God. She herself went and fell at the pope's feet, and there showed such penitence, that she obtained from him remission of all her sins, believing that the absolution of the pope would communicate to her soul that virginity which she was grieved at being unable to offer her lover. It is impossible to help thinking that there was some virtue in the ecclesiastical piscina, for the poor cadet was so smothered with love that he fancied himself in Paradise, and left the negotiations of the King of France, left his love for Mademoiselle de Montmorency—in fact, left everything to marry Madame Imperia, in order that he might live and die with her. Such was the effect of the learned ways of this great lady of pleasure directly she turned her science to the root of a virtuous love. Imperia bade adieu to her admirers at a royal feast, given in honour of her wedding, which was a wonderful ceremony, at which all the Italian princes were present. She had, it is said, a million gold crowns; in spite of the vastness of this sum, every one far from blaming L'Ile Adam, paid him many compliments, because it was evident that neither Madame Imperia nor her young husband thought of anything but one. The pope blessed their marriage, and said that it was a fine thing to see the foolish virgin returning to God by the road of marriage.

But during that last night in which it would be permissible for all to behold the Queen of Beauty, who was about to become a simple chatelaine of the kingdom of France, there were a great number of men who mourned for the merry nights, the suppers, the masked balls, the joyous games, and the melting hours, when each one emptied his heart to her. Everyone regretted the ease and freedom which had always been found in the residence of this lovely creature, who now appeared more tempting than she had ever done in her life, for the fervid

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heat of her great love made her glisten like a summer sun. Much did they lament the fact that she had had the sad fantasy to become a respectable woman. To these Madame de l'Ile Adam answered jestingly, that after twenty-four years passed in the service of the public, she had a right to retire. Others said to her, that however distant the sun was, people could warm themselves in it, while she would show herself no more. To these she replied that she would still have smiles to bestow upon those lords who would come and see how she played the role of a virtuous woman. To this the English envoy answered, he believed her capable of pushing virtue to its extreme point. She gave a present to each of her friends, and large sums to the poor and suffering of Rome; besides this, she left to the convent where her daughter was to have been, and to the church she had built, the wealth she had inherited from Theodora, which came from the cardinal of Ragusa.

When the two spouses set out they were accompanied a long way by knights in mourning, and even by the common people, who wished them every happiness, because Madame Imperia had been hard on the rich only, and had always been kind and gentle with the poor. This lovely queen of love was hailed with acclamations throughout the journey in all the towns of Italy where the report of her conversion had spread, and where everyone was curious to see pass, a case so rare as two such spouses. Several princes received this handsome couple at their courts, saying it was but right to show honour to this woman who had the courage to renounce her empire over the world of fashion, to become a virtuous woman. But there was an evil-minded fellow, one my lord Duke of Ferrara, who said to l'Ile Adam that his great fortune had not cost him much. At this first offence Madame Imperia showed what a good heart she had, for she gave up all the money she had received from her lovers, to ornament the dome of St. Maria del Fiore, in the town of Florence, which turned the laugh against the Sire d'Este, who boasted that he had built a church in spite of the empty condition of his purse. You may be sure he was reprimanded for this joke by his brother the cardinal.

The fair Imperia only kept her own wealth and that which the Emperor had bestowed upon her out of pure friendship since his departure, the amount of which was however, considerable. The cadet of l'Ile Adam had a duel with the duke, in which he wounded him. Thus neither Madame de l'Ile Adam, nor her husband could be in any way reproached. This piece of chivalry caused her to be gloriously received in all places she passed through, especially in Piedmont, where the fetes were splendid. Verses which the poet then composed, such as sonnets, epithalamias, and odes, have been given in certain collections; but all poetry was weak in comparison with her, who was, according to an expression of Monsieur Boccaccio, poetry herself.

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The prize in this tourney of fetes and gallantry must be awarded to the good Emperor of the Romans, who, knowing of the misbehaviour of the Duke of Ferrara, dispatched an envoy to his old flame, charged with Latin manuscripts, in which he told her that he loved her so much for herself, that he was delighted to know that she was happy, but grieved to know that all her happiness was not derived from him; that he had lost his right to make her presents, but that, if the king of France received her coldly, he would think it an honour to acquire a Villiers to the holy empire, and would give him such principalities as he might choose from his domains. The fair Imperia replied that she was extremely obliged to the Emperor, but that had she to suffer contumely upon contumely in France, she still intended there to finish her days.

II HOW THIS MARRIAGE ENDED

Not knowing if it she would be received or not, the lady of l'Ile Adam would not go to court, but lived in the country, where her husband made a fine establishment, purchasing the manor of Beaumont-le-Vicomte, which gave rise to the equivoque upon his name, made by our well-beloved Rabelais, in his most magnificent book. He acquired also the domain of Nointel, the forest of Carenelle, St. Martin, and other places in the neighbourhood of the l'Ile Adam, where his brother Villiers resided. These said acquisitions made him the most powerful lord in the l'Ile de France and county of Paris. He built a wonderful castle near Beaumont, which was afterwards ruined by the English, and adorned it with the furniture, foreign tapestries, chests, pictures, statues, and curiosities, of his wife, who was a great connoisseur, which made this place equal to the most magnificent castles known.

The happy pair led a life so envied by all, that nothing was talked about in Paris and at Court but this marriage, the good fortune of the Sire de Beaumont, and, above all, of the perfect, loyal, gracious, and religious life of his wife, who from habit many still called Madame Imperia; who was no longer proud and sharp as steel, but had the virtues and qualities of a respectable woman, and was an example in many things to a queen. She was much beloved by the Church on account of her great religion, for she had never once forgotten God, having, as she once said, spent much of her time with churchmen, abbots, bishops, and cardinals, who had sprinkled her well with holy water, and under the curtains worked her eternal salvation.

The praises sung in honour of this lady had such an effect, that the king came to Beauvoisis to gaze upon this wonder, and did the sire the honour to sleep at Beaumont, remained there three days, and had a royal hunt there with the queen and the whole Court. You may be sure that he was surprised, as were also the queen, the ladies, and the Court, at the manners of this superb creature, who was proclaimed a lady

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of courtesy and beauty. The king first, then the queen, and afterwards every individual member of the company, complemented l'Ile Adam on having chosen such a wife. The modesty of the chatelaine did more than pride would have accomplished; for she was invited to court, and everywhere, so imperious was her great heart, so tyrannic her violent love for her husband. You may be sure that her charms, hidden under the garments of virtue, were none the less exquisite. The king gave the vacant post of lieutenant of the Ile de France and provost of Paris to his ancient ambassador, giving him the title of Viscount of Beaumont, which established him as governor of the whole province, and put him on an excellent footing at court. But this was the cause of a great wound in Madame's heart, because a wretch, jealous of this unclouded happiness, asked her, playfully, if Beaumont had ever spoken to her of his first love, Mademoiselle de Montmorency, who at that time was twenty-two years of age, as she was sixteen at the time the marriage took place in Rome—the which young lady loved l'Ile Adam so much that she remained a maiden, would listen to no proposals of marriage, and was dying of a broken heart, unable to banish her perfidious lover from her remembrance and was desirous of entering the convent of Chelles. Madame Imperia, during the six years of her marriage, had never heard this name, and was sure from this fact that she was indeed beloved. You can imagine that this time had been passed as a single day, that both believed that they had only been married the evening before, and that each night was as a wedding night, and that if business took the knight out of doors, he was quite melancholy, being unwilling ever to have her out of his sight, and she was the same with him.

The king, who was very partial to the viscount, also made a remark to him which stung him to the quick, when he said, "You have no children?"

To which Beaumont replied, with the face of a man whose raw place you have touched with your finger, "Monsiegneur, my brother has; thus our line is safe."

Now it happened that his brother's two children died suddenly—one from a fall from his horse at a tournament and the other from illness. Monsieur l'Ile Adam the elder was so stricken with grief at these two deaths that he expired soon after, so much did he love his two sons. By this means the manor of Beaumont, the property at Carenelle, St. Martin, Nointel, and the surrounding domains, were reunited to the manor of l'Ile Adam, and the neighbouring forests, and the cadet became the head of the house. At this time Madame was forty-five, and was still fit to bear children; but alas! she conceived not. As soon as she saw the lineage of l'Ile Adam destroyed, she was anxious to obtain offspring.

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Now, as during the seven years which had elapsed she had never once had the slightest hint of pregnancy, she believed, according to the statement of a clever physician whom she sent for from Paris, that this barrenness proceeded from the fact, that both she and her husband, always more lovers than spouses, allowed pleasure to interfere with business, and by this means engendering was prevented. Then she endeavoured to restrain her impetuosity, and to take things coolly, because the physician had explained to her that in a state of nature animals never failed to breed, because the females employed none of those artifices, tricks, and hanky-pankies with which women accommodate the olives of Poissy, and for this reason they thoroughly deserved the title of beasts. She promised him no longer to play with such a serious affair, and to forget all the ingenious devices in which she had been so fertile. But, alas! although she kept as quiet as that German woman who lay so still that her husband embraced her to death, and then went, poor baron, to obtain absolution from the pope, who delivered his celebrated brief, in which he requested the ladies of Franconia to be a little more lively, and prevent a repetition of such a crime. Madame de l'Ile Adam did not conceive, and fell into a state of great melancholy.

Then she began to notice how thoughtful had become her husband, l'Ile Adam, whom she watched when he thought she was not looking, and who wept that he had no fruit of his great love. Soon this pair mingled their tears, for everything was common to the two in this fine household, and as they never left the other, the thought of the one was necessarily the thought of the other. When Madame beheld a poor person's child she nearly died of grief, and it took her a whole day to recover. Seeing this great sorrow, l'Ile Adam ordered all children to be kept out of his wife's sight, and said soothing things to her, such as that children often turned out badly; to which she replied, that a child made by those who loved so passionately would be the finest child in the world. He told her that her sons might perish, like those of his poor brother; to which she replied, that she would not let them stir further from her petticoats than a hen allows her chickens. In fact, she had an answer for everything.

Madame caused a woman to be sent for who dealt in magic, and who was supposed to be learned in these mysteries, who told her that she had often seen women unable to conceive in spite of every effort, but yet they had succeeded by studying the manners and customs of animals. Madame took the beasts of the fields for her preceptors, but she did not increase in size; her flesh still remained firm and white as marble. She returned to the physical science of the master doctors of Paris, and sent for a celebrated Arabian physician, who had just arrived in France with a new science. Then this savant, brought up in the school of one Sieur Averroes, entered into certain

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medical details, and declared that the loose life she had formerly led had for ever ruined her chance of obtaining offspring. The physical reasons which he assigned were so contrary to the teaching of the holy books which establish the majesty of man, made in the image of his creator, and so contrary to the system upheld by sound sense and good doctrine, that the doctors of Paris laughed them to scorn. The Arabian physician left the school where his master, the Sieur Averroes, was unknown.

The doctors told Madame, who had come to Paris, that she was to keep on as usual, since she had had during her gay life the lovely Theodora, by the cardinal of Ragusa, and that the right of having children remained with women as long as their blood circulated, and all that she had to do was to multiply the chances of conception. This advice appeared to her so good that she multiplied her victories, but it was only multiplying her defeats, since she obtained the flowers of love without its fruits.

The poor afflicted woman wrote then to the pope, who loved her much, and told him of her sorrows. The good pope replied to her with a gracious homily, written with his own hand, in which he told her that when human science and things terrestrial had failed, we should turn to Heaven and implore the grace of God. Then she determined to go with naked feet, accompanied by her husband, to Notre Dame de Liesse, celebrated for her intervention in similar cases, and made a vow to build a magnificent cathedral in gratitude for the child. But she bruised and injured her pretty feet, and conceived nothing but a violent grief, which was so great that some of her lovely tresses fell off and some turned white.

At last the faculty of making children was taken from her, which brought on the vapours consequent upon hypochondria, and caused her skin to turn yellow. She was then forty-nine years of age, and lived in her castle of l'Ile Adam, where she grew as thin as a leper in a lazar-house. The poor creature was all the more wretched because l'Ile Adam was still amorous, and as good as gold to her, who failed in her duty, because she had formerly been too free with the men, and was now, according to her own disdainful remark, only a cauldron to cook chitterlings.

"Ha!" said she, one evening when these thoughts were tormenting her. "In spite of the Church, in spite of the king, in spite of everything, Madame de l'Ile Adam is still the wicked Imperia!"

She fell into a violent passion when she saw this handsome gentleman have everything a man can desire, great wealth, royal favour, unequalled love, matchless wife, pleasure such as none other could produce, and yet fail in that which is dearest to the head of the house—namely, lineage. With this idea in her head, she wished to die, thinking how good and noble he had been to her, and how much she failed in her duty in not giving him children, and in being henceforward unable to do so. She hid her sorrow in the

secret recesses of her heart, and conceived a devotion worthy her great love. To put into practice this heroic design she became still more amorous, took extreme care of her charms, and made use of learned precepts to maintain her bodily perfection, which threw out an incredible lustre.

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About this time the Sieur de Montmorency conquered the repulsion his daughter entertained for marriage, and her alliance with one Sieur de Chatillon was much talked about. Madame Imperia, who lived only three leagues distant from Montmorency, one day sent her husband out hunting in the forests, and set out towards the castle where the young lady lived. Arrived in the grounds she walked about there, telling a servant to inform her mistress that a lady had a most important communication to make to her, and that she had come to request an audience. Much interested by the account which she received by the beauty, courtesy, and manners of the unknown lady, Mademoiselle de Montmorency went in great haste into the gardens, and there met her rival, whom she did not know.

“My dear,” said the poor woman, weeping to find the young maiden as beautiful as herself, “I know that they are trying to force you into a marriage with Monsieur de Chatillon, although you still love Monsieur de l’Ile Adam. Have confidence in the prophecy that I here make you, that he whom you have loved, and who only was false to you through a snare into which an angel might have fallen, will be free from the burden of his old wife before the leaves fall. Thus the constancy of your love will have its crown of flowers. Now have the courage to refuse this marriage they are arranging for you, and you may yet clasp your first and only love. Pledge me your word to love and cherish l’Ile Adam, who is the kindest of men; never to cause him a moment’s anguish, and tell him to reveal to you all the secrets of love invented by Madame Imperia, because, in practicing them, being young, you will be easily able to obliterate the remembrance of her from his mind.”

Mademoiselle de Montmorency was so astonished that she could make no answer, and let this queen of beauty depart, and believed her to be a fairy, until a workman told her that the fairy was Madame de l’Ile Adam. Although the adventure was inexplicable, she told her father that she would not give her consent to the proposed marriage until after the autumn, so much is it in the nature of Love to ally itself with Hope, in spite of the bitter pills which this deceitful and gracious, companion gives her to swallow like bull’s eyes. During the months when the grapes are gathered, Imperia would not let l’Ile Adam leave her, and was so amorous that one would have imagined she wished to kill him, since l’Ile Adam felt as though he had a fresh bride in his arms every night. The next morning the good woman requested him to keep the remembrance of these joys in his heart.

Then, to know what her lover’s real thoughts on the subject were she said to him, “Poor l’Ile Adam, we were very silly to marry—a lad like you, with your twenty-three years, and an old woman close to 40.”

He answered her, that his happiness was such that he was the envy of every one, that at her age her equal did not exist among the younger women, and that if ever she grew old he would love her wrinkles, believing that even in the tomb she would be lovely, and her skeleton lovable.

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To these answers, which brought the tears into her eyes, she one morning answered maliciously, that Mademoiselle de Montmorency was very lovely and very faithful. This speech forced l'Ile Adam to tell her that she pained him by telling him of the only wrong he had ever committed in his life—the breaking of the troth pledged to his first sweetheart, all love for whom he had since effaced from his heart. This candid speech made her seize him and clasp him to her heart, affected at the loyalty of his discourse on a subject from which many would have shrunk.

"My dear love," said she, "for a long time past I have been suffering from a retraction of the heart, which has always since my youth been dangerous to my life, and in this opinion the Arabian physician coincides. If I die, I wish you to make the most binding oath a knight can make, to wed Mademoiselle Montmorency. I am so certain of dying, that I leave my property to you only on condition that this marriage takes place."

Hearing this, l'Ile Adam turned pale, and felt faint at the mere thought of an eternal separation from his good wife.

"Yes, dear treasure of love," continued she. "I am punished by God there where my sins were committed, for the great joys that I feel dilate my heart, and have, according to the Arabian doctor, weakened the vessels which in a moment of excitement will burst; but I have always implored God to take my life at the age in which I now am, because I would not see my charms marred by the ravages of time."

This great and noble woman saw then how well she was beloved. This is how she obtained the greatest sacrifice of love that ever was made upon this earth. She alone knew what a charm existed in the embraces, fondlings, and raptures of the conjugal bed, which were such that poor l'Ile Adam would rather have died than allow himself to be deprived of the amorous delicacies she knew so well how to prepare. At this confession made by her that, in the excitement of love her heart would burst, the chevalier cast himself at her knees, and declared that to preserve her life he would never ask her for love, but would live contented to see her only at his side, happy at being able to touch but the hem of her garment.

She replied, bursting into tears, "that she would rather die than lose one iota of his love; that she would die as she had lived, since luckily she could make a man embrace her when such was her desire without having to put her request into words."

Here it must be stated that the cardinal of Ragusa had given her as a present an article, which this holy joker called *in articulo mortis*. It was a tiny glass bottle, no bigger than a bean, made at Venice, and containing a poison so subtle that by breaking it between the teeth death came instantly and painlessly. He had received it from Signora Tophana, the celebrated maker of poisons of the town of Rome.

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Now this tiny bottle was under the bezel of a ring, preserved from all objects that could break it by certain plates of gold. Poor Imperia put it into her mouth several times without being able to make up her mind to bite it, so much pleasure did she take in the moment that she believed to be her last. Then she would pass before her in mental review all her methods of enjoyment before breaking the glass, and determined that when she felt the most perfect of all joys she would bite the bottle.

The poor creature departed this life on the night on the first day of October. Then was there heard a great clamour in the forests and in the clouds, as if the loves had cried aloud, “The great Noc is dead!” in imitation of the pagan gods who, at the coming of the Saviour of men, fled into the skies, saying, “the great Pan is slain!” A cry which was heard by some persons navigating the Eubean Sea, and preserved by a Father of the Church.

Madame Imperia died without being spoiled in shape, so much had God made her the irreproachable model of a woman. She had, it was said, a magnificent tint upon her flesh, caused by the proximity of the flaming wings of Pleasure, who cried and groaned over her corpse. Her husband mourned for her most bitterly, never suspecting that she had died to deliver him from a childless wife, for the doctor who embalmed her said not a word concerning the cause of her death. This great sacrifice was discovered six years after marriage of l’Ile Adam with Mademoiselle de Montmorency, because she told him all about the visit of Madame Imperia. The poor gentleman immediately fell into a state of great melancholy and finished by dying, being unable to banish the remembrance of those joys of love which it was beyond the power of a novice to restore to him; thereby did he prove the truth of that which was said at that time, that this woman would never die in a heart where she had once reigned.

This teaches us that virtue is well understood by those who have practised vice; for among the most modest women few would thus have sacrificed life, in whatever high state of religion you look for them.

EPILOGUE

Oh! mad little one, thou whose business it is to make the house merry, again hast thou been wallowing, in spite of a thousand prohibitions, in that slough of melancholy, whence thou hast already fished out Bertha, and come back with thy tresses dishevelled, like a girl who has been ill-treated by a regiment of soldiers! Where are thy golden aiglets and bells, thy filigree flowers of fantastic design? Where hast thou left thy crimson head-dress, ornamented with precious gewgaws that cost a minot of pearls?

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Why spoil with pernicious tears thy black eyes, so pleasant when therein sparkles the wit of a tale, that popes pardon thee thy sayings for the sake of thy merry laughter, feel their souls caught between the ivory of thy teeth, have their hearts drawn by the rose point of thy sweet tongue, and would barter the holy slipper for a hundred of the smiles that hover round thy vermillion lips? Laughing lassie, if thou wouldst remain always fresh and young, weep no more; think of riding the brideless fleas, of bridling with the golden clouds thy chameleon chimeras, of metamorphosing the realities of life into figures clothed with the rainbow, caparisoned with roseate dreams, and mantled with wings blue as the eyes of the partridge. By the Body and the Blood, by the Censer and the Seal, by the Book and the Sword, by the Rag and the Gold, by the Sound and the Colour, if thou does but return once into that hovel of elegies where eunuchs find ugly women for imbecile sultans, I'll curse thee; I'll rave at thee; I'll make thee fast from roguery and love; I'll—

Phist! Here she is astride a sunbeam with a volume that is ready to burst with merry meteors! She plays in their prisms, tearing about so madly, so wildly, so boldly, so contrary to good sense, so contrary to good manners, so contrary to everything, that one has to touch her with long feathers, to follow her siren's tail in the golden facets which trifle among the artifices of these new pearls of laughter. Ye gods! but she is sporting herself in them like a hundred schoolboys in a hedge full of blackberries, after vespers. To the devil with the magister! The volume is finished! Out upon work! What ho! my jovial friends; this way!