

ЭЖЕН СЮ

THE IRON PINNACLES; OR,
MYLIO AND KARVEL: A
TALE OF THE
ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADES

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Eugène Sue

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INTRODUCTION

I, Mylio the Trouvere¹— the great-great-grandson of Colombaik, whose father, Fergan the Quarryman, was killed on the ramparts of Laon in the defense of the franchise of the commune — have written this "play," or narrative in dialogue, as is the vogue in these days.² The events herein narrated transpired in the course of the year 1208, at the period when the war of King Philip Augustus against King John of England and against Germany raged at its worst. The description of the "Court of Love," however much I may tone it down, reflects truthfully the unbridled license of the morals that are prevalent in these times, and the description of the persecutions of the Albigensian heretics, however much I may tone down that, truthfully reflects the ferocity of the religious bigotry of this self-same epoch. On the one subject and on the other the facts are revolting. Nevertheless, I am of the opinion that the morals and principles of the noble dames, the seigneurs and the clergy should not be concealed from you, children of Joel. Your knowledge of the facts will strengthen your aversion for these elements of our oppression.

¹ Trouvere was the name given to certain "improvisers," or poets, of northern France. In the south of France the counterpart of the Trouvere was called "troubadour."

² This form of writing was used by the trouveres of the XIII century, and were called "Jeux," that is, plays, as *The Play of the Shepherd and the Shepherdess*, by Adam le Hale (Ancient Fables, vol. II, p. 193, Le Grand d'Aussy). In these "plays," which were dialogues, like the modern drama, and which were recited by the strolling trouvere, the dialogue was made to supply the place of descriptions of scenes, etc.

PART I THE COURT OF LOVE

CHAPTER I THE ORCHARD OF MARPHISE

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

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

Certain of being alone among themselves, and sheltered from indiscreet looks or inquisitive ears, the merry gossips observe neither in their words nor in their demeanor the reserve that, perhaps, they might observe elsewhere. Some, stretched at full length on the sward, turn the limpid water of the basin into a mirror, contemplate themselves, and make all manner of winsome grimaces at their own reflections in the water; others, perched upon a ladder, amuse themselves plucking the ruddy apples or mellow pears from the trees, and, as the petticoats of the noble ladies serve for aprons in which to gather their harvest, the color of their garters is often exposed – a circumstance that in no wise disturbs our climbers, knowing as they do, that their limbs are well shaped; others, again, hold themselves by the hands in a circle, and amidst peals of laughter indulge in a giddy whirl; while still others, being of a more indolent bent, repose upon the bench of verdure and lazily enjoy the balmy air of the delightful evening.

These indolent ones should be named. They are: Marphise, the Lady of Ariol; Eglantine, Viscountess of Seligny; and Deliane, Canoness of the sacred Chapter of Nivelles. Marphise, tall, dark, with eyebrows boldly arched and of no less deep a hue than her raven-black hair and large black eyes, would have resembled the antique Minerva if, like the goddess, Marphise had worn a brass casque on her head, and if her chest, massive and white as alabaster, were imprisoned in a cuirass, in short, if her physiognomy had recalled the austere dignity of the goddess of wisdom. Fortunately, there is no trace of all that, thanks both to the playful brilliancy of Marphise's eyes and to her laughing, sensual and ruddy lips. Her coif of orange color, with its flaps gently turned above her ears, exposes the strands of her black hair, which are braided with a thread of pearls. Her elegant figure stands outlined under her robe of white silk, a rich Lombard fabric relieved with orange-colored designs. Her sleeves, open and flowing, her upturned collar, her sloping corsage, leave her beautiful arms bare, and expose her under-waistcoat of snow-white linen, fluted, and bordered with gold thread over her bosom. In order

to cool her burning cheek, Marphise flutters an ivory-handled fan of peacock feathers. Indolently stretched upon the bench of verdure, the nonchalant woman does not notice that a raised fold of her skirt exposes one of her limbs which tightly fits a stocking of pale green silk with silver ribs, together with her dainty slipper of Lyons manufacture, with a red buckle ornamented with rubies.

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

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

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

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

The Canoness – "That simpleton of a husband bringing in a light, and finding – what? Why his wife holding a calf by the tail!"

Eglantine – "And did the monk escape in the darkness?"

Marphise – "Oh! These tonsured friends are cunning lovers!"

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

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

Marphise – "But the knights are also quite expensive luxuries! If the clerk loves to strut under silks at the altar, the knight loves to shine at the tourney, and often have we to pay for his swagger, from his spurs to his casque, from the bridle of his horse to the horse itself, besides garnishing his purse with round pieces of silver and gold!"

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

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

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

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

The three women laugh aloud at Marphise's joke.

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

Marphise – "I believe Deliane is mistaken."

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

Marphise (laughing) – "Where they expiate their own sins – and ours."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Canoness – "An excellent idea! What say you, Marphise? I give it my full support."

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

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

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

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

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

Eglantine – "Lady Confessor, I may boldly name him. His name is Mylio the Trouvere."

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

Eglantine (with downcast eyes) – "Yes, Lady Confessor. That is his name."

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

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

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

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

Marphise – "And the name of that phoenix?"

The Canoness (languorously) – "Mylio the Trouvere. That is my friend's name."

Marphise (nettled and even angered) – "He again?"

The Canoness – "Do you, perhaps, know my lover?"

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

The Canoness (with fire) – "Oh! I love him with all the power of my soul."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Eglantine – "What do you mean?"

The Canoness – "You must now make the announcement, Marphise. How many of us have a clerk for their lover?"

Marphise – "Not one, dear languorous girl!"

Eglantine – "And how many are there of us with a knight for lover?"

Marphise – "Not one! (The eleven women look at one another in silent surprise.) Oh, dear friends! We have been shamefully played with. All of us have the identical lover! Yes, the villain Mylio the Trouvere has deceived all the twelve of us!"

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

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

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

Several Voices – "Ursine is right! Let us pass judgment ourselves! The felon should be punished by those whom he sinned against."

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER II

GOOSE-SKIN THE JUGGLER

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

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

Mylio is twenty-five years of age. Why speak of his face? His picture, whether faithfully drawn or not, has been described by Marphise and her companions. The trouvere's stature is robust and tall. On his black and wavy hair he carries, half-drawn to one side, a scarlet camail, the tippet of which falls upon and covers his wide shoulders. His white tunic of fine woven Frisian cloth, held closed over his chest by a row of gold buttons, is embroidered at the collar and sleeves with scarlet silk. Of his double sleeves, the outer ones, slashed and floating, are open almost up to the shoulders, while the inner ones fit tightly over his arms and are held at the wrists with gold buttons. From his embroidered belt hangs, on one side, a short sword, from the other an almoner. Mylio has recently been on horseback. We notice that, instead of the shoes with long points tipped upwards in the shape of ram's horns, as is the fashion of the time, he wears over his hose large boots of yellow leather embroidered in red and reaching up to his thighs. While Goose-Skin continues soundly asleep and snoring sonorously, Mylio stops a few steps away from the old juggler and remarks to himself with an air of no little concern:

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

Mylio remains pensive for a moment and proceeds:

"Better than any other, Karvel deserves the name of 'Perfect,' the designation or title given to their pastors by the Albigensian heretics, as the Christian priests call this sect. It was no vain pride that led my brother to accept the title of Perfect. He was led thereto by the solemn determination to justify it by his life; and that life, lived so admirably by him, has been seconded by an incomparable wife, the good and gentle Morise. Never did virtue appear in more enchanting features. Yes, Morise is perfect as my brother is a Perfect. (Smiling.) And yet Karvel and myself are of one blood! Well, can I not, after all, say with the modesty so peculiar to the trouvere, that I am perfect after my own fashion? Have I not, although desperately in love with Florette, respected the girl? (A long interval of silence.) Oh! when I compare her candid love with the brazen love intrigues that have turned modern Gaul into a lupanar – when I compare with the stoic life of my brother the life of adventure into which the ardor of youth and the irresistible taste for enjoyment have cast me for the last five years,

when I do that, then I am almost minded to follow the good inspiration that my love for Florette has started in my heart. (He reflects.) Certes, in these days of unbridled corruption, if he only has acquired some little renown, is gifted with as much audacity as recklessness in morals, and is a little better shaped than my friend Goose-Skin, who lies there snoring like a canon at matins, the *trouvere* who makes the rounds of the monasteries of nuns or of the castles, whose seigneurs are away on the Crusade, has but to take his pick. Adventures cluster thick around him. Fondled, caressed, generously paid for his songs in gold and silver coin, besides the fervid kiss of the ladies of the manors or the abbesses, a *trouvere* has nothing for which to envy either the clergymen or the knights. He can have a dozen mistresses at one time, and feast upon the most piquant infidelities. Like a merry bird of passage, soon as his gay song has been heard, he can escape with one flap of his wings from the white hand that seeks to retain him, and fly elsewhere to sing, without ever concerning himself about the future, and without regrets on the past. He has rendered kiss for kiss, he has charmed the ears with his roundelays and the eyes with his plumage. What more can be wanted from him? Aye, to-day so runs love in Gaul! Its emblem is no longer the dove of Cyprus but the lascivious sparrow of Lesbia or the satyr of the ancient priestess of Bacchus! It is the triumph of the god Cupid and his dame Venus!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Goose-Skin – "Miscreant! You snatched from my mouth dishes that cost me nothing, because, if Shrove-Tide was toothsome armed, Shrove-Tuesday was no less so. His casque consisted of a veal patty with a roasted peacock for its top. Shrove-Tuesday, all cased in in hams, was astride of a roe whose many-branched antlers were loaded with partridges. For lance he had a long spit, run through a number of roast capons. (Addressing the *trouvere* with a redoubled affectation of grotesque anger) Vagabond! Man without faith or law! You woke me up at the very moment when, Shrove-Tide

succumbing to the blows of Shrove-Tuesday, I was on the point of eating both the vanquished and the vanquisher! Arms and armor! Everything! I was on the point of eating everything including the mounts of the combatants! Oh, in all my life I shall not pardon you for your villainy."

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

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

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

Goose-Skin (gravely) – "You shut my mouth with the promise to fill it with good wine and plenty!"

Mylio – "Will you render me a service?"

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

Mylio – "Are we not fellows in the gay science? Is not your merry hurdy-gurdy, which rejoices the poor and causes them to forget for a moment the misery of their lives, worth as much as my harp, which entertains the lustful or cloyed idleness of the noble dames? Mention not the services that I have rendered to you, my old friend."

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

Mylio – "Very well! But now listen to me – "

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

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

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

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

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

Mylio (impatiently) – "Are you really done?"

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

Mylio (walking away) – "The devil take the babbler!"

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

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

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

Mylio – "You know Chaillot, the miller of the Abbey of Citeaux?"

Goose-Skin nods affirmatively with his head.

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

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

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

Goose-skin (with a tone of sorrow) – "And the little girl drops into the water? Poor little one!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Goose-Skin – "Will she consent to follow you?"

Mylio – "I am certain."

Goose-Skin – "Then, what need you of me?"

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

Goose-Skin – "That would be uncomfortable, for time presses. Meseems I hear the scamp of an abbot moving after his fritter – "

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

Goose-Skin (scratching his ears) – "Are you quite sure that the said Chaillot will not get up?"

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

Goose-Skin – "You see, the thing is this: These millers have the habit of being always accompanied by some big dog – "

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

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

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

Goose-Skin – "Give – give – dear and kind friend. I shall sing your praises for your liberality."

Mylio (putting the money in his hand) – "Here are the ten silver deniers."

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

"Robin loves me, Robin has me!
Robin wants me, he shall have me!
Robin bought me a dainty hood.
It is scarlet, jaunty and good.
Robin loves me, Robin has me!"

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

CHAPTER III

FLORETTE

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

"You weep, dear beautiful child?"

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

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

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

Mylio – "Why should these means of beautifying yourself cause your tears to flow?"

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

Mylio – "The infamous Chaillotte!"

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

Mylio – "And what did you answer?"

Florette – "That I would obey the holy abbot."

Mylio – "Would you, indeed!"

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

Mylio – "But to-morrow, when the abbot will come would you consent – "

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

Mylio – "Do you contemplate dying?"

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

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

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

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

Florette (takes and kisses the trouvee's hands, and murmurs amid tears) – "Oh, Mylio! I shall die happy!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Hooded Man – "I die – under – this mountain of flesh! Help! Help! – I die – Help!"

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

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

The Hooded Man – "Help! Murder! This beggar is breaking my ribs – Help!"

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

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

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

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

Abbot Reynier – "Oh, you brace of vile jugglers! You will pay dearly for this outrage!"

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

Goose-skin – "You fat monastic debauchee, trust to me for adding all the needed zest to the music!"

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

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

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

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

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

Abbot Reynier (in a fainting voice) – "The vagabond – is – flattening out my intestines – he is pressing the life out of – me – "

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

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

CHAPTER IV THE GARDEN OF EGLANTINE

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

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

Hugues, Seigneur of Lascy, who is the Seneschal of Sweet-Marjoram, and, as such, the one upon whom the duty devolves of introducing the fair pleaders, from whom he also has the right to exact the fee of a kiss; moreover it is his duty to assist the Bailiff of the Joy of Joys in chaining with streamers of ribbons and flowers those upon whom the tribunal pronounces sentence, and to lead them to the Prison of Love – a somber tunnel of verdure furnished with moss couches, and located at a secluded spot of the garden.

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

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

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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