

ONE HUNDRED STORIES

"The *Cent Nouvelles* is undoubtedly the first work of literary prose in French, and the first, moreover, of a long and most remarkable series of literary works in which French writers may challenge all comers with the certainty of victory. The short prose tale of a comic character is the one French literary product the pre-eminence and perfection of which it is impossible to dispute, and the prose tale first appears to advantage in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. They are simply the old themes of the *fabliaux* treated in the old way. The novelty is in the application of prose to such a purpose, and in the crispness, the fluency, and the elegance, of the prose used".

PROF. GEO. SAINTSBURY,

in *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

ONE HUNDRED
MERRIE and DELIGHTSOME
STORIES



right pleasaunte to relate
in all goodly companie
by way
of Joyance and Jollity:

LES CENT NOUVELLES NOUVELLES

now first done into the English tongue
by
ROBERT B. DOUGLAS

✻ PARIS ✻
CHARLES CARRINGTON
13 faubourg Montmartre

LIT
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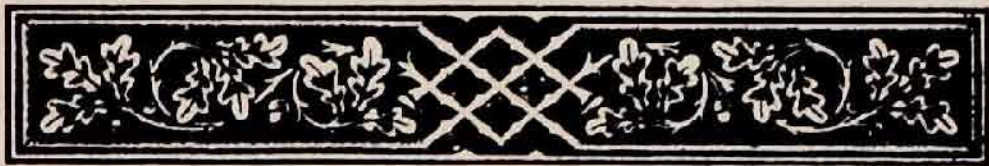
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ILLUSTRATIONS

The publisher begs to announce that a **Set of Fifty-two original and full-page illustrations in colours** has been prepared for this work, and will be issued in October, 1899, to subscribers only—price **TWO GUINEAS** per set.

M. LÉON LEBÈGUE, the well-known Parisian artist and engraver, has made a special study of the Manners and Customs of the Middle-Ages, and few men are better qualified to illustrate the picturesque period described in these stories, and which has been his study for the last five years.

Sufficient guarantee of his eminent fitness for the task is evidenced by the fact that he has already worked with men like Octave Uzanne, Anatole France, and other well-known literary men. His designs while being delightfully liberal as befits the character of the stories, are yet saved from the reproach of coarseness and vulgarity by their rich mediæval colour, and that striking combination of tone and effect for which M. LÉON LEBÈGUE is deservedly celebrated.



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Three very minor Brothers.

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Cuckolded—and Duped.

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Indiscretion reproved, but not punished.

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STORY THE SIXTY-SIXTH. 368

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STORY THE SIXTY-SEVENTH. 371

The Woman with three Husbands.

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The Jade despoiled.

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The virtuous Lady with two Husbands.

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The Devil's Horn.

Of a noble knight of Germany, a great traveller in his time; who after he had made a certain voyage, took a vow to never make the sign of the Cross, owing to the firm faith and belief that he had in the holy sacrament of baptism—in which faith he fought the devil, as you will hear.

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The considerate Cuckold

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STORY THE SEVENTY-SECOND. 390

Necessity is the Mother of Invention.

Of a gentleman of Picardy who was enamoured of the wife of a knight his neighbour; and how he obtained the lady's favours and was nearly caught with her, and with great difficulty made his escape, as you will hear later.

STORY THE SEVENTY-THIRD 395

The Bird in the Cage.

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The obsequious Priest.

Of a priest of Boulogne who twice raised the body of Our Lord whilst chanting a Mass, because he believed that the Seneschal of Boulogne had come late to the Mass, and how he refused to take the Pax until the Seneschal had done so, as you will hear hereafter.

STORY THE SEVENTY-FIFTH 404

The Bagpipe.

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Caught in the Act.

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STORY THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH 413

The sleeveless Robe.

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STORY THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH 416

The Husband turned Confessor.

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The lost Ass found.

Of a good man of Bourbonnais who went to seek the advice of a wise man of that place about an ass that he had lost, and how he believed that he miraculously recovered the said ass, as you will hear hereafter.

STORY THE EIGHTIETH 424

Good Measure!

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STORY THE EIGHTY-FIRST 427

Between two Stools.

Of a noble knight who was in love with a beautiful young married lady, and thought himself in her good graces, and also in those of another lady, her neighbour; but lost both as is afterwards recorded.

STORY THE EIGHTY-SECOND 435

Beyond the Mark.

Of a shepherd who made an agreement with a shepherdess that he should mount upon her "in order that he might see farther," but was not to penetrate beyond a mark which she herself made with her hand upon the instrument of the said shepherd—as will more plainly appear hereafter.

STORY THE EIGHTY-THIRD 437

The gluttonous Monk.

Of a Carmelite monk who came to preach at a village and after his sermon, he went to dine with a lady, and how he stuffed out his gown, as you will hear.

STORY THE EIGHTY-FOURTH 441

The Devil's Share.

Of one of his marshals who married the sweetest and most lovable woman there was in all Germany. Whether what I tell you is true—for I do not swear to it that I may not be considered a liar—you will see more plainly below.

STORY THE EIGHTY-FIFTH. 443

Nailed!

Of a goldsmith, married to a fair, kind, and gracious lady, and very amorous withal of a curé, her neighbour, with whom her husband found her in bed, they being betrayed by one of the goldsmith's servants, who was jealous, as you will hear.

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Foolish Fear.

Of a young man of Rouen, married to a fair, young girl of the age of fifteen or thereabouts; and how the mother of the girl wished to have the marriage annulled by the Judge of Rouen, and of the sentence which the said Judge pronounced when he had heard the parties—as you will hear more plainly in the course of the said story.

STORY THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH 453

What the Eye does not see.

Of a gentle knight who was enamoured of a young and beautiful girl, and how he caught a malady in one of his eyes, and therefore sent for a doctor, who likewise fell in love with the same girl, as you will hear; and of the words which passed between the knight and the doctor concerning the plaster which the doctor had put on the knight's good eye.

STORY THE EIGHTY-EIGHTH 457

A Husband in hiding.

Of a poor, simple peasant married to a nice, pleasant woman, who did much as she liked, and who in order that she might be alone with her lover, shut up her husband in the pigeon-house in the manner you will hear.

STORY THE EIGHTY-NINTH. 461

The fault of the Almanac.

Of a curé who forgot, either by negligence or ignorance, to inform his parishioners that Lent had come until Palm Sunday arrived, as you will hear—and of the manner in which he excused himself to his parishioners.

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A good Remedy.

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STORY THE NINETY-FIRST. 467

The obedient Wife.

Of a man who was married to a woman so lascivious and lickerish, that I believe she must have been born in a stove or half a league from the summer sun, for no man, however well he might work, could satisfy her; and how her husband thought to punish her, and the answer she gave him.

STORY THE NINETY-SECOND	470
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Women's Quarrels.

Of a married woman who was in love with a Canon, and, to avoid suspicion, took with her one of her neighbours when she went to visit the Canon; and of the quarrel that arose between the two women, as you will hear.

STORY THE NINETY-THIRD.	474
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How a good Wife went on a Pilgrimage.

Of a good wife who pretended to her husband that she was going on a pilgrimage, in order to find opportunity to be with her lover the parish-clerk—with whom her husband found her; and of what he said and did when he saw them doing you know what.

STORY THE NINETY-FOURTH	478
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Difficult to please.

Of a curé who wore a short gown, like a gallant about to be married, for which cause he was summoned before the Ordinary, and of the sentence which was passed, and the defence he made, and the other tricks he played afterwards—as you will plainly hear.

STORY THE NINETY-FIFTH.	482
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The sore Finger cured.

Of a monk who feigned to be very ill and in danger of death, that he might obtain the favours of a certain young woman in the manner which is described hereafter.

STORY THE NINETY-SIXTH.	486
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A good Dog.

Of a foolish and rich village curé who buried his dog in the church-yard; for which cause he was summoned before his Bishop, and how he gave 50 gold crowns to the Bishop, and what the Bishop said to him—which you will find related here.

STORY THE NINETY-SEVENTH.	489
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Bids and Biddings.

Of a number of boon companions making good cheer and drinking at a tavern, and how one of them had a quarrel with his wife when he returned home, as you will hear.

STORY THE NINETY-EIGHTH	492
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The unfortunate Lovers.

Of a knight of this kingdom and his wife, who had a fair daughter aged fifteen or sixteen. Her father would have married her to a rich old knight, his neighbour, but she ran away with another knight, a young man who loved her honourably; and, by strange mishap, they both died sad deaths without having ever co-habited,—as you will hear shortly.

STORY THE NINETY-NINTH. 499

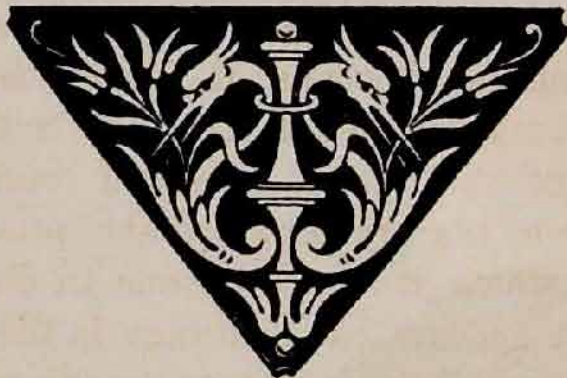
The Metamorphosis.

Relates how a Spanish Bishop, not being able to procure fish, ate two partridges on a Friday, and how he told his servants that he had converted them by his prayers into fish—as will more plainly be related below.

STORY THE HUNDREDTH AND LAST. 503

The chaste Lover.

Of a rich merchant of the city of Genoa, who married a fair damsel, who owing to the absence of her husband, sent for a wise clerk—a young, fit, and proper man—to help her to that of which she had need; and of the fast that he caused her to make—as you will find more plainly below.





INTRODUCTION

The highest living authority on French Literature—Professor George Saintsbury—has said:

“The *Cent Nouvelles* is undoubtedly the first work of literary prose in French, and the first, moreover, of a long and most remarkable series of literary works in which French writers may challenge all comers with the certainty of victory. The short prose tale of a comic character is the one French literary product the pre-eminence and perfection of which it is impossible to dispute, and the prose tale first appears to advantage in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. The subjects are by no means new. They are simply the old themes of the *fabliaux* treated in the old way. The novelty is in the application of prose to such a purpose, and in the crispness, the fluency, and the elegance, of the prose used.”

Besides the literary merits which the eminent critic has pointed out, the stories give us curious glimpses of life in the 15th Century. We get a genuine view of the social condition of the nobility and the middle classes, and are pleasantly surprised to learn from the mouths of the nobles

themselves that the peasant was not the down-trodden serf that we should have expected to find him a century after the Jacquerie, and 350 years before the Revolution.

In fact there is an atmosphere of tolerance, not to say *bonhomie* about these stories which is very remarkable when we consider under what circumstances they were told, and by whom, and to whom.

This seems to have struck M. Lenient, a French critic, who says:

"Generally the incidents and personages belong to the *bourgeoisie*; there is nothing chivalric, nothing wonderful; no dreamy lovers, romantic dames, fairies, or enchanters. Noble dames, bourgeois, nuns, knights, merchants, monks, and peasants mutually dupe each other. The lord deceives the miller's wife by imposing on her simplicity, and the miller retaliates in much the same manner. The shepherd marries the knight's sister, and the nobleman is not over scandalized.

The vices of the monks are depicted in half a score tales, and the seducers are punished with a severity not always in proportion to the offence."

It seems curious that this valuable and interesting work has never before been translated into English during the four and a half centuries the book has been in existence. This is the more remarkable as the work was edited in French by an English scholar—the late Thomas Wright. It can hardly be the coarseness of some of the stories which has prevented the *Nouvelles* from being presented to English readers when there are half a dozen versions of the *Heptameron*, which is quite as coarse as the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, does not possess the same historical interest, and is not to be compared to the present work as regards either the stories or the style.

In addition to this, there is the history of the book itself, and its connection with one of the most important

personages in French history—Louis XI. Indeed, in many French and English works of reference, the authorship of the *Nouvelles* has been attributed to him, and though in recent years, the writer is now believed—and no doubt correctly—to have been Antoine de la Salle, it is tolerably certain that Prince Louis heard all the stories related, and very possibly contributed several of them. The circumstances under which these stories came to be narrated requires a few words of explanation.

At a very early age, Louis showed those qualities by which he was later distinguished. When he was only fourteen, he caused his father, Charles VII, much grief, both by his unfilial conduct and his behaviour to the beautiful Agnes Sorel, the King's mistress, towards whom he felt an implacable hatred. He is said to have slapped her face, because he thought she did not treat him with proper respect. This blow was, it is asserted, the primary cause of his revolt against his father's authority (1440). The rebellion was put down, and the Prince was pardoned, but relations between father and son were still strained, and in 1446, Louis had to betake himself to his appanage of Dauphiné, where he remained for ten years, always plotting and scheming, and braving his father's authority.

At length the Prince's Court at Grenoble became the seat of so many conspiracies that Charles VII was obliged to take forcible measures. It was small wonder that the King's patience was exhausted. Louis, not content with the rule of his province, had made attempts to win over many of the nobility, and to bribe the archers of the Scotch Guard. Though not liberal as a rule, he had also expended large sums to different secret agents for some specific purpose, which was in all probability to secure his father's death, for he was not the sort of man to stick at parricide even, if it would secure his ends.

The plot was revealed to Charles by Antoine de Chabannes, Comte de Dampmartin. Louis, when taxed with his misconduct, impudently denied that he had been mixed up with the conspiracy, but denounced all his accomplices, and allowed them to suffer for his misdeeds. He did not, however, forget to revenge them, so far as lay in his power. The fair Agnès Sorel, whom he had always regarded as his bitterest enemy, died shortly afterwards at Jumièges, and it has always been believed, and with great show of reason, that she was poisoned by his orders. He was not able to take vengeance on Antoine de Chabannes until after he became King.

Finding that his plots were of no avail, he essayed to get together an army large enough to combat his father, but before he completed his plans, Charles VII, tired of his endless treason and trickery, sent an army, under the faithful de Chabannes, into the Dauphiné, with orders to arrest the Dauphin.

The forces which Louis had at his disposal were numerically so much weaker, that he did not dare to risk a battle.

"If God or fortune," he cried, "had been kind enough to give me but half the men-at-arms which now belong to the King, my father, and will be mine some day, by Our Lady, my mistress, I would have spared him the trouble of coming so far to seek me, but would have met him and fought him at Lyon."

Not having sufficient forces, and feeling that he could not hope for fresh pardon, he resolved to fly from France, and take refuge at the Court of the Duke of Burgundy.

One day in June, 1456, he pretended to go hunting, and then, attended by only half a dozen friends, rode as fast as he could into Burgundian territory, and arrived at Saint Claude.

From there he wrote to his father, excusing his flight,

and announcing his intention of joining an expedition which Philippe le Bon, the reigning Duke of Burgundy was about to undertake against the Turks. The Duke was at that moment besieging Utrecht, but as soon as he heard the Dauphin had arrived in his dominions, he sent orders that he was to be conducted to Brussels with all the honours befitting his rank and station.

Shortly afterwards the Duke returned, and listened with real or pretended sympathy to all the complaints that Louis made against his father, but put a damper on any hopes that the Prince may have entertained of getting the Burgundian forces to support his cause, by saying;

“ Monseigneur, you are welcome to my domains. I am happy to see you here. I will provide you with men and money for any purpose you may require, except to be employed against the King, your father, whom I would on no account displease.”

Duke Philippe even tried to bring about a reconciliation between Charles and his son; but as Louis was not very anxious to return to France, nor Charles to have him there, and a good many of the nobles were far from desiring that the Prince should come back, the negotiations came to nothing.

Louis could make himself agreeable when he pleased, and during his stay in the Duke's domains, he was on good terms with Philippe le Bon, who granted him 3000 gold florins a month, and the castle of Genappe as a residence. This castle was situated on the Dyle, midway between Brussels and Louvain, and about eight miles from either city. The river, or a deep moat, surrounded the castle on every side. There was a drawbridge which was drawn up at night, so Louis felt himself quite safe from any attack.

Here he remained five years (1456—1461) until the death of his father placed him on the throne of France.

It was during these five years that these stories were told to amuse his leisure. Probably there were many more than a hundred narrated—perhaps several hundreds—but the literary man who afterwards “edited” the stories only selected those which he deemed best, or, perhaps, those he heard recounted. The narrators were the nobles who formed the Dauphin’s Court. Much ink has been spilled over the question whether Louis himself had any share in the production. In nearly every case the author’s name is given, and ten of them (Nos. 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 29, 33, 69, 70 and 71) are described in the original edition as being by “Monseigneur.” Publishers of subsequent editions brought out at the close of the 15th, or the beginning of the 16th, Century, jumped to the conclusion that “Monseigneur” was really the Dauphin, who not only contributed largely to the book, but after he became King personally supervised the publication of the collected stories.

For four centuries Louis XI was credited with the authorship of the tales mentioned. The first person—so far as I am aware—to throw any doubt on his claim was the late Mr. Thomas Wright, who edited an edition of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, published by Jannet, Paris, 1858. He maintained, with some show of reason, that as the stories were told in Burgundy, by Burgundians, and the collected tales were “edited” by a subject of the Duke (Antoine de la Salle, of whom I shall have occasion to speak shortly) it was more probable that “Monseigneur” would mean the Duke than the Dauphin, and he therefore ascribed the stories to Philippe le Bel. Modern French scholars, however, appear to be of opinion that “Monseigneur” was the Comte de Charolais, who afterwards became famous as Charles le Temeraire, the last Duke of Burgundy.

The two great enemies were at that time close friends, and Charles was a very frequent visitor to Genappe. It

was not very likely, they say, that Duke Philippe who was an old man would have bothered himself to tell his guest indecent stories. On the other hand, Charles, being then only Comte de Charolais, had no right to the title of "Monseigneur," but they parry that difficulty by supposing that as he became Duke before the tales were printed, the title was given him in the first printed edition.

The matter is one which will, perhaps, never be satisfactorily settled. My own opinion—though I claim for it no weight or value—is that Louis appears to have the greatest right to the stories, though in support of that theory I can only adduce some arguments, which if separately weak may have some weight when taken collectively. Vérard, who published the first edition, says in the Dedication; "Et notez que par toutes les Nouvelles où il est dit par Monseigneur il est entendu par Monseigneur le Dauphin, lequel depuis a succédé à la couronne et est le roy Loys unsieme; car il estoit lors ès pays du duc de Bourgoingne."

The critics may have good reason for throwing doubt on Vérard's statement, but unless he printed his edition from a M.S. made after 1467, and the copyist had altered the name of the Comte de Charolais to "Monseigneur" it is not easy to see how the error arose, whilst on the other hand, as Vérard had every facility for knowing the truth, and some of the copies must have been purchased by persons who were present when the stories were told, the mistake would have been rectified in the subsequent editions that Vérard brought out in the course of the next few years, when Louis had been long dead and there was no necessity to flatter his vanity.

On examining the stories related by "Monseigneur," it seems to me that there is some slight internal evidence that they were told by Louis.

Brantôme says of him that, "he loved to hear tales of loose women, and had but a poor opinion of woman and did not believe they were all chaste. (This sounds well coming from Brantôme) Anyone who could relate such tales was gladly welcomed by the Prince, who would have given all Homer and Virgil too for a funny story." The Prince must have heard many such stories, and would be likely to repeat them, and we find the first half dozen stories are decidedly "broad," (No XI was afterwards appropriated by Rabelais, as "Hans Carvel's Ring") and we may suspect that Louis tried to show the different narrators by personal example what he considered a really "good tale."

We know also Louis was subject to fits of religious melancholy, and evinced a superstitious veneration for holy things, and even wore little, leaden images of the saints round his hat. In many of the stories we find monks punished for their immorality, or laughed at for their ignorance, and nowhere do we see any particular veneration displayed for the Church. The only exception is No LXX, "The Devil's Horn," in which a knight by sheer faith in the mystery of baptism vanquishes the Devil, whereas one of the knight's retainers, armed with a battle-axe but not possessing his master's robust faith in the efficacy of holy water, is carried off bodily, and never heard of again. It seems to me that this story bears the stamp of the character of Louis, who though suspicious towards men, was childishly credulous in religious matters, but I leave the question for critics more capable than I to decide.

Of the thirty-two noblemen or squires who contributed the other stories, mention will be made in the notes. Of the stories, I may here mention that 14 or 15 were taken from Boccaccio, and as many more from Poggio or other Italian writers, or French *fabliaux*, but about 70 of them appear to be original.

The knights and squires who told the stories had probably no great skill as *raconteurs*, and perhaps did not read or write very fluently. The tales were written down afterwards by a literary man, and they owe "the crispness, fluency, and elegance," which, as Prof. Saintsbury remarks, they possess in such a striking degree, to the genius of Antoine de la Sale. He was born in 1398 in Burgundy or Touraine. He had travelled much in Italy, and lived for some years at the Court of the Comte d'Anjou. He returned to Burgundy later, and was, apparently, given some sort of literary employment by Duke Philippe le Bel. At any rate he was appointed by Philippe or Louis to record the stories that enlivened the evenings at the Castle of Genappe, and the choice could not have fallen on a better man. He was already known as the author of two or three books, one of which—*Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage*—relates the woes of married life, and displays a knowledge of character, and a quaint, satirical humour that are truly remarkable, and remind the reader alternately of Thackeray and Douglas Jerrold,—indeed some of the Fifteen Joys are "Curtain Lectures" with a mediaeval environment, and the word pictures of Woman's foibles, follies, and failings are as bright to-day as when they were penned exactly 450 years ago. They show that the "Eternal Feminine" has not altered in five centuries—perhaps not in five thousand!

The practised and facile pen of Antoine de la Sale clothed the dry bones of these stories with flesh and blood, and made them live, and move. Considering his undoubted gifts as a humourist, and a delineator of character it is strange that the name of Antoine de la Sale is not held in higher veneration by his countrymen, for he was the earliest exponent of a form of literary art in which the French have always excelled.

In making a translation of these stories I at first determined to adhere as closely as possible to the text, but found that the versions differed greatly. I have followed the two best modern editions, and have made as few changes and omissions as possible.

Three or four of the stories are extremely coarse, and I hesitated whether to omit them, insert them in the original French, or translate them, but decided that as the book would only be read by persons of education, respectability, and mature age, it was better to translate them fully,—as has been done in the case of the far coarser passages of Rabelais and other writers. This course appeared to me less hypocritical than that adopted in a recent expensive edition of Boccaccio in which the story of Rusticus and Alibech was given in French—with a highly suggestive full-page illustration facing the text for the benefit of those who could not read the French language.

ROBERT B. DOUGLAS.

PARIS, 21st October 1899.

ONE HUNDRED STORIES

Good friends, my readers, who peruse this book,
Be not offended, whilst on it you look:
Denude yourselves of all deprav'd affection,
For it contains no badness nor infection:
'T is true that it brings forth to you no birth
Of any value, but in point of mirth;
Thinking therefore how sorrow might your mind
Consume, I could no apter subject find;
One inch of joy surmounts of grief a span;
Because to laugh is proper to the man.

(RABELAIS: *To the Readers*).

La Médaille à revers





Story the First.

THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL

BY

MONSEIGNEUR LE DUC.

The first story tells of one who found means to enjoy the wife of his neighbour, whose husband he had sent away in order that he might have her the more easily, and how the husband returning from his journey, found his friend bathing with his wife. And not knowing who she was, he wished to see her, but was permitted only to see her back—, and then thought that she resembled his wife, but dared not believe it. And thereupon he left and found his wife at home, she having escaped by a postern door, and related to her his suspicions.

IN the town of Valenciennes there lived formerly a notable citizen, who had been receiver of Hainault, who was renowned amongst all others for his prudence and discretion, and amongst his praiseworthy virtues, liberality was not the least, and thus it came to pass that he enjoyed the grace of princes, lords,

and other persons of good estate. And this happy condition, Fortune granted and preserved to him to the end of his days.

Both before and after death unloosed him from the chains of matrimony, the good citizen mentioned in this story, was not so badly lodged in the said town but that many a great lord would have been content and honoured to have such a lodging. His house faced several streets, in one of which was a little postern door, opposite to which lived a good comrade of his, who had a pretty wife, still young and charming.

And, as is customary, her eyes, the archers of the heart, shot so many arrows into the said citizen, that unless he found some present remedy, he felt his case was no less than mortal.

To more surely prevent such a fate, he found many and subtle manners of making the good comrade, the husband of the said quean, his private and familiar friend, so, that few of the dinners, suppers, banquets, baths, and other such amusements took place, either in the hôtel or elsewhere, without his company. And of such favours his comrade was very proud, and also happy.

When our citizen, who was more cunning than a fox, had gained the good-will of his friend, little was needed to win the love of his wife, and in a few days he had worked so much and so well that the gallant lady was fain to hear his case, and to provide a suitable remedy thereto. It remained but to provide time and place; and for this she promised him that, whenever her husband lay abroad for a night, she would advise him thereof.

The wished-for day arrived when the husband told his wife that he was going to a chateau some three leagues distant from Valenciennes, and charged her to look after the house and keep within doors, because his business would not permit him to return that night.

It need not be asked if she was joyful, though she showed it not either in word, or deed, or otherwise. Her husband had not journeyed a league before the citizen knew that the opportunity had come.

He caused the baths to be brought forth, and the stoves to be heated, and pasties, tarts, and hippocras, and all the rest of God's good gifts, to be prepared largely and magnificently.

When evening came, the postern door was unlocked, and she who was expected entered thereby, and God knows if she was not kindly received. I pass over all this.

Then they ascended into a chamber, and washed in a bath, by the side of which a good supper was quickly laid and served. And God knows if they drank often and deeply. To speak of the wines and viands would be a waste of time, and, to cut the story short, there was plenty of everything. In this most happy condition passed the great part of this sweet but short night; kisses often given and often returned, until they desired nothing but to go to bed.

Whilst they were thus making good cheer, the husband returned from his journey, and knowing nothing of this adventure, knocked loudly at the door of the house. And the company that was in the ante-chamber refused him entrance until he should name his surety.

Then he gave his name loud and clear, and so his good wife and the citizen heard him and knew him. She was so amazed to hear the voice of her husband that her loyal heart almost failed her; and she would have fainted, had not the good citizen and his servants comforted her.

The good citizen being calm and well advised how to act, made haste to put her to bed, and lay close by her; and charged her well that she should lie close to him and hide her face, so that no one could see it. And that being

done as quickly as may be, yet without too much haste, he ordered that the door should be opened. Then his good comrade sprang into the room, thinking to himself that there must be some mystery, else they had not kept him out of the room. And when he saw the table laid with wines and goodly viands, also the bath finely prepared, and the citizen in a handsome bed, well curtained, with a second person by his side, God knows he spoke loudly, and praised the good cheer of his neighbour. He called him rascal, and whore-monger, and drunkard, and many other names, which made those who were in the chamber laugh long and loud; but his wife could not join in the mirth, her face being pressed to the side of her new friend.

“Ha!” said the husband, “Master whore-monger, you have well hidden from me this good cheer; but, by my faith, though I was not at the feast, you must show me the bride.”

And with that, holding a candle in his hand, he drew near the bed, and would have withdrawn the coverlet, under which, in fear and silence, lay his most good and perfect wife, when the citizen and his servants prevented him; but he was not content, and would by force, in spite of them all, have laid his hand upon the bed.

But he was not master there, and could not have his will, and for good cause, and was fain to be content with a most gracious proposal which was made to him, and which was this, that he should be shown the backside of his wife, and her haunches, and thighs—which were big and white, and moreover fair and comely—without uncovering and beholding her face.

The good comrade, still holding a candle in his hand, gazed for long without saying a word; and when he did speak, it was to praise highly the great beauty of that dame, and he swore by a great oath that he had never seen

anything that so much resembled the back parts of his own wife, and that were he not well sure that she was at home at that time, he would have said it was she.

She had by this somewhat recovered, and he drew back much disconcerted, but God knows that they all told him, first one and then the other, that he had judged wrongly, and spoken against the honour of his wife, and that this was some other woman, as he would afterwards see for himself.

To restore him to good humour, after they had thus abused his eyes, the citizen ordered that they should make him sit at the table, where he drowned his suspicions by eating and drinking of what was left of the supper, whilst they in the bed were robbing him of his honour.

The time came to leave, and he said good night to the citizen and his companions, and begged they would let him leave by the postern door, that he might the sooner return home. But the citizen replied that he knew not then where to find the key; he thought also that the lock was so rusted that they could not open the door, which they rarely if ever used. He was content therefore to leave by the front gate, and make a long detour to reach his house, and whilst the servants of the citizen led him to the door, the good wife was quickly on her feet, and in a short time, clad in a simple sark, with her corset on her arm, and come to the postern. She made but one bound to her house, where she awaited her husband (who came by a longer way) well-prepared as to the manner in which she should receive him.

Soon came our man, and seeing still a light in the house, knocked at the door loudly; and this good wife, who was pretending to clean the house, and had a besom in her hands, asked — what she knew well; “Who is there?”

And he replied; “It is your husband.”

"My husband!" said she. "My husband is not here! He is not in the town!"

With that he knocked again, and cried, "Open the door! I am your husband."

"I know my husband well," quoth she, "and it is not his custom to return home so late at night, when he is in the town. Go away, and do not knock here at this hour."

But he knocked all the more, and called her by name once or twice. Yet she pretended not to know him, and asked why he came at that hour, but for all reply he said nothing but, "Open! Open!"

"Open!" said she. "What! are you still there you rascally whore-monger? By St. Mary, I would rather see you drown than come in here! Go! and sleep as badly as you please in the place where you came from."

Then her good husband grew angry, and thundered against the door as though he would knock the house down, and threatened to beat his wife, such was his rage, — of which she had not great fear; but at length, because of the noise he made, and that she might the better speak her mind to him, she opened the door, and when he entered, God knows whether he did not see an angry face, and have a warm greeting. For when her tongue found words from a heart overcharged with anger and indignation, her language was as sharp as well-ground Guingant razors.

And, amongst other things, she reproached him that he had wickedly pretended a journey in order that he might try her, and that he was a coward and a recreant, unworthy to have such a wife as she was.

Our good comrade, though he had been angry, saw how wrong he had been, and restrained his wrath, and the indignation that in his heart he had conceived when he was standing outside the door was turned aside. So he

said, to excuse himself, and to satisfy his wife, that he had returned from his journey because he had forgotten a letter concerning the object of his going.

Pretending not to believe him, she invented more stories, and charged him with having frequented taverns and bagnios, and other improper and dissolute resorts, and that he behaved as no respectable man should, and she cursed the hour in which she had made his acquaintance, and doubly cursed the day she became his wife.

The poor man, much grieved, seeing his wife more troubled than he liked, knew not what to say. And his suspicions being removed, he drew near her, weeping and falling upon his knees and made the following fine speech.

“My most dear companion, and most loyal wife, I beg and pray of you to remove from your heart the wrath you have conceived against me, and pardon me for all that I have done against you. I own my fault, I see my error. I have come now from a place where they made good cheer, and where, I am ashamed to say, I fancied I recognised you, at which I was much displeased. And so I wrongfully and causelessly suspected you to be other than a good woman, of which I now repent bitterly, and pray of you to forgive me, and pardon my folly.”

The good woman, seeing her husband so contrite, showed no great anger.

“What?” said she, “You have come from filthy houses of ill-fame, and you dare to think that your honest wife would be seen in such places?”

“No, no, my dear, I know you would not. For God’s sake, say no more about it.” said the good man, and repeated his aforesaid request.

She, seeing his contrition, ceased her reproaches, and little by little regained her composure, and with much

ado pardoned him, after he had made a hundred thousand oaths and promises to her who had so wronged him. And from that time forth she often, without fear or regret, passed the said postern, nor were her escapades discovered by him who was most concerned. And that suffices for the first story.



Story the Second.

THE MONK-DOCTOR

BY

MONSEIGNEUR.

The second story, related by Duke Philip, is of a young girl who had piles, who put out the only eye he had of a Cordelier monk who was healing her; and of the lawsuit that followed thereon.

IN the chief town of England, called London, which is much resorted to by many folks, there lived, not long ago, a rich and powerful man who was a merchant and citizen, who beside his great wealth and treasures, was enriched by the possession of a fair daughter, whom God had given him over and above his substance, and who for goodness, prettiness, and gentleness, surpassed all others of her time, and who when she was fifteen was renowned for her virtue and beauty.

God knows that many folk of good position desired and sought for her good grace by all the divers manners used by lovers,—which was no small pleasure to her

father and mother, and increased their ardent and paternal affection for their beloved daughter.

But it happened that, either by the permission of God, or that Fortune willed and ordered it so, being envious and discontented at the prosperity of this beautiful girl, or of her parents, or all of them,—or may be from some secret and natural cause that I leave to doctors and philosophers to determine, that she was afflicted with an unpleasant and dangerous disease which is commonly called piles.

The worthy family was greatly troubled when they found the fawn they so dearly loved, set on by the sleuth-hounds and beagles of this unpleasant disease, which had, moreover, attacked its prey in a dangerous place. The poor girl—utterly cast down by this great misfortune,—could do naught else than weep and sigh. Her grief-stricken mother was much troubled; and her father, greatly vexed, wrung his hands, and tore his hair in his rage at this fresh misfortune.

Need I say that all the pride of that household was suddenly cast down to the ground, and in one moment converted into bitter and great grief.

The relations, friends, and neighbours of the much-enduring family came to visit and comfort the damsel; but little or nothing might they profit her, for the poor girl was more and more attacked and oppressed by that disease.

Then came a matron who had much studied that disease, and she turned and re-turned the suffering patient, this way, and that way, to her great pain and grief, God knows, and made a medicine of a hundred thousand sorts of herbs, but it was no good; the disease continued to get worse, so there was no help but to send for all the doctors of the city and round about, and for the poor girl to discover unto them her most piteous case.

There came Master Peter, Master John, Master This, Master That — as many doctors as you would, who all wished to see the patient together, and uncover that portion of her body where this cursed disease, the piles had, alas, long time concealed itself.

The poor girl, as much cast down and grieved as though she were condemned to die, would in no wise agree or permit that her affliction should be known; and would rather have died than shown such a secret place to the eyes of any man.

This obstinacy though endured not long, for her father and her mother came unto her, and remonstrated with her many times, — saying that she might be the cause of her own death, which was no small sin; and many other matters too long to relate here.

Finally, rather to obey her father and mother than from fear of death, the poor girl allowed herself to be bound and laid on a couch, head downwards, and her body so uncovered that the physicians might see clearly the seat of the disease which troubled her.

They gave orders what was to be done, and sent apothecaries with clysters, powders, ointments, and whatsoever else seemed good unto them; and she took all that they sent, in order that she might recover her health.

But all was of no avail, for no remedy that the said physicians could apply helped to heal the distressing malady from which she suffered, nor could they find aught in their books, until at last the poor girl, what with grief and pain was more dead than alive, and this grief and great weakness lasted many days.

And whilst the father and mother, relations, and neighbours sought for aught that might alleviate their daughter's sufferings, they met with an old Cordelier monk, who was blind of one eye, and who in his time had seen many things, and had dabbled much in medicine, therefore his presence

was agreeable to the relations of the patient, and he having gazed at the diseased part at his leisure, boasted much that he could cure her.

You may fancy that he was most willingly heard, and that all the grief-stricken assembly, from whose hearts all joy had been banished, hoped that the result would prove as he had promised.

Then he left, and promised that he would return the next day, provided and furnished with a drug of such virtue, that it would at once remove the great pain and martyrdom which tortured and annoyed the poor patient.

The night seemed over-long, whilst waiting for the wished-for morrow; nevertheless, the long hours passed, and our worthy Cordelier kept his promise, and came to the patient at the hour appointed. You may guess that he was well and joyously received; and when the time came when he was to heal the patient, they placed her as before on a couch, with her backside covered with a fair white cloth of embroidered damask, having, where her malady was, a hole pierced in it through which the Cordelier might arrive at the said place.

He gazed at the seat of the disease, first from one side, then from the other: and anon he would touch it gently with his finger, or inspect the tube by which he meant to blow in the powder which was to heal her, or anon would step back and inspect the diseased parts, and it seemed as though he could never gaze enough.

At last he took the powder in his left hand, poured upon a small flat dish, and in the other hand the tube, which he filled with the said powder, and as he gazed most attentively and closely through the opening at the seat of the painful malady of the poor girl, she could not contain herself, seeing the strange manner in which the Cordelier gazed at her with his one eye, but a desire to

burst out laughing came upon her, though she restrained herself as long as she could.

But it came to pass, alas! that the laugh thus held back was converted into a f—t, the wind of which caught the powder, so that the greater part of it was blown into the face and into the eye of the good Cordelier, who, feeling the pain, dropped quickly both plate and tube, and almost fell backwards, so much was he frightened. And when he came to himself, he quickly put his hand to his eye, complaining loudly, and saying that he was undone, and in danger to lose the only good eye he had.

Nor did he lie, for in a few days, the powder which was of a corrosive nature, destroyed and ate away his eye, so that he became, and remained, blind.

Then he caused himself to be led one day to the house where he had met with this sad mischance, and spoke to the master of the house, to whom he related his pitiful case, demanding, as was his right, that there should be granted to him such amends as his condition deserved, in order that he might live honourably.

The merchant replied that though the misadventure greatly vexed him, he was in nowise the cause of it, nor could he in any way be charged with it, but that he would, out of pity and charity, give him some money, and though the Cordelier had undertaken to cure his daughter and had not so done, would give him as much as he would if she had been restored to health, though not forced to do so.

The Cordelier was not content with this offer, but required that he should be kept for the rest of his life, seeing that the merchant's daughter had blinded him, and that in the presence of many people, and thereby he was deprived from ever again performing Mass or any of the services of the Holy Church, or studying what learned men had written concerning the Holy Scriptures, and thus could no longer serve as a preacher; which would be his

destruction, for he would be a beggar and without means, save alms, and these he could no longer obtain.

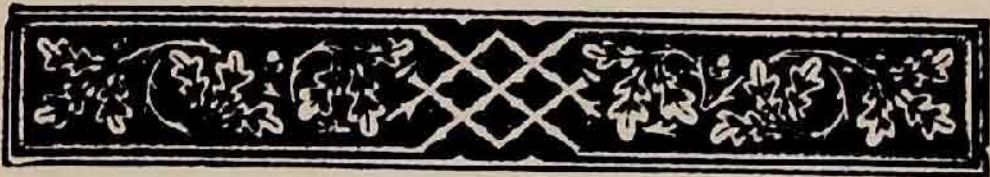
But all that he could say was of no avail, and he could get no other answer than that given. So he cited the merchant before the Parliament of the said city of London, which called upon the aforesaid merchant to appear. When the day came, the Cordelier's case was stated by a lawyer well-advised as to what he should say, and God knows that many came to the Court to hear this strange trial, which much pleased the lords of the said Parliament, as much for the strangeness of the case as for the allegations and arguments of the parties debating therein, which were not only curious but amusing.

To many folk was this strange and amusing case known, and was often adjourned and left undecided by the judges, as is their custom. And so she, who before this was renowned for her beauty, goodness, and gentleness, became notorious through this cursed disease of piles, but was in the end cured, as I have been since told.



La Pêche de l'anneau

Esbague



Story the Third.

THE SEARCH FOR THE RING

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE LA ROCHE.

Of the deceit practised by a knight on a miller's wife whom he made believe that her front-piece was loose, and fastened it many times. And the miller, informed of this, searched for a diamond that the knight's lady had lost, and found it in her body, as the knight knew afterwards: so he called the miller "fisherman", and the miller called him "fastener".



IN the Duchy of Burgundy lived formerly a noble knight, whose name is not mentioned in the present story, who was married to a fair and gentle lady. And near the castle of the said knight lived a miller, also married to a fair young wife.

It chanced once, that the knight, to pass the time and enjoy himself, was strolling around his castle, and by the banks of the river on which stood the house and mill of the said miller, who at that time was not at home, but at Dijon or Beaune, — he saw and remarked

the wife of the said miller carrying two jars and returning from the river, whither she had been to draw water.

He advanced towards her and saluted her politely, and she, being well-mannered, made him the salutation which belonged to his rank. The knight, finding that the miller's wife was very fair but had not much sense, drew near to her and said.

"Of a truth, my friend, I see well that you are in ill case, and therefore in great peril."

At these words the miller's wife replied.

"Alas, monseigneur, and what shall I do?"

"Truly, my dear, if you walk thus, your 'front piece' is in danger of falling off, and if I am not mistaken, you will not keep it much longer."

The foolish woman, on hearing these words was astonished and vexed; — astonished to think how the knight could know, without seeing, of this unlucky accident, and vexed to think of the loss of the best part of her body, and one that she used well, and her husband also.

She replied; "Alas! sir, what is this you tell me, and how do you know that my 'front piece' is in danger of falling off? It seems to keep its place well."

"There, there! my dear," replied the knight. "Let it suffice that I have told you the truth. You would not be the first to whom such a thing had happened."

"Alas, sir," said she. "I shall be an undone, dishonoured and lost woman; and what will my husband say when he hears of the mischance? He will have no more to do with me."

"Be not discomfited to that degree, my friend; it has not happened yet; besides there is a sure remedy."

When the young woman heard that there was a remedy for her complaint, her blood began to flow again, and

she begged the knight for God's sake that he would teach her what she must do to keep this poor front-piece from falling off. The knight, who was always most courteous and gracious, especially towards the ladies, replied;

"My friend, as you are a good and pretty girl, and I like your husband, I will teach you how to keep your front-piece."

"Alas, sir, I thank you; and certainly you will do a most meritorious work: for it would be better to die than to live without my front-piece. And what ought I to do sir?"

"My dear," he said, "to prevent your front-piece from falling off, you must have it fastened quickly and often."

"Fastened, sir? And who will do that? Whom shall I ask to do this for me?"

"I will tell you, my dear," replied the knight. "And because I warned you of this mischance being so near, and told you of the remedy necessary to obviate the inconveniences which would arise, and which I am sure would not please you,—I am content, in order to further increase the love between us, to fasten your front-piece, and put it in such a good condition that you may safely carry it anywhere, without any fear or doubt that it will ever fall off; for in this matter I am very skilful."

It need not be asked whether the miller's wife was joyful. She employed all the little sense she had to thank the knight. So they walked together, she and the knight, back to the mill, where they were no sooner arrived than the knight kindly began his task, and with a tool that he had, shortly fastened, three or four times, the front-piece of the miller's wife, who was most pleased and joyous; and after having appointed a day when he might again work at this front-piece, the knight left, and returned quickly to his castle.

On the day named, he went again to the mill, and did

his best, in the way above mentioned, to fasten this front-piece; and so well did he work as time went on, that this front-piece was most safely fastened, and held firmly and well in its place.

Whilst our knight thus fastened the front-piece of the miller's wife, the miller one day returned from his business, and made good cheer, as also did his wife. And as they were talking over their affairs, this most wise wife said to her husband.

"On my word, we are much indebted to the lord of this town."

"Tell me how, and in what manner," replied the miller.

"It is quite right that I should tell you, that you may thank him, as indeed you must. The truth is that, whilst you were away, my lord passed by our house one day that I was carrying two pitchers from the river. He saluted me and I did the same to him; and as I walked away, he saw, I know not how, that my front-piece was not held properly, and was in danger of falling off. He kindly told me so, at which I was as astonished and vexed as though the end of the world had come. The good lord who saw me thus lament, took pity on me, and showed me a good remedy for this cursed disaster. And he did still more, which he would not have done for every one, for the remedy of which he told me,—which was to fasten and hold back my front-piece in order to prevent it from dropping off,—he himself applied, which was great trouble to him, and he did it many times because that my case required frequent attention. What more shall I say? He has so well performed his work that we can never repay him. By my faith, he has in one day of this week fastened it three times; another day, four times; another day, twice; another day, three times; and he never left me till I was quite cured, and brought to such a condition

that my front-piece now holds as well and firmly as that of any woman in our town."

The miller, on hearing this adventure, gave no outward sign of what was passing in his mind, but, as though he had been joyful, said to his wife:

"I am very glad, my dear, that my lord hath done us this service, and, God willing, when it shall be possible, I will do as much for him. But at any rate, as it is not proper it should be known, take care that you say no word of this to anyone; and also, now that you are cured, you need not trouble my lord any further in this matter."

"You have warned me," replied his wife, "not to say a word about it and that is also what my lord bade me."

Our miller, who was a good fellow, often thought over the kindness that my lord had done him, and conducted himself so wisely and carefully that the said lord never suspected that he knew how he had been deceived, and imagined that he knew nothing. But alas, his heart and all his thoughts were bent on revenge and how he could repay in like manner the deceit practised on his wife. And at length he bethought himself of a way by which he could, he imagined, repay my lord in butter for his eggs.

At last, owing to other circumstances, the knight was obliged to mount his horse and say farewell to his wife for a month; at which our miller was in no small degree pleased.

One day, the lady had a desire to bathe, and caused the bath to be brought forth and the stoves to be heated in her private apartments; of which our miller knew soon, because he learned all that went on in the house; so he took a fine pike, that he kept in the ditch near his house, and went to the castle to present it to the lady.

None of the waiting-women would he let take the fish, but said that he must present it himself to the lady, or else he would take it back home. At last, because he was

well-known to the household, and a good fellow, the lady allowed him to enter whilst she was in her bath.

The miller gave his present, for which the lady thanked him, and caused it to be taken to the kitchen and cooked for supper.

Whilst he was talking, the miller perceived on the edge of the bath, a fine large diamond which she had taken from her finger, fearing lest the water should spoil it. He took it so quietly that no one saw him, and having gained his point, said good night to the lady and her women, and returned to the mill to think over his business.

The lady, who was making good cheer with her attendants, seeing that it was now very late, and supper-time, left the bath and retired to her bed. And as she was looking at her arms and hands, she saw not the diamond, and she called her women, and asked them where was the diamond, and to whom she had given it. Each said, "It was not to me;"—"Nor to me,"—"Nor to me either."

They searched inside and outside the bath, and everywhere, but it was no good, they could not find it. The search for this diamond lasted a long time, without their finding any trace of it, which caused the lady much vexation, because it had been unfortunately lost in her chamber, and also because my lord had given it to her the day of their betrothal, and she held it very precious. They did not know whom to suspect nor whom to ask, and much sorrow prevailed in the household.

Then one of the women bethought herself, and said.

"No one entered the room but ourselves and the miller; it seems right that he should be sent for."

He was sent for, and came. The lady who was much vexed, asked the miller if he had not seen her diamond. He, being as ready to lie as another is to tell the truth,

answered boldly, and asked if the lady took him for a thief? To which she replied gently ;

“Certainly not, miller; it would be no theft if you had for a joke taken away my diamond.”

“Madame,” said the miller, “I give you my word that I know nothing about your diamond.”

Then were they all much vexed, and my lady especially, so that she could not refrain from weeping tears in great abundance at the loss of this trinket. They all sorrowfully considered what was to be done. One said that it must be in the chamber, and another said that they had searched everywhere, and that it was impossible it should be there or they would have found it, as it was easily seen.

The miller asked the lady if she had it when she entered the bath; and she replied, yes.

“If it be so, certainly, madam, considering the diligence you have made in searching for it, and without finding it, the affair is very strange. Nevertheless, it seems to me that if there is any man who could give advice how it should be found, I am he, and because I would not that my secret should be discovered and known to many people, it would be expedient that I should speak to you alone.”

“That is easily managed,” said the lady.

So her attendants left, but, as they were leaving, Dames Jehanne, Isabeau, and Katherine said,

“Ah, miller, you will be a clever man if you bring back this diamond.”

“I don't say that I am over-clever,” replied the miller, “but I venture to declare that if it is possible to find it I am the man to do so.”

When he saw that he was alone with the lady, he told her that he believed seriously, that as she had the diamond when she entered the bath, that it must have fallen from her finger and entered her body, seeing that there was no one who could have stolen it.

And that he might hasten to find it, he made the lady get upon her bed, which she would have willingly refused if she could have done otherwise.

After he had uncovered her, he pretended to look here and there, and said,

"Certainly, madam, the diamond has entered your body."

"Do you say, miller, that you have seen it?"

"Truly, yes."

"Alas!" said she, "and how can it be got out?"

"Very easily, madam. I doubt not to succeed if it please you."

"May God help you! There is nothing that I would not do to get it again," said the lady, "or to advance you, good miller."

The miller placed the lady on the bed, much in the same position as the lord had placed *his* wife when he fastened her front-piece, and with a like tool was the search for the diamond made.

Whilst resting after the first and second search that the miller made for the diamond, the lady asked him if he had not felt it, and he said, yes, at which she was very joyful, and begged that he would seek until he had found it.

To cut matters short, the good miller did so well that he restored to the lady her beautiful diamond, which caused great joy throughout the house, and never did miller receive so much honour and advancement as the lady and her maids bestowed upon him.

The good miller, who was high in the good graces of the lady after the much-desired conclusion of his great enterprise, left the house and went home, without boasting to his wife of his recent adventure, though he was more joyful over it than though he had gained the whole world.

A short time after, thank God, the knight returned to

his castle, and was kindly received and humbly welcomed by the lady, who whilst they were enjoying themselves in bed, told him of the most wonderful adventure of the diamond, and how it was fished out of her body by the miller; and, to cut matters short, related the process, fashion, and manner employed by the said miller in his search for the diamond, which hardly gave her husband much joy, but he reflected that the miller had paid him back in his own coin.

The first time he met the good miller, he saluted him coldly, and said,

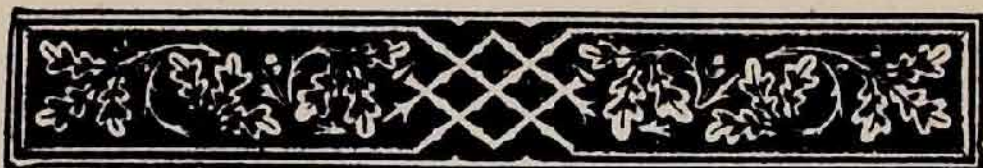
“God save you! God save you, good diamond-searcher!”

To which the good miller replied,

“God save you! God save you, fastener of front-pieces!”

“By our Lady, you speak truly,” said the knight. “Say nothing about me, and I will say nothing about you.”

The miller was satisfied, and never spoke of it again; nor did the knight either, so far as I know.



Story the Fourth.

THE ARMED CUCKOLD

BY

MONSEIGNEUR.

The fourth tale is of a Scotch archer who was in love with a fair and gentle dame, the wife of a mercer, who, by her husband's orders appointed a day for the said Scot to visit her, who came and treated her as he wished, the said mercer being hid by the side of the bed, where he could see and hear all.



WHEN the king was lately in the city of Tours, a Scottish gentleman, an archer of his body-guard, was greatly enamoured of a beautiful and gentle damsel married to a mercer; and when he could find time and place, related to her his sad case, but received no favourable reply,—at which he was neither content nor joyous. Nevertheless, as he was much in love, he relaxed not the pursuit, but besought her so eagerly, that the damsel, wishing to drive him away for good and all, told him that she would inform her husband of the dishonourable and damnable proposals made to her,—which at length she did.



The husband,—a good and wise man, honourable and valiant, as you will see presently,—was very angry to think that the Scot would dishonour him and his fair wife. And that he might avenge himself without trouble, he commanded his wife that if the Scot should accost her again, she should appoint a meeting on a certain day, and, if he were so foolish as to come, he would buy his pleasure dearly.

The good wife, to obey her husband's will, did as she was told. The poor amorous Scot, who spent his time in passing the house, soon saw the fair mercer, and when he had humbly saluted her, he besought her love so earnestly, and desired that she would listen to his final piteous prayer, and if she would, never should woman be more loyally served and obeyed if she would but grant his most humble and reasonable request.

The fair mercer, remembering the lesson that her husband had given her, finding the opportunity propitious, after many subterfuges and excuses, told the Scot that he could come to her chamber on the following evening, where he could talk to her more secretly, and she would give him what he desired.

You may guess that she was greatly thanked, and her words listened to with pleasure and obeyed by her lover, who left his lady feeling more joyous than ever he had in his life.

When the husband returned home, he was told of all the words and deeds of the Scot, and how he was to come on the morrow to the lady's chamber.

"Let him come," said the husband. "Should he undertake such a mad business I will make him, before he leaves, see and confess the evil he has done, as an example to other daring and mad fools like him."

The evening of the next day drew near,—much to the joy of the amorous Scot, who wished to see and enjoy

the person of his lady;—and much also to the joy of the good mercer who was desiring a great vengeance to be taken on the person of the Scot who wished to replace him in the marriage bed; but not much to the taste of his fair wife, who expected that her obedience to her husband would lead to a serious fight.

All prepared themselves; the mercer put on a big, old, heavy suit of armour, donned his helmet and gauntlets, and armed himself with a battle-axe. Like a true champion, he took up his post early, and as he had no tent in which to await his enemy, placed himself behind a curtain by the side of the bed, where he was so well-hidden that he could not be perceived.

The lover, sick with desire, knowing the longed-for hour was now at hand, set out for the house of the mercer, but he did not forget to take his big, good, strong two-handed sword; and when he was within the house, the lady went up to her chamber without showing any fear, and he followed her quietly. And when he came within the room, he asked the lady if she were alone? To which she replied casually, and with some confusion, that she was.

“Tell me the truth,” said the Scot. “Is not your husband here?”

“No,” said she.

“Well! let him come! By Saint Aignan, if he should come, I would split his skull to the teeth. By God! if there were three of them I should not fear them. I should soon master them!”

After these wicked words, he drew his big, good sword, and brandished it three or four times; then laid it on the bed by his side.

With that he kissed and cuddled her, and did much more at his leisure and convenience, without the poor coward by the side of the bed, who was greatly afraid he should be killed, daring to show himself.

Our Scot, after this adventure, took leave of the lady for a while, and thanked her as he ought for her great courtesy and kindness, and went his way.

As soon as the valiant man of arms knew that the Scot was out of the house, he came out of his hiding place, so frightened that he could scarcely speak, and commenced to upbraid his wife for having let the archer do his pleasure on her. To which she replied that it was his fault, as he had made her appoint a meeting.

"I did not command you," he said, "to let him do his will and pleasure."

"How could I refuse him," she replied, "seeing that he had his big sword, with which he could have killed me?"

At that moment the Scot returned, and came up the stairs to the chamber, and ran in and called out, "What is it?" Whereupon the good man, to save himself, hid under the bed for greater safety, being more frightened than ever.

The Scot served the lady as he had done before, but kept his sword always near him. After many long love-games between the Scot and the lady, the hour came when he must leave, so he said good-night and went away.

The poor martyr who was under the bed would scarcely come out, so much did he fear the return of his adversary,—or rather, I should say, his companion. At last he took courage, and by the help of his wife was, thank God, set on his feet, and if he had scolded his wife before he was this time harder upon her than ever, for she had consented, in spite of his forbidding her, to dishonour him and herself.

"Alas," said she, "and where is the woman bold enough to oppose a man so hasty and violent as he was, when you yourself, armed and accoutred and so valiant,—and to whom he did more wrong than he did to me—did not dare to attack him, and defend me?"

"That is no answer," he replied. "Unless you had liked, he would never have attained his purpose. You are a bad and disloyal woman."

"And you," said she, "are a cowardly, wicked, and most blamable man; for I am dishonoured since, through obeying you, I gave a rendezvous to the Scot. Yet you have not the courage to undertake the defence of the wife who is the guardian of your honour. For know that I would rather have died than consent to this dishonour, and God knows what grief I feel, and shall always feel as long as I live, whilst he to whom I looked for help suffered me to be dishonoured in his presence."

He believed that she would not have allowed the Scot to tumble her if she had not taken pleasure in it, but she maintained that she was forced and could not resist, but left the resistance to him and he did not fulfil his charge. Thus they both wrangled and quarrelled, with many arguments on both sides. But at any rate, the husband was cuckolded and deceived by the Scot, in the manner you have heard.



Story the Fifth.

THE DUEL WITH THE BUCKLE-STRAP

BY

PHILIPPE DE LAON.

The fifth story relates two judgments of Lord Talbot. How a Frenchman was taken prisoner (though provided with a safe-conduct) by an Englishman, who said that buckle-straps were implements of war, and who was made to arm himself with buckle-straps and nothing else and meet the Frenchman who struck him with a sword in the presence of Talbot. The other story is about a man who robbed a church, and who was made to swear that he would never enter a church again.



TORD Talbot (whom may God pardon) who was, as every one knows, so victorious as leader of the English, gave in his life two judgments which were worthy of being related and held in perpetual remembrance, and in order that the said judgments should be known, I will relate them briefly in this my first story, though it is the fifth amongst the others. I will tell it thus.

During the time that the cursed and pestilent war prevailed between France and England, and which has not yet finished, (1) it happened, as was often the case, that a French soldier was taken prisoner by an Englishman, and, a ransom having been fixed, he was sent under a safe-conduct, signed by Lord Talbot, to his captain, that he might procure his ransom and bring it back to his captor.

As he was on his road, he was met by another Englishman, who, seeing he was a Frenchman, asked him whence he came and whither he was going? The other told him the truth.

"Where is your safe-conduct?" asked the Englishman.

"It is not far off," replied the Frenchman. With that he took the safe-conduct, which was in a little box hung at his belt, and handed it to the Englishman, who read it from one end to the other. And, as is customary, there was written on the safe-conduct, "Forbidden to carry any implements of warfare."

The Englishman noted this, and saw that there were *esguillettes* on the Frenchman's doublet. (2) He imagined that these straps were real implements of war, so he said,

"I make you my prisoner, because you have broken your safe-conduct."

"By my faith, I have not," replied the Frenchman, "saving your grace. You see in what condition I am."

"No! no!" said the Englishman. "By Saint John you have broken your safe-conduct. Surrender, or I will kill you."

The poor Frenchman, who had only his page with him, and was quite unprovided with weapons, whilst the other

(1) It had virtually finished, and the English only retained the town of Calais when this tale was written (about 1455) but they had not relinquished their claim to the French Crown, and hostilities were expected to recommence.

(2) *Esguillettes* were small straps or laces, used to fasten the cuirass to the doublet.

was accompanied by three or four archers, did the best thing he could, and surrendered. The Englishman led him to a place near there, and put him in prison.

The Frenchman, finding himself thus ill-treated, sent in great haste to his captain, who when he heard his man's case, was greatly and marvellously astonished. Thereupon he wrote a letter to Lord Talbot, and sent it by a herald, to ask how it was that one of his men had been arrested by one of Lord Talbot's men whilst under that general's safe-conduct.

The said herald, being well instructed as to what he was to say and do, left his master, and presented the letters to Lord Talbot. He read them, and caused them to be read also by one of his secretaries before many knights and squires and others of his followers.

Thereupon he flew into a great rage, for he was hot-tempered and irritable, and brooked not to be disobeyed, and especially in matters of war; and to question his safe-conduct made him very angry.

To shorten the story, he caused to be brought before him both the Frenchman and the Englishman, and told the Frenchman to tell his tale.

He told how he had been taken prisoner by one of Lord Talbot's people, and put to ransom;

"And under your safe-conduct, my lord, I was on my way to my friends to procure my ransom. I met this gentleman here, who is also one of your followers, who asked me whither I was going, and if I had a safe-conduct? I told him, yes, and showed it to him. And when he had read it he told me that I had broken it, and I replied that I had not, and that he could not prove it. But he would not listen to me, and I was forced, if I would not be killed on the spot, to surrender. I know of no cause why he should have detained me, and I ask justice of you."

Lord Talbot, when he had heard the Frenchman, was

not well content, nevertheless when the latter had finished, my Lord turned to the Englishman and asked,

“What have you to reply to this?”

“My lord,” said he, “it is quite true, as he has said, that I met him and would see his safe-conduct, which when I had read from end to end, I soon perceived that he had broken and violated; otherwise I should never have arrested him.”

“How had he broken it?” asked Lord Talbot. “Tell me quickly!”

“My Lord, because in his safe-conduct he is forbidden all implements of war, and he had, and has still, real implements of war; that is to say he has on his doublet, buckle-straps, which are real implements of war, for without them a man cannot be armed.”

“Ah!” said Lord Talbot, “and so buckle-straps are implements of war are they? Do you know of any other way in which he had broken his safe-conduct?”

“Truly, my lord, I do not,” replied the Englishman.

“What, you villain!” said Lord Talbot. “Have you stopped a gentleman under my safe-conduct for his buckle-straps? By St. George, I will show you whether they are implements of war.”

Then, hot with anger and indignation, he went up to the Frenchman, and tore from his doublet the two straps, and gave them to the Englishman; then he put a sword in the Frenchman’s hand, and drawing his own good sword out of the sheath, said to the Englishman,

“Defend yourself with that implement of war, as you call it, if you know how!”

Then he said to the Frenchman,

“Strike that villain who arrested you without cause or reason, and we shall see how he can defend himself with this implement of war. If you spare him, by St. George I will strike you.”

Thus the Frenchman, whether he would or not, was obliged to strike at the Englishman with the sword, and the poor Englishman protected himself as best he could, and ran about the room, with Talbot after him, who made the Frenchman keep striking the other, and cried out;

“Defend yourself, villain, with your implement of war!”

In truth, the Englishman was so well beaten that he was nearly dead, and cried for mercy to Talbot and the Frenchman. The latter was released from his ransom by Lord Talbot, and his horse, harness, and all his baggage, were given back to him.

Such was the first judgment of Lord Talbot; there remains to be given an account of the other, which was thus.

He learned that one of his soldiers had robbed a church of the pyx in which is placed the Corpus Domini, and sold it for ready money—I know not for how much, but the pyx was big and fine, and beautifully enamelled.

Lord Talbot, who though he was very brutal and wicked in war, had always great reverence for the Church, and would never allow a monastery or church to be set on fire or robbed, heard of this, and he was very severe on those who broke his regulations.

So he caused to be brought before him the man who had stolen the pyx from the church; and when he came, God knows what a greeting he had. Talbot would have killed him, if those around had not begged that his life might be saved. Nevertheless, as he would punish him, he said.

“Rascal traitor! why have you dared to rob a church in spite of my orders?”

“Ah, my lord,” said the poor thief, “for God’s sake have mercy upon me; I will never do it again.”

“Come here, villain,” said Talbot; and the other came up about as willingly as though he were going to the gallows. And the said Lord Talbot rushed at him, and

with his fist, which was both large and heavy, struck him on the head, and cried.

"Ha! you thief! have you robbed a church?"

And the other cried,

"Mercy my lord! I will never do it again."

"Will you do it again?"

"No, my lord!"

"Swear then that you will never again enter a church of any kind. Swear, villain!"

"Very good, my lord," said the other.

Then Talbot made the thief swear that he would never set foot in a church again, which made all who were present and who heard it, laugh, though they pitied the thief because Lord Talbot had forbidden him the church for ever, and made him swear never to enter it. Yet we may believe that he did it with a good motive and intention. Thus you have heard the two judgments of Lord Talbot, which were such as I have related to you.



Story the Sixth.

THE DRUNKARD IN PARADISE

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE LANNOY.

The sixth story is of a drunkard, who would confess to the Prior of the Augustines at the Hague, and after his confession said that he was then in a holy state and would die; and believed that his head was cut off and that he was dead, and was carried away by his companions who said they were going to bury him.



IN the city of The Hague in Holland, as the prior of the Augustine Monastery was one day saying his prayers on the lawn near the chapel of St. Antony, he was accosted by a great, big Dutchman who was exceedingly drunk, and who lived in a village called Schevingen, about two leagues from there.

The prior, who saw him coming from afar, guessed his condition by his heavy and uncertain step, and when they met, the drunkard saluted the prior, who returned the salute, and passed on reading his prayers, proposing neither to stop nor question him.

The drunkard, being half beside himself, turned and pursued the prior, and demanded to be confessed.

"Confession!" said the prior. "Go away! Go away! You have confessed already."

"Alas, sir," replied the drunkard, "for God's sake confess me. At present, I remember all my sins, and am most contrite."

The prior, displeased to be interrupted by a drunkard, replied.

"Go your ways; you have no need of confession, for you are in a very comfortable case as it is."

"Oh, no," said the drunkard, "as sure as death you shall confess me, master Curé, for I am most devout," and he seized him by the sleeve, and would have stopped him.

The priest would not listen to him, and made wonderful efforts to escape, but it was no good, for the other was obstinate in his desire to confess, which the priest would not hear.

The devotion of the drunkard increased more and more, and when he saw that the priest still refused to hear his sins, he put his hand on his big knife and drew it from its sheath, and told the priest he would kill him, if he did not listen to his confession.

The priest, being afraid of a knife in such dangerous hands, did not know what to do, so he asked the other,

"What is it you want?"

"I wish to confess," said he.

"Very well; I will hear you," said the priest. "Come here."

Our drunkard,—being more tipsy than a thrush in a vineyard,—began, so please you, his devout confession,—over which I pass, for the priest never revealed it, but you may guess it was both novel and curious.

The priest cut short the wearisome utterances of the

drunkard, and gave him absolution, and, to get rid of him, said;

“Go away now; you have made a good confession.”

“Say you so, sir?” he replied.

“Yes, truly,” said the priest, “it was a very good confession. Go, and sin no more!”

“Then, since I have well confessed and received absolution, if I were to die now, should I go to paradise?” asked the drunkard.

“Straight! Straight!” replied the priest. “There can be no doubt about it.”

“Since that is so,” said the drunkard, “and I am now in a holy state, I would like to die at once, in order that I may go to heaven.”

With that he took and gave his knife to the priest, begging of him to cut off his head, in order that he might go to paradise.

“Oh, no!” said the priest, much astonished. “It is not my business to do that—you must go to heaven by some other means.”

“No,” replied the drunkard, “I wish to go there now, and to die here by your hands. Come, and kill me.”

“I will not do that,” said the prior. “A priest must not kill any one.”

“You shall I swear; and if you do not at once despatch me and send me to heaven I will kill you with my own hands,” and at these words he brandished his big knife before the eyes of the priest, who was terrified and alarmed.

At last, having thought the matter over,—that he might get rid of this drunkard, who was becoming more and more aggressive, and perchance might have taken his life, he seized the knife, and said;

“Well! since you wish to die by my hands in order that you may go to paradise,—kneel down before me.”

The words were hardly uttered before the drunkard fell flat, and with some trouble raised himself to his knees, and with his hands joined together, awaited the blow of the sword which was to kill him.

The priest gave the drunkard a heavy blow with the back of the knife, which felled him to the ground, where he lay, and would not get up, believing himself to be in paradise.

Then the priest left, not forgetting for his own safety to take the knife with him, and ere he had gone far he met a waggon full of people some of whom had been along with the drunkard that day, to whom he recounted all the story—begging that they would raise him and convey him home; he also gave them the knife.

They promised to take charge of him, and the priest went away. They had hardly started on their way, when they perceived the good toper, lying as though dead, with his face to the ground; and when they were nigh to him, they all with one voice shouted his name,—but, shout as they would, he made no reply. Then they cried out again, but it was no use.

Then some of them descended from the waggon, and they took him by the head, and the feet, and the legs, and raised him from the ground, and so shook him that he opened his eyes and said,

“Leave me alone! Leave me alone! I am dead!”

“No, you are not,” said his companions. “You must come along with us.”

“I will not,” said the drunkard. “Where should I go? I am dead, and already in heaven.”

“You must come,” said the others. “We will get some drink.”

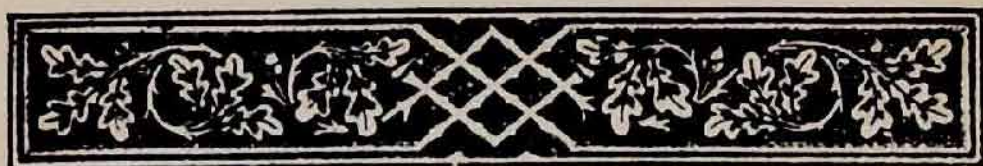
“Drink?” said the other. “I shall never drink again; I am dead;” and for all that his comrades could say or do, they could not get it out of his head but that he was dead.

The dispute lasted long, and they could not persuade the drunkard to accompany them; for to all that they said he always replied, "I am dead".

At last one of them bethought himself, and said,

"Then since you are dead, you must not lie here and be buried like a beast of the field. Come! come along with us, and we will carry you in our waggon to the grave-yard of our town as befits a Christian. Otherwise you will not go to heaven."

When the drunkard heard that he must be buried in order that he might go to heaven, he was satisfied to obey, so he was soon tucked up in the waggon, where he was quickly asleep. The waggon was drawn by good cattle, and they were speedily at Stevingen, where the good drunkard was put down in front of his house. His wife and servants were called, and the body given to them, for he slept so soundly that he was carried from the waggon to the house and put in his bed without ever waking, and being laid between the sheets, at last woke up two days later.



Story the Seventh.

THE WAGGONER IN THE REAR

BY

MONSEIGNEUR.

Of a goldsmith of Paris who made a waggoner sleep with him and his wife, and how the waggoner dallied with her from behind, which the goldsmith perceived and discovered, and of the words which he spake to the waggoner.



A goldsmith of Paris, once, in order to complete some of his wares in time for the fair of Lendit, laid in a large stock of willow charcoal.

It happened one day amongst others, that the waggoner who delivered this charcoal, knowing that the goldsmith was in great haste, brought two waggons more than he had on any previous day, but hardly had he entered Paris with the last load than the city gates were shut on his heels. Nevertheless, he was well received by the goldsmith, and after the charcoal was unloaded, and the horses stabled, they all supped at their leisure, and made great cheer, and drank heavily. Just as the meal finished the clock struck midnight, which astonished them greatly, so quickly had the time passed at supper.

Le charreton à l'arrière garde



Each one thanked God, and being heavy-eyed, only asked to go to bed, but as it was so late, the goldsmith detained the waggoner, fearing that he might meet the watch, who would have put him into the Châtelet had they found him at that hour of the night.

At that time the goldsmith had many persons working for him, and he was obliged to make the waggoner lie with him and his wife, and, not being of a suspicious nature, he made his wife lie between him and the waggoner.

He had great trouble to arrange this, for the good waggoner refused his hospitality, and would rather have slept in the barn or stable, but he was obliged to obey the goldsmith. And after he had undressed, he got into bed, in which already were the goldsmith and his wife, as I have already said.

The wife feeling the waggoner approach her, moved nearer her husband, both on account of the cold and the smallness of the bed, and, instead of a pillow, placed her head upon her husband's breast, whilst her backside rested on the waggoner's knees.

Our goldsmith soon went to sleep, and his wife pretended to also, and the waggoner, being tired from his work, did the same. But as the stallion grows hot as soon as he approaches the mare, so did this stallion lift up his head on feeling so near to him the aforesaid woman.

It was not within the power of the waggoner to refrain from attacking her closely; and this lasted for some time without the woman waking, or at least pretending to wake. Nor would the husband have awaked, had it not been that the head of his wife reclined on his breast, and owing to the assault of this stallion, gave him such a bump that he quickly woke.

He thought at first that his wife was dreaming, but as her dream continued, and he heard the waggoner moving about and breathing hard, he gently put down his hand,

and found what ravage the stallion of the waggoner was making in his warren;—at which, as he loved his wife, he was not well content. He soon made the waggoner withdraw, and said to him,

“What are you doing, you wicked rascal? You must be mad to attack my wife in that way. Don't do it again! Morbleu! I declare to you that if she had woken just now when your machine was pushing her, I don't know what she would have done; but I feel certain, as I know her well, that she would have scratched your face, and torn out your eyes with her nails. You don't know what she will do when she loses her temper, and there is nothing in the world which puts her out more. Take it away, I beg, for your own sake.”

The waggoner, in a few words, declared that it was unintentional, and, as day was breaking, he rose and took his leave and went away with his cart.

You may fancy that the good woman on whom the waggoner made this attempt was displeased in another way than her husband fancied; and afterwards it was said that the waggoner met her in the proper way: but I would not believe it or credit the report.



Story the Eighth.

TIT FOR TAT

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE LA ROCHE.

Of a youth of Picardy who lived at Brussels, and made his master's daughter pregnant, and for that cause left and came back to Picardy to be married. And soon after his departure the girl's mother perceived the condition of her daughter, and the girl confessed in what state she was; so her mother sent her to the Picardian to tell him that he must undo that which he had done. And how his new bride refused then to sleep with him, and of the story she told him, whereupon he immediately left her, and returned to his first love, and married her.

IN the city of Brussels, where a good many adventures have happened in our time, there lived not long ago a young man of Picardy, who served his master well and faithfully for a long period. And amongst other services which he did the said master was this; that by his civil speech, bearing, and courtesy he so gained the graces of his master's daughter, that he

lay with her, and owing to his meritorious actions she became pregnant.

The youth, knowing the lady was in that condition, was not such a fool as to wait until his master should perceive and know it. So he quickly asked leave to absent himself for a few days,—albeit he had no intention to return—pretending that he must go to Picardy to see his father and mother, and some others of his relations.

Then he took farewell of his master and mistress, and had a most piteous leave-taking with the daughter; to whom he promised quickly to return,—which he did not, and for good cause.

When he was in Picardy, at the house of his father, his master's daughter grew so big with child that her sad condition could no longer be concealed; amongst others, her worthy mother, who was experienced in such matters, was the first to notice it. She took her daughter on one side, and asked her how she came to be in that condition, and who was the cause of it. The girl had to be much pressed and scolded before she would say anything, but at last was forced to confess her sad condition, and own that it was the Picardian, who, a short while before, had been servant to her father, who had seduced her, and left her in that pitiful case.

Her mother was furious, and abused her till she could say no more, which the poor girl bore so patiently and without saying a word, that it was enough to excuse her for letting herself be put in the family-way by the Picardian.

But alas! her patient endurance had no effect upon her mother, who said;

“Go away! go away! disgraceful hussy! and do your best to find the man who made you pregnant, and tell him to undo that which he has done! Never come back to me till he has undone the wrong he has done you.”

The poor girl, who was in the condition you have heard,

was crushed and overcome by the wrath of her cruel mother, and set out in search of the young man who had ruined her; and you may well imagine, had to endure much trouble and pain before she could hear any news of him.

But at last, as God so willed it, after much wandering about through Picardy, she came, one Sunday, to a large village in the county of Artois, and she came most opportunely, for on that day her friend, the Picardian who had deceived her, was to be married, at which she was very joyful. And she cared so little about obeying her mother, that, big as she was, she pressed amongst the crowd, and when she saw her lover, she saluted him. He, when he saw her, blushed, and returned her salutation, and said to her;

“You are very welcome! What brings you here at this time, my dear?”

“My mother,” she replied, “sent me to you, and God knows that you have caused me much upbraiding. She charged and commanded me that I should tell you that you must undo that which you have done, or, if you do not, I am never to go back to her.”

The other, when he heard this, to get rid of her as soon as he could, spoke as follows.

“My dear, I will willingly do that which you ask and your mother requires me to do, for it is very reasonable, but at this moment I cannot be seen talking to you. I beg of you to have patience for to-day, and to-morrow I will attend to your request.”

With that she was content, and then he caused her to be taken and put in a fair chamber, and commanded that she should be well-treated, as she deserved to be, after the great trouble and difficulty she had had in seeking him out.

Now you must know that the bride had kept her eyes open, and when she saw her husband talking to a woman

big with child, she had misgivings, and was by no means satisfied, but much troubled and vexed in mind.

She nursed her wrath, and said nothing until her husband came to bed. And when he would have cuddled and kissed her, and done his proper duty as a husband, and so earned his "caudle", (¹) she turned herself first on one side and then on the other, so that he could not attain his purpose, at which he was greatly astonished and angry, and said to her,

"Why do you do that, my dear?"

"I have good cause," she replied, "for I see from your acts that you do not care for me. There are many others you like better than me."

"By my faith," said he, "there is no woman in the world I love better than you."

"Ah!" she said, "did I not see you after dinner holding discourse for a long time with a woman who was in the room! I saw you only too plainly, and you cannot excuse yourself."

"By our Lady," he replied, "you have no cause to be jealous about her," and with that he told her that it was the daughter of his master at Brussels, and how he had lain with her and made her pregnant, and on that account he had left the place; and how also after his departure, she became so big with child that it was perceived, and then she had confessed to her mother who had seduced her, and her mother had sent her to him that he might undo that which he had done, or else she must never return home.

When the young man had finished his story, his wife who had been struck by one portion of it, said;

"What? Do you say that she told her mother you had slept with her?"

(¹) It was the custom in the Middle Ages to bring in the middle of the wedding night, a caudle of hot milk, soup, or spiced wine to the married couple.

"Yes," he said; "she made it all known to her."

"On my word!" she replied, "then she proved herself very stupid. The waggoner at our house slept with me more than forty nights, but you don't suppose that I breathed a word of that to my mother. I took good care to say nothing."

"Truly," quoth he, "the devil takes care that the gibbet is not cheated. ⁽¹⁾ Go back to your waggoner if you like; for I care nothing for you."

Thereupon he arose and went to the woman he had seduced, and left the other one; and when the morning came and this news was noised abroad, God knows that it amused many and displeased many others, especially the father and mother of the bride.

(1) In other words, we are punished for our ill-deeds.



Story the Ninth.

THE HUSBAND PANDAR TO HIS OWN WIFE

BY

MONSEIGNEUR.

Of a knight of Burgundy, who was marvellously amorous of one of his wife's waiting-women, and thinking to sleep with her, slept with his wife who was in the bed of the said tire-woman. And how he caused, by his order, another knight, his neighbour, to sleep with the said woman, believing that it was really the tire-woman—and afterwards he was not well pleased, albeit that the lady knew nothing, and was not aware. I believe, that she had had to do with aught other than her own husband.

IN order to properly continue these stories, the incidents of which happen in divers places and under various circumstances, there should not be omitted the tale of a gentle knight of Burgundy, who lived in a castle of his own that was fair and strong, and well provided with retainers and artillery, as his condition required.

Se mari maquereau de sa femme



Coeyco

He fell in love with a fair damsel of his household, who was chief tire-woman to his wife, and his great affection for her took such hold upon him that he could not be happy without her, and was always conversing with her and beseeching her, and, in short, life seemed no good without her, so filled with love of her was he.

The girl, being chaste and prudent, wished to keep her honour, which she valued as she did her own soul, and would not betray the duty she owed to her mistress, and therefore she lent no ear to her master when he importuned her. And whenever he spoke to her, God knows what a rebuff he met, and how she remonstrated with him as to his boldness and ill-conduct. Moreover, she told him that if he continued she would inform her mistress.

But, in spite of her threats, he would not abandon the enterprise, but pursued her more and more, so that at last the girl was forced to tell her mistress.

The lady being informed of her lord's love affair, though she did not show it, was not well pleased; but she devised a plan, which was this.

She charged the girl that the next time the knight solicited her, that she should lay aside all reserve, and inform him that on the following night she would expect him in her chamber and in her bed; "And if he should accept the rendezvous," added the lady; "I will take your place; and leave the rest to me."

The girl was pleased to obey her mistress, as was her duty, and promised she would do as she was bid.

It was not long before my lord again returned to the charge, and prayed her more warmly than before, saying that if she did not grant his prayer, he would rather die than live longer in this hopeless passion.

What need is there of a long story? The girl, being thoroughly well-instructed by her mistress, appointed an hour at which he should come to her the next night, at

which he was so well-pleased that his heart leapt for joy, and he promised himself that he would not fail to be there.

The desired day arrived, but in the evening, a gentle knight, a neighbour of my lord and his great friend, came to see him, for whom my lord made, as he well knew how, great cheer; as did my lady also, and the rest of the household were not behind-hand, knowing that to be the good pleasure of my lord and my lady.

After much feasting and a supper and a banquet, it was time to retire to rest, and having said good-night to the lady and her women, the two knights began to talk over various matters, and, amongst other things, the visitor asked my lord if there were any pretty women with shoulder-knots in the village, ⁽¹⁾ for the weather being fine, and having made good cheer, he had a desire for a woman.

My lord, on account of the great love he bore his friend, would hide nothing from him, and told him how he had that night agreed to sleep with the tire-woman; and that he might do his friend pleasure, when he had been with her a certain time, he would, he said, rise gently, and go away, and let the visitor do the rest.

The visitor thanked his host, and God knows that the hour seemed long in coming. At last the host took leave of his guest, and went to his room, as was his custom, to undress.

Now you must know that whilst the knights were talking, my lady went to the bed in which my lord expected to find the tiring-maid, and there she awaited whatever God might be pleased to send her.

My lord was a long time undressing, to give time to his wife to go to sleep. He then dismissed his valet, and in his long dressing-gown went to where his lady awaited

⁽¹⁾ In some towns of the south of France, in the Middle Ages, the courtesans used to wear a knot of coloured ribbon on the shoulder.

him,—he thinking to find some-one else,—and silently undressed and got into bed.

And as the candle was put out, and the lady uttered no word, he believed he was with the woman. Hardly had he got into bed before he began to perform his duty, and so well did he acquit himself, that three, even four, times did not content him; whereat his wife felt great pleasure, and thinking that that was all, fell asleep.

My lord, now much lighter than when he came, seeing that the lady slept, and remembering his promise, rose quietly and went to his friend, who was awaiting orders to go into action, and told him to take his place, but that he must not speak a word, and must come away when he had done all that he wished.

The other, as wide-awake as a rat, and straining at the leash like a greyhound,—went, and lay down by the lady without her knowing of it. And though he felt assured that my lord had already worked well, and he was in haste, he did better, at which my lady was in no small degree astonished, and after this amusement—which was not distasteful to her—she again fell asleep.

Then the good knight left her, and returned to my lord, who again resumed his place by my lady's side as before, and made a fresh attack upon her—so well did the exercise please him.

Thus the hours passed,—either in sleeping or doing something else,—until day broke; and as he turned round in bed, expecting to behold the tire-woman, he saw and knew that it was his wife, who thereupon said to him.

“Are you not a recreant, cowardly, and wicked whore-monger? You thought to have had my tire-woman, and it is upon me that you have so many times essayed your unbridled and measureless lust. Thank God you have been deceived, for no one else shall ever have that which belongs to me.”

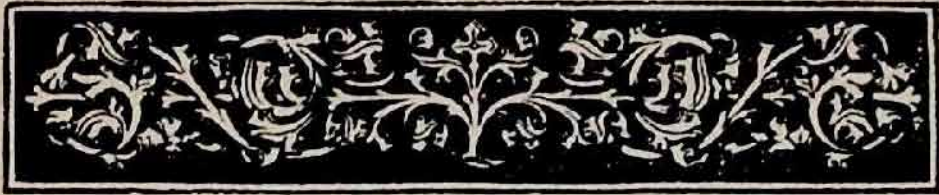
The good knight was both astonished and angry, and no wonder. And when he spoke at last, he said.

“My dear, I cannot hide from you my folly, and I greatly grieve ever to have undertaken such an enterprise. I beg of you to be satisfied with what you have done, and never mention it for never in all my life shall it occur again. That I promise you on my honour; and that you may never have occasion to be reminded of it, I will send away the woman who has played this trick upon me.”

The lady, who was more satisfied with this adventure than her woman, and seeing how contrite her husband was, allowed herself to be gained-over, but not without making some remonstrances and scoldings.

In the end, all was arranged satisfactorily, but the knight, who had a flea in his ear, as soon as he rose, went to his companion, to whom he related the adventure at full length, and demanded from him two promises; the first was that he should strictly promise to say nothing of the matter, and the second that he should never meet his wife again.

The other, who was much vexed at this unfortunate affair, comforted the knight as best he could, and promised to perform his very reasonable requests; then mounted his horse and rode off. The tire-woman, who was not to blame for the *contretemps*, bore the punishment however, and was sent away. The knight and the lady lived long together without her ever being aware that she had had to do with a strange knight.



Story the Tenth.

THE EEL PASTIES

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE LA ROCHE.

Of a knight of England, who, after he was married, wished his mignon to procure him some pretty girls, as he did before; which the mignon would not do, saying that one wife sufficed; but the said knight brought him back to obedience by causing eel pasties to be always served to him, both at dinner and at supper.



MANY wonderful and curious adventures have occurred in England, though their recital would be out of place amongst these tales.

Nevertheless, the present story is appropriate to be told here to increase the number of these tales, and is of a great lord of the kingdom of England, who was very rich and powerful, and who, amongst all his servitors, had especial trust, confidence, and affection in a young gentleman of his household, and that for various reasons. And because of his loyalty, diligence, cunning, and prudence, and other good qualities he found in him, he hid from him nothing concerning his love-affairs.

As time went on, the said young gentleman, by his cleverness, grew so much in his master's favour, that he not only knew his master's love-affairs, but acted as emissary and go-between on every occasion, as long as his master was unmarried.

But a certain time after that, it happened that by the advice of his relatives, friends, and well-wishers, my lord was married to a beautiful, noble, good, and rich lady, much to the joy of many persons; and amongst other our *mignon* was not the least joyful, as he said to himself that the marriage would be to his master's welfare and honour, and would cause him he hoped to cease from those pleasures of love which he had hitherto practised.

One day he told the lord how glad he was that he had married a fair and good lady, for now he would not need to have women sought for him as before. To which my lord replied that nevertheless he did not intend to abandon all his love-affairs, and although he was married would sometimes employ the young man's services.

The youth was not pleased to hear this, and replied that such amours should cease now that his love was shared by a lady who excelled all others in beauty, prudence, and goodness.

"Do as you please, my lord," said he, "but, for my part, I will never carry a message to any woman if it is to prejudice my mistress."

"I know not what you mean by prejudice," said his master, "but you must prepare to go to such and such ladies. For I would have you know that your duties will be as they were before."

"Oh, my lord," said the youth, "it seems that you take a pleasure in abusing women, which is not right; for you know well that all those you have named are not to be compared in beauty or other respects to my lady, to whom you are offering a deadly insult if she

should ever hear of your misconduct. And what is more, you cannot be ignorant that in so doing you damn your own soul."

"Cease your preaching," said my lord, "and do as I command."

"Pardon me, my lord," said the youth. "I would rather die than, through my means, trouble should arise between you and my lady; and I beg of you to be satisfied with me as I am, for certainly I will no more act as I once used."

My lord, who saw how obstinate the young man was, pressed him no more at that time. But three or four days after that, without alluding to the conversation they had had, he demanded of the young man, amongst other things, what dish he preferred, and he replied that no dish pleased him so much as eel pasties.

"By St. John, it is a good dish," said his master; "you have not chosen badly."

That being said, my lord retired, and caused to be sent to him his major-domo, whom he charged by his obedience that he should serve to the young man nothing but eel pasties, whatsoever he might say or do; and the major-domo promised to perform his commands, which he did, for on the same day, as the said youth was seated at table in his chamber, his servant brought unto him many fair and large eel pasties which had been delivered to him from the kitchen,—at which he was pleased, and ate his fill.

On the morrow it was the same, and the five or six following days he was brought like pasties, of which he was already weary. So the youth asked of his servants why they brought him nothing but these pasties?

"By my faith, sir," they replied, "they will give us nothing else. We see very well that they send to the hall and elsewhere, other meats; but for you there is nothing but pasties."

The young man, being wise and prudent, and caring little for his stomach, made no complaint, and several days passed; during which he was still served with these everlasting pies, at which he was not best pleased.

One day he determined to go and dine with the stewards, where he was served as before with eel pasties. And when he saw that, he could not help asking why they served him differently to the others.

"God's death!" quoth he, "I am so stuffed that I can eat no more. It seems to me that I see nothing but eel pies. Let me tell you there is no sense in it,—you carry the joke too far. For more than a month you have played this trick upon me. I am so worn-out that I have neither health nor strength. I do not like to be treated in this manner."

The stewards told him that they only did as their master had bidden them, and that it was not their own doing. The young man, wearied of these pies, determined to complain to my lord, and ask him why he had caused the eel pies to be always served, and forbidden the cooks to supply any other dish.

In reply, my lord said unto him, "Did you not tell me that eel pie was the dish that you most liked in all the world?"

"By St. John, yes, my lord," said the youth.

"Then why do you complain now," said my lord, "since I cause you to be served with that which you like?"

"I like them," replied the young man, "in moderation. I like exceedingly to have eel pies once, or twice, or three times, or now and then, and there is no dish I love better. But to eat it always, and nothing else beside,—by Our Lady I will not. Any man would be sick and weary. My stomach is so sick of eel pasties, that the moment I smell them I have already dined. For God's sake, my lord, command that I be given some other food

that I may recover my appetite; otherwise I am a dead man."

"Ah!" said my lord, "Yet it seems that you do not think I shall be a dead man if I content myself with the charms of my wife. By my soul, you may believe that I am as weary of them as you are of the pasties, and would as willingly have a change,—though there is none I love so much—as you desire another dish, though you like pasties best. In short, you shall eat no other food until you consent to serve me as you did before, and bring me a variety of women,—even as you would have a variety of dishes."

The young man, when he heard this subtle comparison, was confused, and promised his master that he would do all that was desired, if he could but be quit of his pasties, and would carry messages and conduct intrigues as before. And from that time forth my lord, to spare my lady, and by the good help of his *mignon*, passed his time with fair and honest damsels, and the young man was relieved of his eel pasties, and restored to his old office.



Story the Eleventh.

A SACRIFICE TO THE DEVIL

BY

MONSEIGNEUR.

Of a jealous rogue, who after many offerings made to divers saints to cure him of his jealousy, offered a candle to the devil who is usually painted under the feet of St. Michael; and of the dream that he had and what happened to him when he awoke.

A cowardly, jealous old hunk (I will not say that he was a cuckold) knew not to whom to have recourse to be cured of his jealous grief and misery. To-day he would make one pilgrimage, and to-morrow another, and often would send his servants to perform his devotions and make offerings whilst he was seated in his house to look after his wife, who Passed her time miserably with the most cursed husband and suspicious grumbler that ever woman married.

One day, as he thought of the many offerings that he had made or was to make to the various saints in heaven and amongst others to St. Michael, he bethought him that

he would make one to the figure that is under the feet of the said St. Michael.

With that he commanded one of his servants to light and bring a large wax candle, and offer it on his behalf. Soon it was reported to him that his orders had been obeyed.

"Thus," said he to himself, "I shall see if God or the devil can cure me," and in his usual ill-temper he went to bed with his good and honest wife, and perhaps because he had so many fancies and whims in his head that nature was restrained, she lay in peace.

In fact he slept soundly, and when he was in the depth of his sleep, he to whom the candle had that day been offered, appeared unto him in a vision, and thanked him for his offering, declaring that such a sacrifice had never before been made to him. Moreover, he told the man that he had not lost his labour, and should obtain his request, and whilst the other lay still in deep sleep, it seemed to him that a ring was placed on his finger, and he was told that whilst that ring was on his finger he should never be jealous or have any cause for jealousy.

After the vision had vanished, our jealous hunks awoke, and expected to find on his finger the said ring, and found that one of his fingers was in the backside of his wife, at which both he and she were much astonished.

But of the rest of the life of this jealous fool, and of his business and condition, this story is silent.



Story the Twelfth.

THE CALF

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE LA ROCHE.

Of a Dutchman, who at all hours of the day and night ceased not to dally with his wife in love sports; and how it chanced that he laid her down, as they were passing through a wood, under a great tree in which was a labourer who had lost his calf. And as he was enumerating the charms of his wife, and naming all the pretty things he could see, the labourer asked him if he could not see the calf he sought, to which the Dutchman replied that he thought he could see a tail.



IN the borders of Holland there formerly lived a foolish fellow, who determined to do the worst thing he could—that is, get married. And so entranced was he with the joys of wedlock, that although it was winter, he was so heated that the night—which at that season was nine or ten hours—was not sufficiently long to enable him to appease the ardent desires which he felt.



Le veau

Wherever he met his wife he put her on her back; whether it was in the chamber, or in the stable, or any other place, he always attacked her. And this did not last only one or two months, but longer than I care to tell, for it would not be convenient that many women should hear of the zeal of this insatiable worker. What more shall I say? He performed so often that his memory has never been forgotten, or will be, in that country. And in truth the woman who formerly complained to the Bailli of Amiens had not such good cause as this man's wife, but, notwithstanding that she could often have dispensed with this pleasant task she was always obedient to her husband, and never restive under the spur.

It chanced one day, after dinner, when the weather was very fine, and the sun shot its rays over the flower-embroidered earth, that the fancy came to this man and his wife that they two would go alone to the woods, and they started on their road.

Now, in order that you may learn my story, let me tell you that exactly at the same time as these good folk went forth to play in the wood, it chanced that a labourer had lost his calf, which he had put to graze in a field at the edge of the wood; but when he came to search for his calf he could not find it, at which he was sad at heart.

So he set out to search for the said calf both in the wood and in the fields, and the places round about, to gather news of it.

He bethought him that perchance it might have wandered into some thicket to graze, or to some grassy ditch which it would not leave till it had filled its belly; and to the end that he might the better see, without running hither and thither, whether his surmise was right, he chose the highest and thickest tree that he could find, and climbed into it, and when he had climbed to the top of his tree, from whence he could see all the adjacent fields and

wood, he was sure that he was half-way towards finding his calf.

Whilst the honest fellow was casting his eyes on all sides to find his calf, there came through the wood our man and his wife, singing, playing, and rejoicing, as light hearts will do in a pleasant place. Nor was it wonderful that the desire came to him to tumble his wife in such a pleasant and suitable place, and looking now to the right now to the left for a spot where he might conveniently take his pleasure, he saw the big tree in which was the labourer—though he knew it not—and under that tree he prepared to accomplish his pleasant purposes.

And when he came to that place, his desires soon inflamed him, and he waited not to begin his work, but attacked his wife and threw her on the ground, for at that time he was very merry and his wife also.

He would fain see her both before and behind, and for that reason took off her dress, so that she was only in her petticoat, and that he pulled up very high in spite of her efforts, and that he might the better see at his ease her beauties, he turned her this way and that, and three or four times did his strong hand fall upon her big buttocks. Then he turned her on the other side, and as he had regarded her backside, so did he her front, to which the good, honest woman would in no wise consent, and besides the resistance that she made, her tongue was not idle.

She called him "ungracious", "a fool", "a madman", "disgusting", and many other things, but it was no good; he was stronger than she was, and would make an inventory of all her charms, and she was forced to let him, — preferring, like a wise woman, to please her husband, than to annoy him by a refusal.

Having broken down all her defences, this valiant man feasted his eyes on her front part, and, shame to say,

was not content until his hands had revealed to his eyes all the secrets for which he searched.

And as he was profoundly studying her body, he would say, "I see this! I see that! Now again this! Now again that!" until whosoever heard him would have thought he saw all the world and much beside. And, finally, after a long and thorough examination, he cried, "Holy Mary! what a lot of things I see!"

"Alas, good people," then said the labourer in the tree; "you do not happen to see my calf? It seems to me, sir, that I can see its tail."

The other was much vexed and astonished, and replied quickly,

"That tail is not the tail of your calf," and with that he walked away, and his wife after him.

If it should be asked what moved the labourer to put that question, the writer of this story would reply that the hair in front of this woman was very long and thick, as is usual with the Dutch women, and he might well have thought it was the tail of his calf, and as also her husband was saying that he could see so many things—nearly everything there was in the world—the labourer thought to himself that the calf could hardly be far off, but might be hidden inside along with the other things.



Story the Thirteenth.

THE CASTRATED CLERK

BY

MONSEIGNEUR L'AMANT DE BRUCELLES.

How a lawyer's clerk in England deceived his master, making him believe that he had no testicles, by which reason he had charge over his mistress both in the country and in the town, and enjoyed his pleasure.



AT London, in England, there formerly lived a lawyer, who, amongst his other servitors, had a clerk who was clever, and diligent, wrote well, and was a handsome lad, and was, moreover, let it be stated, as cunning as any man of his age.

This gentle and lusty clerk was much smitten with his mistress, — a beautiful, kind, and gentle dame — who so much admired him that if ever he had but dared to reveal his affection, the god of love would have led her to confess that he was the only man on earth who pleased her.

It chanced that once, being in a suitable place, and all fear being laid aside, he recounted unto the said lady his sad, but not unpleasant, case; and she by the great courtesy which God had not forgotten to give her, being

Le clerc chastré



already touched as has before been said, did not long delay; for after she had addressed to him many excuses and remonstrances, she was glad to let him know that he pleased her well.

The other,—who was no fool—was more joyed than he had ever been, and determined to hammer the iron while it was hot, and so warmly pursued her, that ere long he enjoyed her love.

The love of the mistress for the clerk, and of the clerk for the mistress, was for a long time so ardent, that never were people more taken with each other; for not seldom did they forget to eat and drink, and it would not have been in the power of Malbouche or Dangier (¹) nor other such cursed sprites, to have disturbed their happiness.

In this joyous state and pleasant pastime, they passed many days such as are rarely given to lovers, and so fond were they of each other, that they would almost have renounced their share of paradise, to live in the world in that condition.

It chanced one day they were together, talking of the great affection they bore each other, and devising how they could safely continue to take their pleasure without some inkling of their dangerous pastime being known to her husband, who was as jealous as a man could be.

You may fancy that more than one idea occurred to them, which I here pass over, but the final conclusion and supreme resolution of the good clerk, was to vow to act carefully and bring his undertaking to a lucky termination,—in which he failed not, and this is how he accomplished his end.

You must know that while the clerk was on intimate and friendly terms with his mistress, and diligently served and pleased her, he was at the same time not less diligent

(¹) Allegorical personages, typifying slander and jealousy, mentioned in the *Romaunt de la Rose*.

to serve and please his master, that he might the better conceal his own faults and blind the eyes of the jealous husband, who little suspected what was being prepared for him.

One day soon after, our clerk, seeing that his master was well satisfied with him, spoke to him when he was alone, most humbly, softly, and with great respect, and told him that he had a great secret which he would willingly reveal if he dared.

And, it must be told, that like women, who have tears at their command and can shed them whenever they like, our clerk, whilst he spoke, let fall from his eyes tears in great abundance,—which any man would have taken to be signs of sorrow, pity, and honest purpose.

When the poor abused master heard his clerk, he was much astonished, and said,

“What is the matter, my son, and why do you weep?”

“Alas, sir, I have much more cause than anyone else to be sorrowful, but my case is so strange, and not the less pitiful, that it should be hidden; nevertheless I have determined to tell you, if I can lay aside the fear which for long has haunted me.”

“Do not weep, my son,” replied his master, “and tell me what it is, and I assure you that if it is possible for me to aid, you I will willingly give you all the assistance I can.”

“Master,” said the cunning clerk, “I thank you; but I have thought the matter over, and I do not think my tongue will be able to relate the great misfortune that I have long time borne.”

“Leave all your grief and pratings,” replied the master. “Nothing ought to be hidden from me, as your master, and I wish to know what is the matter; therefore come here and tell me.”

The clerk, who knew the length of his master’s foot,

had to be much entreated, and pretended to be in great fear, and shed great abundance of tears before he would accede and say what he had to say, and then made his master promise that he would reveal the secret to no man, for he would rather die than have his misfortune known.

The master having given this promise, the clerk—pale, and trembling like a man who was going to be hanged—told his story.

“My most worthy master, I know that all people, and you amongst them, imagine that I am a natural man like any other, capable of having connexion with a woman, and creating children; but I affirm and can prove that I am not such—to my great sorrow, alas.”

And with these words he pulled out his member and showed his bag. He had with much time and trouble pushed up his testicles towards his lower belly, and so well concealed them that it seemed as though he had none. Then he said,

“Master, you now know my misfortune, which I again beg of you not to let be known, and, moreover, I humbly beg of you by all the services I have ever rendered,—which would have been greater if my power had equalled my will—that you will allow me to pass the rest of my life in some holy monastery, where I may spend my time in the service of God, for I am of no use in the world.”

His worthy and much-abused master discoursed unto him of the austerities of a religious life, and how little merit there was in becoming a monk out of grief for a misfortune, and by many other means, too numerous to recount here, prevailed on him to renounce his intention. And you must know, moreover, that he would on no account lose his clerk, on account of his skill in writing, and diligence, and the use he intended to make of him.

What need to say more? He so remonstrated that the clerk, in short, promised to remain for a further time in his service. And as the clerk had revealed his secret, so also did the master lay bare his own heart, and said;

“My son, I am not glad to hear of your misfortune; but in the end God orders all things for the best, and knows what is most suitable for us. You can in future serve me well, and merit all that is in my power to do for you. I have a young wife, who is light-hearted and flighty, and I am old and staid; which might give occasion to some to dishonour me and her also, if she should prove other than chaste, and afford me matter for jealousy, and many other things. I entrust her to you that you may watch over her, and I beg of you to guard her so that I may have no reason to be jealous.”

After long deliberation, the clerk gave his reply, and when he spoke, God knows how he praised his most fair and kind mistress, saying that she excelled all others in beauty and goodness, of that he was sure. Nevertheless, that service or any other he would perform with all his heart, and never leave her whatever might happen, but inform his master of all that occurred, as a good servant should.

The master, pleased and joyful at the new guardian he had found for his wife, left the house, and went to the town to do his business. And the good clerk at once entered upon his duties, and, as much as they dared, employed the members with which they were provided, and made great cheer over the subtle manner in which the husband had been deceived. For a long period did they continue thus to enjoy themselves; and if at any time the good husband was forced to go abroad, he took care to leave his clerk behind; rather would he borrow a servant from one of his neighbours than not leave the clerk to mind house. And if the lady had leave to

go on any pilgrimage, she would rather go without her tire-woman than without the kind and obliging clerk.

In short, as you may suppose, never could clerk boast of a more lucky adventure, and which—so far as I know—never came to the knowledge of the husband, who would have been overcome with grief had he learned of the trick.



Story the Fourteenth.

THE POPE-MAKER, OR THE HOLY MAN

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE CREQUY.

Of a hermit who deceived the daughter of a poor woman, making her believe that her daughter should have a son by him who should become Pope; and how, when she brought forth it was a girl, and thus was the trickery of the hermit discovered, and for that cause he had to flee from that country.



THE borders of Burgundy furnish many adventures worthy to be written and remembered, and have provided the present story, not to speak of many others which could be related. I will here only speak of an adventure which happened formerly in a big village on the river Ousche.

There was, and is still, a mountain near, on which a hermit—of God knows what sort—made his residence, and who under the cloak of hypocrisy did many strange things, which did not come to the knowledge of the common people until the time when God would no longer suffer his most damnable abuses to continue.

Le faiseur de pape



Eschigue

This holy hermit was during all his life as lewd and mischievous as an old ape, but surpassed all ordinary mortals in cunning. And this is what he did.

He sought amongst all the women and pretty girls the one most worthy to be loved and desired, and resolved that it was the daughter of a poor, simple woman,—a widow who was very devout and charitable—and made up his mind that, if he could have his way, she should become his prey.

One night, about midnight, when the weather was very rough and stormy, he descended from the mountain and came to the village, and passing by bye-roads and footpaths, came to where the mother and daughter lived, without being seen or heard. He knew the house, which was not large, and to which he had often been for devotional purposes.

He bored a hole in a part of the wall not exposed, and near the spot where stood the bed of the simple widow woman, and passing a long, hollow stick, with which he was provided, and without awaking the widow, placed it near her ear, and said in a low voice, three times,

“Hear my voice, woman of God. I am an angel of the Creator, and have been sent to you to announce that for your many good deeds which you have performed there shall issue from your seed, that is your daughter, one who shall unite, reform, and restore his bride the Church. And it shall be in this manner. Thou shalt go to the mountain, to the holy hermit, and take thy daughter, and relate to him at length that which God now commands you by me. He shall know thy daughter, and from them shall spring a son, the elect of God, and destined to fill the Holy Seat of Rome, who shall do such good deeds that he may fitly be compared to St. Peter and St. Paul. Harken to my voice! Obey God!”

The foolish widow, much astonished and surprised, and

half ravished with delight, really believed that God had sent this messenger. She vowed to herself that she would not disobey, and it was long ere she slept again, and then not very soundly, so greatly did she desire and await the day.

Meanwhile the good hermit returned to his hermitage in the mountain. The much-desired day at last dawned, and the sun pierced into the chamber of the said widow, and both mother and daughter rose in great haste.

When they were up and dressed, and their little household set in order, the mother asked her daughter if she had heard anything in the night.

The daughter replied, "No, mother; nothing."

"It was not to you," said the mother, "that the message was first delivered, albeit it concerns you greatly."

Then she related at length the angel's message which God had sent her, and asked her what she should reply thereto?

The girl, who was like her mother, simple and devout, replied; "Praise be to God. Whatever pleases you, mother, shall be done."

"That is well spoken," replied the mother. "Let us go to the mountain to the holy man, as the angel bade us."

The hermit was on the watch to see whether the foolish woman would bring her innocent daughter, and beheld them coming. He left his door half open, and knelt down in prayer in his chamber, in order that he might be found at his devotions.

It happened as he wished, for the good woman and her daughter, when they saw the door open, entered at once; and when they beheld the hermit in holy contemplation, as though he had been a god, they did homage to him.

The hermit, with his eyes bent down to the earth, said in a humble voice; "God save you both."

Then the poor, old woman, anxious that he should know the cause of her coming, took him on one side, and told him from beginning to end the story—which he knew better than she did. And as she related the tale with great veneration and respect, the hermit folded his hands and turned up his eyes to heaven, and the good old woman wept, more for joy than for grief; and the poor girl also wept when she saw this good and holy hermit pray with such deep devotion she did not know why.

When the story was finished, the old woman awaited the reply, which he did not hasten to give. But after a certain time he spoke, and said,

“Praise be to God! But, my dear friend, are you really sure that the message you say you heard, may not have been some fancy or illusion created by your own heart? The matter is a serious one.”

“I certainly heard the voice, father, which brought me this joyful message, as plainly as I now hear you, and I do not think I was asleep.”

“Well,” said he, “I should be unwilling to act against the wishes of my Creator; but it seems best to me that you and I should again sleep upon this matter, and if the angel should appear to you again, come back and tell me, and God will give us good counsel. We should not believe too readily, good mother. The devil, who is always envious of the good, has many tricks, and can change himself into an angel of light. Believe me, mother, it is no light thing you ask of me, and it is no marvel if I seem to hesitate. Have I not sworn before God, a vow of chastity? And here you bring me word that I am to break my oath! Return to your house and pray to God, and to-morrow we shall see what will happen. God be with you.”

After much discussion, they left the hermit and returned home thoughtfully.

To cut the story short, our hermit, at the accustomed time set forth, carrying a hollow stick instead of a staff, and putting it near the pillow of the foolish woman, delivered much the same message as on the previous night; and that being done, returned at once to his hermitage.

The good woman, filled with joy, rose early and related all the story to her daughter, showing how the vision of the previous night had been confirmed. "There is no time to be lost! We must go to the holy man!"

They went, and he saw them coming, and took his breviary and acted the hypocrite as before, but God knows he was not thinking of his devotions. And just as he had finished, and was about to recommence, there were the two women in front of his hut saluting him, and you may fancy that the old lady hurried through her narration; whereupon the good man made the sign of the cross, and feigning great surprise, said,

"Oh God! my Creator! What is this? Do with me as you will—though, if it were not for thy great grace, I am not worthy to perform such a great work!"

"But see, father!" said the much-abused and deceived woman: "the message is true, since the angel has again appeared unto me."

"In truth, my dear friend, this matter is of great importance and very difficult and strange, so that I yet can give but a doubtful reply. Not that I would tempt God by demanding another vision, but there is a saying "The third time is sure". Therefore I beg and desire of you to let pass this night also, and await the pleasure of God, and if of His great mercy it please Him to show us also this night as on the previous nights, we will do as He bids us to His praise."

It was not with a good grace that the foolish old woman was induced to put off this act of obedience to God, but she knew the hermit was wiser than she was.

When she was in bed, and thinking over all these marvellous visions, this perverse hypocrite came down from his mountain, placed his hollow stick to her ear, as before, and commanded her, once for all, to obey the message and take her daughter to the hermit for the purpose mentioned.

She did not forget, as soon as it was day, to do her duty, and when she and her daughter had given thanks to God, they set out for the hermitage, where the hermit came forth to meet them, and saluted and blessed them in the name of God.

The good woman, more joyous than ever, informed him of the last vision. The hermit took her by the hand and led her into the chapel, and the girl followed them. There they made most devout prayers to the all-powerful God who had vouchsafed to show them this mystery.

Then the hermit delivered a short sermon, touching dreams, visions, apparitions, and revelations, which often come to certain people, and alluded to the cause for which they were there assembled, and God knows that he preached well and righteously.

"Since God willed and commanded that he should create a successor to the Pope, and had deigned to reveal His will not once or twice, but three times, he must needs believe and conclude that great results must follow from this deed. It is my opinion," he concluded, "that we should no longer defer the execution of His orders, seeing that we have already delayed so long, through refusing to believe in this holy vision."

"That is well said, father. What would it please you to do?" replied the old woman.

"You will leave your fair daughter here," said the hermit, "and she and I will pray together, and moreover do whatever God shall teach us."

The good widow was much pleased, and her daughter was content to obey. When the hermit found himself alone with the damsel, he made her strip entirely as though he would baptise her, and you may fancy that the hermit did not long remain dressed. But why make a long story? He lay with her so long, and so often repeated it both in his cell and at her home, that at last she could not leave the house for shame, for her belly began to swell,—at which you need not be told she was overjoyed.

But if the daughter rejoiced to find herself pregnant, the mother rejoiced a hundred times more, and the hypocritical hermit also pretended to rejoice at the news, though inwardly he was bitterly vexed.

The poor credulous mother, really believing that her daughter would bring forth a son who should in due time be Pope of Rome, could not help relating the story to one of her intimate friends, who was as much astonished as though she had found horns growing on her head, but, nevertheless, suspected no trickery.

Ere long the neighbour had told the other male and female neighbours, how the daughter of such an one was pregnant by the holy hermit of a son who was to be Pope of Rome.

“And what I tell you,” she said, “the mother of the girl told me, and God revealed it to her.”

The news soon spread through all the neighbouring towns. Soon afterwards the girl was brought to bed, and duly delivered of a female child, at which she and her foolish mother were both astonished and angry, and the neighbours also, who expected the holy hermit to have been there to receive the child.

The report spread quite as quickly as the previous one, and the hermit was one of the first to hear of it, and quickly fled into another country—I know not

where—to deceive another woman or girl, or perhaps into the desert of Egypt to perform penance, with a contrite heart, for his sin. However that may be, the poor girl was dishonoured; which was a great pity, for she was fair, good, and amiable.



Story the Fifteenth.

THE CLEVER NUN

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE LA ROCHE.

Of a nun whom a monk wished to deceive, and how he offered to show her his weapon that she might feel it, but brought with him a companion whom he put forward in his place, and of the answer she gave him.

IN the fair country of Brabant, near a monastery of white monks ⁽¹⁾, is situated a nunnery of devout and charitable nuns, but their name and order need not be mentioned.

The two convents being close together, there was always a barn for the threshers, as the saying is, for, thank God, the nuns were so kind-hearted that few who sought amorous intercourse with them were refused, provided only they were worthy to receive their favours.

But, to come to the story, there was amongst these white monks, a young and handsome monk, who fell in love with one of the nuns, and after some preliminaries,

(1) Either Carthusians, who wear white robes and hoods, or Dominicans who wear white robes and black hoods.

had the courage to ask her for the love of God to grant him her favours.

The nun, who knew how he was furnished, though she was by nature courteous, gave him a harsh and sharp reply. He was not to be rebuffed, however, but continued to implore her love with most humble requests, until the pretty nun was forced either to lose her reputation for courtesy, or give the monk what she had granted to many others as soon as she was asked.

She said to him; "Truly you weary me with requests for that which honestly I ought not to give you. But I have heard what sort of weapon you carry, and if it be so you have not much to thank Nature for."

"I do not know who told you," replied the monk, "but I am sure that you will be satisfied with me, and I will prove to you that I am as good a man as any other."

"Oh, yes. I believe you are a man," said she "but your machine is so small that if you were to put it in a certain place, I should hardly know that it was there."

"It is quite the reverse," said the monk, "and, if I were in that place, I would do so well that you would confess that those who gave me that reputation were liars."

After these fair speeches, the kind nun, that she might know what he could do, and perhaps not forgetting her own share in the pleasure, told him to come to the window of her cell at midnight; for which favour he thanked her gratefully.

"But at any rate," said she, "you shall not enter until I really know what sort of lance you carry, and whether you can be of use to me or not."

"As you please," replied the monk, and with that he quitted his mistress, and went straight to Brother Conrad,

one of his companions, who was furnished, God knows how well, and for that reason was much esteemed in the nunnery.

To him the young monk related how he had begged a favour of such an one, and how she had refused, doubting whether his foot would fit her shoe, but in the end had consented that he should come to her, but would first feel and know with what sort of lance he would charge against her shield.

"I have not," said he, "a fine thick lance, such as I know she would desire to meet. Therefore I beg of you with all my heart, to come with me this night at the hour when I am to meet her, and you will do me the greatest service that ever one man did to another. I know very well that she will want to touch and handle the lance, and this is what you must do. You will be behind me; but do not speak. Then take my place, and put your great machine in her hand. She will open the door then, I expect, and you will go away and I will enter in,—and leave the rest to me."

Brother Conrad greatly doubted whether it would happen as his friend wished, but he agreed to do as he was asked. At the appointed hour they set forth to visit the nun. When they came to the window, the young monk, who was more eager than a stallion, knocked once with his stick, and the nun did not wait for him to knock a second time, but opened the window, and said in a low voice;

"Who is there?"

"It is I," he replied; "Open your door, lest anyone should hear us."

"By my faith," quoth she, "you shall not be entered on the roll of my lovers, until you have passed a review, and I know what equipments you have. Come hither, and show me what it is like."

"Willingly," said he.

Then Brother Conrad took his place, and slipped into the nun's hand his fine, powerful weapon, which was thick, long, and round. But as soon as she felt it she recognized it, and said;

"No! No! I know that well enough. That is the lance of Brother Conrad. There is not a nun here who does not know it! You thought I should be deceived, but I know too much for you! Go and try your luck elsewhere!"

And with that she closed the window, being very angry and ill-pleased, not with Brother Conrad, but with the other monk; and they after this adventure, returned to their convent, pondering over all that had happened.



Story the Sixteenth.

ON THE BLIND SIDE

BY

MONSEIGNEUR LE DUC.

Of a knight of Picardy who went to Prussia, and meanwhile his lady took a lover, and was in bed with him when her husband returned; and how by a cunning trick she got her lover out of the room without the knight being aware of it.



IN the County of Artois there lived formerly a noble knight, rich and powerful, and married to a beautiful dame of high family. These two lived together for long, and passed their days in peace and happiness. And because the most powerful Duke of Burgundy, Count of Artois, and their lord, was then at peace with all the great princes of Christendom, the knight, who was most devout, reflected that he ought to offer to God the body which had been given him, and which was fair and strong, and as well-formed as that of any man in that country, save that he had lost an eye in a battle.

To perform the vow he had made,—after he had taken leave of his wife and relatives, he betook himself to the



noble knights of Prussia,—the true defenders of the holy Christian church (¹); and in Prussia he fought valiantly and had many adventures—which I pass over here—and at the end was safe and sound, though he had shown great prowess, and the reports of his valour had been widely spread about by those who had seen them and returned to their own country, or by the letters they had written to many who had heard of his deeds with much pleasure.

Now you must know that his lady, who stayed at home, had bestowed her affection on a squire who sought her love, and was glad to have a substitute for her liege lord, who was away fighting the Saracens.

Whilst my lord was fasting and doing penance, my lady made good cheer with the squire; often did my lord dine and sup on bread and water, whilst my lady was enjoying all the good things which God had given her in plenty; my lord,—if he could do no better,—lay upon straw, and my lady rested in a fine bed with the squire.

To cut matters short, whilst my lord was fighting the Saracens, my lady was indulging in another sort of combat with the squire, and did so well thereat, that if my lord had never returned he would not have been much missed or regretted.

The knight finding that—thanks be to God—the Saracens were no longer on the offensive; and that it was a long time since he had seen his home, and his good wife, who much desired and regretted him, as she had many times told him in her letters, prepared to return, and started with the few retainers he had. And he fared so well, owing to the great desire he had to return to his home, and the arms of his wife, that in a few days he was near there.

(¹) Doubtless there was a confusion in the writer's mind between Prussia and Hungary, and he alludes to the Crusade against the Turks which ended disastrously for the Crusaders in 1396, and in which Jean sans Peur and many Burgundian knights took part.

Being more anxious than any of his followers, he was always the first to rise, and the foremost on the journey. In fact, he made such speed that he often rode alone, a quarter of a league or more ahead of his retainers.

One day, it chanced the knight had lodged about six leagues from his home. He rose early in the morning and mounted his horse, intending to arrive at his house before his wife, who knew nothing of his coming, was awake.

He set out as he intended, and, when on the road, he said to his followers, "Come at your leisure; there is no need for you to follow me. I will ride on fast that I may surprise my wife in bed."

His retainers being weary, and their horses also, did not oppose his wishes, but travelled along at their ease, though they had some fears for the knight, who rode thus fast in the dark and alone.

He made such speed that soon he was in the courtyard of his castle, where he found a serving-man, to whom he gave his horse; then, in his boots and spurs, he went straight, and without meeting any one, for it was yet early in the morning, towards the chamber where my lady slept, and where the squire was doing that which the knight longed to do.

You may guess that the squire and the lady were both astonished when the knight thundered on the door—which was locked—with his staff.

"Who is there?" asked the lady.

"It is I," replied the knight. "Open the door!"

The lady, who knew her husband's voice, did not feel comfortable; nevertheless she caused the squire to dress himself which he did as quickly as he could, wondering how he should escape from his dangerous position. She meanwhile pretended to be asleep, and not recognise her

husband's voice, and when he knocked at the door a second time, she asked again, "Who is there?"

"It is your husband, wife! Open the door quickly!"

"My husband?" said she. "Alas, he is far from here! May God soon bring him back in safety."

"By my soul, wife, I am your husband! Did you not know my voice? I knew yours as soon as I heard you speak."

"When he does come, I shall know of it long beforehand, that I may receive him as I ought, and that I may call together his relations and friends to wish him a hearty welcome. Go away! Go away! and let me sleep!"

"By St. John I will take care you do not! Open the door! Do you not know your own husband?" and with that he called her by her name.

She saw that her lover was by that time quite ready, and made him stand behind the door. Then she said to the knight.

"Is it really you? For God's sake pardon me! And are you in good health?"

"Yes; thank God," said the knight.

"God be praised!" said the lady. "I will come directly and let you in; but I am not dressed, and must get a candle."

"Take your time!" said the knight.

"Truly," said the lady, "just as you knocked, my lord, I was much disturbed by a dream I had about you."

"And what was that, my dear?"

"Faith, my lord! I dreamed that you came back, and talked with me, and that you saw as well with one eye as with the other.

"Would to God it were so," said my lord.

"By our Lady," said his wife, "I believe it is as I say."

"By my word", replied the knight, "you are very foolish. How could it be so?"

"I maintain," said she, "that it is so."

"There is nothing of the kind," said the knight. "You must be mad to think so."

"Ah, my lord," she replied, "you will never make me believe it is not as I say, and, to set my mind at rest, I ask of you to give me a proof."

Thereupon she opened the door, holding a lighted candle in her hand, and he, not displeased at her words, permitted her to make trial, and thus the poor man allowed her to cover up his eye with her one hand, whilst with the other she held the candle before his blind eye. Then she said;

"My lord! on your oath, can you not see well?"

"I swear I cannot," said my lord.

Whilst this trick was being played, my lord's substitute stole out of the chamber without being perceived by him.

"Wait a moment, my lord," said she. "Now cannot you see well? Tell me the truth!"

"No, by God, my dear," replied the knight. "How should I see? You have stopped up my right eye, and the other I lost more than ten years ago."

"Then," said she, "I see it was but an idle, foolish dream; but, be that as it may, God be praised and thanked that you are here."

"Amen," said the knight, and with that he kissed and embraced her many times, and they rejoiced greatly.

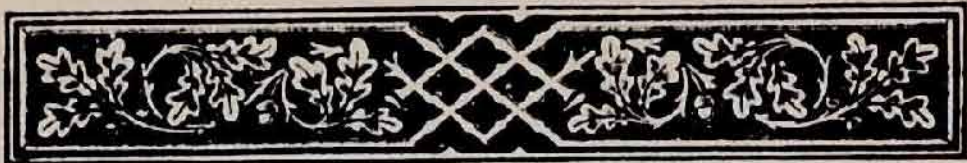
And my lord did not forget to tell her how he had left his retainers behind, and what speed he had made that he might find her in bed.

"Truly," said my lady, "you are a good husband."

And with that there came women and other servants, who took off the knight's armour, and undressed him. That being done, he got into bed with the lady, and enjoyed what the squire had left—who, for his part,

meanwhile went his way, happy and joyful to have escaped.

Thus was the knight deceived, as you have heard; nor was he ever informed of it that I am aware, though it was known to many people.



Story the Seventeenth.

THE LAWYER AND THE BOLTING-MILL

BY

MONSEIGNEUR LE DUC.

Of a President of Parliament, who fell in love with his Chambermaid, and would have forced her whilst she was sifting flour, but by fair speaking she dissuaded him, and made him shake the sieve whilst she went unto her mistress, who came and found her husband thus, as you will afterwards hear.



HERE lived formerly at Paris a President of the Court of Accounts, who was a learned clerk, a knight, and a man of ripe age, but right joyous and pleasant to both men and women.

This worthy lord had married a woman who was both elderly and sickly, and by her had divers children. And amongst the other damsels, waiting women, and servant maids in his house, was a serving-wench whom nature had made most fair, and who did the household work; made the beds, baked the bread, and did other low offices.

The gentleman, who made love whenever he found a chance, did not conceal from the fair wench his intentions



towards her, and made attempts upon her virtue, promising her many rich gifts, and explaining to her that it was her duty to let him have his way, and trying first this way and then that to seduce her. But he was grieved to find that he could not induce her to return his love. The girl was wise and chaste, and not so foolish as to grant her master any favour, but spoke him so fairly that he did not lose heart, though he would have preferred a different kind of answer.

When he found that kindness was of no use, he tried harshness and rough words, but the wench was not frightened, and told him that, "He might do as he pleased, but whilst she had life she would never let him near her."

The gentleman, seeing that her mind was fully made-up, spake no more to her for some days, but spared not loving looks and signs; which much annoyed her, and if she had not feared to make discord between husband and wife, she would have told the latter how unfaithful her spouse was, but, in the end, she resolved to conceal this as long as she could.

The infatuation of the old man increased every day, and begging and praying no longer sufficed. He went to her and renewed his entreaties and vows, which he confirmed by a hundred thousand oaths. But—to cut matters short—it was all no good; he could not obtain a single word, or the least shadow of hope, that he would ever attain his purpose.

Thereupon he left her, but he did not forget to say that if ever he found a favourable opportunity she would have to comply with his wishes, or it would be the worse for her.

The wench was not much frightened, thought no more of it, and went about her duties as usual.

Some time afterwards, one Monday morning, the pretty

servant, having some pies to make, was sifting meal. Now you must know that the room where she was thus engaged, was not far from her master's bedroom, and he heard the noise of the sieve, and knew very well that it was made by the servant-girl at her work.

He thought that perhaps she was not alone, but, if she should be, he would never find a better chance.

He said to himself, "Though she has often refused me by word of mouth, I shall succeed at last if I only keep to my purpose."

It was early dawn, and his wife was not awake, at which he was glad. He stole quietly out of bed; put on his dressing-gown and his slippers, and crept to the damsel's room so quietly that she never knew he was there until she saw him.

The poor girl was much astonished, and trembled; suspecting that her master had come to take that which she would never give him.

Seeing she was frightened, he said nothing but attacked her with such violence that he would soon have taken the place by storm if she had not sued for peace. She said to him;

"Alas, sir, I beg for mercy! My life and honour are in your hands;—have pity on me!"

"I care nothing about honour," said her master, who was very hot and excited. "You are in my hands and cannot escape me," and with that he attacked her more violently than before.

The girl, finding resistance was useless, bethought herself of a stratagem, and said,

"Sir, I prefer to surrender of free-will than by force. Leave me alone, and I will do all that you may require."

"Very well," said her master, "but be sure that I will not let you go free."

"There is but one thing I would beg of you, sir" replied the girl. "I greatly fear that my mistress may hear you; and if, by chance, she should come and find you here, I should be lost and ruined, for she would either beat me or kill me."

"She is not likely to come," said he, "she is sleeping soundly."

"Alas, sir, I am in great fear of her and, as I would be assured, I beg and request of you, for my peace of mind and our greater security in what we are about to do, that you let me go and see whether she is sleeping, or what she is doing."

"By our Lady! you would never return," said the gentleman.

"I swear that I will," she replied, "and that speedily."

"Very good then," said he. "Make haste!"

"Ah, sir," said she. "It would be well that you should take this sieve and work as I was doing; so that if my lady should by chance awake, she will hear the noise and know that I am at work."

"Give it to me, and I will work well;—but do not stay long."

"Oh, no, sir. Hold this sieve, and you will look like a woman."

"As to that, God knows I care not," said he, and with that laid hold of the sieve and began to work it as best he could.

Meanwhile the virtuous wench mounted to her lady's room and woke her, and told her how her husband had attempted her virtue, and attacked her whilst she was sifting meal, "And if it please you to come and see how I escaped him," she said, "come down with me and behold him."

The lady rose at once, put on her dress, and was soon before the door of the room where her lord was

diligently sifting. And when she saw him thus employed, and struggling with the sieve, she said to him ;

“ Ah, master, what is this? Where are now all your learning, your honour, your knowledge and prudence? ”

He saw that he had been deceived, and replied quickly.

“ Wife, they are all collected at the end of my c—k. ”, and with that, being much annoyed and angry, he threw down the sieve and went back to his room.

His wife followed him, and began to lecture him again, but he paid little heed. When he was ready, he ordered his mule, and went to the palace, where he related his adventure to divers gentlemen, who laughed loudly thereat. And, although he was at first angry with the wench, he afterwards helped her, by his influence and rich gifts, to find a husband.

La porteuse du ventre et du dos





Story the Eightteenth.

FROM BELLY TO BACK

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE LA ROCHE.

Of a gentleman of Burgundy who paid a chambermaid ten crowns to sleep with her, but before he left her room, had his ten crowns back, and made her carry him on her shoulders through the host's chamber. And in passing by the said chamber he let wind so loudly that all was known, as you will hear in the story which follows.



A gentleman of Burgundy went on some business to Paris, and lodged at a good inn, for it was his custom always to seek out the best lodgings.

He knew a thing or two, and he noticed that the chambermaid did not look a sort of woman who was afraid of a man. So, without much ado, or making two bites at a cherry, he asked if he could sleep with her?

But she set her back up at once. "How dare you make such a proposal to me," she said. "I would have you to know that I am not one of those girls who bring scandal upon the houses in which they live." And in

short, for all he could say she refused to have anything to do with him "for any money."

The gentleman who knew well what all these protestations were worth, said to her;

"My dear, if fitting time and place were given me, I would tell you something you would be glad to learn; but as, perhaps, it might hurt your reputation if you were seen conversing with me, talk to my valet, and he will arrange matters on my behalf."

"I have nothing to say either to him or to you," she replied, and with that she walked away, and the gentleman called his valet, who was a clever rogue, and ordered him to follow her and win her over at any cost.

The valet, who was well trained, promised that he would perform his task, and, as soon as he found her, set to work to employ honied phrases, and if she had not been of Paris, and not the least cunning of the women of that city, his soft speeches and the promises he made on behalf of his master, would soon have gained her heart.

But as it was, after much talk between them, she cut matters short by saying;

"I know well what your master wants, but he shall not touch me unless I have ten crowns."

The servant reported this to his master, who was not so generous, or at least not in such a case, as to give ten crowns to enjoy a kitchen wench.

"Be that as it may," replied the valet, "she will not budge from that; and even then you must use precautions in going to her chamber, for you must pass through that of the host. What do you intend to do?"

"By my oath!" said his master, "I regret sorely having to pay ten crowns, but I am so smitten with the wench that I cannot give her up. To the devil with avarice! she shall have the money."

"Shall I tell her then you will give her the money?"

"Yes, in the devil's name! Yes!"

The valet found the girl, and told her she should have the money, and perhaps something more.

"Very good," she replied.

To cut matters short, a time was arranged for the gentleman to come to her, but, before she would show him the way to her room, she insisted on the ten crowns being paid down.

The Burgundian was not over-pleased, and as he was on the way to her chamber, it struck him that he was paying dearly for his amusement, and he resolved that he would play her a trick.

He stole into her room so quietly that neither the host nor his wife awaked. There he undressed, and said to himself that he would at least have his money's worth. He did marvels, and got as good as he sent.

What with jesting and other matters, the hours passed quickly, and dawn was near. He was then more willing to sleep than to do anything else, but the fair chambermaid said to him;

"Sir, I have heard and seen so much of your nobleness, honour, and courtesy that I have consented to allow you to take that which I hold dearest in all the world. I now beg and request of you that you will at once dress and hasten away, for it is now day, and if by chance my master or mistress should come here, as is often their custom in the morning, and should find you here, I should be dishonoured, nor would it do you any good."

"I care not," quoth he, "what good or evil may happen, but here I will remain, and sleep at my ease and leisure before I leave. I am entitled to that for my money. Do you think you have so easily earned my ten crowns? You took them quickly enough. By St. George! I have no

fear; but I will stay here and you shall bear me company, if you please."

"Oh, sir," she replied, "by my soul I cannot do this. You must leave. It will be full day directly, and if you are found here what will become of me? I would rather die than that should happen; and if you do not make haste I much fear some one will come."

"Let them come," said the gentleman. "I care not, but, I tell you plainly, that until you give me back my ten crowns, I will not leave here, happen what may."

"Your ten crowns?" she answered. "Are you a man of that sort, and so devoid of any courtesy or grace as to take back from me in that fashion, that which you have given? By my faith that is not the way to prove yourself a gentleman."

"Whatever I am," said he, "I will not leave here, or shall you either, until you have given me back my ten crowns; you gained them too easily."

"May God help me," she replied, "though you speak thus I do not believe you would be so ungrateful, after the pleasure I have given you, or so discorteous, as not to aid me to preserve my honour, and therefore I beg of you to grant my request, and leave here."

The gentleman said that he would do nothing of the sort, and in the end the poor girl was forced—though God knows with what regret—to hand-over the ten crowns in order to make him go. When the money had returned to the hand that gave it, the girl was very angry, but the man was in great glee.

"Now," said the girl, angrily, "that you have thus tricked and deceived me, at least make haste. Let it suffice that you have made a fool of me, and do not by delay bring dishonour upon me by being seen here."

"I have nothing to do with your honour," said he. "Keep it as much as like, but you brought me here and

you must take me back to the place from whence I came, for I do not intend to have the double trouble of coming and returning."

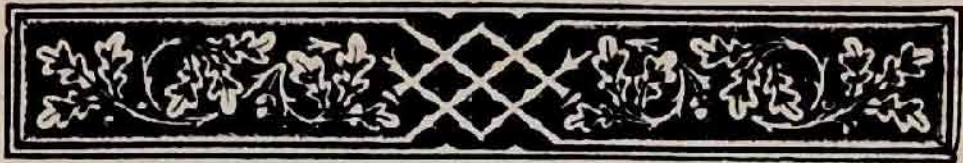
The chambermaid, seeing that she only made him more obstinate, and that day was breaking fast, took the gentleman on her back, and though sick at heart with fear and anger, began to carry him. And as she was picking her way carefully and noiselessly, this courteous gentleman, who after having ridden on her belly was now riding on her back, broke wind so loudly that the host awoke, and called out in his fright;

"Who is there?"

"It is your chambermaid," said the gentleman, "who is taking me back to the place from whence she brought me."

At these words the poor girl's heart and strength failed her. She could no longer bear her unpleasant burden, and she fell on the floor and rolled one way, whilst the squire went rolling the other.

The host, who knew what was the matter, spoke sharply to the girl, who soon afterwards left his house; and the gentleman returned to Burgundy, where he often gleefully related to his gallant companions the above written adventure.



Story the Nineteenth.

THE CHILD OF THE SNOW

BY

PHILIPPE VIGNIER.

Of an English merchant whose wife had a child in his absence, and told him that it was his; and how he cleverly got rid of the child—for his wife having asserted that it was born of the snow, he declared it had been melted by the sun.



MOVED by a strong desire to see and know foreign countries, and to meet with adventures, a worthy and rich merchant of London left his fair and good wife, his children, relations, friends, estates, and the greater part of his possessions, and quitted the kingdom, well furnished with money and great abundance of merchandise, such as England can supply to foreign countries, and with many other things which, for the sake of brevity, I do not mention here.

On this first voyage, the good merchant wandered about for a space of five years, during which time his good wife looked after his property, disposed of much merchandise profitably, and managed so well that her husband, when

he returned at the end of five years, greatly praised her, and loved her more than ever.

The merchant, not content with the many strange and wonderful things he had seen, or with the large fortune he had made, four or five months after his return, again set forth in quest of adventures in foreign lands, both Christian and pagan, and stayed there so long that ten years passed before his wife again saw him, but he often wrote to her, that she might know that he was still alive.

She was young and lusty, and wanted not any of the goods that God could give, except the presence of her husband. His long absence constrained her to provide herself with a lover, by whom shortly she had a fine boy.

This son was nourished and brought up with the others, his half-brothers, and, when the merchant returned, was about seven years old.

Great were the rejoicings between husband and wife when he came back, and whilst they were conversing pleasantly, the good woman, at the demand of her husband, caused to be brought all their children, not omitting the one who had been born during the absence of him whose name she bore.

The worthy merchant seeing all these children, and remembering perfectly how many there should be, found one over and above; at which he was much astonished and surprised, and he inquired of his wife who was this fair son, the youngest of their children?

"Who is he?" said she; "On my word, husband, he is our son! Who else should he be?"

"I do not know," he replied, "but, as I have never seen him before, is it strange that I should ask?"

"No, by St. John," said she; "but he is our son."

"How can that be?" said her husband. "You were not pregnant when I left."

"Truly I was not, so far as I know," she replied, "but

I can swear that the child is yours, and that no other man but you has ever lain with me."

"I never said so," he answered, "but, at any rate, it is ten years since I left, and this child does not appear more than seven. How then can it be mine? Did you carry him longer than you did the others?"

"By my oath, I know not!" she said; "but what I tell you is true. Whether I carried it longer than the others I know not, and if you did not make it before you left, I do not know how it could have come, unless it was that, not long after your departure, I was one day in our garden, when suddenly there came upon me a longing and desire to eat a leaf of sorrel, which at that time was thickly covered with snow. I chose a large and fine leaf, as I thought, and ate it, but it was only a white and hard piece of snow. And no sooner had I eaten it than I felt myself to be in the same condition as I was before each of my other children was born. In fact, a certain time afterwards, I bore you this fair son."

The merchant saw at once that he was being fooled, but he pretended to believe the story his wife had told him, and replied;

"My dear, though what you tell me is hardly possible, and has never happened to anyone else, let God be praised for what He has sent us. If He has given us a child by a miracle, or by some secret method of which we are ignorant, He has not forgotten to provide us with the wherewithal to keep it."

When the good woman saw that her husband was willing to believe the tale she told him, she was greatly pleased. The merchant, who was both wise and prudent, stayed at home the next ten years, without making any other voyages, and in all that time breathed not a word to his wife to make her suspect he knew aught of her doings, so virtuous and patient was he.

But he was not yet tired of travelling, and wished to begin again. He told his wife, who was very dissatisfied thereat.

"Be at ease," he said, "and, if God and St. George so will, I will return shortly. And as our son, who was born during my last voyage, is now grown up, and capable of seeing and learning, I will, if it seem good to you, take him with me."

"On my word", said she "I hope you will, and you will do well."

"It shall be done," he said, and thereupon he started, and took with him the young man, of whom he was not the father, and for whom he felt no affection.

They had a good wind, and came to the port of Alexandria, where the good merchant sold the greater part of his merchandise very well. But he was not so foolish as to keep at his charge a child his wife had had by some other man, and who, after his death, would inherit like the other children, so he sold the youth as a slave, for good money paid down, and as the lad was young and strong, nearly a hundred ducats was paid for him.

When this was done, the merchant returned to London, safe and sound, thank God. And it need not be told how pleased his wife was to see him in good health, but when she saw her son was not there, she knew not what to think.

She could not conceal her feelings, and asked her husband what had become of their son?

"Ah, my dear," said he, "I will not conceal from you that a great misfortune has befallen him."

"Alas, what?" she asked. "Is he drowned?"

"No; but the truth is that the wind and waves wafted us to a country that was so hot that we nearly died from the great heat of the sun. And one day when we had all left the ship, in order that we each might dig a hole in which

to shield ourselves from the heat,—our dear son, who, as you know was made of snow, began to melt in the sun, and in our presence was turned into water, and ere you could have said one of the seven psalms, there was nothing left of him. Thus strangely did he come into the world, and thus suddenly did he leave it. I both was, and am, greatly vexed, and not one of all the marvels I have ever seen astonished me so greatly.”

“Well!” said she. “Since it has pleased God to give and to take away, His name be praised.”

As to whether she suspected anything or not, the history is silent and makes no mention, but perhaps she learned that her husband was not to be hood-winked.

Le mary medecin





Story the Twentieth.

THE HUSBAND AS DOCTOR

BY

PHILIPPE DE LAON.

Of a young squire of Champagne who, when he married, had never mounted a Christian creature,—much to his wife's regret. And of the method her mother found to instruct him, and how the said squire suddenly wept at a great feast that was made shortly after he had learned how to perform the carnal act—as you will hear more plainly hereafter.



It is well-known that in the province of Champagne you are sure to meet heavy and dull-witted persons—which has seemed strange to many persons, seeing that the district is so near to the country of Mischief. (¹) Many stories could be told of the stupidity of the Champenois, but this present story will suffice.

In this province, there lived a young man, an orphan, who at the death of his father and mother had become rich and powerful. He was stupid, ignorant, and disagreeable, but hard-working and knew well how to take

(¹) *Mal-Eugen* in the original. The author probably means Picardy or Lorraine.

care of himself and his affairs, and for this reason, many persons,—even people of condition,—were willing to give him their daughter in marriage.

One of these damsels, above all others, pleased the friends and relations of our Champenois, for her beauty, goodness, riches, and so forth. They told him that it was time he married.

“You are now,” they said, “twenty-three years old, and there could not be a better time. And if you will listen to us, we have searched out for you a fair and good damsel who seems to us just suited to you. It is such an one—you know her well;” and they told him her name.

The young man, who cared little whether he was married or not, as long as he lost no money by it, replied that he would do whatever they wished. “Since you think it will be to my advantage, manage the business the best way you can, and I will follow your advice and instructions.”

“You say well,” replied these good people. “We will select your wife as carefully as though it were for ourselves, or one of our children.”

To cut matters short, a little time afterwards our Champenois was married; but on the first night, when he was sleeping with his wife, he, never having mounted on any Christian woman, soon turned his back to her, and a few poor kisses was all she had of him, but nothing on her back. You may guess his wife was not well pleased at this; nevertheless, she concealed her discontent.

This unsatisfactory state of things lasted ten days, and would have continued longer if the girl’s mother had not put a stop to it.

It should be known to you that the young man was unskilled in the mysteries of wedlock, for during the lifetime of his parents he had been kept with a tight hand,

and, above all things, had been forbidden to play at the *beast with two backs*, lest he should take too much delight therein, and waste all his patrimony. This was wise of his parents, for he was not a young man likely to be loved for his good looks.

As he would do nothing to anger his father or mother, and was, moreover, not of an amorous disposition, he had always preserved his chastity, though his wife would willingly have deprived him of it, if she had known how to do so honestly.

One day the mother of the bride came to her daughter, and asked her all about her husband's state and condition, and the thousand other things which women like to know. To all of these questions the bride replied that her husband was a good man, and she hoped and believed that she would be happy with him.

But the old woman knew by her own experience that there are more things in married life than eating and drinking, so she said to her daughter;

"Come here, and tell me, on your word of honour, how does he acquit himself at night?"

When the girl heard this question she was so vexed and ashamed that she could not reply, and her eyes filled with tears. Her mother understood what these tears meant, and said;

"Do not weep, my child! Speak out boldly! I am your mother, and you ought not to conceal anything from me, or be afraid of telling me. Has he done nothing to you yet?"

The poor girl, having partly recovered, and being re-assured by her mother's words, ceased her tears, but yet could make no reply. Thereupon, her mother asked again;

"Lay aside your grief and answer me honestly: has he done nothing to you yet?"

In a low voice, mingled with tears, the girl replied, "On my word, mother, he has never yet touched me,

but, except for that, there is no more kind or affectionate man."

"Tell me," said the mother; "do you know if he is properly furnished with all his members? Speak out boldly, if you know."

"By St. John! he is all right in that respect," replied the bride. "I have often, by chance, felt his luggage as I turned to and fro in our bed when I could not sleep."

"That is enough," said the mother; "leave the rest to me. This is what *you* must do. In the morning you must pretend to be very ill—even as though your soul were departing from your body. Your husband will, I fully expect, seek me out and bid me come to you, and I will play my part so well that your business will be soon settled, for I shall take your water to a certain doctor, who will give such advice as I order."

All was done as arranged, for on the morrow, as soon as it was dawn, the girl, who was sleeping with her husband, began to complain and to sham sickness as though a strong fever racked her body.

Her booby husband was much vexed and astonished, and knew not what to say or do. He sent forthwith for his mother-in-law, who was not long in coming. As soon as he saw her, "Alas! mother!" said he, "your daughter is dying."

"My daughter?" said she. "What does she want?" and whilst she was speaking she walked to the patient's chamber.

As soon as the mother saw her daughter, she asked what was the matter; and the girl, being well instructed what she was to do, answered not at first, but, after a little time, said, "Mother, I am dying."

"You shall not die, please God! Take courage! But how comes it that you are taken ill so suddenly?"

"I do not know! I do not know!" replied the girl.

"It drives me wild to answer all these questions."

The old woman took the girl's hand, and felt her pulse; then she said to her son-in-law;

"On my word she is very ill. She is full of fire, and we must find some remedy. Have you any of her water?"

"That which she made last night is there," said one of the attendants.

"Give it me," said the mother.

She took the urine, and put it in a proper vessel, and told her son-in-law that she was about to show it to such-and-such a doctor, that he might know what he could do to her daughter to cure her.

"For God's sake spare nothing," said she. "I have yet some money left, but I love my daughter better than money."

"Spare!" quoth he. "If money can help, you shall not want."

"No need to go so fast," said she. "Whilst she is resting, I will go home; but I will come back if I am wanted."

Now you must know that the old woman had on the previous day, when she left her daughter, instructed the doctor, who was well aware of what he ought to say. So the young man carried his wife's water to the doctor, and when he had saluted him, related how sick and suffering his wife was.

"And I have brought you some of her water that you may judge how ill she is, and more easily cure her."

The doctor took the vessel of urine, and turned it about and examined it, then said;

"Your wife is afflicted with a sore malady, and is in danger of dying unless help be forthcoming; her water shows it."

"Ah, master, for God's sake tell me what to do, and I will pay you well if you can restore her to health, and prevent her from dying."

"She need not die," said the doctor; "but unless you

make haste, all the money in the world will not save her life."

"Tell me, for God's sake," said the other, "what to do, and I will do it."

"She must," said the doctor, "have connection with a man, or she will die."

"Connection with a man?" said the other, "What is that?"

"That is to say," continued the doctor, "that you must mount on the top of her, and speedily ram her three or four times, or more if you can; for, if not, the great heat which is consuming her will not be put out."

"Ah! will that be good for her?"

"There is no chance of her living," said the doctor "if you do not do it, and quickly too."

"By St. John," said the other, "I will try what I can do."

With that he went home and found his wife, who was groaning and lamenting loudly.

"How are you, my dear?" said he.

"I am dying, my dear," she replied.

"You shall not die, please God," said he. "I have seen the doctor, who has told me what medicine will cure you," and as he spoke, he undressed himself, and lay down by his wife, and began to execute the orders he had received from the doctor.

"What are you doing?" said she. "Do you want to kill me?"

"No! I am going to cure you," he replied. "The doctor said so;" and Nature instructing him, and the patient helping, he performed on her two or three times.

When he was resting from his labours, much astonished at what had happened, he asked his wife how she was?

"I am a little better than I was before;" she replied.

"God be praised," said he. "I hope you will get well and that the doctor told me truly:" and with that he began again.

To cut matters short, he performed so well that his wife was cured in a few days, at which he was very joyful, and so was her mother when she knew it.

The young man after this became a better fellow than he was before, and his wife being now restored to health, he one day invited all his relations and friends to dinner, and also the father and mother of his wife, and he served grand cheer after his own fashion. They drank to him, and he drank to them, and he was marvellous good company.

But hear what happened to him: in the midst of the dinner he began to weep, which much astonished all his friends who were at table with him, and they demanded what was the matter, but he could not reply for weeping scalding tears. At last he spoke, and said;

“I have good cause to weep.”

“By my oath you have not,” replied his mother-in-law. “What ails you? You are rich and powerful, and well housed, and have good friends; and you must not forget that you have a fair and good wife whom God brought back to health when she was on the edge of the grave. In my opinion you ought to be light-hearted and joyful.”

“Alas!” said he, “woe is me! My father and mother, who both loved me, and who amassed and left me so much wealth, are both dead, and by my fault, for they died of a fever, and if I had well towzled them both when they were ill, as I did to my wife, they would still be on their feet.”

There was no one at table who, on hearing this, would not have liked to laugh, nevertheless they restrained themselves as best they could. The tables were removed, and each went his way, and the young man continued to live with his wife, and—in order that she might continue in good health—he failed not to tail her pretty often.



Story the Twenty-First.

THE ABBESS CURED

BY

PHILIPPE DE LAON.

Of an abbess who was ill for want of—you know what—but would not have it done, fearing to be reproached by her nuns, but they all agreed to do the same, and most willingly did so.

IN Normandy there is a fair nunnery, the Abbess of which was young, fair, and well-made. It chanced that she fell ill. The good sisters who were charitable and devout, hastened to visit her, and tried to comfort her, and do all that lay in their power. And when they found she was getting no better, they commanded one of the sisters to go to Rouen, and take her water to a renowned doctor of that place.

So the next day one of the nuns started on this errand, and when she arrived there she showed the water to the physician, and described at great length the illness of the Lady Abbess, how she slept, ate, drank, etc.

The learned doctor understood the case, both from his

examination of the water, and the information given by the nun, and then he gave his prescription.

Now I know that it is the custom in many cases to give a prescription in writing, nevertheless this time he gave it by word of mouth, and said to the nun;

"Fair sister, for the abbess to recover her health there is but one remedy, and that is that she must have company with a man; otherwise in a short time she will grow so bad that death will be the only remedy."

Our nun was much astonished to hear such sad news, and said,

"Alas! Master John! is there no other method by which our abbess can recover her health?"

"Certainly not," he replied; "there is no other, and moreover, you must make haste to do as I have bid you, for if the disease is not stopped and takes its course, there is no man living who could cure it."

The good nun, though much disconcerted, made haste to announce the news to the Abbess, and by the aid of her stout cob, and the great desire she had to be at home, made such speed that the abbess was astonished to see her returned.

"What says the doctor, my dear?" cried the abbess. "Is there any fear of death?"

"You will be soon in good health if God so wills, madam," said the messenger. "Be of good cheer, and take heart."

"What! has not the doctor ordered me any medicine?" said the Abbess.

"Yes," was the reply, and then the nun related how the doctor had looked at her water, and asked her age, and how she ate and slept, etc. "And then in conclusion he ordered that you must have, somehow or other, carnal connection with some man, or otherwise you will shortly be dead, for there is no other remedy for your complaint."

"Connection with a man!" cried the lady. "I would rather die a thousand times if it were possible." And then she went on, "Since it is thus, and my illness is incurable and deadly unless I take such a remedy, let God be praised! I will die willingly. Call together quickly all the convent!"

The bell was rung, and all the nuns flocked round the Abbess, and, when they were all in the chamber, the Abbess, who still had the use of her tongue, however ill she was, began a long speech concerning the state of the church, and in what condition she had found it and how she left it, and then went on to speak of her illness, which was mortal and incurable as she well knew and felt, and as such and such a physician had also declared.

"And so, my dear sisters, I recommend to you our church, and that you pray for my poor soul."

At these words, tears in great abundance welled from all eyes, and the heart's fountain of the convent was moved. This weeping lasted long, and none of the company spoke.

After some time, the Prioress, who was wise and good, spoke for all the convent, and said;

"Madam, your illness—what it is, God, from whom nothing is hidden, alone knows—vexes us greatly, and there is not one of us who would not do all in her power to aid your recovery. We therefore pray you to spare nothing, not even the goods of the Church, for it would be better for us to lose the greater part of our temporal goods than be deprived of the spiritual profit which your presence gives us."

"My good sister," said the Abbess, "I have not deserved your kind offer, but I thank you as much as I can, and again advise and beg of you to take care of the Church—as I have already said—for it is a matter which concerns me closely, God knows; and pray also for my poor soul, which hath great need of your prayers."

"Alas, madam," said the Prioress, "is it not possible that by great care, or the diligent attention of some physician, that you might be restored to health?"

"No, no, my good sister," replied the Abbess. "You must number me among the dead—for I am hardly alive now, though I can still talk to you."

Then stepped forth the nun who had carried the water to Rouen, and said;

"Madam, there is a remedy if you would but try it."

"I do not choose to," replied the Abbess. "Here is sister Joan, who has returned from Rouen, and has shown my water, and related my symptoms, to such and such a physician, who has declared that I shall die unless I suffer some man to approach me and have connection with me. By this means he hopes, and his books informed him, that I should escape death; but if I did not do as he bade me, there was no help for me. But as for me, I thank God that He has deigned to call me, though I have sinned much. I yield myself to His will, and my body is prepared for death, let it come when it may."

"What, madam!" said the infirmiry nun, "would you murder yourself? It is in your power to save yourself, and you have but to put forth your hand and ask for aid, and you will find it ready! That is not right; and I even venture to tell you that you are imperilling your soul if you die in that condition."

"My dear sister," said the Abbess, "how many times have I told you that it is better for a person to die than commit a deadly sin. You know that I cannot avoid death except by committing a deadly sin. Also I feel sure that even by prolonging my life by this means, I should be dishonoured for ever, and a reproach to all. Folks would say of me, 'There is the lady who——'. All of you,—however you may advise me—would cease to reverence and love me, for I should seem—

and with good cause—unworthy to preside over and govern you.”

“You must neither say nor think that,” said the Treasurer. “There is nothing that we should not attempt to avoid death. Does not our good father, St. Augustine, say that it is not permissible to anyone to take his own life, nor to cut off one of his limbs? And are you not acting in direct opposition to his teaching, if you allow yourself to die when you could easily prevent it?”

“She says well!” cried all the sisters in chorus. “Madam, for God’s sake obey the physician, and be not so obstinate in your own opinion as to lose both your body and soul, and leave desolate, and deprived of your care, the convent where you are so much loved.”

“My dear sisters,” replied the Abbess, “I much prefer to bow my head to death than to live dishonoured. And would you not all say—‘There is the woman who did so and so’.”

“Do not worry yourself with what people would say: you would never be reproached by good and respectable people.”

“Yes, I should be,” replied the Abbess.

The nuns were greatly moved, and retired and held a meeting, and passed a resolution, which the Prioress was charged to deliver to the Abbess, which she did in the following words.

“Madam, the nuns are greatly grieved,—for never was any convent more troubled than this is, and you are the cause. We believe that you are ill-advised in allowing yourself to die when we are sure you could avoid it. And, in order that you should comprehend our loyal and single-hearted love for you, we have decided and concluded in a general assembly, to save you and ourselves, and if you have connection secretly with some respectable man, we will do the same, in order that you may not think or

imagine that in time to come you can be reproached by any of us. Is it not so, my sisters?"

"Yes," they all shouted most willingly.

The Abbess heard the speech, and was much moved by the testimony of the love the sisters bore her, and consented, though with much regret, that the doctor's advice should be carried out. Monks, priests, and clerks were sent for, and they found plenty of work to do, and they worked so well that the Abbess was soon cured, at which the nuns were right joyous.



Story the Twenty-Second.

THE CHILD WITH TWO FATHERS

BY

CARON.

Of a gentleman who seduced a young girl, and then went away and joined the army. And before his return she made the acquaintance of another, and pretended her child was by him. When the gentleman returned from the war he claimed the child, but she begged him to leave it with her second lover, promising that the next she had she would give to him, as is hereafter recorded.

FORMERLY there was a gentleman living at Bruges who was so often and so long in the company of a certain pretty girl that at last he made her belly swell.

And about the same time that he was aware of this, the Duke called together his men-at-arms, and our gentleman was forced to abandon his lady-love and go with others to serve the said lord, which he willingly did. But, before leaving, he provided sponsors and a nurse against the time his child should come into the world, and lodged the mother with good people to whose care he

recommended her, and left money for her. And when he had done all this as quickly as he could, he took leave of his lady, and promised that, if God pleased, he would return quickly.

You may fancy if she wept when she found that he whom she loved better than any one in the world, was going away. She could not at first speak, so much did her tears oppress her heart, but at last she grew calmer when she saw that there was nothing else to be done.

About a month after the departure of her lover, desire burned in her heart, and she remembered the pleasures she had formerly enjoyed, and of which the unfortunate absence of her friend now deprived her. The God of Love, who is never idle, whispered to her of the virtues and riches of a certain merchant, a neighbour, who many times, both before and since the departure of her lover, had solicited her love, so that she decided that if he ever returned to the charge he should not be sent away discouraged, and that even if she met him in the street she would behave herself in such a way as would let him see that she liked him.

Now it happened that the day after she arrived at this determination, Cupid sent round the merchant early in the morning to present her with dogs and birds and other gifts, which those who seek after women are always ready to present.

He was not rebuffed, for if he was willing to attack she was not the less ready to surrender, and prepared to give him even more than he dared to ask; for she found in him such chivalry, prowess, and virtue that she quite forgot her old lover, who at that time suspected nothing.

The good merchant was much pleased with his new lady, and they so loved each other, and their wills, desires, and thoughts so agreed, that it was as though they had but a single heart between them. They could not be

content until they were living together, so one night the wench packed up all her belongings and went to the merchant's house, thus abandoning her old lover, her landlord and his wife, and a number of other good people to whose care she had been recommended.

She was not a fool, and as soon as she found herself well lodged, she told the merchant she was pregnant, at which he was very joyful, believing that he was the cause; and in about seven months the wench brought forth a fine boy, and the adoptive father was very fond both of the child and its mother.

A certain time afterwards the gentleman returned from the war, and came to Bruges, and as soon as he decently could, took his way to the house where he had left his mistress, and asked news of her from those whom he had charged to lodge her and clothe her, and aid her in her confinement.

"What!" they said. "Do you not know? Have you not had the letters which were written to you?"

"No, by my oath," said he. "What has happened?"

"Holy Mary!" they replied, "you have good reason to ask. You had not been gone more than a month when she packed up her combs and mirrors and betook herself to the house of a certain merchant, who is greatly attached to her. And, in fact, she has there been brought to bed of a fine boy. The merchant has had the child christened, and believes it to be his own."

"By St. John! that is something new," said the gentleman, "but, since she is that sort of a woman, she may go to the devil. The merchant may have her and keep her, but as for the child I am sure it is mine, and I want it."

Thereupon he went and knocked loudly at the door of the merchant's house. By chance, the lady was at home and opened the door, and when she recognised the lover

she had deserted, they were both astonished. Nevertheless, he asked her how she came in that place, and she replied that Fortune had brought her there.

"Fortune?" said he; "Well then, fortune may keep you; but I want my child. Your new master may have the cow, but I will have the calf; so give it to me at once, for I will have it whatever may happen."

"Alas!" said the wench, "what will my man say? I shall be disgraced, for he certainly believes the child is his."

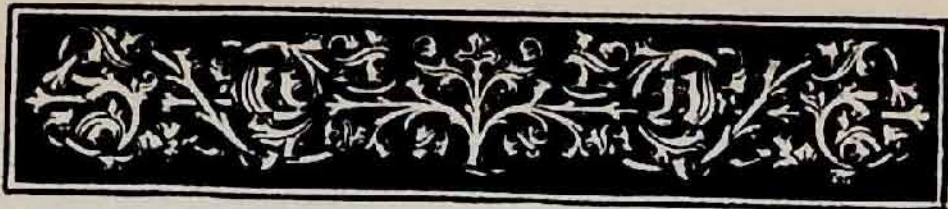
"I don't care what he thinks," replied the other, "but he shall not have what is mine."

"Ah, my friend, I beg and request of you to leave the merchant this child; you will do him a great service and me also. And by God! you will not be tempted to have the child when once you have seen him, for he is an ugly, awkward boy, all scrofulous and mis-shapen.

"Whatever he is," replied the other, "he is mine, and I will have him."

"Don't talk so loud, for God's sake!" said the wench, "and be calm, I beg! And if you will only leave me this child, I promise you that I will give you the next I have."

Angry as the gentleman was, he could not help smiling at hearing these words, so he said no more and went away, and never again demanded the child, which was brought up by the merchant.



Story the Twenty-Third.

THE LAWYER'S WIFE WHO PASSED THE LINE

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE COMMESURAM.

Of a clerk of whom his mistress was enamoured, and what he threatened to do and did to her if she crossed a line which the said clerk had made. Seeing which, her little son told his father when he returned that he must not cross the line; or said he, "the clerk will serve you as he did mother."



FORMERLY there lived in the town of Mons, in Hainault, a lawyer of a ripe old age, who had, amongst his other clerks, a good-looking and amiable youth, with whom the lawyer's wife fell deeply in love, for it appeared to her that he was much better fitted to do her business than her husband was.

She decided that she would behave in such a way that, unless he were more stupid than an ass, he would know what she wanted of him; and, to carry out her design, this lusty wench, who was young, fresh, and buxom, often brought her sewing to where the clerk was, and



La Procureuse passe la raye

Lobéque

talked to him of a hundred thousand matters, most of them about love.

And during all this talk she did not forget to practise little tricks: sometimes she would knock his elbow when he was writing; another time she threw gravel and spoiled his work, so that he was forced to write it all over again. Another time also she recommenced these tricks, and took away his paper and parchment, so that he could not work,—at which he was not best pleased, fearing that his master would be angry.

For a long time his mistress practised these tricks, but he being young, and his eyes not opened, he did not at first see what she intended; nevertheless at last he concluded he was in her good books.

Not long after he arrived at this conclusion, it chanced that the lawyer being out of the house, his wife came to the clerk to teaze him as was her custom, and worried him more than usual, nudging him, talking to him, preventing him from working, and hiding his paper, ink &c.

Our clerk more knowing than formerly, and seeing what all this meant, sprang to his feet, attacked his mistress and drove her back, and begged of her to allow him to write—but she who asked for nothing better than a tussle, was not inclined to discontinue.

“Do you know, madam,” said he, “that I must finish this writing which I have begun? I therefore ask of you to let me alone or, morbleu, I will pay you out.”

“What would you do, my good lad?” said she. “Make ugly faces?”

“No, by God!”

“What then?”

“What?”

“Yes, tell me what!”

“Why,” said he, “since you have upset my inkstand, and crumpled my writing, I will well crumple *your*

parchment, and that I may not be prevented from writing by want of ink, I will dip into your inkstand."

"By my soul," quoth she, "you are not the man to do it. Do you think I am afraid of you?"

"It does not matter what sort of man I am," said the clerk, "but if you worry me any more, I am man enough to make you pay for it. Look here! I will draw a line on the floor, and by God, if you overstep it, be it ever so little, I wish I may die if I do not make you pay dearly for it."

"By my word," said she, "I am not afraid of you, and I will pass the line and see what you will do," and so saying the merry hussy made a little jump which took her well over the line.

The clerk grappled with her, and threw her down on a bench, and punished her well, for if she had rumped him outside and openly, he rumped her inside and secretly.

Now you must know that there was present at the time a young child, about two years old, the son of the lawyer. It need not be said either, that after this first passage of arms between the clerk and his mistress, there were many more secret encounters between them, with less talk and more action than on the first occasion.

You must know too that, a few days after this adventure, the little child was in the office where the clerk was writing, when there came in the lawyer, the master of the house, who walked across the room to his clerk, to see what he wrote, or for some other matter, and as he approached the line which the clerk had drawn for his wife, and which still remained on the floor, his little son cried,

"Father, take care you do not cross the line, or the clerk will lay you down and tumble you as he did mother a few days ago."

The lawyer heard the remark, and saw the line, but

knew not what to think; but if he remembered that fools, drunkards, and children always tell the truth, at all events he made no sign, and it has never come to my knowledge that he ever did so, either through want of confirmation of his suspicions, or because he feared to make a scandal.



Story the Twenty-Fourth.

HALF-BOOTED

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE FIENNES.

Of a Count who would ravish by force a fair young girl who was one of his subjects, and how she escaped from him by means of his leggings, and how he overlooked her conduct and helped her to a husband, as is hereafter related.



I know that in many of the stories already related the names of the persons concerned are not stated, but I desire to give, in my little history, the name of Comte Valerien, who was in his time Count of St. Pol, and was called "the handsome Count". Amongst his other lordships, he was lord of a village in the district of Lille, called Vrelenchem, about a league distant from Lille.

This gentle Count, though of a good and kind nature, was very amorous. He learned by report from one of his retainers, who served him in these matters, that at the said Vrelenchem there resided a very pretty girl of good condition. He was not idle in these matters, and soon after he heard the news, he was in that village, and

with his own eyes confirmed the report that his faithful servants had given him concerning the said maiden.

"The next thing to be done," said the noble Count, "is that I must speak to her alone, no matter what it may cost me."

One of his followers, who was a doctor by profession, said, "My lord, for your honour and that of the maiden also, it seems to me better that I should make known to her your will, and you can frame your conduct according to the reply that I receive."

He did as he said, and went to the fair maiden and saluted her courteously, and she, who was as wise as she was fair and good, politely returned his salute.

To cut matters short, after a few ordinary phrases, the worthy messenger preached much about the possessions and the honours of his master, and told her that if she liked she would be the means of enriching all her family.

The fair damsel knew what o'clock it was.⁽¹⁾ Her reply was like herself—fair and good—for it was that she would obey, fear, and serve the Count in anything that did not concern her honour, but that she held as dear as her life.

The one who was astonished and vexed at this reply was our go-between, who returned disappointed to his master, his embassy having failed. It need not be said that the Count was not best pleased at hearing of this proud and harsh reply made by the woman he loved better than anyone in the world, and whose person he wished to enjoy. But he said, "Let us leave her alone for the present. I shall devise some plan when she thinks I have forgotten her."

He left there soon afterwards, and did not return until six weeks had passed, and, when he did return, it was very quietly, and he kept himself private, and his presence unknown.

(1) A literal translation. *La bonne fille entendit tantost quelle heure il estoit.*

He learned from his spies one day that the fair maiden was cutting grass at the edge of a wood, and aloof from all company; at which he was very joyful, and, all booted as he was, set out for the place in company with his spies. And when he came near to her whom he sought, he sent away his company, and stole close to her before she was aware of his presence.

She was astonished and confused, and no wonder, to see the Count so close to her, and she turned pale and could not speak, for she knew by report that he was a bold and dangerous man to women.

"Ha, fair damsel," said the Count, "you are wondrous proud! One is obliged to lay siege to you. Now defend yourself as best you can, for there will be a battle between us, and, before I leave, you shall suffer by my will and desire, all the pains that I have suffered and endured for love of you."

"Alas, my lord!" said the young girl, who was frightened and surprised. "I ask your mercy! If I have said or done anything that may displease you, I ask your pardon; though I do not think I have said or done anything for which you should owe me a grudge. I do not know what report was made of me. Dishonourable proposals were made to me in your name, but I did not believe them, for I deem you so virtuous that on no account would you dishonour one of your poor, humble subjects like me, but on the contrary protect her."

"Drop this talk!" said my lord, "and be sure that you shall not escape me. I told you why I sent to you, and of the good I intended to do you," and without another word, he seized her in his arms, and threw her down on a heap of grass which was there, and pressed her closely, and quickly made all preparations to accomplish his desire.

The young girl, who saw that she was on the point of

La bote à Jemy



losing that which she held most precious, bethought her of a trick, and said,

"Ah, my lord, I surrender! I will do whatever you like, and without refusal or contradiction, but it would be better that you should do with me whatever you will by my free consent, than by force and against my will accomplish your intent."

"At any rate," said my lord, "you shall not escape me! What is it you want?"

"I would beg of you," said she, "to do me the honour not to dirty me with your leggings, which are greasy and dirty, and which you do not require."

"What can I do with them?" asked my lord.

"I will take them off nicely for you," said she, "if you please; for by my word, I have neither heart nor courage to welcome you if you wear those mucky leggings."

"The leggings do not make much difference," said my lord, "nevertheless if you wish it, they shall be taken off."

Then he let go of her, and seated himself on the grass, and stretched out his legs, and the fair damsel took off his spurs, and then tugged at one of his leggings, which were very tight. And when with much difficulty she had got it half off, she ran away as fast as her legs could carry her with her will assisting, and left the noble Count, and never ceased running until she was in her father's house.

The worthy lord who was thus deceived was in as great a rage as he could be. With much trouble he got on his feet, thinking that if he stepped on his legging he could pull it off, but it was no good, it was too tight, and there was nothing for him to do but return to his servants. He did not go very far before he found his retainers waiting for him by the side of a ditch; they did not know what to think when they saw him in that disarray. He related his story, and they put his boots on for him,

and if you had heard him you would have thought that she who thus deceived him was not long for this world, he so cursed and threatened her.

But angry as he was for a time, his anger soon cooled, and was converted into sincere respect. Indeed he afterwards provided for her, and married her at his own cost and expense to a rich and good husband, on account of her frankness and loyalty.



Story the Twent-fifth.

FORCED WILLINGLY

BY

PHILIPPE DE SAINT-YON.

Of a girl who complained of being forced by a young man, whereas she herself had helped him to find that which he sought; and of the judgment which was given thereon.



THE incident on which I found my story happened so recently that I need not alter, nor add to, nor suppress, the facts.

There recently came to the provost at Quesnay, a fair wench, to complain of the force and violence she had suffered owing to the uncontrollable lust of a young man. The complaint being laid before the provost, the young man accused of this crime was seized, and as the common people say, was already looked upon as food for the gibbet, or the headsman's axe.

The wench, seeing and knowing that he of whom she had complained was in prison, greatly pestered the provost that justice might be done her, declaring that without her will and consent, she had by force been violated and dishonoured.

The provost, who was a discreet and wise man, and very experienced in judicial matters, assembled together all the notables and chief men, and commanded the prisoner to be brought forth, and he having come before the persons assembled to judge him, was asked whether he would confess, by torture or otherwise, the horrible crime laid to his charge, and the provost took him aside and adjured him to tell the truth.

"Here is such and such a woman," said he, "who complains bitterly that you have forced her. Is it so? Have you forced her? Take care that you tell the truth, for if you do not you will die, but if you do you will be pardoned."

"On my oath, provost," replied the prisoner, "I will not conceal from you that I have often sought her love. And, in fact, the day before yesterday, after a long talk together, I laid her upon the bed, to do you know what, and pulled up her dress, petticoat, and chemise. But my weasel could not find her rabbit hole, and went now here now there, until she kindly showed it the right road, and with her own hands pushed it in. I am sure that it did not come out till it had found its prey, but as to force, by my oath there was none."

"Is that true?" asked the provost.

"Yes, on my oath," answered the young man.

"Very good," said he, "we shall soon arrange matters."

After these words, the provost took his seat in the pontifical chair, surrounded by all the notable persons; and the young man was seated on a small bench in front of the judges, and all the people, and of her who accused him.

"Now, my dear," said the provost, "what have you to say about the prisoner?"

"Provost!" said she, "I complain that he has forced me and violated me against my will and in spite of me. Therefore I demand justice."

“What have you to say in reply?” asked the provost of the prisoner.

“Sir,” he replied, “I have already told how it happened, and I do not think she can contradict me.”

“My dear!” said the provost to the girl, “think well of what you are saying! You complain of being forced. It is a very serious charge! He says that he did not use any force, but that you consented, and indeed almost asked for what you got. And if he speaks truly, you yourself directed his weasel, which was wandering about near your rabbit-hole, and with your two hands—or at least with one—pushed the said weasel into your burrow. Which thing he could never have done without your help, and if you had resisted but ever so little he would never have effected his purpose. If his weasel was allowed to rummage in your burrow, that is not his fault, and he is not punishable.”

“Ah, Provost,” said the girl plaintively, “what do you mean by that? It is quite true, and I will not deny it, that I conducted his weasel into my burrow—but why did I do so? By my oath, Sir, its head was so stiff, and its muzzle so hard, that I was sure that it would make a large cut, or two or three, on my belly, if I did not make haste and put it where it could do little harm—and that is what I did.”

You may fancy what a burst of laughter there was at the end of this trial, both from the judges and the public. The young man was discharged,—to continue his rabbit-hunting if he saw fit.

The girl was angry that he was not hanged on a high forked tree for having hung on her “low forks”⁽¹⁾. But this anger and resentment did not last long, for as I heard afterwards on good authority, peace was concluded between them, and the youth had the right to ferret in the coney burrow whenever he felt inclined.

(1) A play upon words, which is not easily translatable, in allusion to the gallows.



Story the Twenty-Sixth.

THE DAMSEL KNIGHT

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE FOQUESSOLES.

Of the loves of a young gentleman and a damsel, who tested the loyalty of the gentleman in a marvellous and courteous manner, and slept three nights with him without his knowing that it was not a man—as you will more fully hear hereafter.



IN the duchy of Brabant—not so long ago but that the memory of it is fresh in the present day—happened a strange thing, which is worthy of being related, and is not unfit to furnish a story. And in order that it should be publicly known and reported, here is the tale.

In the household of a great baron of the said country there lived and resided a young, gracious, and kind gentleman, named Gerard, who was greatly in love with a damsel of the said household, named Katherine. And when he found opportunity, he ventured to tell her of his piteous case. Most people will be able to guess the answer he received, and therefore, to shorten matters, I omit it here.

In due time Gerard and Katherine loved each other so warmly that there was but one heart and one will between them. This loyal and perfect love endured no little time—indeed two years passed away. Love, who blinds the eyes of his disciples, had so blinded these two that they did not know that this affection, which they thought secret, was perceived by every one; there was not a man or a woman in the chateau who was not aware of it—in fact the matter was so noised abroad that all the talk of the household was of the loves of Gerard and Katherine.

These two poor, deluded fools were so much occupied with their own affairs that they did not suspect their love affairs were discussed by others. Envious persons, or those whom it did not concern, brought this love affair to the knowledge of the master and mistress of the two lovers, and it also came to the ears of the father and mother of Katherine.

Katherine was informed by a damsel belonging to the household, who was one of her friends and companions, that her love for Gerard had been discovered and revealed both to her father and mother, and also to the master and mistress of the house.

"Alas, what is to be done, my dear sister and friend?" asked Katherine. "I am lost, now that so many persons know, or guess at, my condition. Advise me, or I am ruined, and the most unfortunate woman in the world," and at these words her eyes filled with tears, which rolled down her fair cheeks and even fell to the edge of her robe.

Her friend was very vexed to see her grief, and tried to console her.

"My sister," she said, "it is foolish to show such great grief; for, thank God, no one can reproach you with anything that touches your honour or that of your friends. If you have listened to the vows of a gentleman, that is

not a thing forbidden by the Court of Honour, it is even the path, the true road, to arrive there. You have no cause for grief, for there is not a soul living who can bring a charge against you. But, at any rate, I should advise that, to stop chattering tongues which are discussing your love affairs, your lover, Gerard, should, without more ado, take leave of our lord and lady, alleging that he is to set out on a long voyage, or take part in some war now going on, and, under that excuse, repair to some house and wait there until God and Cupid have arranged matters. He will keep you informed by messages how he is, and you will do the same to him; and by that time the rumours will have ceased, and you can communicate with one another by letter until better times arrive. And do not imagine that your love will cease—it will be as great, or greater, than ever, for during a long time you will only hear from each other occasionally, and that is one of the surest ways of preserving love.”

The kind and good advice of this gentle dame was followed, for as soon as Katherine found means to speak to her lover, Gerard, she told him how the secret of their love had been discovered and had come to the knowledge of her father and mother, and the master and mistress of the house.

“And you may believe,” she said, “that it did not reach that point without much talk on the part of those of the household and many of the neighbours. And since Fortune is not so friendly to us as to permit us to live happily as we began, but menaces us with further troubles, it is necessary to be fore-armed against them. Therefore, as the matter much concerns me, and still more you, I will tell you my opinion.”

With that she recounted at full length the good advice which had been given by her friend and companion.

Gerard, who had expected a misfortune of this kind, replied;

"My loyal and dear mistress, I am your humble and obedient servant, and, except God, I love no one so dearly as you. You may command me to do anything that seems good to you, and whatever you order shall be joyfully and willingly obeyed. But, believe me, there is nothing left for me in the world when once I am removed from your much-wished-for presence. Alas, if I must leave you, I fear that the first news you will hear will be that of my sad and pitiful death, caused by your absence, but, be that as it may, you are the only living person I will obey, and I prefer rather to obey you and die, than live for ever and disobey you. My body is yours. Cut it, hack it, do what you like with it!"

You may guess that Katherine was grieved and vexed at seeing her lover, whom she adored more than anyone in the world, thus troubled. Had it not been for the virtue with which God had largely endowed her, she would have proposed to accompany him on his travels, but she hoped for happier days, and refrained from making such a proposal. After a pause, she replied ;

"My friend you must go away, but do not forget her who has given you her heart. And that you may have courage in the struggle which is imposed on you, know that I promise you on my word that as long as I live I will never marry any man but you of my own free-will, provided that you are equally loyal and true to me, as I hope you will be. And in proof of this, I give you this ring, which is of gold enamelled with black tears. If by chance they would marry me to some one else, I will defend myself so stoutly that you will be pleased with me, and I will prove to you that I can keep my promise without flinching from it. And, lastly, I beg of you that wherever you may stop, you will send me news about yourself, and I will do the same."

"Ah, my dear mistress," said Gerard, "I see plainly

that I must leave you for a time. I pray to God that he will give you more joy and happiness than I am likely to have. You have kindly given me, though I am not worthy of it, a noble and honourable promise, for which I cannot sufficiently thank you. Still less do I deserve it, but I venture in return to make a similar promise, begging most humbly and with all my heart, that my vow may have as great a weight as if it came from a much nobler man than I. Adieu, dearest lady. My eyes demand their turn, and prevent my tongue from speaking."

With these words he kissed her, and pressed her tightly to his bosom, and then each went away to think over his or her griefs.

God knows that they wept with their eyes, their hearts, and their heads, but ere they showed themselves, they concealed all traces of their grief, and put on a semblance of cheerfulness.

To cut matters short, Gerard did so much in a few days that he obtained leave of absence from his master — which was not very difficult, not that he had committed any fault, but owing to his love affair with Katherine, with which her friends were not best pleased, seeing that Gerard was not of such a good family or so rich as she was, and could not expect to marry her.

So Gerard left, and covered such a distance in one day that he came to Barrois, where he found shelter in the castle of a great nobleman of the country; and being safely housed he soon sent news of himself to the lady, who was very joyful thereat, and by the same messenger wrote to tell him of her condition, and the good-will she bore him, and how she would always be loyal to him.

Now you must know that as soon as Gerard had left Brabant, many gentlemen, knights and squires, came to Katherine, desiring above all things to make her acquaintance, which during the time that Gerard had been there

they had been unable to do, knowing that her heart was already occupied.

Indeed many of them demanded her hand in marriage of her father, and amongst them was one who seemed to him a very suitable match. So he called together many of his friends, and summoned his fair daughter, and told them that he was already growing old, and that one of the greatest pleasures he could have in the world was to see his daughter well married before he died. Moreover, he said to them ;

“ A certain gentleman has asked for my daughter’s hand, and he seems to me a suitable match. If your opinion agrees with mine, and my daughter will obey me, his honourable request will not be rejected.”

All his friends and relations approved of the proposed marriage, on account of the virtues, riches, and other gifts of the said gentleman. But when they asked the opinion of the fair Katherine, she sought to excuse herself, and gave several reasons for refusing, or at least postponing this marriage, but at last she saw that she would be in the bad books of her father, her mother, her relatives, friends, and her master and mistress, if she continued to keep her promise to her lover, Gerard.

At last she thought of a means by which she could satisfy her parents without breaking her word to her lover, and said,

“ My dearest lord and father, I do not wish to disobey you in anything you may command, but I have made a vow to God, my creator, which I must keep. Now I have made a resolution and sworn in my heart to God that I would never marry unless He would of His mercy show me that that condition was necessary for the salvation of my poor soul. But as I do not wish to be a trouble to you, I am content to accept this condition of matrimony, or any other that you please, if you will first

give me leave to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Nicolas at Varengeville ¹, which pilgrimage I vowed and promised to make before I changed my present condition."

She said this in order that she might see her lover on the road, and tell him how she was constrained against her will.

Her father was rather pleased to hear the wise and dutiful reply of his daughter. He granted her request, and wished to at once order her retinue, and spoke to his wife about it when his daughter was present.

"We will give her such and such gentlemen, who with Ysabeau, Marguerite and Jehanneton, will be sufficient for her condition."

"Ah, my lord," said Katherine, "if it so please you we will order it otherwise. You know that the road from here to St. Nicolas is not very safe, and that when women are to be escorted great precautions must be taken. I could not go thus without great expense; moreover, the road is long, and if it happened that we lost either our goods or honour (which may God forbend) it would be a great misfortune. Therefore it seems good to me—subject to your good pleasure—that there should be made for me a man's dress and that I should be escorted by my uncle, the bastard, each mounted on a stout horse. We should go much quicker, more safely, and with less expense, and I should have more confidence than with a large retinue."

The good lord, having thought over the matter a little while, spoke about it to his wife, and it seemed to them that the proposal showed much common sense and dutiful feeling. So everything was prepared for their departure.

They set out on their journey, the fair Katherine and her uncle, the bastard, without any other companion. Katherine, who was dressed in the German fashion very

(¹) A town of Lorraine, on the Meurthe, about six miles from Nancy. Pilgrims flocked thither from all parts to worship the relics of St. Nicolas.

elegantly, was the master, and her uncle, the bastard, was the serving man. They made such haste that their pilgrimage was soon accomplished, as far as St. Nicolas was concerned, and, as they were on their return journey—praising God for having preserved them, and talking over various matters Katherine said to her uncle,

“Uncle, you know that I am sole heiress to my father, and that I could bestow many benefits upon you, which I will most willingly do if you will aid me in a small quest I am about to undertake—that is to go to the castle of a certain lord of Barrois (whom she named) to see Gerard, whom you know. And, in order that when we return we may have some news to tell, we will demand hospitality, and if we obtain it we will stop there for some days and see the country, and you need be under no fear but that I shall take care of my honour, as a good girl should.”

The uncle, who hoped to be rewarded some day, and knew she was virtuous, vowed to himself that he would keep an eye upon her, and promised to serve her and accompany her wherever she wished. He was much thanked no doubt, and it was then decided that he should call his niece, Conrad.

They soon came, as they desired, to the wished-for place, and addressed themselves to the lord's major-domo, who was an old knight, and who received them most joyfully and most honourably.

Conrad asked him if the lord, his master, did not wish to have in his service a young gentleman who was fond of adventures, and desirous of seeing various countries?

The major-domo asked him whence he came, and he replied, from Brabant.

“Well then,” said the major-domo, “you shall dine here, and after dinner I will speak to my lord.”

With that he had them conducted to a fair chamber, and ordered the table to be laid, and a good fire to be lighted, and sent them soup and a piece of mutton, and white wine while dinner was preparing.

Then he went to his master and told him of the arrival of a young gentleman of Brabant, who wished to serve him, and the lord was content to take the youth if he wished.

To cut matters short, as soon as he had served his master, he returned to Conrad to dine with him, and brought with him, because he was of Brabant, the aforesaid Gerard, and said to Conrad;

“Here is a young gentleman who belongs to your country.”

“I am glad to meet him,” said Conrad.

“And you are very welcome,” replied Gerard.

But he did not recognise his lady-love, though she knew him very well.

Whilst they were making each other's acquaintance, the meat was brought in, and each took his place on either hand of the major-domo.

The dinner seemed long to Conrad, who hoped afterwards to have some conversation with her lover, and expected also that she would soon be recognised either by her voice, or by the replies she made to questions concerning Brabant; but it happened quite otherwise, for during all the dinner, the worthy Gerard did not ask after either man or woman in all Brabant; which Conrad could not at all understand.

Dinner passed, and after dinner my lord engaged Conrad in his service; and the major-domo, who was a thoughtful, experienced man, gave instructions that as Gerard and Conrad came from the same place, they should share the same chamber.

After this Gerard and Conrad went off arm in arm to look at their horses, but as far as Gerard was concerned,

if he talked about anything it was not Brabant. Poor Conrad—that is to say the fair Katherine—began to suspect that she was like forgotten sins, and had gone clean out of Gerard's mind; but she could not imagine why, at least, he did not ask about the lord and lady with whom she lived. The poor girl was, though she could not show it, in great distress of mind, and did not know what to do; whether to still conceal her identity, and test him by some cunning phrases, or to suddenly make herself known.

In the end she decided that she would still remain Conrad, and say nothing about Katherine unless Gerard should alter his manner.

The evening passed as the dinner had done, and when they came to their chamber, Gerard and Conrad spoke of many things, but not of the one subject pleasing to the said Conrad. When he saw that the other only replied in the words that were put into his mouth, she asked of what family he was in Brabant, and why he left there, and where he was when he was there, and he replied as it seemed good to him.

"And do you not know," she said, "such and such a lord, and such another?"

"By St. John, yes!" he replied.

Finally, she named the lord at whose castle she had lived; and he replied that he knew him well, but not saying that he had lived there, or ever been there in his life.

"It is rumoured," she said, "there are some pretty girls there. Do you know of any?"

"I know very little," he replied, "and care less. Leave me alone; for I am dying to go to sleep!"

"What!" she said. "Can you sleep when pretty girls are being talked about? That is a sign that you are not in love!"

He did not reply, but slept like a pig, and poor Katherine

began to have serious doubts about him, but she resolved to try him again.

When the morrow came, each dressed himself, talking and chattering meanwhile of what each liked best—Gerard of dogs and hawks, and Conrad of the pretty girls of that place and Brabant.

After dinner, Conrad managed to separate Gerard from the others, and told him that the country of Barrois was very flat and ugly, but Brabant was quite different, and let him know that he (Conrad) longed to return thither.

“For what purpose?” asked Gerard. “What do you see in Brabant that is not here? Have you not here fine forests for hunting, good rivers, and plains as pleasant as could be wished for flying falcons, and plenty of game of all sorts?”

“Still that is nothing!” said Conrad. “The women of Brabant are very different, and they please me much more than any amount of hunting or hawking!”

“By St. John! they are quite another affair,” said Gerard. “You are exceedingly amorous in your Brabant, I dare swear!”

“By my oath!” said Conrad, “it is not a thing that can be hidden, for I myself am madly in love. In fact my heart is drawn so forcibly that I fear I shall be forced to quit your Barrois, for it will not be possible for me to live long without seeing my lady love.”

“Then it was a madness,” said Gerard, “to have left her, if you felt yourself so inconstant.”

“Inconstant, my friend! Where is the man who can guarantee that he will be constant in love. No one is so wise or cautious that he knows for certain how to conduct himself. Love often drives both sense and reason out of his followers.”

The conversation dropped as supper time came, and was not renewed till they were in bed. Gerard would have

desired nothing better than to go to sleep, but Conrad renewed the discussion, and began a piteous, long, and sad complaint about his lady-love (which, to shorten matters, I omit) and at last he said,

"Alas, Gerard, and how can you desire to sleep whilst I am so wide awake, and my soul is filled with cares, and regrets, and troubles. It is strange that you are not a little touched yourself, for, believe me, if it were a contagious disease you could not be so close to me and escape unscathed. I beg of you, though you do not feel yourself, to have some pity and compassion on me, for I shall die soon if I do not behold my lady-love."

"I never saw such a love-sick fool!" cried Gerard. "Do you think that I have never been in love? I know what it is, for I have passed through it the same as you—certainly I have! But I was never so love-mad as to lose my sleep or upset myself, as you are doing now. You are an idiot, and your love is not worth a doit. Besides do you think your lady is the same as you are? No, no!"

"I am sure she is," replied Conrad; "she is so true-hearted."

"Ah, you speak as you wish," said Gerard, "but I do not believe that women are so true as to always remain faithful to their vows; and those who believe in them are blockheads. Like you, I have loved, and still love. For, to tell you the truth, I left Brabant on account of a love affair, and when I left I was high in the graces of a very beautiful, good, and noble damsel, whom I quitted with much regret; and for no small time I was in great grief at not being able to see her—though I did not cease to sleep, drink, or eat, as you do. When I found that I was no longer able to see her, I cured myself by following Ovid's advice, for I had not been here long before I made the acquaintance of a pretty girl in the house, and so managed, that—thank God—she now likes me very much,

and I love her. So that now I have forgotten the one I formerly loved, and only care for the one I now possess, who has turned my thoughts from my old love!"

"What!" cried Conrad. "Is it possible that, if you really loved the other, you can so soon forget her and desert her? I cannot understand nor imagine how that can be!"

"It is so, nevertheless, whether you understand it or not."

"That is not keeping faith loyally," said Conrad. "As for me, I would rather die a thousand times, if that were possible, than be so false to my lady. However long God may let me live, I shall never have the will, or even the lightest thought, of ever loving any but her."

"So much the greater fool you," said Gerard, "and if you persevere in this folly, you will never be of any good, and will do nothing but dream and muse; and you will dry up like the green herb that is cast into the furnace, and kill yourself, and never have known any pleasure, and even your mistress will laugh at you,—if you are lucky enough to be remembered by her at all."

"Well!" said Conrad. "You are very experienced in love affairs. I would beg of you to be my intermediary, here or elsewhere, and introduce me to some damsel that I may be cured like you."

"I will tell you what I will do," said Gerard. "Tomorrow I will speak to my mistress and tell her that we are comrades, and ask her to speak to one of her lady friends, who will undertake your business, and I do not doubt but that, if you like, you will have a good time, and that the melancholy which now bears you down will disappear—if you care to get rid of it."

"If it were not for breaking my vow to my mistress, I should desire nothing better," said Conrad, "but at any rate I will try it."

With that Gerard turned over and went to sleep, but

Katherine was so stricken with grief at seeing and hearing the falsehood of him whom she loved more than all the world, that she wished herself dead and more than dead. Nevertheless, she put aside all feminine feeling, and assumed manly vigour. She even had the strength of mind to talk for a long time the next day with the girl who loved the man *she* had once adored; and even compelled her heart and eyes to be witnesses of many interviews and love passages that were most galling to her.

Whilst she was talking to Gerard's mistress, she saw the ring that she had given her unfaithful lover, but she was not so foolish as to admire it, but nevertheless found an opportunity to examine it closely on the girl's finger, but appeared to pay no heed to it, and soon afterwards left.

As soon as supper was over, she went to her uncle, and said to him;

"We have been long enough in Barrois! It is time to leave. Be ready to-morrow morning at daybreak, and I will be also. And take care that all our baggage is prepared. Come for me as early as you like."

"You have but to come down when you will," replied the uncle.

Now you must know that after supper, whilst Gerard was conversing with his mistress, she who had been his lady-love went to her chamber and began to write a letter, which narrated at full length the love affairs of herself and Gerard, "also the promises which they made at parting, how they had wished to marry her to another and how she had refused, and the pilgrimage that she had undertaken to keep her word and come to him, and the disloyalty and falsehood she had found in him, in word, act, and deed. And that, for the causes mentioned, she held herself free and disengaged from the promise she had formerly made. And that she was going to return to her own country and never wished to see him or meet

him again, he being the falsest man who ever made vows to a woman. And as regards the ring that she had given him, that he had forfeited it by passing it into the hands of a third person. And if he could boast that he had lain three nights by her side, there was no harm, and he might say what he liked, and she was not afraid."

Letter written by a hand you ought to know, and underneath Katherine etc., otherwise known as Conrad; and on the back, To the false Gerard etc.

She scarcely slept all night, and as soon as she saw the dawn, she rose gently and dressed herself without awaking Gerard. She took the letter, which she had folded and sealed, and placed it in the sleeve of Gerard's jerkin; then in a vow voice prayed to God for him, and wept gently on account of the grief she endured on account of the falseness she had met with.

Gerard still slept, and did not reply a word. Then she went to her uncle, who gave her her horse which she mounted, and they left the country, and soon came to Brabant, where they were joyfully received, God knows.

You may imagine that all sorts of questions were asked about their adventures and travels, and how they had managed, but whatever they replied they took care to say nothing about their principal adventure.

But to return to Gerard. He awoke about 10 o'clock on the morning of the day when Katherine left, and looked to see if his companion Conrad was already risen. He did not know it was so late, and jumped out of bed in haste to seek for his jerkin. When he put his arm in the sleeve, out dropped the letter, at which he was much astonished, for he did not remember putting it there.

At any rate, he picked it up, and saw that it was sealed, and had written on the back, *To the false Gerard*. If he had been astonished before, he was still more so now.

After a little while he opened it and saw the signature, *Katherine known as Conrad* etc.

He did not know what to think, nevertheless he read the letter, and in reading it the blood mounted to his cheeks, and his heart sank within him, so that he was quite changed both in looks and complexion.

He finished reading the letter the best way he could, and learned that his falseness had come to the knowledge of her who wished so well to him, and that she knew him to be what he was, not by the report of another person, but by her own eyes; and what touched him most to the heart was that he had lain three nights with her without having thanked her for the trouble she had taken to come so far to make trial of his love.

He champed the bit, and was wild with rage, when he saw how he had been mystified. After much thought, he resolved that the best thing to do was to follow her, as he thought he might overtake her.

He took leave of his master and set out, and followed the trail of their horses, but did not catch them up before they came to Brabant, where he arrived opportunely on the day of the marriage of the woman who had tested his affection.

He wished to kiss her and salute her, and make some poor excuse for his fault, but he was not able to do so, for she turned her back on him, and he could not, all the time that he was there, find an opportunity of talking with her.

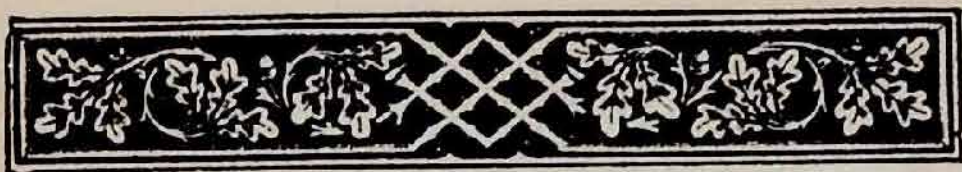
Once he advanced to lead her to the dance, but she flatly refused in the face of all the company, many of whom took note of the incident. For, not long after, another gentleman entered, and caused the minstrels to strike up, and advanced towards her, and she came down and danced with him.

Thus, as you have heard, did the false lover lose his mistress. If there are others like him, let them take warning by this example, which is perfectly true, and is well known, and happened not so very long ago.

Le Seigneur au bahu



Echiquet



Story the Twenty-Seventh.

THE HUSBAND IN THE CLOTHES-CHEST

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE BEAUVOIR.

Of a great lord of this kingdom and a married lady, who, in order that she might be with her lover, caused her husband to be shut in a clothes-chest by her waiting women, and kept him there all the night, whilst she passed the time with her lover; and of the wagers made between her and the said husband, as you will find afterwards recorded.



IT is not an unusual thing, especially in this country, for fair dames and damsels to often and willingly keep company with young gentlemen, and the pleasant joyful games they have together, and the kind requests which are made, are not difficult to guess.

Not long ago, there was a most noble lord, who might be reckoned as one of the princes, but whose name shall not issue from my pen, who was much in the good graces of a damsel who was married, and of whom report spoke so highly that the greatest personage in the kingdom might have deemed himself lucky to be her lover.

She would have liked to prove to him how greatly she esteemed him, but it was not easy; there were so many adversaries and enemies to be outwitted. And what more especially annoyed her was her worthy husband, who kept to the house and played the part of the cursed Dangier, (¹) and the lover could not find any honourable excuse to make him leave.

As you may imagine, the lover was greatly dissatisfied at having to wait so long, for he desired the fair quarry, the object of his long chase, more than he had ever desired anybody in all his life.

For this cause he continued to importune his mistress, till she said to him.

"I am quite as displeased as you can be that I can give you no better welcome; but, you know, as long as my husband is in the house he must be considered."

"Alas!" said he, "cannot you find any method to abridge my hard and cruel martyrdom?"

She—who as has been said above, was quite as desirous of being with her lover as he was with her—replied;

"Come to-night, at such and such an hour, and knock at my chamber door. I will let you in, and will find some method to be freed from my husband, if Fortune does not upset our plans."

Her lover had never heard anything which pleased him better, and after many gracious thanks,—which he was no bad hand at making—he left her, and awaited the hour assigned.

Now you must know that a good hour or more before the appointed time, our gentle damsel, with her women and her husband, had withdrawn to her chamber after supper; nor was her imagination idle, but she studied with all her mind how she could keep her promise to

(¹) Allegorical personage typifying jealousy, taken from *Le Roman de la Rose*.

her lover. Now she thought of one means, now of another, but nothing occurred to her by which she could get rid of her cursed husband; and all the time the wished-for hour was fast approaching.

Whilst she was thus buried in thought, Fortune was kind enough to do her a good turn, and her husband a bad one.

He was looking round the chamber, and by chance he saw at the foot of the bed his wife's clothes-chest. In order to make her speak, and arouse her from her reverie, he asked what that chest was used for, and why they did not take it to the wardrobe, or some other place where it would be more suitable.

"There is no need, Monseigneur," said Madame; "no one comes here but us. I left it here on purpose, because there are still some gowns in it, but if you are not pleased, my dear, my women will soon take it away."

"Not pleased?" said he. "No, I am not; but I like it as much here as anywhere else, since it pleases you; but it seems to me much too small to hold your gowns well without crumpling them, seeing what great and long trains are worn now."

"By my word, sir," said she, "it is big enough."

"It hardly seems so," replied he, "really; and I have looked at it well."

"Well, sir," said she, "will you make a bet with me?"

"Certainly I will," he answered; "what shall it be?"

"I will bet, if you like, half a dozen of the best shirts against the satin to make a plain petticoat, that we can put you inside the box just as you are."

"On my soul," said he, "I will bet I cannot get in."

"And I will bet you can."

"Come on!" said the women. "We will soon see who is the winner."

"It will soon be proved," said Monsieur, and then he

made them take out of the chest all the gowns which were in it, and when it was empty, Madam and her women put in Monsieur easily enough.

Then there was much chattering, and discussion, and laughter, and Madam said;

"Well, sir; you have lost your wager! You own that, do you not?"

"Yes," said he, "you are right."

As he said these words, the chest was locked, and the girls all laughing, playing, and dancing, carried both chest and man together, and put it in a big cupboard some distance away from the chamber.

He cried, and struggled, and made a great noise; but it was no good, and he was left there all the night. He could sleep, or think, or do the best he could, but Madam had given secret instructions that he was not to be let out that day, because she had been too much bothered by him already.

But to return to the tale we had begun. We will leave our man in his chest, and talk about Madam, who was awaiting her lover, surrounded by her waiting women, who were so good and discreet that they never revealed any secrets. They knew well enough that the dearly beloved adorer was to occupy that night the place of the man who was doing penance in the clothes-chest.

They did not wait long before the lover, without making any noise or scare, knocked at the chamber door, and they knew his knock, and quickly let him in. He was joyfully received and kindly entertained by Madam and her maids; and he was glad to find himself alone with his lady love, who told him what good fortune God had given her, that is to say how she had made a bet with her husband that he could get into the chest, how he had got in, and how she and her women had carried him away to a cupboard.

"What?" said her lover. "I cannot believe that he is in the house. By my word, I believed that you had found some excuse to send him out whilst I took his place with you for a time."

"You need not go," she said. "He cannot get out of where he is. He may cry as much as he will, but there is no one here likes him well enough to let him out, and there he will stay; but if you would like to have him set free, you have but to say so."

"By Our Lady," said he, "if he does not come out till I let him out, he will wait a good long time."

"Well then, let us enjoy ourselves," said she, "and think no more about him."

To cut matters short, they both undressed, and the two lovers lay down in the fair bed, and did what they intended to do, and which is better imagined than described.

When day dawned, her paramour took leave of her as secretly as he could, and returned to his lodgings to sleep, I hope, and to breakfast, for he had need of both.

Madam, who was as cunning as she was wise and good, rose at the usual hour, and said to her women;

"It will soon be time to let out our prisoner. I will go and see what he says, and whether he will pay his ransom."

"Put all the blame on us," they said. "We will appease him."

"All right, I will do so," she said.

With these words she made the sign of the Cross, and went nonchalantly, as though not thinking what she was doing, into the cupboard where her husband was still shut up in the chest. And when he heard her he began to make a great noise and cry out, "Who is there? Why do you leave me locked up here?"

His good wife, who heard the noise he was making

replied timidly, as though frightened, and playing the simpleton;

“Heavens! who is it that I hear crying?”

“It is I! It is I!” cried the husband.

“You?” she cried; “and where do you come from at this time?”

“Whence do I come?” said he. “You know very well, madam. There is no need for me to tell you—but what you did to me I will some day do to you,”—for he was so angry that he would willingly have showered abuse upon his wife, but she cut him short, and said;

“Sir, for God’s sake pardon me. On my oath I assure you that I did not know you were here now, for, believe me, I am very much astonished that you should be still here, for I ordered my women to let you out whilst I was at prayers, and they told me they would do so; and, in fact, one of them told me that you had been let out, and had gone into the town, and would not return home, and so I went to bed soon afterwards without waiting for you.”

“Saint John!” said he; “you see how it is. But make haste and let me out, for I am so exhausted that I can stand it no longer.”

“That may well be,” said she, “but you will not come out till you have promised to pay me the wager you lost, and also pardon me, or otherwise I will not let you out.”

“Make haste, for God’s sake! I will pay you—really.”

“And you promise?”

“Yes—on my oath!”

This arrangement being concluded, Madam opened the chest, and Monsieur came out, tired, cramped, and exhausted.

She took him by the arm, and kissed him, and embraced him as gently as could be, praying to God that he would not be angry.

The poor blockhead said that he was not angry with

her, because she knew nothing about it, but that he would certainly punish her women.

"By my oath, sir," said she, "they are well revenged upon you—for I expect you have done something to them."

"Not I certainly, that I know of—but at any rate the trick they have played me will cost them dear."

He had hardly finished this speech, when all the women came into the room, and laughed so loudly and so heartily that they could not say a word for a long time; and Monsieur, who was going to do such wonders, when he saw them laugh to such a degree, had not the heart to interfere with them. Madame, to keep him company, did not fail to laugh also. There was a marvellous amount of laughing, and he who had the least cause to laugh, laughed one of the loudest.

After a certain time, this amusement ceased, and Monsieur said;

"Mesdames, I thank you much for the kindness you have done me."

"You are quite welcome, sir," said one of the women, "and still we are not quits. You have given us so much trouble, and caused as so much mischief, that we owed you a grudge, and if we have any regret it is that you did not remain in the box longer. And, in fact, if it had not been for Madame you would still be there;—so you may take it how you will!"

"Is that so?" said he. "Well, well, you shall see how I will take it. By my oath I am well treated, when, after all I have suffered, I am only laughed at, and what is still worse, must pay for the satin for the petticoat. Really, I ought to have the shirts that were bet, as a compensation for what I have suffered."

"By Heaven, he is right," said the women. "We are on your side as to that, and you shall have them. Shall he not have them, Madame?"

"On what grounds?" said she. "He lost the wager."

"Oh, yes, we know that well enough: he has no right to them,—indeed he does not ask for them on that account, but he has well deserved them for another reason."

"Never mind about that," said Madame. "I will willingly give the material out of love for you, mesdames, who have so warmly pleaded for him, if you will undertake to do the sewing."

"Yes, truly, Madame."

Like one who when he wakes in the morning has but to give himself a shake and he is ready, Monsieur needed but a bunch of twigs to beat his clothes and he was ready, and so he went to Mass; and Madame and her women followed him, laughing loudly at him I can assure you.

And you may imagine that during the Mass there was more than one giggle when they remembered that Monsieur, whilst he was in the chest (though he did not know it himself) had been registered in the book which has no name. (1) And unless by chance this book falls into his hands, he will never,—please God—know of his misfortune, which on no account would I have him know. So I beg of any reader who may know him, to take care not to show it to him.

(1) The Book of Cuckolds.

Le Balant morfondu





Story the Twenty-Eighth.

THE INCAPABLE LOVER

BY

MESSIRE MICHAUT DE CHANGY.

Of the meeting assigned to a great Prince of this kingdom by a damsel who was chamber-woman to the Queen; of the little feats of arms of the said Prince, and of the neat replies made by the said damsel to the Queen concerning her Greyhound, which had been purposely shut out of the room of the said Queen, as you shall shortly hear.



IF in the time of the most renowned and eloquent Boccaccio, the adventure which forms the subject of my tale had come to his knowledge, I do not doubt but that he would have added it to his stories of great men who met with bad fortune. For I think that no nobleman ever had a greater misfortune to bear than the good lord (whom may God pardon!) whose adventure I will relate, and whether his ill fortune is worthy to be in the aforesaid books of Boccaccio, I leave those who hear it to judge.

The good lord of whom I speak was, in his time, one of the great princes of this kingdom, apparelled and

furnished with all that befits a nobleman; and amongst his other qualities was this,—that never was man more destined to be a favourite with the ladies.

Now it happened to him at the time when his fame in this respect most flourished, and everybody was talking about him, that Cupid, who casts his darts wherever he likes, caused him to be smitten by the charms of a beautiful, young, gentle and gracious damsel, who also had made a reputation second to no other of that day on account of her great and unequalled beauty and her good manners and virtues, and who, moreover, was such a favourite with the Queen of that country that she shared the royal bed on the nights when the said Queen did not sleep with the king.

This love affair, I must tell you, had advanced to such a point that each only desired time and place to say and do what would most please both. They were many days considering how to find a convenient opportunity, and at last, she—who was as anxious for the welfare of her lover as she was for the safety of her own reputation—thought of a good plan, of which she hastened to inform him, saying as follows;

“My dearest friend, you know that I sleep with the Queen, and that it is not possible for me—unless I would spoil everything—to resign that honour and position which the noblest lady of the land would think herself proud and happy to obtain. So that, though I would like to please you and do your pleasure, I would remain on good terms with her, and not desert her who can and does give me all the advancement and honour in the world. I do not suppose that you would have me act otherwise.”

“No, by my soul, dearest,” replied the worthy lord; “but at any rate I would beg you that in serving your mistress your devoted lover should not be forgotten, and that you do for him all that lies in your power, for he

would rather gain your love and good-will than aught else in the world."

"This is what I will do for you, Monseigneur," said she. "The Queen, as you know, has a greyhound of which she is very fond, that sleeps in her chamber. I will find means to shut it out of the room without her knowledge, and when everybody has retired, I will jump out of bed, run to the reception room, and unbolt the door. Then, when you think that the Queen is in bed, you must come quietly, and enter the reception room and close the door after you. There you will find the greyhound, who knows you well enough, and will let you approach it; pull its ears and make it cry out, and when the Queen hears that, I expect that she will make me get out of bed at once to let it in. Then I will come to you, and fail me not, if ever you would speak to me again."

"My most dear and loyal sweetheart," said Monseigneur, "I thank you all I can. Be sure that I will fail not to be there."

Then he rose and went away, and the lady also; each thinking and desiring how to carry out the proposed plan.

What need of a long story? The greyhound wanted to come into the chamber of his mistress at the usual time, as it had been accustomed, but the damsel had condemned it to banishment, and it was quickly made to beat a retreat. The Queen went to bed without noticing the absence of the dog, and soon afterwards there came to keep her company, the gentle damsel, who was only waiting to hear the greyhound cry out as the signal for the battle.

It was not long before the worthy lord set to work, and soon managed to reach the chamber where the greyhound was sleeping. He felt for it, with his foot or with his hand, until he found it, then he took

it by the ears and made it cry aloud two or three times.

The Queen, who heard it, soon knew that it was her greyhound, and thought that it wanted to come in. She called the damsel, and said;

“My dear, my greyhound is howling outside. Get up, and let it in!”

“Willingly, madam,” said the damsel, and as she awaited the battle, the day and hour of which she had herself appointed, she only armed herself with her chemise, and in that guise, came to the door and opened it, and soon met with him who was awaiting her.

He was so delighted and so surprised to see his lady-love so beautiful, and so well-prepared for the encounter, that he lost his strength and sense, and had not force enough left to draw his dagger, and try whether it could penetrate her cuirass. Of kissing, and cuddling, and playing with her breasts, he could do plenty; but for the grand operation—nihil.

So the fair damsel was forced to return without leaving him that which he could not gain by force of arms. But when she would quit him, he tried to detain her by force and by soft speeches, but she dared not stay, so she shut the door in his face, and came back to the Queen, who asked her if she had let the greyhound in? And she said, “No, because she could not find it though she had looked well for it.”

“Oh, well” said the Queen, “go to bed. It will be all right.”

The poor lover was very dissatisfied with himself, and thought himself dishonoured and disgraced. for he had up till then had such confidence in himself that he believed he could in less than one hour have tackled three ladies, and come off every time with honour.

At last his courage returned, and he said to himself that if he ever were so fortunate as to find another such

opportunity with his sweetheart, she should not escape as she did the previous time.

Thus animated and spurred on by shame and desire, he again took the greyhound by the ears, and made it cry out much louder than it had before.

Awakened by this cry, the Queen again sent her damsel, who opened the door as before, but had to return to her mistress without getting any more pleasure than she had the first time.

A third time did the poor gentleman do all in his power to tumble her, but the devil a bit could he find a lance to encounter her with, though she awaited his onslaught with a firm foot. And when she saw that she could not have her basket pierced, and that he could not lay his lance in rest, whatever advantage she gave him, she knew that the joust had come to nothing, and had a very poor opinion of the joustier.

She would no longer stay with him for all that he could say or do. She wished to return to the chamber, but her lover held her by force and said ;

“Alas, sweetheart, stay a little longer, I pray!”

“I cannot,” she said: “let me go! I have stayed too long already, considering the little I got by it,” and with that she turned towards the chamber, but he followed her and tried to detain her.

When she saw that—to pay him out, and also hoodwink the Queen—she called out loud,

“Get out! get out! dirty beast that you are! By God! you shall not come in here, dirty beast that you are!” and so saying she closed the door.

The Queen, who heard it, asked,

“To whom are you speaking, my dear?”

“To this dirty dog, madam, who has given me such trouble to look for him. He was lying quite flat, and with his nose on the ground, hidden under a bench, so

that I could not find him. And when I did find him he would not get up for anything that I could do. I would willingly have put him in, but he would not deign to lift up his head, so, in disgust, I have shut the door upon him and left him outside."

"You did quite right, my dear," said the Queen. "Come to bed, and go to sleep!"

Such, as you have heard, was the bad luck of this noble lord; and since he could not when his lady would, I believe that since then, when he had the power, his lady's will was not to be had.



Story the Twent-Ninth.

THE COW AND THE CALF

BY

MONSEIGNEUR.

Of a gentleman to whom—the first night that he was married, and after he had but tried one stroke—his wife brought forth a child, and of the manner in which he took it, and of the speech that he made to his companions when they brought him the candle, as you shall shortly hear.



IT is not a hundred years ago since a young gentleman of this country wished to know and experience the joys of matrimony, and—to cut matters short—the much-desired day of his marriage duly came.

After much good cheer and the usual amusements, the bride was put to bed, and a short time afterwards her husband followed, and lay close to her, and without delay duly began the assault on her fortress. With some trouble he entered in and gained the stronghold, but you must understand that he did not complete the conquest without accomplishing many feats of arms which it would take long to enumerate; for before he came to the donjon

of the castle he had other outworks, with which it was provided, to carry, like a place that had never been taken or was still quite new, and which nature had provided with many defences.

When he was master of the place, he broke his lance, and ceased the assault. But the fair damsel when she saw herself at the mercy of her husband, and how he had foraged the greater part of her manor, wished to show him a prisoner whom she held confined in a secret place,—or to speak plainly she was delivered on the spot, after this first encounter, of a fine boy; at which her husband was so ashamed and so astonished that he did not know what to do except to hold his tongue.

Out of kindness and pity, he did all that he possibly could for both mother and child, but, as you may believe, the poor woman could not restrain from uttering a loud cry when the child was born. Many persons heard this cry, and believed that it was "the cry of the maidenhead,"⁽¹⁾ which is a custom of this country.

Immediately all the gentlemen in the house where the bridegroom resided, came and knocked at the door of the chamber, and brought the caudle; but though they knocked loudly they received no reply, for the bride was in a condition in which silence is excusable, and the bridegroom had not much to chatter about.

"What is the matter?" cried the guests. "Why do you not open the door? If you do not make haste we will break it open; the caudle we have brought you will be quite cold;" and they began to knock louder than ever.

But the bridegroom would not have uttered a word for

(1) A singular custom which obliged the bride to utter a loud cry when she lost her virginity, and to which the groomsman replied by bringing a large bowl of caudle or some invigorating drink into the bed chamber. From some verses written by Clement Marot on the marriage of the Duke of Ferrara to Princess Renée, it would appear that the custom existed at the Court of France.

a hundred francs; at which those outside did not know what to think, for he was not ordinarily a silent man. At last he rose, and put on a dressing-gown he had, and let in his friends, who soon asked him whether the caudle had been earned, and what sort of a time he had had?

Then one of them laid the table-cloth, and spread the banquet, for they had everything prepared, and spared nothing in such cases. They all sat round to eat, and the bridegroom took his seat in a high-backed chair placed near his bed, looking very stupid and pitiful as you may imagine. And whatever the others said, he did not answer a word, but sat there like a statue or a carved idol.

"What is the matter?" cried one. "You take no notice of the excellent repast that our host has provided. You have not said a single word yet."

"Marry!" said another, "he has no jokes ready."

"By my soul!" said another, "marriage has wondrous properties. He has but been married an hour and he has lost his tongue. If he goes on at that rate there will soon be nothing left of him."

To tell the truth, he had formerly been known as a merry fellow, fond of a joke, and never uttered a word but a jest; but now he was utterly cast down.

The gentlemen drank to the bride and bridegroom, but devil a drop would either of them quaff in return; the one was in a violent rage, and the other was far from being at ease.

"I am not experienced in these affairs," said a gentleman, "but it seems we must feast by ourselves. I never saw a man with such a grim-looking face, and so soon sobered by a woman. You might hear a pin drop in his company. Marry! his loud jests are small enough now!"

"I drink to the bridegroom," said another, but the bridegroom neither drank, eat, laughed, or spoke.

Nevertheless, after some time that he had been both

scolded and teased by his friends, like a wild boar at bay, he retorted;

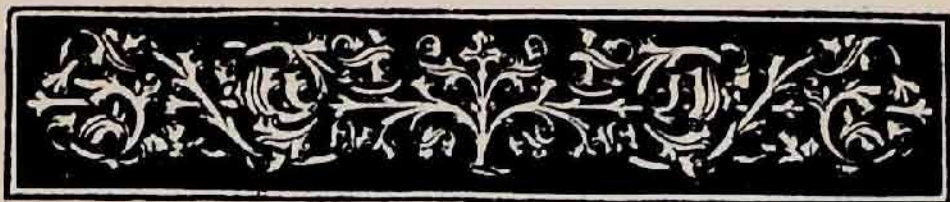
"Gentlemen, I have listened for some time to your jokes and reproofs. I would like you to understand that I have good reason to reflect and keep silent, and I am sure that there is no one here but would do the same if he had the same reasons that I have. By heavens! if I were as rich as the King of France, or the Duke of Burgundy, or all the princes of Christendom, I should not be able to provide that which, apparently, I shall *have* to provide. I have but touched my wife once, and she has brought forth a child! Now if each time that I begin again she does the same, how shall I be able to keep my family?"

"What? a child?" said his friends.

"Yes, yes! Really a child! Look here!" and he turned towards the bed and lifted up the clothes and showed them.

"There!" said he. "There is the cow and the calf! Am I not well swindled?"

Many of his friends were much astonished, and quite excused their host's conduct, and went away each to his own home. And the poor bridegroom abandoned his newly-delivered bride the first night, fearing that she would do the same another time, and not knowing what would become of him if so.



Story the Thirtieth.

THE THREE CORDELIERS

BY

MONSIEUR DE BEAUVOIR.

Of three merchants of Savoy who went on a pilgrimage to St. Anthony in Vienne (1) and who were deceived and cuckolded by three Cordeliers who slept with their wives. And how the women thought they had been with their husbands, and how their husbands came to know of it, and of the steps they took, as you shall shortly hear.



IT is as true as the Gospel, that three worthy merchants of Savoy set out with their wives to go on a pilgrimage to St. Anthony of Vienne.

And in order to render their journey more devout and more agreeable to God and St. Anthony, they determined that from the time they left their houses, and all through the journey, they would not sleep with their wives, but live in continence, both going and returning.

They arrived one night in the town, where they found

(1) This according to M. Lacroix is the old town of La Mothe St. Didier in Dauphiné, which took the name of Saint Antoine on account of the relics of the Saint, which were brought there in the 11th century.

good lodgings, and had excellent cheer at supper, like those who have plenty of money and know well what to do with it, and enjoyed themselves so much that each determined to break his oath, and sleep with his wife.

However, it happened otherwise, for when it was time to retire to rest, the women said good night to their husbands and left them, and shut themselves up in a chamber near, where each had ordered her bed to be made.

Now you must know that that same evening there arrived in the house three Cordeliers, who were going to Geneva, and who ordered a chamber not very far from that of the merchant's wives.

The women, when they were alone, began to talk about a hundred thousand things, and though there were only three of them they made enough noise for forty.

The good Cordeliers, hearing all this womens' chatter, came out of their chamber, without making any noise, and approached the door without being heard. They saw three pretty women, each lying by herself in a fair bed, big enough to accommodate a second bed-fellow; then they saw and heard also the three husbands go to bed in another chamber, and they said to themselves that fortune had done them a good turn, and that they would be unworthy to meet with any other good luck if they were cowardly enough to allow this opportunity to escape them.

"So," said one of them, "there needs no further deliberation as to what we are to do; we are three and they are three—let each take his place when they are asleep."

As it was said, so it was done, and such good luck had the good brothers that they found the key of the room in which the women were, and opened the door so gently that they were not heard by a soul, and they were not such fools when they had gained the outworks as not to close

the door after them and take out the key, and then, without more ado, each picked out a bed-fellow, and began to ruffle her as well as he could.

One of the women, believing it was her husband, spoke, and said ;

“ What are you doing ? Do you not remember your vow ? ”

But the good Cordelier answered not a word, but did that for which he came, and did it so energetically that she could not help assisting in the performance.

The other two also were not idle, and the good women did not know what had caused their husbands thus to break their vow. Nevertheless, they thought they ought to obey, and bear it all patiently without speaking, each being afraid of being heard by her companions, for really each thought that she alone was getting the benefit.

When the good Cordeliers had done all they could, they left without saying a word, and returned to their chamber, each recounting his adventures. One had broken three lances ; another, four ; and the other, six. They rose early in the morning, and left the town.

The good ladies, who had not slept all night, did not rise very early in the morning, for they fell asleep at daybreak, which caused them to get up late.

On the other hand, their husbands, who had supped well the previous night, and who expected to be called by their wives, slept heavily till an hour so late that on other days they had generally travelled two leagues by that time.

At last the women got up, and dressed themselves as quickly as they could, and not without talking. And, amongst other things, the one who had the longest tongue, said ;

“ Between ourselves, mesdames—how have you passed the night ? Have your husbands worked like mine did ? He has not ceased to ruffle me all night.”

"By St. John!" said they, "if your husband ruffled you well last night, ours have not been idle. They have soon forgotten what they promised at parting; though believe us we did not forget to remind them."

"I warned mine also," said the first speaker, "when he began, but he did not leave off working, and hurried on like a hungry man who had been deprived of my company for two nights."

When they were attired, they went to find their husbands, who were already dressed;

"Good morning, good morning! you sleepers!" cried the ladies.

"Thank you," said the men, "for having called us."

"By my oath!" said one lady. "We have no more qualms of conscience for not calling you than you have for breaking your vow."

"What vow?" said one of the men.

"The vow," said she, "that you made on leaving, not to sleep with your wife."

"And who has slept with his wife?" asked he.

"You know well enough," said she, "and so do I."

"And I also," said her companion. "Here is my husband who never gave me such a tumbling as he did last night—indeed if he had not done his duty so well I should not be so pleased that he had broken his vow, but I pass over that, for I suppose he is like young children, who when they know they deserve punishment, think they may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb."

"By St. John! so did mine!" cried the third. "But I am not going to scold him for it. If there was any harm done there was good reason for it."

"And I declare by my oath," cried one of the men, "that you dream, and that you are drunken with sleep. As for me I slept alone, and did not leave my bed all night."

“Nor did I,” said another.”

“Nor I, by St. John!” said the third. “I would not on any account break my oath. And I feel sure that my friend here, and my neighbour there, who also promised, have not so quickly forgotten.”

The women began to change colour and to suspect some trickery, when one of the husbands began to fear the truth. Without giving the women time to reply, he made a sign to his companions, and said, laughing;

“By my oath, madam, the good wine here, and the excellent cheer last night made us forget our promise; but be not displeased at the adventure; if it please God we each last night, with your help, made a fine baby, which is a work of great merit, and will be sufficient to wipe out the fault of breaking our vow!”

“May God will it so!” said the women. “But you so strongly declared that you had not been near us that we began to doubt a little.”

“We did it on purpose,” said he, “in order to hear what you would say.”

“And so you committed a double sin; first to break your oath, then to knowingly lie about it; and also you have much troubled us.”

“Do not worry yourselves about that,” said he; “it is no great matter; but go to Mass, and we will follow you.”

The women set out towards the church, and their husbands remained behind, without following them too closely; then they all said together, without picking their words;

“We are deceived! Those devils of Cordeliers have cuckolded us; they have taken our places, and shown us the folly of not sleeping with our wives. They should never have slept out of our rooms, and if it was dangerous to be in bed with them, is there not plenty of good straw to be had?”

"Marry!" said one of them, "we are well punished this time; but at any rate it is better that the trick should only be known to us than to us and our wives, for there would be much danger if it came to their knowledge. You hear by their confession that these ribald monks have done marvels—both more and better than we could do. And, if our wives knew that, they would not be satisfied with this experience only. My advice is that we swallow the business without chewing it."

"So help me God!" cried the third, "my friend speaks well. As for me, I revoke my vow, for it is not my intention to run any more risks."

"As you will," said the other two; "and we will follow your example."

So all the rest of the journey the wives slept with their husbands, though the latter took care not to explain the cause. And when the women saw that, they demanded the cause of this sudden change. And they answered deceitfully, that as they had begun to break their vow they had better go on.

Thus were the three worthy merchants deceived by the three good Cordeliers, without it ever coming to the knowledge of their wives, who would have died of grief had they known the truth; for every day we see women die for less cause and occasion.

La Dame à Deux





Story the Thirty-First.

TWO LOVERS FOR ONE LADY

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE LA BARDE.

Of a squire who found the mule of his companion, and mounted thereon and it took him to the house of its master's mistress; and the squire slept there, where his friend found him; also of the words which passed between them—as is more clearly declared below.



A gentleman of this kingdom—a squire of great renown and reputation—fell in love with a beautiful damsel of Rouen, and did all in his power to gain her good graces. But fortune was contrary to him, and his lady so unkind, that finally he abandoned the pursuit in despair.

He was not very wrong to do so, for she was provided with a lover—not that the squire knew of that, however much he might suspect it.

He who enjoyed her love was a knight, and a man of great authority, and was so familiar with the squire as to tell him much concerning his love-affair.

Often the knight said; “By my faith, friend, I would

have you know that I have a mistress in this town to whom I am devoted; for, however tired I may be, I would willingly go three or four leagues to see her—a mere couple of leagues I would run over without stopping to take breath."

"Is there no request or prayer that I can make" said the squire, "that will cause you to tell me her name?"

"No, no!" said the other, "you shall not know that."

"Well!" said the squire, "when I am so fortunate as to have something good, I will be as reticent as you are."

It happened some time after this that the good knight asked the squire to supper at the castle of Rouen, where he was then lodged. He came, and they had some talk; the gentle knight, who had an appointment to see his lady at a certain hour, said farewell to the squire, and added,

"You know that we have various things to see to to-morrow, and that we must rise early in order to arrange various matters. It is advisable therefore to go to bed early, and for that reason I bid you good-night."

The squire, who was cunning enough, suspected that the good knight wished to go somewhere, and that he was making the duties of the morrow an excuse to get rid of him, but he took no notice, and on taking leave and wishing good-night to his host, said;

"Monseigneur you say well; rise early to-morrow morning, and I will do the same."

When the good squire went down, he found a little mule at the foot of the staircase of the castle, with no one minding it. He soon guessed that the page he had met as he came down had gone to seek for a saddle-cloth for his master.

"Ah, ah" he said to himself, "my host did not get rid of me at this early hour for nothing. Here is his mule,

which only waits till I am gone to carry his master to some place he does not wish me to know. Ah, mule!" said he, "if you could speak, you could tell me some news. Let me beg of you to lead me where your master wishes to be."

With that he made his page hold the stirrup, and mounted the mule, and laid the reins on the mule's neck, and let it amble on wherever it liked.

And the little mule led him by streets and alleys here and there, till at last it stopped before a little wicket, which was in a side street where its master was accustomed to come, and which was the garden gate of the house of the very damsel the squire had so loved and had abandoned in despair.

He dismounted, and tapped gently at the wicket, and a damsel, who was watching through a hidden lattice, believing it to be the knight, came down and opened the door, and said;

"Monseigneur you are welcome; mademoiselle is in her chamber, and awaits you."

She did not recognise him, because it was late, and he had a velvet cap drawn down over his face. And the good squire replied, "I will go to her."

The he whispered to his page, "Go quickly and put the mule where we found it; then go to bed."

"It shall be done, sir," he said.

The woman closed the gate, and led the way to the chamber. Our good squire, much occupied with the business in hand, walked boldly to the room where the lady was, and he found her simply dressed in a plain petticoat, and with a gold chain round her neck.

He saluted her politely, for he was kind, courteous and well-spoken, but she, who was as much astonished as though horns had sprouted out of her head, did not for the moment know how to reply, but at last she asked him

what he sought there, why he came at that hour, and who had sent him?

"Mademoiselle," said he, "you may well imagine that if I had had to rely on myself alone I should not be here; but, thank God, one who has more pity for me than you ever had, has done this kindness to me."

"Who brought you here, sir?" she asked.

"By my oath, mademoiselle, I will not conceal that from you; it was such and such a lord (and he named the knight who had invited him to supper), who sent me here."

"Ah!" she cried. "Traitor and disloyal knight that he is, has he betrayed my confidence? Well, well! I will be revenged on him some day."

"Oh, mademoiselle! it is not right of you to say that, for it is no treason to give pleasure to one's friend, or to render him aid and service when one can. You know what a great friendship exists between him and me, and that neither hides from the other what is in his heart. It happened that not long ago I related and confessed to him the great love I bore you, and that because of you I had no happiness left in the world, for that by no means could I ever win your affection, and that it was not possible for me to long endure this horrible martyrdom. When the good knight knew that my words were really true, and was aware of the sorrow I endured, he was fain to tell me how he stood with regard to you, and preferred to lose you, and so save my life, than to see me die miserably and retain your affection. And if you are such a woman as you should be, you would not hesitate to give comfort and consolation to me, your obedient servant, who has always loyally served and obeyed you."

"I beg of you," she said, "not to speak of that, and to leave here at once. Cursed be he who made you come!"

"Do you know, mademoiselle," he replied, "that it is not my intention to leave here before to-morrow morning?"

"By my oath," she cried, "you will go now, at once!"

"Morableu! I will not—for I will sleep with you."

When she saw that he was not to be got rid of by hard words, she resolved to try kindness, and said;

"I beg of you with all my heart to leave my house now, and by my oath, another time I will do whatever you wish."

"Bah!" said he; "Waste no more words, for I shall sleep here," and with that he removed his cloak, and led the damsel to the table, and finally—to cut the tale short—she went to bed with him by her side.

They had not been in bed long, and he had but broken one lance, when the good knight arrived on his mule, and knocked at the wicket. When the squire heard that and knew who it was, he began to growl, imitating a dog very well.

The knight, hearing this, was both astonished and angry. He knocked at the door more loudly than before, and the other growled louder than ever.

"Who is that growling?" said he outside. "Morableu! but I will soon find out! Open the door, or I will carry it away!"

The fair damsel, who was in a great rage, went to the window in her chemise, and said;

"Are you there, false and disloyal knight? You may knock as much as you like, but you will not come in!"

"Why shall I not come in?" said he.

"Because," said she, "you are the falsest man that ever woman met, and are not worthy to be with respectable people."

"Mademoiselle," said he, "you blason my arms very well, but I do not know what excites you, for I have never been false to you that I am aware of."

"Yes, you have," she cried, "done me the greatest wrong that ever man did to woman."

"I have not, I swear. But tell me who is in there?"

"You know very well, wretched traitor that you are," she replied.

Thereupon the squire, who was in bed, began to growl like a dog as before.

"Marry!" said he outside, "I do not understand this. Who is this growler?"

"By St. John! you shall know," cried the other, and jumped out of bed and came to the window, and said;

"And please you, sir, you have no right to wake us up."

The good knight, when he knew who spoke to him, was marvellously astonished, and when at last he spoke, he said.

"How did you come here?"

"I supped at your house and slept here."

"The fault is mine," said he. Then addressing the damsel, he added, "Mademoiselle, do you harbour such guests in your house?"

"Yes, monseigneur," she replied, "and thank you for having sent him."

"I?" said he. "By St. John I have nothing to do with it. I came to occupy my usual place, but it seems I am too late. At least I beg, since I cannot have anything else, that you open the door and let me drink a cup of wine."

"By God, you shall not enter here!" she cried.

"By St. John! he shall," cried the squire, and ran down and opened the door, and then went back to bed, and she did also, though, God knows, much ashamed and dissatisfied.

When the good knight entered the chamber, he lighted a candle, and looked at the couple in bed and said;

"Good luck to you, mademoiselle, and to you also squire."

"Many thanks, monseigneur," said he.

But the damsel could not say a word, her heart was so full, for she felt certain that the knight had connived at the squire's coming, and she felt so angry that she would not speak to him.

"Who showed you the way here, squire?" asked the knight.

"Your little mule, monseigneur," said he. "I found it at the foot of the stairs, when I supped with you at the castle. It was there alone, and seemingly lost, so I asked it what it was waiting for, and it replied that it was waiting for its saddle-cloth and you. 'To go where?' I asked. 'Where we usually go,' replied the mule. 'I am sure,' said I, 'that your master will not leave the house to-night, for he is going to bed, so take me where you usually go, I beg.' It was content, so I mounted on it, and it brought me here, for which I give it thanks."

"God reward the little beast that betrayed me," said the good knight.

"Ah, you have fully deserved it, monseigneur," said the damsel, when at last she was able to speak. "I know well that you have deceived me, but I wish you to know that it is not much to your honour. There was no need, if you would not come yourself, to send some one else surreptitiously. It was an evil day for me when first I saw you."

"Morbleu! I never sent him," he said; "but since he is here I will not drive him away. Besides there is enough for the two of us; is there not my friend?"

"Oh, yes, monseigneur, plenty of spoil to divide. Let us celebrate the arrangement by a drink."

He went to the side-board and filled a large cup with wine, and said, "I drink to you, friend."

"And I pledge you, friend," said the other, and poured out another cup for the damsel, who refused to drink, but at last, unwillingly, kissed the cup.

"Well, friend," said the knight, "I will leave you here. Ruffle her well; it is your turn to-day and will be mine to-morrow, please God, and I hope you will be as obliging to me, if ever you find me here, as I am to you now."

"By Our Lady, friend, doubt not but I shall be."

Then the knight went away and left the squire, who did as well as he could on the first night. And he told the damsel the whole truth of his adventure, at which she was somewhat relieved to find that he had not been sent.

Thus was the fair damsel deceived by the mule, and obliged to obey the knight and the squire, each in his turn—an arrangement to which she finally became accustomed. The knight and squire grew more attached to each other than before this adventure; their affection increased, and no evil counsels engendered discord and hate between them.

Les Dames Dismées





Story the Thirty-Second.

THE WOMEN WHO PAID TITHE

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE VILLIERS.

Of the Cordeliers of Ostelleria in Catalonia, who took tithe from the women of the town, and how it was known, and the punishment the lord of that place and his subjects inflicted on the monks, as you shall learn hereafter.



IN order that I may not be excluded from the number of fortunate and meritorious writers who have worked to increase the number of stories in this book, I will briefly relate a new story, which will serve as a substitute for the tale previously required of me.

It is a well-known fact that in the town of Hostelleria, in Catalonia, ⁽¹⁾ there arrived some minor friars of the order of Observance, ⁽²⁾ who had been driven out of the kingdom of Spain.

They managed to worm themselves into the good graces of the Lord of that town, who was an old man, so that

⁽¹⁾ Hostalrich, a town of Catalonia, some 26 miles from Girona.

⁽²⁾ One of the principal branches of the order of Franciscans.

he built for them a fair church and a large convent, and maintained and supported them all his life as best he could. And after him came his eldest son, who did quite as much for them as his worthy father had done.

In fact they prospered so, that, in a few years they had everything that a convent of mendicant friars could desire. Nor were they idle during all the time they were acquiring these riches; they preached both in the town and in the neighbouring villages, and had such influence over the people that there was not a good christian who did not confess to them, they had such great renown for pointing out faults to sinners.

But of all who praised them and held them in esteem, the women were foremost, such saints did they deem them on account of their charity and devotion.

Now listen to the wickedness, deception, and horrible treason which these false hypocrites practised on the men and women who every day gave them so many good gifts. They made it known to all the women in the town that they were to give to God a tenth of all their goods.

"You render to your Lord such and such a thing; to your parish and priest such and such a thing; and to us you must render and deliver the tithe of the number of times that you have carnal connection with your husband. We will take no other tithe from you, for, as you know, we carry no money—for the temporal and transitory things of this world are nothing to us. We ask and demand only spiritual goods. The tithes which we ask and which you owe us are not temporal goods; as the Holy Sacrament, which you receive, is a divine and holy thing, so no one may receive the tithe but us, who are monks of the order of the Observance."

The poor simple women, who believed the good friars were more like angels than terrestrial beings, did not refuse to pay the tithe. There was not one who did not

pay in her turn, from the highest to the lowest, even the wife of the Lord was not excused.

Thus were all the women of the town parcelled out amongst these rascally monks, and there was not a monk who did not have fifteen or sixteen women to pay tithes to him, and God knows what other presents they had from the women, and all under cover of devotion.

This state of affairs lasted long without its ever coming to the knowledge of those who were most concerned in the payment of the new tithe; but at last it was discovered in the following manner.

A young man who was newly married, was invited to supper at the house of one of his relations—he and his wife—and as they were returning home, and passing the church of the above-mentioned good Cordeliers, suddenly the bell rang out the *Ave Maria*, and the young man bowed to the ground to say his prayers.

His wife said, "I would willingly enter this church."

"What would you do in there at this hour?" asked her husband. "You can easily come again when it is daylight; to-morrow, or some other time."

"I beg of you," she said, "to let me go: I will soon return."

"By Our Lady!" said he, "you shall not go in now."

"By my oath!" she replied, "it is compulsory. I must go in, but I will not stay. If you are in a hurry to get home, go on, and I will follow you directly."

"Get on! get forward!" he said, "you have nothing to do here. If you want to say a *Pater noster*, or an *Ave Maria*, there is plenty of room at home, and it is quite as good to say it there as in this monastery, which is now as dark as pitch."

"Marry!" said she, "you may say what you like, but by my oath, it is necessary that I should enter here for a little while."

"Why?" said he. "Do you want to sleep with any of the brothers."

She imagined that her husband knew that she paid the tithe, and replied;

"No, I do not want to sleep with him; I only want to pay."

"Pay what?" said he.

"You know very well," she answered; "Why do you ask?"

"What do I know well?" he asked, "I never meddle with your debts."

"At least," she said, "you know very well that I must pay the tithe."

"What tithe?"

"Marry!" she replied. "It always has to be paid;—the tithe for our nights together. You are lucky—I have to pay for us both."

"And to whom do you pay?" he asked.

"To brother Eustace," she replied. "You go on home, and let me go in and discharge my debt. It is a great sin not to pay, and I am never at ease in my mind when I owe him anything."

"It is too late to-night," said he, "he has gone to bed an hour ago."

"By my oath," said she, "I have been this year later than this. If one wants to pay one can go in at any hour."

"Come along! come along!" he said. "One night makes no such great matter."

So they returned home; both husband and wife vexed and displeased—the wife because she was not allowed to pay her tithe, and the husband because he had learned how he had been deceived, and was filled with anger and thoughts of vengeance, rendered doubly bitter by the fact that he did not dare to show his anger.

A little later they went to bed together, and the husband, who was cunning enough, questioned his wife indirectly, and asked if the other women of the town paid tithes as she did?

"By my faith they do," she replied. "What privilege should they have more than me? There are sixteen to twenty of us who pay brother Eustace. Ah, he is so devout. And he has so much patience. Brother Bartholomew has as many or more, and amongst others my lady (¹) is of the number. Brother Jacques also has many; Brother Anthony also—there is not one of them who has not a number."

"St. John!" said the husband, "they do not do their work by halves. Now I understand well that they are more holy than I thought them; and truly I will invite them all to my house, one after the other, to feast them and hear their good words. And since Brother Eustace receives your tithes, he shall be the first. See that we have a good dinner to-morrow, and I will bring him."

"Most willingly," she replied, "for then at all events I shall not have to go to his chamber to pay him; he can receive it when he comes here."

"Well said," he replied; "give it him here;" but as you may imagine he was on his guard, and instead of sleeping all night, thought over at his leisure the plan he intended to carry out on the morrow.

The dinner arrived, and Brother Eustace, who did not know his host's intentions stuffed a good meal under his hood. And when he had well eaten, he rolled his eyes on his hostess, and did not spare to press her foot under the table—all of which the host saw, though he pretended not to, however much to his prejudice it was.

After the meal was over and grace was said, he called Brother Eustace and told him that he wanted to

(¹) The wife of the Seigneur.

show him an image of Our Lady that he had in his chamber, and the monk replied that he would willingly come.

They both entered the chamber, and the host closed the door so that he could not leave, and then laying hold of a big axe, said to the Cordelier.

"By God's death, father! you shall never go out of this room—unless it be feet foremost—if you do not confess the truth."

"Alas, my host, I beg for mercy. What is it you, would ask of me?"

"I ask," said he, "the tithe of the tithe you have received from my wife."

When the Cordelier heard the word tithes, he began to think that he was in a fix, and did not know what to reply except to beg for mercy, and to excuse himself as well as he could.

"Now tell me," said the husband, "what tithe it is that you take from my wife and the others?"

The poor Cordelier was so frightened that he could not speak, and answered never a word.

"Tell me all about it," said the young man, "and I swear to you I will let you go and do you no harm;—but if you do not confess I will kill you stone dead."

When the other felt convinced that he had better confess his sin and that of his companions and escape, than conceal the facts and be in danger of losing his life, he said;

"My host, I beg for mercy, and I will tell you the truth. It is true that my companions and I have made all the women of this town believe that they owe us tithes for all the times their husbands sleep with them. They believed us, and they all pay—young and old—when once they are married. There is not one that is excused—my lady even pays like the others—her two nieces

also—and in general there is no one that is exempt.”

“Marry!” said the other, “since my lord and other great folks pay it, I ought not to be dissatisfied, however much I may dislike it. Well! you may go, worthy father, on this condition—that you do not attempt to collect the tithe that my wife owes you.”

The other was never so joyous as when he found himself outside the house, and said to himself that he would never ask for anything of the kind again, nor did he, as you will hear.

When the host of the Cordelier was informed by his wife of this new tithe, he went to his Lord and told him all about the tax and how it concerned him. You may imagine that he was much astonished, and said;

“Ah, cursed wretches that they are! Cursed be the hour that ever my father—whom may God pardon—received them! And now they take our spoils and dishonour us, and ere long they may do worse. What is to be done?”

“By my faith, Monseigneur” said the other, “if it please you and seem good to you, you should assemble all your subjects in this town, for the matter touches them as much as you. Inform them of this affair, and consult with them what remedy can be devised before it is too late.”

Monseigneur approved, and ordered all his married subjects to come to him, and in the great hall of his castle, he showed them at full length why he had called them together.

If my lord had been astonished and surprised when he heard the news, so also were all the good people who were there assembled. Some of them said, “We ought to kill them,” others “They should be hanged!” others “Drown them!” Others said they could not believe it was true—the monks were so devout and led such

holy lives. One said one thing, another said another.

"I will tell you," said the Seigneur, "what we will do. We will bring our wives hither, and Master John, or some other, shall preach a little sermon in which he will take care to make allusion to tithes, and ask the women, in the name of all of us, whether they discharge their debts, as we are anxious they should be paid, and we shall hear their reply."

After some discussion they all agreed to the Seigneur's proposal. So orders were issued to all the married women of the town, and they all came to the great hall, where their husbands were assembled. My lord even brought my lady, who was quite astonished to see so many persons. An usher of my lord's commanded silence, and Master John, who was slightly raised above the other people, began the address which follows;

"Mesdames and mesdemoiselles, I am charged by my lord and those of his council to explain briefly the reason why you are called together. It is true that my lord, his council, and all his people who are here met together, desire to make a public examination of their conscience,—the cause being that that they wish (God willing) to make ere long a holy procession in praise of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and His Glorious Mother, and from the present moment to be in such a devout frame of mind that they may the better praise him in their prayers, and that all the works which they do may be most agreeable to God. You know that there have been no wars in our time, and that our neighbours have been terribly afflicted both by pestilence and famine. Whilst others have been cast down, we have nothing to complain of, and we must own that God has preserved us. There is good reason that we should acknowledge that this is not due to our own virtues, but to the great and liberal mercy of our Blessed Redeemer, who cries, calls, and invites us to put up in

our parish church, devout prayers, to which we are to add great faith and firm devotion. The holy convent of the Cordeliers in this town has greatly aided, and still aids us in preserving the above-mentioned benefits. Moreover, we wish to know if you women also perform that which you have undertaken, and whether you sufficiently remember the obligation you owe the Church, and therefore it will be advisable that, by way of precaution, I should mention the principal points. Four times a year,—that is to say at the four Natales (¹) you must confess to some priest or monk having the power of absolution, and if at each festival you receive your Creator that will be well done, but twice, or at least once a year, you ought to receive the Communion. Bring an offering every Sunday to each Mass; those who are able should freely give tithes to God—as fruit, poultry, lambs, pigs, and other accustomed gifts. You owe also another tithe to the holy monks of the convent of St. Francis, and which we earnestly desire to see paid. It greatly concerns us, and we desire it to be continued, nevertheless there are many of you who have not acted properly in this respect, and who by negligence, or backwardness, have neglected to pay in advance. You know that the good monks cannot come to your houses to seek their tithes;—that would disturb and trouble them too much; it is quite enough if they take the trouble to receive it. It is important that this should be mentioned—it remains to see who have paid, and who still owe.”

Master John had no sooner finished his discourse, than more than twenty women began to cry at the same time, “I have paid!” “I have paid!” “I owe nothing!” “Nor I,” “Nor I.” A hundred other voices chimed in—generally to say that they owed nothing—and four or

(¹) The four principal festivals in the life of Christ—Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, and Ascension.

six pretty young women were even heard to declare that they had paid well in advance, one four times; one, six; and another, ten.

There were also I know not how many old women who said not a word, and Master John asked them if they had paid their tithe, and they replied that they had made an arrangement with the Cordeliers.

"What!" said he, "you do not pay? You ought to advise and persuade the others to do their duty, and you yourselves are in default!"

"Marry!" said one of them, "I am not to blame. I have been several times to perform my duty, but my confessor would not listen to me: he always says he is too busy."

"St. John!" said the other old women, "we have compounded with the monks to pay them the tithe we owe them in linen, cloth, cushions, quilts, pillow-cases and such other trifles; and that by their own instructions and desire, for we should prefer to pay like the others."

"By Our Lady!" said Master John, "there is no harm done; it is quite right.

"I suppose they can go away now; can they not?" said the Seigneur to Master John."

"Yes!" said he, "but let them be sure and not forget to pay the tithe."

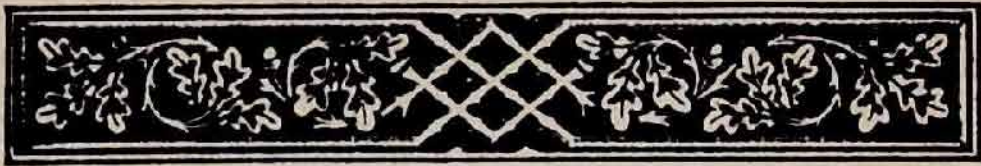
When they had all left the hall, the door was closed, and every man present looked hard at his neighbour.

"Well!" said the Seigneur. "What is to be done? We know for certain what these ribald monks have done to us, by the confession of one of them, and by our wives; we need no further witness."

After many and various opinions, it was resolved to set the convent on fire, and burn both monks and monastery.

They went to the bottom of the town, and came to the monastery, and took away the *Corpus Domini* and

all the relics and sent them to the parish church. Then without more ado, they set fire to the convent in several places, and did not leave till all was consumed—monks, convent, church, dormitory, and all the other buildings, of which there were plenty. So the poor Cordeliers had to pay very dearly for the new tithe they had levied. Even God could do nothing, but had His house burned down.



Story the Thirty-Third.

THE LADY WHO LOST HER HAIR

BY

MONSEIGNEUR.

Of a noble lord who was in love with a damsel who cared for another great lord, but tried to keep it secret; and of the agreement made between the two lovers concerning her, as you shall hereafter hear.



A noble knight who lived in the marches of Burgundy, who was wise, valiant, much esteemed, and worthy of the great reputation he had, was so much in the graces of a fair damsel, that he was esteemed as her lover, and obtained from her, at sundry times, all the favours that she could honourably give him. She was also smitten with a great and noble lord, a prudent man, whose name and qualities I pass over, though if I were to recount them there is not one of you who would not recognise the person intended, which I do not wish.

This gentle lord, I say, soon perceived the love affair of the valiant gentleman just named, and asked him if he were not in the good graces of such and such a damsel,—that is to say the lady before mentioned.

He replied that he was not, but the other, who knew the contrary to be case, said that he was sure he was,

“For whatever he might say or do, he should not try to conceal such a circumstance, for if the like or anything more important had occurred to him (the speaker) he would not have concealed it.”

And having nothing else to do, and to pass the time, he found means to make her fall in love with him. In which he succeeded, for in a very short time he was high in her graces and could boast of having obtained her favours without any trouble to win them.

The other did not expect to have a companion, but you must not think that the fair wench did not treat him as well or better than before, which encouraged him in his foolish love. And you must know that the brave wench was not idle, for she entertained the two at once, and would with much regret have lost either, and more especially the last-comer, for he was of better estate and furnished with a bigger lance than her first lover; and she always assigned them different times to come, one after the other, as for instance one to-day and the other to-morrow.

The last-comer knew very well what she was doing, but he pretended not to, and in fact he cared very little, except that he was rather disgusted at the folly of the first-comer, who esteemed too highly a thing of little value.

So he made up his mind that he would warn his rival, which he did. He knew that the days on which the wench had forbidden him to come to her (which displeased him much) were reserved for his friend the first-comer. He kept watch several nights, and saw his rival enter by the same door and at the same hour as he did himself on the other days.

One day he said to him, “You well concealed your amours with such an one. I am rather astonished that

you had so little confidence in me, considering what I know to be really the case between you and her. And in order that you may understand that I know all, let me tell you that I saw you enter her house at such and such an hour, and indeed no longer ago than yesterday I had an eye upon you, and from a place where I was, I saw you arrive—you know whether I speak the truth."

When the first-comer heard this accusation, he did not know what to say, and he was forced to confess what he would have willingly concealed, and which he thought no one knew but himself; and he told the last-comer that he would not conceal the fact that he was in love, but begged him not to make it known.

"And what would you say," asked the other, "if you found you had a companion?"

"Companion?" said he; "What companion? In a love affair? I never thought of it."

"By St. John!" said the last-comer, "I ought not to keep you longer in suspense—it is I. And since I see that you are in love with a woman who is not worth it, and if I had not more pity on you than you have on yourself I should leave you in your folly, but I cannot suffer such a wench to deceive you and me so long."

If any one was astonished at this news it was the first-comer who believed himself firmly established in the good graces of the wench, and that she loved no one but him. He did not know what to say or think, and for a long time could not speak a word. When at last he spoke, he said,

"By Our Lady! they have given me the onion (¹) and I never suspected it. I was easily enough deceived. May the devil carry away the wench, just as she is!"

"She has fooled the two of us," said the last-comer;

"at least she has begun well,—but we must even fool her."

(¹) i. e. "they have made a fool of me."

"Do so I beg," said the first. "St. Anthony's fire burn me if ever I see the jade again."

"You know," said the second, "that we go to her each in turn. Well, the next time that you go, you must tell her that you well know that I am in love with her, and that you have seen me enter her house at such an hour, and dressed in such a manner, and that, by heaven, if ever you find me there again you will kill me stone dead, whatever may happen to you. I will say the same thing about you, and we shall then see what she will say and do, and then we shall know how to act."

"Well said, and just what I would wish," said the first.

As it was arranged, so was it done, for some days later it was the last-comer's turn to go and visit her; he set out and came to the place appointed.

When he was alone with the wench, who received him very kindly and lovingly it appeared, he put on—as he well knew how—a troubled, bothered air, and pretended to be very angry. She, who had been accustomed to see him quite otherwise, did not know what to think, and she asked what was the matter, for his manner showed that his heart was not at ease.

"Truly, mademoiselle," said he, "you are right; and I have good cause to be displeased and angry. Moreover, it is owing to you that I am in this condition."

"To me?" said she. "Alas, I have done nothing that I am aware of, for you are the only man in the world to whom I would give pleasure, and whose grief and displeasure touch my heart."

"The man who refuses to believe that will not be damned," said he. "Do you think that I have not perceived that you are on good terms with so-and-so (that is to say the first-comer). It is so, by my oath, and I have but too often seen him speak to you apart, and, what is more, I have watched and seen him enter here. But by heaven,

if ever I find him here his last day has come, whatever may happen to me in consequence. I could not allow him to be aware that he has done me this injury—I would rather die a thousand times if it were possible. And you are as false as he is, for you know of a truth that after God I love no one but you, and yet you encourage him, and so do me great wrong!”

“Ah, monseigneur!” she replied, “who has told you this story? By my soul! I wish that God and you should know that it is quite otherwise, and I call Him to witness that never in my life have I given an assignation to him of whom you speak, nor to any other whoever he may be—so you have little enough cause to be displeased with me. I will not deny that I have spoken to him, and speak to him every day, and also to many others, but I have never had aught to do with him, nor do I believe that he thinks of me even for a moment, or if so, by God he is mistaken. May God not suffer me to live if any but you has part or parcel in what is yours entirely.”

“Mademoiselle,” said he, “you talk very well, but I am not such a fool as to believe you.”

Angry and displeased as he was, he nevertheless did that for which he came, and on leaving, said,

“I have told you, and given you fair warning that if ever I find any other person comes here, I will put him, or cause him to be put, in such a condition that he will never again worry me or any one else.”

“Ah, Monseigneur,” she replied, “by God you are wrong to imagine such things about him, and I am sure also that he does not think of me.”

With that, the last-comer left, and, on the morrow, his friend, the first-comer did not fail to come early in the morning to hear the news, and the other related to him in full all that had passed, how he had pretended

to be angry and threatened to kill his rival, and the replies the jade made.

"By my oath," said the first, "she acted the comedy well! Now let me have my turn, and I shall be very much surprised if I do not play my part equally well."

A certain time afterwards his turn came, and he went to the wench, who received him as lovingly as she always did, and as she had previously received her other lover. If his friend the last-comer had been cross and quarrelsome both in manner and words, he was still more so, and spoke to her in this manner;

"I curse the hour and the day on which I made your acquaintance, for it is not possible to load the heart of a poor lover with more sorrows, regrets, and bitter cares than oppress and weigh down my heart to-day. Alas! I chose you amongst all others as the perfection of beauty, gentleness, and kindness, and hoped that I should find in you truth and fidelity, and therefore I gave you all my heart, believing in truth that it was safe in your keeping, and I had such faith in you that I would have met death, or worse, had it been possible, to save your honour. Yet, when I thought myself most sure of your faith, I learned, not only by the report of others but by my own eyes, that another had snatched your love from me, and deprived me of the hope of being the one person in the world who was dearest to you."

"My friend," said the wench, "I do not know what your trouble is, but from your manner and your words I judge that there is something the matter, but I cannot tell what it is if you do not speak more plainly—unless it be a little jealousy which torments you, and if so, I think, if you are wise, that you will soon banish it from your mind. For I have never given you any cause for that, as you know me well enough to be aware, and you should be sorry for having used such expressions to me."

"I am not the sort of man," said he, "to be satisfied with mere words. Your excuses are worth nothing. You cannot deny that so-and-so (that is to say the last-comer) does not keep you. I know well he does, for I have noticed you, and moreover, have watched, and saw him yesterday come to you at such an hour, dressed in such and such a manner. But I swear to God he has had his last pleasure with you, for I bear him a grudge, and were he ten times as great a man as he is, when I meet him I will deprive him of his life, or he shall deprive me of mine; one of us two must die for I cannot live and see another enjoy you. You are false and disloyal to have deceived me, and it is not without cause that I curse the hour I made your acquaintance, for I know for a certainty that you will cause my death if my rival knows my determination, as I hope he will. I know that I am now as good as dead, and even if he should spare me, he does but sharpen the knife which is to shorten his own days, and then the world would not be big enough to save me, and die I must."

The wench could not readily find a sufficient excuse to satisfy him in his present state of mind. Nevertheless, she did her best to dissipate his melancholy, and drive away his suspicions, and said to him;

"My friend, I have heard your long tirade, which, to tell the truth, makes me reflect that I have not been so prudent as I ought, and have too readily believed your deceitful speeches, and obeyed you in all things, which is the reason you now think so little of me. Another reason why you speak to me thus, is that you know that I am so much in love with you that I cannot bear to live out of your presence. And for this cause, and many others that I need not mention, you deem me your subject and slave, with no right to speak or look at any but you. Since that pleases you, I am satisfied, but you have no

right to suspect me with regard to any living person, nor have I any need to excuse myself. Truth, which conquers all things, will right me in the end!"

"By God, my dear," said the young man, "the truth is what I have already told you—as both and he will find to your cost if you do not take care."

After these speeches, and others too long to recount here, he left, and did not forget on the following morning to recount everything to his friend the last-comer; and God knows what laughter and jests they had between them.

The wench, who still had wool on her distaff⁽¹⁾, saw and knew very well that each of her lovers suspected the other, nevertheless she continued to receive them each in his turn, without sending either away. She warned each earnestly that he must come to her in the most secret manner, in order that he should not be perceived.

You must know that when the first-comer had his turn that he did not forget to complain as before, and threatened to kill his rival should he meet him. Also at his last meeting, he pretended to be more angry than he really was, and made very light of his rival, who, according to him, was as good as dead if he were caught with her. But the cunning and double-dealing jade had so many deceitful speeches ready that her excuses sounded as true as the Gospel. For she believed that, whatever doubts and suspicions they had, the affair would never really be found out, and that she was capable of satisfying them both.

It was otherwise in the end, for the last-comer—whom she was greatly afraid to lose, one day read her a sharp lesson. In fact he told her that he would never see her again, and did not for a long time

(1) i. e. plenty of tricks or resources.

afterwards, at which she was much displeased and dissatisfied.

And in order to embarrass and annoy her still more, he sent to her a gentleman, a confidential friend, to point out how disgusted he was to find he had a rival, and to tell her, in short, that if she did not send away this rival, that he would never see her again as long as he lived.

As you have already heard, she would not willingly give up his acquaintance, and there was no male or female saint by whom she did not perjure herself in explaining away her love passages with her other lover, and at last, quite beside herself, she said to the squire;

"I will show your master that I love him; give me your knife."

Then, when she had the knife, she took off her head-dress, and with the knife cut off all her hair—not very evenly.

The squire, who knew the facts of the case, took this present, and said he would do his duty and give it to his master, which he soon did. The last-comer received the parcel, which he undid, and found the hair of his mistress, which was very long and beautiful. He did not feel much at ease until he had sent for his friend and revealed to him the message he had sent, and the valuable present she had given him in return, and then he showed the beautiful long tresses.

"I fancy," said he, "I must be very high in her good graces. You can scarcely expect that she would do as much for you."

"By St. John!" said the other, "this is strange news. I see plainly that I am left out in the cold. It is finished! You are the favoured one. But let us" he added, "think what is to be done. We must show her plainly that we know what she is."

"That's what I wish," said the other.

They thought the matter over, and arranged their plan as follows.

The next day, or soon afterwards, the two friends were in a chamber where there were assembled their fair lady and many others. Each took his place where he liked; the first-comer sat near the damsel, and after some talk, he showed her the hair which she had sent to his friend.

Whatever she may have thought, she was not startled, but said she did not know whose hair it was, but it did not belong to her.

"What?" he said. "Has it so quickly changed that it cannot be recognised?"

"That I cannot say," she replied, "but it does not belong to me."

When he heard that, he thought it was time to play his best card, and, as though by accident, gave her *chaperon* (¹) such a twitch that it fell to the ground, at which she was both angry and ashamed. And all those who were present saw that her hair was short, and had been badly hacked.

She rose in haste, and snatched up her head-dress, and ran into another chamber to attire herself, and he followed her. He found her angry and ashamed, and weeping bitterly with vexation at being thus caught. He asked her what she had to weep about, and at what game she had lost her hair?

She did not know what to reply, she was so vexed and astonished; and he, who was determined to carry out the arrangement he had concluded with his friend, said to her;

(¹) The chaperon, in the time of Charles VII, was fastened to the shoulder by a long band which sometimes passed two or three times round the neck, and sometimes hung down the back.

"False and disloyal as you are, you have not cared that I and my friend were deceived and dishonoured. You wished,—as you have plainly shown—to add two more victims to your list, but, thank God, we were on our guard. And, in order that you may see that we both know you, here is your hair which you sent him, and which he has presented to me; and do not believe that we are such fools as you have hitherto thought us."

Then he called his friend, who came, and the first said,

"I have given back this fair damsel her hair, and have begun to tell her how she has accepted the love of both of us, and how by her manner of acting she has shown us that she did not care whether she disgraced us both—may God save us!"

"Truly—by St. John!" said the other, and thereupon he made a long speech to the wench, and God knows he talked to her well, remonstrating with her on her cowardice and disloyal heart. Never was woman so well lectured as she was at that time, first by one then by the other.

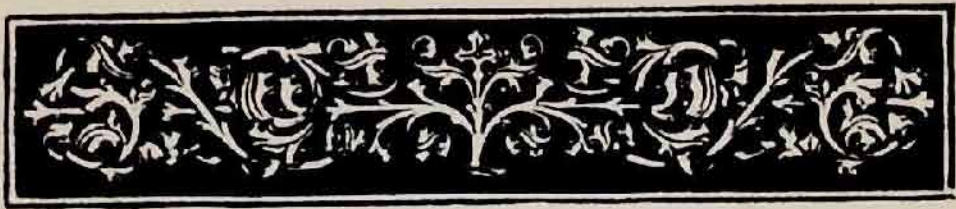
She was so taken by surprise that she did not know what to reply, except by tears, which she shed abundantly.

She had never had enough pleasure out of both her lovers to compensate for the vexation she suffered at that moment.

Nevertheless, in the end they did not desert her, but lived as they did before, each taking his turn, and if by chance they both came to her together, the one gave place to the other, and they were both good friends as before, without ever talking of killing or fighting.

For a long time the two friends continued this pleasant manner of loving, and the poor wench never dared to

refuse either of them. And whenever the one wished to have intercourse with her, he told the other, and whenever the second went to see her, the first stayed at home. They made each other many compliments, and sent one another rondels and songs which are now celebrated, about the circumstances I have already related, and of which I now conclude the account.



Story the Thirty-Fourth.

THE MAN ABOVE AND THE MAN BELOW

BY

MONSIEUR DE LA ROCHE.

Of a married woman who gave rendezvous to two lovers, who came and visited her, and her husband came soon after, and of the words which passed between them, as you shall presently hear.



I knew in my time a brave and worthy woman, deserving to be remembered and respected, for her virtues should not be hidden and kept dark, but publicly blazoned to the world. You will shortly hear, if you will, in this story something which will increase and magnify her fame.

This gallant wench was married to a countryman of ours, and had many lovers seeking and desiring her favours,—which were not over difficult to obtain, for she was so kind and compassionate that she both would and could bestow herself freely whenever she liked.

It happened one day that two men came to see her, as both were accustomed, to ask for a rendezvous.

She would not have retreated before two or even three,

Seigneur dessus, Seigneur dessous



and appointed a day and hour for each to come to her — the one at eight o'clock the morrow morning, and the other at nine, and charged each one expressly that he should not fail to keep his appointed hour.

They promised on their faith and honour that if they were alive they would keep their assignation.

When the morrow came, at about 6 o'clock in the morning, the husband of this brave wench rose, dressed himself, and called his wife, but she bluntly refused to get up when ordered.

"Faith!" she said, "I have such a headache that I cannot stand on my feet, or if I did get up I should die, I am so weak and worn-out; and, as you know, I did not sleep all the night. I beg of you to leave me here, and I hope that when I am alone I shall get a little rest."

Her husband, though he suspected something, did not dare to contradict her or reply, but went about his business in the town, whilst his wife was not idle at home, for eight o'clock had no sooner struck than the honest fellow, to whom on the previous day an assignation had been given, came and knocked at the door, and she let him in. He soon took off his long gown and his other clothes, and joined madame in bed, in order to cheer her up.

Whilst these two were locked in each other's arms, and otherwise engaged, the time passed quickly without her noticing it, when she heard some one knock loudly at the door.

"Ah!" she said, "as I live, there is my husband; make haste and take your clothes."

"Your husband?" he said, "Why, do you know his knock?"

"Yes," she replied, "I know it very well. Make haste lest he find you here."

"If it be your husband, he must find me here, for I know not where I can hide."

"No, please God, he must not find you here, for you would be killed and so should I, he is so terrible. Get up into this little attic, and keep quite quiet and do not move, that he may not find you here."

The other climbed into the garret as he was told, and found the planks stripped away in many places, and the laths broken.

As soon as he was safe, mademoiselle made one bound to the door, knowing very well that it was not her husband who was there, and let in the man who had promised to come to her at nine o'clock. They came into the chamber, where they were not long on their feet, but laid down and cuddled and kissed in the same manner as he in the garret had done, whilst he, through a chink, kept his eye on the couple, and was not best pleased. He could not make up his mind whether he should speak or hold his tongue. At last he determined to keep silence, and not say a word till the opportunity came,—and you may guess that he had plenty of patience.

Whilst he was waiting and looking at the lady engaged with the last comer, the worthy husband came home to enquire after the health of his good wife, as it was very proper of him to do.

She soon heard him, and as quickly as may be, made her lover get out of bed, and as she did not know where to hide him, since she could not put him in the garret, she made him lie down between the bed and the wall, and covered him with his clothes, and said to him.

"I have no better place to put you—have a little patience."

She had hardly finished speaking when her husband came into the room, and though he had heard nothing, he found the bed all rumpled and tossed about, the quilt dirty and soiled, and looking more like the bed of a bride than the couch of an invalid.

The doubts he had formerly entertained, combined with the appearance of the bed, made him call his wife by her name, and say.

"Wicked whore that you are! I did not believe you when you shammed illness this morning! Where is the whoremonger? I swear to God, if I find him, he will have a bad end, and you too." Then, putting his hand on the quilt, he went on. "This looks nice, doesn't it? It looks as though the pigs had slept on it!"

"What is the matter with you, you nasty drunkard?" she replied. "Why make me suffer when you get too much wine in your belly? That's a nice salutation, to call me a whore! I would have you to know that I am nothing of the kind, but much too virtuous and too honest for a rascal like you, and my only regret is that I have been so good to you, for you are not worth it. I do not know why I do not get up and scratch your face in such a manner that you would remember it all your life, for having abused me without cause."

If you ask how she dared reply to her husband in this manner, I should answer there were two reasons,—that is she had both right and might on her side. For, as you may guess, if it had come to blows, both the lover in the garret, and the one by the bed, would have come to her assistance.

The poor husband did not know what to say when he heard his wife abuse him thus, and as he saw that big words were of no use, he left the matter to God, who does justice to all, and replied;

"You make many excuses for your palpable faults, but I care little what you say. I am not going to quarrel and make a noise; there is One above who will repay all!"

By "One above", he meant God,—as though he had said, "God, who gives everyone his due, will repay you according to your deserts." But the gallant who was in

the garret, and heard these words, really believed they were meant for him, and that he was expected to pay for the misdeeds of another besides himself, and he replied aloud;

“What? Surely it will suffice if I pay half! The man who is down by the side of the bed can pay the other half—he is as much concerned as I am!”

You may guess that the husband was much astonished, for he thought that God was speaking to him; and the man by the bed did not know what to think, for he knew nothing about the existence of the other man. He quickly jumped up, and the other man came down, and they recognised each other.

They went off together, and left the couple looking vexed and angry, but they did not trouble much about that and for good reason.



Story the Thirty-Fifth.

THE EXCHANGE

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE VILLIERS.

Of a knight whose mistress married whilst he was on his travels, and on his return, by chance he came to her house, and she, in order that she might sleep with him, caused a young damsel, her chamber-maid, to go to bed with her husband; and of the words that passed between the husband and the knight his guest, as are more fully recorded hereafter.



A gentleman, a knight of this kingdom, a most virtuous man, and of great renown, a great traveller and a celebrated warrior, fell in love with a very beautiful damsel, and so advanced in her good graces that nothing that he demanded was refused him.

It happened, I know not how long after that, this good knight, to acquire honour and merit, left his castle, in good health and well accompanied, by the permission of his master, to bear arms elsewhere, and he went to Spain and various places, where he did such feats that he was received in great triumph at his return.

During this time the lady married an old knight who was courteous and wise, and who in his time had been a courtier, and—to say truth—was known as the very mirror of honour. It was a matter for regret that he did not marry better, but at any rate he had not then discovered his wife's misconduct, as he did afterwards, as you shall hear.

The first-named knight, returning from the war, as he was travelling through the country, arrived by chance one night at the castle where his mistress lived, and God knows what good cheer she and her husband made for him, for there had been a great friendship between them.

But you must know that whilst the master of the house was doing all he could to honour his guest, the guest was conversing with his former lady-love, and was willing to renew with her the intimacy that had existed before she married. She asked for nothing better, but excused herself on account of want of opportunity.

“It is not possible to find a chance.”

“Ah, madam,” he said, “by my oath, if you want to, you will make a chance. When your husband is in bed and asleep, you can come to my chamber, or, if you prefer it, I will come to you.”

“It cannot be managed so,” she replied; “the danger is too great; for monseigneur is a very light sleeper, and he never wakes but what he feels for me, and if he did not find me, you may guess what it would be.”

“And when he does find you,” he said, “what does he do to you?”

“Nothing else,” she replied; “he turns over on the other side.”

“Faith!” said he, “he is a very bad bed-fellow; it is very lucky for you that I came to your aid to perform for you what he cannot.”

"So help me God," she said, "when he lies with me once a month it is the best he can do. I may be difficult to please, but I could take a good deal more than that.

"That is not to be wondered at," he said; "but let us consider what we shall do."

"There is no way that I see," she replied, "that it can be managed."

"What?" he said; "have you no woman in the house to whom you can explain the difficulty?"

"Yes, by God! I have one," she said, "in whom I have such confidence that I would tell her anything in the world I wanted kept secret, without fearing that she would ever repeat it."

"What more do we want then?" he said. "The rest concerns you and her."

The lady who was anxious to be with her lover, called the damsel, and said,

"My dear, you must help me to-night to do something which is very dear to my heart."

"Madam," said the damsel, "I am ready and glad, as I ought to be, to serve you and obey you in any way possible; command me, and I will perform your orders."

"I thank you, my dear," said madam, "and be sure that you will lose nothing by it. This is what is the matter. The knight here is the man whom I love best in all the world, and I would not that he left here without my having a few words with him. Now he cannot tell me what is in his heart unless we be alone together, and you are the only person to take my place by the side of monseigneur. He is accustomed, as you know, to turn in the night and touch me, and then he leaves me and goes to sleep again."

"I will do your pleasure, madam; there is nothing that you can command that I will not do."

"Well, my dear," she said, "you will go to bed as

I do, keeping a good way off from monseigneur, and take care that if he should speak to you not to reply, and suffer him to do whatever he may like."

"I will do your pleasure, madam."

Supper-time came. There is no need to describe the meal, suffice it to say there was good cheer and plenty of it, and after supper, sports, and the visitor took madam's arm, and the other gentlemen escorted the other damsels. The host came last, and enquired about the knight's travels from an old gentleman who had accompanied him.

Madame did not forget to tell her lover that one of her women would take her place that night, and that she would come to him; at which he was very joyful, and thanked her much, and wished that the hour had come.

They returned to the reception hall, where monseigneur said good-night to his guest, and his wife did the same. The visitor went to his chamber, which was large and well-furnished, and there was a fine sideboard laden with spices and preserves, and good wine of many sorts.

He soon undressed, and drank a cup, and made his attendants drink also, and then sent them to bed, and remained alone, waiting for the lady, who was with her husband. Both she and her husband undressed and got into bed.

The damsel was in the *ruelle*, and as soon as my lord was in bed, she took the place of her mistress, who—as her heart desired—made but one bound to the chamber of the lover, who was anxiously awaiting her.

Thus were they all lodged—monseigneur with the chambermaid, and his guest with madame—and you may guess that these two did not pass all the night in sleeping.

Monseigneur, as was his wont, awoke an hour before day-break, and turned to the chamber-maid, believing it

to be his wife, and to feel her he put out his hand, which by chance encountered one of her breasts, which were large and firm, and he knew at once that it was not his wife, for she was not well furnished in that respect.

"Ha, ha!" he said to himself, "I understand what it is! They are playing me a trick, and I will play them another."

He turned towards the girl, and with some trouble managed to break a lance, but she let him do it without uttering a word or half a word.

When he had finished, he began to call as loudly as he could to the man who was sleeping with his wife.

"Hallo! my lord of such a place! Where are you? Speak to me!"

The other, when he heard himself called, was much astonished, and the lady quite overwhelmed with shame.

"Alas!" she said, "our deeds are discovered: I am a lost woman!"

Her husband called out,

"Hallo, monseigneur! hallo, my guest! Speak to me."

The other ventured to speak, and said,

"What is it, so please you, monsieur?"

"I will make this exchange with you whenever you like."

"What exchange?" he asked.

"An old, worn-out false, treacherous woman, for a good, pretty, and fresh young girl. That is what I have gained by the exchange and I thank you for it."

None of the others knew what to reply, even the poor chamber-maid wished she were dead, both on account of the dishonour to her mistress and the unfortunate loss of her own virginity.

The visitor left the lady and the castle as soon as could, without thanking his host, or saying farewell. And never again did he go there, so he never knew how she settled the matter with her husband afterwards, so I can tell you no more.



Story the Thirty-Sixth.

AT WORK

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE LA ROCHE.

Of a squire who saw his mistress, whom he greatly loved, between two other gentlemen, and did not notice that she had hold of both of them, till another knight informed him of the matter, as you will hear.



A kind and noble gentleman, who wished to spend his time in the service of the Court of Love, devoted himself, heart, body, and goods, to a fair and honest damsel who well deserved it, and who was specially suited to do what she liked with men; and his amour with her lasted long. And he thought that he stood high in her good graces, though to say the truth, he was no more a favourite than the others, of whom there were many.

It happened one day that this worthy gentleman found his lady, by chance, in the embrasure of a window, between a knight and a squire, to whom she was talking. Sometimes she would speak to one apart and not let the other hear, another time she did the same to the other, to please

both of them, but the poor lover was greatly vexed and jealous, and did not dare to approach the group.

The only thing to do was to walk away from her, although he desired her presence more than anything else in the world. His heart told him that this conversation would not tend to his advantage, in which he was not far wrong. For, if his eyes had not been blinded by affection, he could easily have seen what another, who was not concerned, quickly perceived, and showed him, in this wise.

When he saw and knew for certain that the lady had neither leisure nor inclination to talk to him, he retired to a couch and lay down, but he could not sleep.

Whilst he was thus sulking, there came a gentleman, who saluted all the company, and seeing that the damsel was engaged, withdrew to the recess where the squire was lying sleepless upon the couch; and amongst other conversation the squire said,

"By my faith, monseigneur, look towards the window; there are some people who are making themselves comfortable. Do you not see how pleasantly they are talking."

"By St. John, I see them," said the knight, "and see that they are doing something more than talking."

"What else?" said the other.

"What else? Do you not see that she has got hold of both of them?"

"Got hold of them!"

"Truly yes, poor fellow! Where are your eyes? But there is a great difference between the two, for the one she holds in her left hand is neither so big nor so long as that which she holds in her right hand."

"Ha!" said the squire, "you say right. May St. Anthony burn the wanton;" and you may guess that he was not well pleased.

"Take no heed," said the knight, "and bear your wrong as patiently as you can. It is not here that you have to show your courage: make a virtue of necessity."

Having thus spoken, the worthy knight approached the window where the three were standing, and noticed by chance that the knight on the left hand, was standing on tip-toe, attending to what the fair damsel and the squire were saying and doing.

Giving him a slight tap on his hat, the knight said,

"Mind your own business in the devil's name, and don't trouble about other people."

The other withdrew, and began to laugh, but the damsel, who was not the sort of woman to care about trifles, scarcely showed any concern, but quietly let go her hold without blushing or changing colour, though she was sorry in her heart to let out of her hand what she could have well used in another place.

As you may guess, both before and after that time, either of those two would most willingly have done her a service, and the poor, sick lover was obliged to be a witness of the greatest misfortune which could happen to him, and his poor heart would have driven him to despair, if reason had not come to his help, and caused him to abandon his love affairs, out of which he had never derived any benefit.



Story the Thirty-Seventh.

THE USE OF DIRTY WATER

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE LA ROCHE.

Of a jealous man who recorded all the tricks which he could hear or learn by which wives had deceived their husbands in old times; but at last he was deceived by means of dirty water which the lover of the said lady threw out of window upon her as she was going to Mass, as you shall hear hereafter.



WHILST others are thinking and ransacking their memories for adventures and deeds fit to be narrated and added to the present history, I will relate to you, briefly, how the most jealous man in this kingdom, in his time, was deceived. I do not suppose that he was the only one who ever suffered this misfortune, but at any rate I will not omit to describe the clever trick that was played upon him.

This jealous old hunk was a great historian, and had often read and re-read all sorts of stories; but the principal end and aim of all his study was to learn and know all the ways and manners in which wives had deceived

Le Benestrier d'ordures



their husbands. For—thank God—old histories like *Matheolus* ⁽¹⁾, *Juvenal*, the *Fifteen Joys of Marriage* ⁽²⁾, and more others than I can count, abound in descriptions of deceits, tricks, and deceptions of that sort.

Our jealous husband had always one or other of these books in his hand, and was as fond of them as a fool is of his bauble,—reading or studying them; and indeed he had made from these books a compendium for his own use, in which all the tricks and deceits practised by wives on their husbands were noted and described.

This he had done in order to be forewarned and on his guard, should his wife perchance use any of the plans or subterfuges chronicled or registered in his book. For he watched his wife as carefully as the most jealous Italian would, and still was not content, so ruled was he by this cursed passion of jealousy.

In this delectable state did the poor man live three or four years with his wife, and the only amusement she had in that time was to escape out of his hateful presence by going to *Mass*, and then she was always accompanied by an old servant, who was charged to watch over her.

A gentle knight, who had heard how the fair lady was watched, one day met the damsel, who was both beautiful and witty, and told her how willing he was to do her a service, that he sighed for her love, and condoled with her evil fortune in being allied to the most jealous wretch there was on the face of the earth, and saying, moreover, that she was the sole person on earth for whom he cared.

⁽¹⁾ *Le Livre de Matheolus*, a poem of the early part of the 15th Century, written by Jean le Febvre, Bishop of Therouenne. It is a violent satire against women.

⁽²⁾ A curious old work the authorship of which is still doubtful. It is often ascribed to Antoine de la Sale, who is believed to have partly written and edited the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. The allusion is interesting as showing that the *Quinze Joyes de mariage* was written before the present work.

"And since I cannot tell you here how much I love you, and many other things which I hope you will be glad to hear, I will, if you wish, put it all in writing and give it you to-morrow, begging also that any small service that I most willingly do for you, be not refused."

She gladly listened, but owing to the presence of Dangier, (¹) who was near, hardly replied; nevertheless she said she would be glad to have his letter when it came.

Her lover was very joyful when he took leave of her, and with good cause, and the damsel said farewell to him in a kind and gracious manner, but the old woman, who watched her, did not fail to ask her what conversation had taken place between her and the man who had just left.

"He brought me news of my mother," she replied; "at which I am very joyful, for she is in good health."

The old woman asked no more, and they returned home.

On the morrow, the lover, provided with a letter written God knows in what terms, met the lady, and gave her this letter so quickly and cunningly that the old servant, who was watching, saw nothing.

The letter was opened by her most joyfully when she was alone. The gist of the contents was that he had fallen in love with her, and that he knew not a day's happiness when he was absent from her, and finally hoped that she would of her kindness appoint a suitable place where she could give him a reply to this letter.

She wrote a reply in which she said she could love no one but her husband, to whom she owed all faith and loyalty; nevertheless, she was pleased to know the writer was so much in love with her, but, though she could promise him no reward, would be glad to hear what he had to say, but certainly that could not be, because her

(¹) See note page 150.

husband never left her except when she went to church, and then she was guarded, and more than guarded, by the dirtiest old hag that ever interfered with anybody.

The lover, dressed quite differently to what he had been the preceding day, met the lady, who knew him at once, and as he passed close to her, received from her hand the letter already mentioned. That he was anxious to know the contents was no marvel. He went round a corner, and there, at his leisure, learned the condition of affairs, which seemed to be progressing favourably.

It needed but time and place to carry out his enterprise, and he thought night and day how this was to be accomplished. At last he thought of a first-rate trick, for he remembered that a lady friend of his lived between the church where his lady went to Mass and her house, and he told her the history of his love affair, concealing nothing from her, and begging her to help him.

"Whatever I can do for you, I will do with all my heart," she said.

"I thank you," said he. "Would you mind if I met her here?"

"Faith!" she said, "to please you, I do not mind!"

"Well!" he replied, "if ever it is in my power to do you a service, you may be sure that I will remember this kindness."

He was not satisfied till he had written again to his lady-love and given her the letter, in which he said that he had made an arrangement with a certain woman, "who is a great friend of mine, a respectable woman, who can loyally keep a secret, and who knows you well and loves you, and who will lend us her house where we may meet. And this is the plan I have devised. I will be to-morrow in an upper chamber which looks on the street, and I will have by me a large pitcher of water mingled with ashes, which I will upset on you suddenly

as you pass. And I shall be so disguised that neither your old woman, nor anyone else in the world, will recognise me. When you have been drenched with this water, you will pretend to be very angry and surprised, and take refuge in the house, and send your Dangier to seek another gown; and while she is on the road we will talk together."

To shorten the story, the letter was given, and the lady, who was very well pleased, sent a reply.

The next day came, and the lady was drenched by her lover with a pitcher of water and cinders, in such fashion that her kerchief, gown, and other habiliments were all spoiled and ruined. God knows that she was very astonished and displeased, and rushed into the house, as though she were beside herself, and ignorant of where she was.

When she saw the lady of the house, she complained bitterly of the mischief which had been done, and I cannot tell you how much she grieved over this misadventure. Now she grieved for her kerchief, now for her gown, and another time for her other clothes,—in short, if anyone had heard her, they would have thought the world was coming to an end.

The old woman, who was also in a great rage, had a knife in her hand, with which she scraped the gown as well as she could.

"No, no, my friend! you only waste your time. It cannot be cleaned as easily as that: you cannot do any good. I must have another gown and another kerchief—there is nothing else to be done. Go home and fetch them, and make haste and come back, or we shall lose the Mass in addition to our other troubles."

The old woman seeing that there was imperative need of the clothes, did not dare to refuse her mistress, and took the gown and kerchief under her mantle, and went home.

She had scarcely turned on her heels, before her mistress was conducted to the chamber where her lover was, who was pleased to see her in a simple petticoat and with her hair down.

Whilst they are talking together, let us return to the old woman, who went back to the house, where she found her master, who did not wait for her to speak, but asked her at once,

“What have you done with my wife? where is she?”

“I have left her,” she replied, “at such a person’s house, in such a place.”

“And for what purpose?” said he.

Then she showed him the gown and the kerchief, and told him about the pitcher of water and ashes, and said that she had been sent to seek other clothes, for her mistress could not leave the place where she was in that state.

“Is that so?” said he. “By Our Lady! that trick is not in my book! Go! Go! I know well what has happened.”

He would have added that he was cuckolded, and I believe he was at that time, and he never again kept a record of the various tricks that had been played on husbands. Moreover, it is believed that he never forgot the trick which had been played on him. There was no need for him to write it down—he preserved a lively memory of it the few good days that he had to live.



Story the Thirty-Eight.

A ROD FOR ANOTHER'S BACK

BY

THE SENESCHAL OF GUYENNE.

Of a citizen of Tours who bought a lamprey which he sent to his wife to cook in order that he might give a feast to the priest, and the said wife sent it to a Cordelier, who was her lover, and how she made a woman who was her neighbour sleep with her husband, and how the woman was beaten, and what the wife made her husband believe, as you will hear hereafter.



HERE was formerly a merchant of Tours, who, to give a feast to his curé and other worthy people, bought a large lamprey, and sent it to his house, and charged his wife to cook it, as she well knew how to do.

"And see," said he, "that the dinner is ready at twelve o'clock, for I shall bring our curé, and some other people" (whom he named).

"All shall be ready," she replied, "bring whom you will." She prepared a lot of nice fish, and when she saw the



lamprey she wished that her paramour, a Cordelier, could have it, and said to herself,

"Ah, Brother Bernard, why are you not here? By my oath, you should not leave till you had tasted this lamprey, or, if you liked, you should take it to your own room, and I would not fail to keep you company."

It was with great regret that the good woman began to prepare the lamprey for her husband, for she was thinking how the Cordelier could have it. She thought so much about it that she finally determined to send the lamprey by an old woman, who knew her secret. She did so, and told the Cordelier that she would come at night, and sup and sleep with him.

When the Cordelier heard that she was coming, you may guess that he was joyful and contented, and he told the old woman that he would get some good wine to do honour to the lamprey. The old woman returned, and delivered his message.

About twelve o'clock came our merchant, the curé, and the other guests, to eat this lamprey, which had now gone far out of their reach. When they were all in the merchant's house, he took them all into the kitchen to show them the big lamprey that he was going to give them, and called his wife, and said,

"Show us our lamprey, I want to tell our guests how cheap I bought it."

"What lamprey?" she asked.

"The lamprey that I gave you for our dinner, along with the other fish."

"I have seen no lamprey," she said; "I think you must be dreaming. Here are a carp, two pike, and I know not what fish beside, but I have seen no lamprey to day."

"What?" said he. "Do you think I am drunk?"

"Yes," replied the curé and the other guests, "we

think no less. You are too niggardly to buy such a lamprey."

"By God," said his wife, "he is either making fun of you or he is dreaming—for certainly I have never seen this lamprey."

Her husband grew angry, and cried,

"You lie, you whore! Either you have eaten it, or you have hidden it somewhere. I promise you it will be the dearest lamprey you ever had."

With that he turned to the curé and the others, and swore by God's death and a hundred other oaths, that he had given his wife a lamprey which had cost him a franc; but they, to tease him and torment him still more, pretended not to believe him, and that they were very disappointed, and said;

"We were invited to dinner at such houses, but we refused in order to come here, thinking we were going to eat this lamprey; but, as far as we can see, there is no chance of that."

Their host, who was in a terrible rage, picked up a stick, and advanced towards his wife to thrash her, but the others held him back, and dragged him by force out of the house, and with much trouble appeased him as well as they could. Then, since they could not have the lamprey, the curé had the table laid, and they made as good cheer as they could.

The good dame meanwhile sent for one of her neighbours, who was a widow, but still good-looking and lively, and invited her to dinner; and when she saw her opportunity, she said;

"My dear neighbour, it would be very kind of you to do me a great service and pleasure, and if you will do this for me, I will repay you in a manner that will please you."

"And what do you want me to do?" asked the other.

"I will tell you," said she. "My husband is so violent in his night-work that it is astounding, and, in fact, last night he so tumbled me, that by my oath I am afraid of him to-night. Therefore I would beg of you to take my place, and if ever I can do anything for you in return, you may command me—body and goods."

The good neighbour, to oblige her, promised to take her place—for which she was greatly thanked.

Now you must know that our merchant when he returned from dinner, laid in a good stock of birch rods, which he carried secretly into his house, and hid near his bed, saying to himself that if his wife worried him she should be well paid.

But he did not do this so secretly but what his wife was on her guard and prepared, for she knew by long experience her husband's brutality.

He did not sup at home, but stopped out late, and came home when he expected she would be in bed and naked. But his design failed, for late that evening she made her neighbour undress and go to bed in her place, and charged her expressly not to speak to her husband when he came, but pretend to be dumb and ill. And she did more, for she put out the fire both in the chamber and in the kitchen. That being done, she told her neighbour that as soon as ever her husband rose in the morning, she was to leave and return to her own house, and she promised that she would.

The neighbour being thus put to bed, the brave woman went off to the Cordelier to eat the lamprey and gain her pardons, as was her custom.

While she was feasting there, the merchant came home after supper, full of spite and anger about the lamprey, and to execute the plan he had conceived, took his rods in his hand and then searched for a light for the candle, but found no fire even in the chimney.

When he saw that, he went to bed without saying a word, and slept till dawn, when he rose and dressed, and took his rods, and so thrashed his wife's substitute, in revenge for the lamprey, till she bled all over, and the sheets of the bed were as bloody as though a bullock had been flayed on them, but the poor woman did not dare to say a word, or even to show her face.

His rods being all broken, and his arm tired, he left the house, and the poor woman, who had expected to enjoy the pleasant pastime of the sports of love, went home soon afterwards to bemoan her ill-luck and her wounds, and not without cursing and threatening the woman who had brought this upon her.

Whilst the husband was still away from home, the good woman returned from seeing the Cordelier, and found the bed-chamber all strewn with birch twigs, the bed all crumpled, and the sheets covered with blood, and she then knew that her neighbour had suffered bodily injury, as she had expected. She at once remade the bed, and put on fresh and clean sheets, and swept the chamber, and then she went to see her neighbour, whom she found in a pitiable condition, and it need not be said was not able to give her any consolation.

As soon as she could, she returned home, and undressed, and laid down on the fair white bed that she had prepared, and slept well till her husband returned from the town, his anger quite dissipated by the revenge he had taken, and came to his wife whom he found in bed pretending to sleep.

"What is the meaning of this, mademoiselle?" he said. "Is it not time to get up?"

"Oh dear!" she said, "is it day yet? By my oath I never heard you get up. I was having a dream which had lasted a long time."

"I expect," he replied, "that you were dreaming about

the lamprey, were you not? It would not be very wonderful if you did, for I gave you something to remember it by this morning."

"By God!" she said, "I never thought about you or your lamprey."

"What?" said he. "Have you so soon forgotten?"

"Forgotten?" she answered. "Why not? a dream is soon forgotten."

"Well, then, did you dream about the bundle of birch rods I used on you not two hours ago?"

"On me?" she asked.

"Yes, certainly; on you," he said. "I know very well I thrashed you soundly, as the sheets of the bed would show."

"By my oath, dear friend," she replied, "I do not know what you did or dreamed, but for my part I recollect very well that this morning you indulged in the sports of love with much desire; I am sure that if you dreamed you did anything else to me it must be like yesterday, when you made sure you had given me the lamprey."

"That would be a strange dream," said he. "Show yourself that I may see you."

She turned down the bed-clothes and showed herself quite naked, and without mark or wound. He saw also that the sheets were fair and white, and without any stain. It need not be said that he was much astonished, and he thought the matter over for a long time, and was silent. At last he said:

"By my oath, my dear, I imagined that I gave you a good beating this morning, even till you bled—but I see well I did nothing of the kind, and I do not know exactly what *did* happen."

"Marry!" she said "Get the idea that you have beaten me out of your head, for you never touched me, as you can see. Make up your mind that you dreamed it."

"I am sure you are right," said he, "and I beg of you to pardon me, for I did wrong to abuse you before all the strangers I brought to the house."

"That is easily pardoned," she replied; "but at any rate take care that you are not so rash and hasty another time."

"No, I will not be, my dear!" said he.

"Thus, as you have heard, was the merchant deceived by his wife, and made to believe that he had dreamed that he had bought the lamprey; also in the other matters mentioned above.

L'un et l'autre payé



Belgique



Story the Thirty-Ninth.

BOTH WELL SERVED

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE SAINT POL.

Of a knight who, whilst he was waiting for his mistress amused himself three times with her maid, who had been sent to keep him company that he might not be dull; and afterwards amused himself three times with the lady, and how the husband learned it all from the maid, as you will hear.



A noble knight of the Marches of Haynau—rich, powerful, brave, and a good fellow—was in love with a fair lady for a long time, and was so esteemed and secretly loved by her, that whenever he liked he repaired to a private and remote part of her castle, where she came to visit him, and they conversed at their leisure of their pleasant mutual love.

Not a soul knew of their pleasant pastime, except a damsel who served the lady, and who had kept the matter secret for a long time, and had served the dame so willingly in all her affairs that she was worthy of a great reward. Moreover, she was such a good girl, that not

only had she gained the affection of her mistress for her services in this and other matters, but the husband of the lady esteemed her as much as his wife did, because he found her good, trustworthy, and diligent.

It chanced one day that the lady knew her aforesaid lover to be in the house, but could not go to him as soon as she wished, because her husband detained her; at which she was much vexed, and sent the damsel to tell him that he must yet have patience, and that, as soon as she could get rid of her husband, she would come to him.

The damsel went to the knight, who was awaiting the lady, and delivered her message, and he, being a courteous knight, thanked her much for her message, and made her sit by him; then tenderly kissed her two or three times. She did not object, which gave the knight encouragement to proceed to other liberties, which also were not refused him.

This being finished, she returned to her mistress, and told her that her lover was anxiously awaiting her.

"Alas!" said the lady, "I know full well he is, but my husband will not go to bed, and there are a lot of people here whom I cannot leave. God curse them! I would much rather be with him. He is very dull, is he not—all alone up there?"

"Faith! I believe he is," replied the damsel, "but he comforts himself as well as he can with the hope of your coming."

"That I believe, but at any rate he has been all alone, and without a light, for more than two hours; it must be very lonely. I beg you, my dear, to go back to him again and make excuses for me, and stay with him. May the devil take the people who keep me here!"

"I will do what you please, madam, but it seems to me that he loves you so much you have no need to

make excuses; and also, that, if I go, you will have no woman here, and perhaps monseigneur may ask for me and I cannot be found."

"Do not trouble about that," said the lady. "I will manage that all right if he should ask for you. But it vexes me that my friend should be alone—go and see what he is doing, I beg."

"I will go, since you wish it," she replied.

That she was pleased with her errand need not be said, though to conceal her willingness she had made excuses to her mistress. She soon came to the knight, who was still waiting, and said to him;

"Monseigneur, madame has sent me to you again to make her excuses for keeping you so long waiting, and to tell you how vexed she is."

"You may tell her," said he, "that she may come at her leisure, and not to hurry on my account, for you can take her place."

With that he kissed and cuddled her, and did not suffer her to depart till he had tumbled her twice, which was not much trouble to him, for he was young and vigorous, and fond of that sport.

The damsel bore it all patiently, and would have been glad to often have the same luck, if she could without prejudice to her mistress.

When she was about to leave, she begged the knight to say nothing to her mistress.

"Have no fear," said he.

"I beg of you to be silent," she said.

Then she returned to her mistress, who asked what her friend was doing?

"He is still," the damsel replied, "awaiting you."

"But," said the lady, "is he not vexed and angry?"

"No," said the damsel, "since he had company. He is much obliged to you for having sent me, and if he often

had to wait would like to have me to talk to him to pass the time,—and, faith! I should like nothing better, for he is the pleasantest man I ever talked to. God knows that it was good to hear him curse the folks who detained you—all except monseigneur; he would say nothing against him.”

“St. John! I wish that he and all his company were in the river, so that I could get away.”

In due time monseigneur—thank God—sent away his servants, retired to his chamber, undressed, and went to bed. Madame, dressed only in a petticoat, put on her night-dress, took her prayer-book, and began,—devoutly enough God knows—to say her psalms and paternosters, but monseigneur, who was as wide awake as a rat, was anxious for a little conversation, and wished madame to put off saying her prayers till the morrow, and talk to him.

“Pardon me,” she replied, “but I cannot talk to you now—God comes first you know. Nothing would go right in the house all the week if I did not give God what little praise I can, and I should expect bad luck if I did not say my prayers now.”

“You sicken me with all this bigotry,” said monseigneur. “What is the use of saying all these prayers? Come on, come on! and leave that business to the priests. Am I not right, Jehannette?” he added, addressing the damsel before mentioned.

“Monseigneur,” she replied, “I do not know what to say, except that as madame is accustomed to serve God, let her do so.”

“There, there!” said madame to her husband, “I see well that you want to argue, and I wish to finish my prayers, so we shall not agree. I will leave Jehannette to talk to you, and will go to my little chamber behind to petition God.”

Monseigneur was satisfied, and madame went off at full gallop to her friend, the knight, who received her with God knows how great joy, and the honour that he did her was to bend her knees and lay her down.

But you must know that whilst madame was saying her prayers with her lover, it happened, I know not how, that her husband begged Jehannette, who was keeping him company, to grant him her favours.

To cut matters short, by his promises and fine words she was induced to obey him, but the worst of it was that madame, when she returned from seeing her lover, who had tumbled her twice before she left, found her husband and Jehannette, her waiting-woman, engaged in the very same work which she had been performing, at which she was much astonished; and still more so were her husband and Jehannette at being thus surprised.

When madame saw that, God knows how she saluted them, though she would have done better to hold her tongue; and she vented her rage so on poor Jehannette that it seemed as though she must have a devil in her belly, or she could not have used such abominable words.

Indeed she did more and worse, for she picked up a big stick and laid it across the girl's shoulders, on seeing which, monseigneur, who was already vexed and angry, jumped up and so beat his wife that she could not rise.

Having then nothing but her tongue, she used it freely God knows, but addressed most of her venomous speeches to poor Jehannette, who no longer able to bear them, told monseigneur of the goings-on of his wife, and where she had been to say her prayers, and with whom.

The whole company was troubled—monseigneur because

he had good cause to suspect his wife, and madame, who was wild with rage, well beaten, and accused by her waiting-woman.

How this unfortunate household lived after that, those who know can tell.



Story the Fortieth.

THE BUTCHER'S WIFE WHO PLAYED THE GHOST IN THE CHIMNEY

BY

MICHAULT DE CHANGY.

Of a Jacobin who left his mistress, a butcher's wife, for another woman who was younger and prettier, and how the said butcher's wife tried to enter his house by the chimney.



IT happened formerly at Lille, that a famous clerk and preacher of the order of St. Dominic, converted, by his holy and eloquent preaching, the wife of a butcher; in such wise that she loved him more than all the world, and was never perfectly happy when he was not with her.

But in the end Master Monk tired of her, and wished that she would not visit him so often, at which she was as vexed as she could be, but the rebuff only made her love him the more.

The monk, seeing that, forbade her to come to his chamber, and charged his clerk not to admit her, whatever she might say; at which she was more vexed and infuriated than ever, and small marvel.

If you ask me why the monk did this, I should reply that it was not from devotion, or a desire to lead a chaste life, but that he had made the acquaintance of another woman, who was prettier, much younger, and richer, and with whom he was on such terms that she had a key to his chamber.

Thus it was that the butcher's wife never came to him, as she had been accustomed, so that his new mistress could in all leisure and security come and gain her pardons and pay her tithe, like the women of Ostelleria, of whom mention has been made.

One day, after dinner, there was a great feast held in the chamber of Master Monk, and his mistress had promised to come and bring her share both of wine and meat. And as some of the other brothers in that monastery were of the same kidney, he secretly invited two or three of them; and God knows they had good cheer at this dinner, which did not finish without plenty of drink.

Now you must know that the butcher's wife was acquainted with many of the servants of these preachers, and she saw them pass her house, some bearing wine, some pasties, some tarts, and so many other things that it was wonderful.

She could not refrain from asking what feast was going forward at their house? And the answer was that all this dainties were for such an one,—that is to say her monk—who had some great people to dinner.

"And who are they?" she asked.

"Faith! I know not," he said. "I only carry my wine to the door, and there our master takes it from us. I know not who is there!"

"I see," she said, "that it is a secret. Well, well! go on and do your duty."

Soon there passed another servant, of whom she asked

the same questions, and he replied as his fellow had done, but rather more, for he said,

"I believe there is a damsel there;—but she wishes her presence to be neither seen nor known."

She guessed who it was, and was in a great rage, and said to herself that she would keep an eye upon the woman who had robbed her of the love of her friend, and, no doubt, if she had met her she would have read her a pretty lesson, and scratched her face.

She set forth with the intention of executing the plan she had conceived. When she arrived at the place, she waited long to meet the person she most hated in the world, but she had not the patience to wait till her rival came out of the chamber where the feast was being held, so at last she determined to use a ladder that a tiler, who was at work at the roof, had left there whilst he went to dinner.

She placed this ladder against the kitchen chimney of the house, with the intention of dropping in and saluting the company, for she knew well that she could not enter in any other way.

The ladder being placed exactly as she wished it, she ascended it to the chimney, round which she tied a fairly thick cord that by chance she found there. Having tied that firmly, as she believed, she entered the said chimney and began to descend; but the worst of it was that she stuck there—without being able to go up or down, however much she tried—and this was owing to her backside being so big and heavy, and to the fact that the cord broke, so that she could not climb back. She was in sore distress, God knows, and did not know what to say or do. She reflected that it would be better to await the arrival of the tiler, and make an appeal to him when he came to look for his ladder and his rope; but this hope was taken from her, for the tiler did not come to work

until the next morning, on account of the heavy rain, of which she had her share, for she was quite drenched.

When the evening grew late, the poor woman heard persons talking in the kitchen, whereupon she began to shout, at which they were much astonished and frightened, for they knew not who was calling them, or whence the voice came. Nevertheless, astonished as they were, they listened a little while, and heard the voice now in front and now behind, shrieking shrilly. They believed it was a spirit, and went to tell their master, who was in the dormitory, and was not brave enough to come and see what it was, but put it off till the morning.

You may guess what long hours the poor woman spent, being all night in the chimney. And, by bad luck, it rained heavily for a long time.

The next day, early in the morning, the tiler came to work, to make up for the time the rain had made him lose on the previous day. He was quite astonished to find his ladder in another place than where he left it, and the rope tied round the chimney, and did not know who had done it. He determined to fetch the rope, and mounted the ladder and came to the chimney, and undid the cord, and put his head down the chimney, where he saw the butcher's wife, looking more wretched than a drowned cat, at which he was much astonished.

"What are you doing here, dame?" he asked. "Do you want to rob the poor monks who live here?"

"Alas, friend," she replied, "by my oath I do not. I beg of you to help me to get out, and I will give you whatever you ask."

"I will do nothing of the kind," he said, "if I do not know who you are and whence you come."

"I will tell you if you like," she said, "but I beg of you not to repeat it."

Then she told him all about her love affair with the

monk, and why she had come there. The tiler took pity on her, and with some trouble, and by means of his rope, pulled her out, and brought her down to the ground. And she promised him that if he held his tongue she would give him beef and mutton enough to supply him and his family all the year, which she did. And the other kept the matter so secret that everybody heard of it.



Story the Forty-First.

LOVE IN ARMS

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE LA ROCHE.

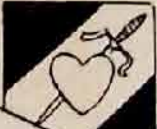
Of a knight who made his wife wear a hauberk whenever he would do you know what; and of a clerk who taught her another method which she almost told her husband, but turned it off suddenly.



A noble knight of Haynau, who was wise, cunning, and a great traveller, found such pleasure in matrimony, that after the death of his good and prudent wife, he could not exist long unmarried, and espoused a beautiful damsel of good condition, who was not one of the cleverest people in the world, for, to tell the truth, she was rather dull-witted, which much pleased her husband, because he thought he could more easily bend her to his will.

He devoted all his time and study to training her to obey him, and succeeded as well as he could possibly have wished. And, amongst other matters, whenever he would indulge in the battle of love with her—which was not as often as she would have wished—he made her put

L'amour en armes



Belgique

on a splendid hauberk, at which she was at first much astonished, and asked why she was armed, and he replied that she could not withstand his amorous assaults if she were not armed. So she was content to wear the hauberk; and her only regret was that her husband was not more fond of making these assaults, for they were more trouble than pleasure to him.

If you should ask why her lord made her wear this singular costume, I should reply that he hoped that the pain and inconvenience of the hauberk would prevent his wife from being too fond of these amorous assaults; but, wise as he was, he made a great mistake, for if in each love-battle the hauberk had broken her back and bruised her belly, she would not have refused to put it on, so sweet and pleasant did she find that which followed.

They thus lived together for a long time, till her husband was ordered to serve his prince in the war, in another sort of battle to that above-mentioned, so he took leave of his wife and went where he was ordered, and she remained at home in the charge of an old gentleman, and of certain damsels who served her.

Now you must know that there was in the house a good fellow, a clerk, who was treasurer of the household, and who sang and played the harp well. After dinner he would often play, which gave madame great pleasure, and she would often come to him when she heard the sound of his harp.

She came so often that the clerk at last made love to her, and she, being desirous to put on her hauberk again, listened to his petition, and replied;

“Come to me at a certain time, in such a chamber, and I will give you a reply that will please you.”

She was greatly thanked, and at the hour named, the clerk did not fail to rap at the door of the chamber the

lady had indicated, where she was quietly awaiting him with her fine hauberk on her back.

She opened the door, and the clerk saw her armed, and thinking that some one was concealed there to do him a mischief, was so scared that, in his fright, he tumbled down backwards I know not how many stairs, and might have broken his neck, but luckily he was not hurt, for, being in a good cause, God protected him.

Madame, who saw his danger, was much vexed and displeased; she ran down and helped him to rise, and asked why he was in such fear? He told her that truly he thought he had fallen into an ambush.

"You have nothing to fear," she said, "I am not armed with the intention of doing you any hurt, " and so saying they mounted the stairs together, and entered the chamber.

"Madame," said the clerk, "I beg of you to tell me, if you please, why you have put on this hauberk?"

She blushed and replied, "You know very well."

"By my oath, madame, begging your pardon," said he, "if I had known I should not have asked."

"My husband," she replied, "whenever he would kiss me, and talk of love, makes me dress in this way; and as I know that you have come here for that purpose, I prepared myself accordingly."

"Madame," he said, "you are right, and I remember now that it is the manner of knights to arm their ladies in this way. But clerks have another method, which, in my opinion is much nicer and more comfortable."

"Please tell me what that is," said the lady.

"I will show you," he replied. Then he took off the hauberk, and the rest of her apparel down to her chemise, and he also undressed himself, and they got into the fair bed that was there, and—both being disarmed even of their chemises—passed two or three hours very pleasantly. And before leaving, the clerk

showed her the method used by clerks, which she greatly praised, as being much better than that of knights. They often met afterwards, also in the same way, without its becoming known, although the lady was not over-cunning.

After a certain time, her husband returned from the war, at which she was not inwardly pleased, though outwardly she tried to pretend to be. His coming was known, and God knows how great a dinner was prepared. Dinner passed, and grace being said, the knight—to show he was a good fellow, and a loving husband—said to her,

“Go quickly to our chamber, and put on your hauberk.”

She, remembering the pleasant time she had had with her clerk, replied quickly,

“Ah, monsieur, the clerks’ way is the best.”

“The clerks’ way!” he cried. “And how do you know their way?” and he began to fret and to change colour, and suspect something; but he never knew the truth, for his suspicions were quickly dissipated.

Madame was not such a fool but what she could see plainly that her husband was not pleased at what she had said, and quickly bethought herself of a way of getting out of the difficulty.

“I said that the clerks’ way is the best; and I say it again.”

“And what is that?” he asked.

“They drink after grace.”

“Indeed, by St. John, you speak truly!” he cried. “Verily it is their custom, and it is not a bad one; and since you so much care for it, we will keep it in future.”

So wine was brought and they drank it, and then Madame went to put on her hauberk, which she would willingly have done without, for the gentle clerk had showed her another way which pleased her better.

Thus, as you have heard, was **Monsieur** deceived by his wife's ready reply. No doubt her wits had been sharpened by her intercourse with the clerk, and after that he showed her plenty of other tricks, and in the end he and her husband became great friends.



Story the Forty-Second.

THE MARRIED PRIEST

BY

MERIADECH.

Of a village clerk who being at Rome and believing that his wife was dead, became a priest, and was appointed cure of his own town, and when he returned, the first person he met was his wife.



IN the year '50 ⁽¹⁾ just passed, the clerk of a village in the diocese of Noyon, that he might gain the pardons, which as every one knows were then given at Rome ⁽²⁾, set out in company with many respectable people of Noyon, Compeigne, and the neighbouring places.

But, before leaving, he carefully saw to his private affairs, arranged for the support of his wife and family, and entrusted the office of sacristan, which he held, to a young and worthy clerk to hold until his return.

In a fairly brief space of time, he and his companions arrived at Rome, and performed their devotions and their

⁽¹⁾ 1450

⁽²⁾ Special indulgences were granted that year on account of the Jubilee

pilgrimage as well as they knew how. But you must know that our clerk met, by chance, at Rome, one of his old school-fellows, who was in the service of a great Cardinal, and occupied a high position, and who was very glad to meet his old friend, and asked him how he was. And the other told him everything—first of all that he was, alas! married, how many children he had, and how that he was a parish clerk.

“Ah!” said his friend, “by my oath! I am much grieved that you are married.”

“Why?” asked the other.

“I will tell you,” said he; “such and such a Cardinal has charged me to find him a secretary, a native of our province. This would have suited you, and you would have been largely remunerated, were it not that your marriage will cause you to return home, and, I fear, lose many benefits that you cannot now get.”

“By my oath!” said the clerk, “my marriage is no great consequence, for—to tell you the truth—the pardon was but an excuse for getting out of the country, and was not the principal object of my journey; for I had determined to enjoy myself for two or three years in travelling about, and if, during that time, God should take my wife, I should only be too happy. So I beg and pray of you to think of me and to speak well for me to this Cardinal, that I may serve him; and, by my oath, I will so bear myself that you shall have no fault to find with me; and, moreover, you will do me the greatest service that ever one friend did another.”

“Since that is your wish,” said his friend, “I will oblige you at once, and will lodge you too if you wish.”

“Thank you, friend,” said the other.

To cut matters short, our clerk lodged with the Cardinal, and wrote and told his wife of his new position, and that he did not intend to return home as soon as he had

intended when he left. She consoled herself, and wrote back that she would do the best she could.

Our worthy clerk conducted himself so well in the service of the Cardinal, and gained such esteem, that his master had no small regret that his secretary was incapable of holding a living, for which he was exceedingly well fitted.

Whilst our clerk was thus in favour, the curé of his village died, and thus left the living vacant during one of the Pope's months. (1) The Sacristan who held the place of his friend who had gone to Rome, determined that he would hurry to Rome as quickly as he could, and do all in his power to get the living for himself. He lost no time, and in a few days, after much trouble and fatigue, found himself at Rome, and rested not till he had discovered his friend—the clerk who served the Cardinal.

After mutual salutations, the clerk asked after his wife, and the other, expecting to give him much pleasure and further his own interests in the request he was about to make, replied that she was dead—in which he lied, for I know that at this present moment (2) she can still worry her husband.

“Do you say that my wife is dead?” cried the clerk.
“May God pardon her all her sins.”

“Yes, truly,” replied the other; “the plague carried her off last year, along with many others.”

He told this lie, which cost him dear, because he knew that the clerk had only left home on account of his wife, who was of a quarrelsome disposition, and he thought the most pleasant news he could bring was to announce her death, and truly so it would have been, but the news was false.

(1) During eight months of the year, the Pope had the right of bestowing all livings which became vacant.

(2) That is when the story was written.

"And what brings you to this country?" asked the clerk after many and various questions.

"I will tell you, my friend and companion. The curé of our town is dead; so I came to you to ask if by any means I could obtain the benefice. I would beg of you to help me in this matter. I know that it is in your power to procure me the living, with the help of monseigneur, your master."

The clerk, thinking that his wife was dead, and the cure of his native town vacant, thought to himself that he would snap up this living, and others too if he could get them. But, all the same, he said nothing to his friend, except that it would not be his fault if the other were not curé of their town,—for which he was much thanked.

It happened quite otherwise, for, on the morrow, our Holy Father, at the request of the Cardinal, the master of our clerk, gave the latter the living.

Thereupon this clerk, when he heard the news, came to his companion, and said to him,

"Ah, friend, by my oath, your hopes are dissipated, at which I am much vexed."

"How so?" asked the other.

"The cure of our town is given," he said, "but I know not to whom. Monseigneur, my master, tried to help you, but it was not in his power to accomplish it."

At which the other was vexed, after he had come so far and expended so much. So he sorrowfully took leave of his friend, and returned to his own country, without boasting about the lie he had told.

But let us return to our clerk, who was as merry as a grig at the news of the death of his wife, and to whom the benefice of his native town had been given, at the request of his master, by the Holy Father, as a reward for his services. And let us record how he became

a priest at Rome, and chanted his first holy Mass, and took leave of his master for a time, in order to return and take possession of his living.

When he entered the town, by ill luck the first person that he chanced to meet was his wife, at which he was much astonished I can assure you, and still more vexed.

"What is the meaning of this, my dear?" he asked. "They told me you were dead!"

"Nothing of the kind," she said. "You say so, I suppose, because you wish it, as you have well proved, for you have left me for five years, with a number of young children to take care of."

"My dear," he said, "I am very glad to see you in good health, and I praise God for it with all my heart. Cursed be he who brought me false news."

"Amen!" she replied.

"But I must tell you, my dear, that I cannot stay now; I am obliged to go in haste to the Bishop of Noyon, on a matter which concerns him; but I will return to you as quickly as I can."

He left his wife, and took his way to Noyon; but God knows that all along the road he thought of his strange position.

"Alas!" he said, "I am undone and dishonoured. A priest! a clerk! and married! I suppose I am the first miserable wretch to whom that ever occurred!"

He went to the Bishop of Noyon, who was much surprised at hearing his case, and did not know what to advise him, so sent him back to Rome.

When he arrived there, he related his adventure at length to his master, who was bitterly annoyed, and on the morrow repeated it to our Holy Father, in the presence of the Sacred College and all the Cardinals.

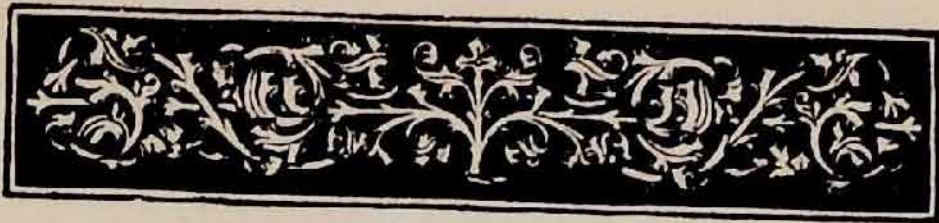
So it was ordered that he should remain priest, and married, and curé also; and that he should live with his

wife as a married man, honourably and without reproach, and that his children should be legitimate and not bastards, although their father was a priest. Moreover, that if it was found he lived apart from his wife, he should lose the living.

Thus, as you have heard, was this gallant punished for believing the false news of his friend, and was obliged to go and live in his own parish, and, which was worse, with his wife, with whose company he would have gladly dispensed if the Church had not ordered it otherwise.

Les cornes marchandes





Story the Forty-Third.

A BARGAIN IN HORNS

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE FIENNES.

Of a labourer who found a man with his wife, and forewent his revenge for a certain quantity of wheat, but his wife insisted that the other should complete the work he had begun.



THERE lived formerly, in the district of Lille, a worthy man who was a labourer and tradesman, and who managed, by the good offices of himself and his friends, to obtain for a wife a very pretty young girl, but who was not rich, neither was her husband, but he was very covetous, and diligent in business, and loved to gain money.

And she, for her part, attended to the household as her husband desired; who therefore had a good opinion of her, and often went about his business without any suspicion that she was other than good.

But whilst the poor man thus came and went, and left his wife alone, a good fellow came to her, and, to cut the story short, was in a short time the deputy for the trusting

husband, who still believed that he had the best wife in the world, and the one who most thought about the increase of his honour and his worldly wealth.

It was not so, for she gave him not the love she owed him, and cared not whether he had profit or loss by her. The good merchant aforesaid, being out as usual, his wife soon informed her friend, who did not fail to come as he was desired, at once. And not to lose his time, he approached his mistress, and made divers amorous proposals to her, and in short the desired pleasure was not refused him any more than on the former occasions, which had not been few.

By bad luck, whilst the couple were thus engaged, the husband arrived, and found them at work, and was much astonished, for he did not know that his wife was a woman of that sort.

"What is this?" he said. "By God's death, scoundrel, I will kill you on the spot."

The other, who had been caught in the act, and was much scared, knew not what to say, but as he was aware that the husband was miserly and covetous, he said quickly:

"Ah, John, my friend, I beg your mercy; pardon me if I have done you any wrong, and on my word I will give you six bushels of wheat."

"By God!" said he, "I will do nothing of the kind. You shall die by my hands and I will have your life if I do not have twelve bushels."

The good wife, who heard this dispute, in order to restore peace, came forward, and said to her husband.

"John, dear, let him finish what he has begun, I beg, and you shall have eight bushels. Shall he not?" she added, turning to her lover.

"I am satisfied," he said, "though on my oath it is too much, seeing how dear corn is."

"It is too much?" said the good man. "Morbleu! I much regret that I did not say more, for you would have to pay a much heavier fine if you were brought to justice: however, make up your mind that I will have twelve bushels, or you shall die."

"Truly, John," said his wife, "you are wrong to contradict me. It seems to me that you ought to be satisfied with eight bushels, for you know that is a large quantity of wheat."

"Say no more," he replied, "I will have twelve bushels, or I will kill him and you too."

"The devil, quoth the lover; "you drive a bargain; but at least, if I must pay you, let me have time."

"That I agree to, but I will have my twelve bushels."

The dispute ended thus, and it was agreed that he was to pay in two instalments, — six bushels on the morrow, and the others on St. Remy's day, then near.

All this was arranged by the wife, who then said to her husband.

"You are satisfied, are you not, to receive your wheat in the manner I have said?"

"Certainly," he replied.

"Then go," she said, "whilst he finishes the work he had begun when you interrupted him; otherwise the contract will not be binding."

"By St. John! is it so?" said the lover.

"I always keep my word," said the good merchant. "By God, no man shall say I am a cheat or a liar. You will finish the job you have begun, and I am to have my twelve bushels of wheat on the terms agreed. That was our contract — was it not?"

"Yes, truly," said his wife.

"Good bye, then," said the husband, "but at any rate be sure that I have six bushels of wheat to-morrow."

"Don't be afraid," said the other. "I will keep my word."

So the good man left the house, quite joyful that he was to have twelve bushels of wheat, and his wife and her lover recommenced more heartily than ever. I have heard that the wheat was duly delivered on the dates agreed.