The Queen Pedauque by Anatole France

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THE QUEEN PEDAUQUE

ANATOLE FRANCE

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Introduction by JAMES BRANCH CABELL

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INTRODUCTION

What one first notes about _The Queen Pedauque_ is the fact that in this ironic and subtle book is presented a story which, curiously enough, is remarkable for its entire innocence of subtlety
and irony. Abridge the "plot" into a synopsis, and you will find
your digest to be what is manifestly the outline of a straightforward,
plumed romance by the elder Dumas.

Indeed, Dumas would have handled the "strange surprising adventures"
of Jacques Tournebroche to a nicety, if only Dumas had ever thought
to have his collaborators write this brisk tale, wherein d'Astarac
and Tournebroche and Mosaide display, even now, a noticeable
something in common with the Balsamo and Gilbert and Althotas of the
_Memoires d'un Medecin_. One foresees, to be sure, that, with
the twin-girthed Creole for guide, M. Jerome Coignard would have
waddled into immortality not quite as we know him, but with somewhat
more of a fraternal resemblance to the Dom Gorenflof of _La Dame
de Monsoreau:_ and that the blood of the abbe's death-wound could
never have bedewed the book's final pages, in the teeth of Dumas’
economic unwillingness ever to despatch any character who was "good
for" a sequel.

And one thinks rather kindly of _The Queen Pedauque_ as Dumas
would have equipped it... Yes, in reading here, it is the most
facile and least avoidable of mental exercises to prefigure how
excellently Dumas would have contrived this book,--somewhat as in
the reading of Mr. Joseph Conrad's novels a many of us are haunted
by the sense that the Conrad "story" is, in its essential beams and
stanchions, the sort of thing which W. Clark Russell used to put
together, in a rather different way, for our illicit perusal.
Whereby I only mean that such seafaring was illicit in those aureate
days when, Cleveland being consul for the second time, your geography figured as the screen of fictive reading-matter during school-hours.

One need not say that there is no question, in either case, of "imitation," far less of "plagiarism"; nor need one, surely, point out the impossibility of anybody's ever mistaking the present book for a novel by Alexandre Dumas. Ere Homer's eyesight began not to be what it had been, the fact was noted by the observant Chian, that very few sane architects commence an edifice by planting and rearing the oaks which are to compose its beams and stanchions. You take over all such supplies ready hewn, and choose by preference time-seasoned timber. Since Homer's prime a host of other great creative writers have recognised this axiom when they too began to build: and "originality" has by ordinary been, like chess and democracy, a Mecca for little minds.

Besides, there is the vast difference that M. Anatole France has introduced into the Dumas theatre some preeminently un-Dumas-like stage-business: the characters, between assignations and combats, toy amorously with ideas. That is the difference which at a stroke dissevers them from any helter-skelter character in Dumas as utterly as from any of our clearest thinkers in office.

It is this toying, this series of mental _amourettes_, which incommunicably "makes the difference" in almost all the volumes of
M. France familiar to me, but our affair is with this one story. Now in this vivid book we have our fill of color and animation and gallant strangenesses, and a stir of characters who impress us as living with a poignancy unmastered as yet by anybody's associates in flesh and blood. We have, in brief, all that Dumas could ever offer, here utilised not to make drama but background, all being woven into a bright undulating tapestry behind an erudite and battered figure,— a figure of odd medleys, in which the erudition is combined with Coignard; and what one remembers, ultimately, about Coignard is not his crowded career, however opulent in larcenous and lectual escapades and fisticuffs and broached wineflasks; but his religious meditations, wherein a merry heart does, quite actually, go all the way.

Coignard I take to be a peculiarly rare type of man (there is no female of this species), the type that is genuinely interested in religion. He stands apart. He halves little with the staid majority of us, who sociably contract our sacred tenets from our neighbors like a sort of theological measles. He halves nothing whatever with our more earnest-minded juniors who--perennially discovering that all religions thus far put to the test of nominal practice have, earthly hash--perennially run yelping into the shrill agnosticism which believes only that one's neighbors should not be permitted to believe in anything.
The creed of Coignard is more urbane. "Always bear in mind that a sound intelligence rejects everything that is contrary to reason, except in matters of faith, where it is necessary to believe blindly." Your opinions are thus all-important, your physical conduct is largely a matter of taste, in a philosophy which ranks affairs of the mind immeasurably above the gross accidents of matter. Indeed, man can win to heaven only through repentance, and the initial step toward repentance is to do something to repent of. There is no flaw in this logic, and in its clear lighting such abrogations of parochial and transitory human laws as may be suggested by reason and the consciousness that nobody is looking, take on the aspect of divinely appointed duties.

Some dullard may here object that M. France--attestedly, indeed, since he remains unjailed--cannot himself believe all this, and that it is with an ironic glitter in his ink he has recorded these dicta. To which the obvious answer would be that M. France (again like all great creative writers) is an ephemeral and negligible person beside his durable puppets; and that, moreover, to reason thus is, it may be precipitately, to disparage the plumage of birds on the ground that an egg has no feathers... Whatever M. France may believe, our concern is here with the conviction of M. Coignard that his religion is all-important and all-significant. And it is curious to observe how unerringly the abbe's thoughts aspire, from no matter what remote and low-lying starting-point, to the loftiest niceties of religion and the high thin atmosphere of ethics. Sauce spilt upon the good man's collar is but a reminder of the influence of clothes
upon our moral being, and of how terrifyingly is the destiny of each person's soul dependent upon such trifles; a glass of light white wine leads not, as we are nowadays taught to believe, to instant ruin, but to edifying considerations of the life and glory of St. Peter; and a pack of cards suggests, straightway, intransigent fine points of martyrology. Always this churchman's thoughts deflect to the most interesting of themes, to the relationship between God and His children, and what familiar etiquette may be necessary to preserve the relationship unstrained. These problems alone engross Coignard unfailingly, even when the philosopher has had the ill luck to fall simultaneously into drunkenness and a public fountain, and retains so notably his composure between the opposed assaults of fluidic unfriends.

What, though, is found the outcome of this philosophy, appears a question to be answered with wariness of empiricism. None can deny that Coignard says when he lies dying: "My son, reject, along with the example I gave you, the maxims which I may have proposed to you during my period of lifelong folly. Do not listen to those who, like myself, subtilise over good and evil." Yet this is just one low-spirited moment, as set against the preceding fifty-two high-hearted years. And the utterance wrung forth by this moment is, after all, merely that sentiment which seems the inevitable bedfellow of the moribund,—"Were I to have my life over again, I would live differently." The sentiment is familiar and venerable, but its truthfulness has not yet been attested.
To the considerate, therefore, it may appear expedient to dismiss Coignard's trite winding-up of a half-century of splendid talking, as just the infelicitous outcropping, in the dying man's enfeebled condition, of an hereditary foible. And when moralising would approach an admonitory forefinger to the point that Coignard's manner of living brought him to die haphazardly, among preoccupied strangers at a casual wayside inn, you do, there is no questioning it, recall that a more generally applauded manner of living has been known to result in a more competently arranged-for demise, under the best churchly and legal auspices, through the rigors of crucifixion.

So it becomes the part of wisdom to waive these mundane riddles, and to consider instead the justice of Coignard's fine epitaph, wherein we read that "living without worldly honors, he earned for himself eternal glory." The statement may (with St. Peter keeping the gate) have been challenged in paradise, but in literature at all events tolerably longeval looking texture. It is true that this might also be said of Iago and Tartuffe, but then we have Balzac's word for it that merely to be celebrated is not enough. Rather is the highest

And that much Coignard promises to be for a long while.

James Branch Cabell

Dumbarton Grange,

July, 1921,
CHAPTER I

Why I recount the singular Occurrences of my Life

I intend to give an account of some odd occurrences in my life. Some have been exquisite, some queer. Recollecting them, I am myself in doubt if I have not dreamed them. I have known a Gascon cabalist, of whom I could not say that he was wise, because he perished miserably, but he delivered sublime discourses to me, on a certain night on the Isle of Swans, speeches [Footnote: The original manuscript, written in a fine hand, of the eighteenth century, bears \[The Editor\].] I was happy enough to keep in my memory, and careful enough to put into writing. Those speeches referred to magic and to occult sciences, with which people were very much infatuated in my days.

Everyone speaks of naught else but Rosicrucian mysteries.[Footnote: This writing dates from the second half of the eighteenth century \[The Editor\]]. Besides I do not myself expect to gain great honour by these revelations. Some will say that everything is of my own invention, and that it is not the true doctrine, others that I only said what one had already known. I own that I am not very
learned in cabalistic lore, my master having perished at the beginning of my initiation. But, little as I have learned of his craft, it makes me vehemently suspect that all of it is illusion, deception and vanity.

I think it quite sufficient to repudiate magic with all my strength, because it is contrary to religion. But still I believe myself to be obliged to explain concerning one point of this false science, so that none may judge me to be more ignorant than I really am. I know that cabalists generally think that Sylphs, Salamanders, Elves, Gnomes and Gnomides are born with a soul perishable like their bodies and that they acquire immortality by intercourse with the magicians. [Footnote: This opinion is especially supported in a principes des anciens mages ou sages cabalistes," of which several editions are extant. I only mention the one published at Amsterdam (Jacques Le Jeune, 1700, 18mo, with engravings), which contains a second part not included in the original edition [__The Editor__]]

On the contrary my cabalist taught me that eternal life does not fall to the lot of any creature, earthly or aerial. I follow his sentiment without presuming myself to judge it.

He was in the habit of saying that the Elves kill those who reveal who was murdered on the Lyons road, to the vengeance of those spirits. But I know very well that this much lamented death had a more natural cause. I shall speak freely of the air and fire
spirits. One has to run some risk in life and that with Elves is an extremely small one.

knowledge and godliness. Could his soul have been less troubled he surpassed in extent of knowledge and penetration of intellect.

He had at least the advantage over M. Rollin that he had not fallen into Jansenism during the agitation of a troubled life, because the soundness of his mind was not to be shaken by the violence of reckless doctrines, and before Him I can attest to the purity of his faith. He had a wide knowledge of the world, obtained by the frequentation of all sorts of companies. This experience would have served him well with the Roman histories he, like M. Rollin, would doubtless have composed should he have had time and leisure, and if his life could have been better matched to his genius. What I shall relate of this excellent man will be the ornament of these memoirs.

And like Aulus Gellius, who culled the most beautiful sayings of the philosophers into his "Attic Nights," and him who put the best fables of the Greeks into the "Metamorphoses," I will do a bee's work and gather exquisite honey. But I do not flatter myself to be the rival of those two great authors, because I draw all my wealth from my own life's recollections and not from an abundance of reading. What I furnish out of my own stock is good faith. Whenever some curious person shall read my memoirs he will easily recognise that a candid soul alone could express itself in language so plain
and unaffected. Where and with whomsoever I have lived I have always been considered to be entirely artless. These writings cannot but confirm it after my death.

CHAPTER II

read--Entry of Abbe Jerome Coignard.

who, as everyone knows, wag web-footed like the geese and ducks.

Gilles the haberdasher at the _Three Virgins_ and M. Blaizot, the bookseller at the sign of _Saint Catherine_, not far from the _Little Bacchus_, the gate of which, decorated with vine branches, was at the corner of the Rue des Cordiers. He loved me very much, and when, after supper, I lay in my little bed, he took my hand in his, lifted one after the other of my fingers, beginning with the thumb, and said:

"This one has killed him, this one has plucked him, this one has fricasseed him and that one has eaten him, and the little _Riquiqui_ had nothing at all. Sauce, sauce, sauce," he used to add, tickling the hollow of my hand with my own little finger.
And mightily he laughed, and I laughed too, dropping off to sleep, and my mother used to affirm that the smile still remained on my lips on the following morning.

My father was a good cookshop-keeper and feared God. For this he carried on holidays the banner of the Cooks' Guild, on which a fine-looking St Laurence was embroidered, with his grill and a golden palm. He used to say to me:

"Jacquot, thy mother is a holy and worthy woman."

He liked to repeat this sentence frequently. True, my mother went to church every Sunday with a prayer-book printed in big type. She could hardly read small print, which, as she said, drew the eyes out of her head.

My father used to pass an hour or two nightly at the tavern of the and Catherine the lacemaker were regular frequenters. And every time he returned home somewhat later than usual he said in a soft voice, while pulling his cotton night-cap on:

"Barbe, sleep in peace; as I have just said to the limping cutler: 'You are a holy and worthy woman.'"
I was six years old when, one day, readjusting his apron, with him always a sign of resolution, he said to me:

"Miraut, our good dog, has turned my roasting-spit during these last fourteen years. I have nothing to reproach him with. He is a good servant, who has never stolen the smallest morsel of turkey or goose. He was always satisfied to lick the roaster as his wage. But he is getting old. His legs are getting stiff; he can't see, and is no more good to turn the handle. Jacquot, my boy, it is your duty to take his place. With some thought and some practice, you certainly will succeed in doing as well as he."

Miraut listened to these words and wagged his tail as a sign of approbation. My father continued:

"Now then, seated on this stool, you'll turn the spit. But to form your mind you'll con your horn-book, and when, afterwards, you are able to read type, you'll learn by heart some grammar or morality book, or those fine maxims of the Old and New Testaments. And that because the knowledge of God and the distinction between good and evil are also necessary in a working position, certainly of but trifling importance but honest as mine is, and which was my father's and also will be yours, please God."

And from this very day on, sitting from morn till night, at the
corner of the fireplace, I turned the spit, the open horn-book on my knees. A good Capuchin friar, who with his bag came a-begging to my father, taught me how to spell. He did so the more willingly as my father, who had a consideration for knowledge, paid for his lesson with a savoury morsel of roast turkey and a large glass of wine, so liberally that by-and-by the little friar, aware that I was able to form syllables and words tolerably well, brought me a fine "Life of St Margaret," wherewith he taught me to read fluently.

On a certain day, having as usual laid his wallet on the counter, he sat down at my side, and, warming his naked feet on the hot ashes of the fireplace, he made me recite for the hundredth time:

"Pucelle sage, nette et fine,

At this moment a man of rather burly stature and withal of noble appearance, clad in the ecclesiastical habit, entered the shop and shouted out with an ample voice:

"Hello! host, serve me a good portion!" With grey hair, he still looked full of health and strength. His mouth was laughing and his eyes were sprightly, his cheeks were somewhat heavy and his three chins dropped majestically on a neckband which, maybe by sympathy, had become as greasy as the throat it enveloped.
My father, courteous by profession, lifted his cap and bowing said:

"If your reverence will be so good as to warm yourself near the fire, I'll soon serve you with what you desire."

Without any further preamble the priest took a seat near the fire by the side of the Capuchin friar.

Hearing the good friar reading aloud:

"Pucelle sage, nette et fine,

he clapped his hands and said:

"Oh, the rare bird! The unique man! A Capuchin who is able to read!

Eh, little friar, what is your name?"

"Friar Ange, an unworthy Capuchin," replied my teacher.

My mother, hearing the voices from the upper room descended to the shop, attracted by curiosity.
The priest greeted her with an already familiar politeness and said:

"That is really wonderful, mistress; Friar Ange is a Capuchin and knows how to read."

"He is able to read all sorts of writing," replied my mother.

And going near the friar, she recognised the prayer of St Margaret by the picture representing the maiden martyr with a holy-water sprinkler in her hand.

"This prayer," she added, "is difficult to read because the words of it are very small and hardly divided, but happily it is quite sufficient, when in labour-pains, to apply it like a plaster on the place where the most pain is felt and it operates just as well, and rather better, than when it is recited. I had the proof of it, sir, when my son Jacquot was born, who is here present."

"Do not doubt about it, my good dame," said Friar Ange. "The orison of St Margaret is sovereign for what you mentioned, but under the special condition that the Capuchins get their Maundy."

In saying so, Friar Ange emptied the goblet of wine which my mother had filled up for him and, throwing his wallet over his shoulder,
went off in the direction of the _Little Bacchus_.

My father served a quarter of fowl to the priest, who took out of
his pocket a piece of bread, a flagon of wine and a knife, the
copper handle of which represented the late king on a column in the
costume of a Roman emperor, and began to have his supper.

But having hardly taken the first morsel in his mouth he turned
round on my father and asked for some salt, rather surprised that no
salt cellar had been presented to him offhand.

"So did the ancients use it," he said, "they offered salt as a sign
of hospitality. They also placed salt cellars in the temples on the
tablecloths of the gods."

My father presented him with some bay salt out of the wooden shoe
which was hung on the mantelpiece. The priest took what he wanted of
it and said:

"The ancients considered salt to be a necessary seasoning of all
repasts, and held it in so high esteem that they metaphorically
called salt the wit which gives flavour to conversation."

"Ah!" said my father, "high as the ancients may have valued it, the
excise of our days puts it still higher."
My mother, listening the while she knitted a woollen stocking, was
glad to say a word:

"It must be believed that salt is a good thing, because the priests
put a grain of it on the tongues of the babies held over the
christening font. When my Jacques felt the salt on his tongue he
made a grimace; as tiny as he was he already had some sense. I
speak, Sir Priest, of my son Jacques here present."

The priest looked on me and said:

"Now he is already a grown-up boy. Modesty is painted on his
features and he reads the 'Life of St Margaret' with attention."

"Oh!" exclaimed my mother, "he also reads the prayer for chilblains
and that of 'St Hubert,' which Friar Ange has given him, and the
history of that fellow who has been devoured, in the Saint Marcel
suburb, by several devils for having blasphemed the holy name of our
Lord."

My father looked admiringly on me, and then he murmured into the
priest's ear that I learned anything I wanted to know with a native
and natural facility.
"Wherefore," replied the priest, "you must form him to become a man of letters, which to be, is one of the honours of mankind, the consolation of human life and a remedy against all evils, actually against those of love, as it is affirmed by the poet Theocritus."

"Simple cook as I am," was my father's reply, "I hold knowledge in high esteem, and am quite willing to believe that it also is, as your reverence says, a remedy for love. But I do not think that it is a remedy against hunger."

"Well, perhaps it is not a sovereign ointment," replied the priest; "but it gives some solace, like a sweet balm, although somewhat imperfect."

As he spoke Catherine the lacemaker appeared on the threshold, with her bonnet sideways over her ear and her neckerchief very much creased. Seeing her, my mother frowned and let slip three meshes of her knitting.

word to the sergeants of the watch. If you do not, they doubtless will lock up Friar Ange. The good friar came to the _Little Bacchus_, where he drank two or three pots without paying for them, so as not to go contrary to the rules of St Francis, he said. But the worst of it is, that he, seeing me in company under the
arbour, came near me to teach me a new prayer. I told him it was not
the right moment to do so, and he insisting on it, the limping
cutler, who was sitting by me, tore his beard rather roughly. Friar
Ange threw himself on the cutler, who fell to the ground, and by his
fall upset the table and pitchers.

"The taverner, running up, seeing the table knocked over, the wine
spilt, and Friar Ange with one foot on the cutler's head, swinging a
stool with which he struck anyone approaching him, this vile
taverner swore like a real devil and called for the watch. Monsieur
watch's clutches. He is a holy man, and quite excusable in this
affair."

My father was inclined to oblige Catherine, but for this once the
lacemaker's words had not the effect she expected. He said plainly
that he could not find any excuse for the Capuchin, and that he
wished him to get a good punishment by bread and water in the
darkest corner of the cellars of the convent, of which he was the
shame and disgrace.

He warmed up in talking:

"A drunkard and a dissipated fellow, to whom I give daily good wine
and good morsels and who goes to the tavern to play the deuce with
some ill-famed creatures, depraved enough to prefer the company of a
hawking cutler and a Capuchin friar to that of honest sworn
tradesmen of the quarter. Fie! fie!"

Therewith he suddenly stopped his scoldings and looked sideways on
my mother, who, standing up at the entry to the staircase, pushed
her knitting needles with sharp little strokes.

Catherine, surprised by this unfriendly reception, said drily:

"Then you don't want to say a good word to the taverner and the
sergeant?"

"If you wish it, I'll tell them to take the cutler and the friar."

"But," she replied, and laughed, "the cutler is your friend."

"Less mine than yours," said my father sharply. "A ragamuffin and a
humbug, who hops about----"

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "that's true, really true, that he hops. He
hops, hops, hops!"

And she left the shop, shaking with laughter.
My father turned round to the priest, who was picking a bone:

"It is as I had the honour to say to your reverence! For each reading and writing lesson that Capuchin friar gives to my child, I pay him with a goblet of wine and a fine piece of meat, hare, rabbit, goose, or a tender poulet or a capon. He is a drunkard and evil liver!"

"Don't doubt about that," said the priest.

"But if ever he dares to come over my threshold again, I'll drive him out with a broomstick."

"And you'll do well by it," said the priest; "that Capuchin is an ass, and he taught your son rather to bray than to talk. You'll act wisely by throwing into the fire that 'Life of St Catherine,' that prayer for the cure of chilblains and that history of the bugbear, with which that monk poisoned your son's mind. For the same price you paid for Friar Ange's lessons, I'll give him my own; I'll teach him Latin and Greek, and French also, that language which Voiture and Balzac have brought to perfection. And in such way, by a luck doubly singular and favourable, this Jacquot Tournebroche will become learned and I shall eat every day,"
"Agreed!" said my father. "Barbara, bring two goblets. No business is concluded without the contracting parties having a drink together as a token of agreement. We will drink here. I'll never in my life put my legs into the _Little Bacchus_ again, so repugnant have that cutler and that monk become to me."

The priest rose and, putting his hands on the back of his chair, said in a slow and serious manner:

"Before all, I thank God, the Creator and Conserver of all things, for having guided me into this hospitable house. It is He alone who governs us and we are compelled to recognise His providence in all matters human, notwithstanding that it is foolhardy and sometimes incongruous to follow Him too closely. Because being universal He is to be found in all sorts of encounters, sublime by the conduct which He keeps, but obscene or ridiculous for the part man takes in it and which is the only part where they appear to us. And therefore one must not shout, in the manner of Capuchin monks and goody-goody women, that God is to be seen in every trifle. Let us praise the Lord; pray to Him to enlighten me in the teachings I'll give to that child, and for the rest let us rely on His holy will, without searching to understand it in all its details."

And raising his goblet, he drank deeply.

"This wine," he said, "infilters into the economy of the human body
a sweet and salutary warmth. It is a liquor worthy to be sung at
Teos and at the Temple by the princes of bacchic poets, Anacreon and
Chaulieu. I will anoint with it the lips of my young disciple."

He held the goblet under my chin and exclaimed:

"Bees of the Academy, come, come and place yourselves in harmonious
swarms on the mouth of Jacobus Tournebroche, henceforth consecrated
to the Muses."

"Oh! Sir Priest," said my mother, "it is a truth that wine attracts
the bees, particularly sweet wine. But it is not to be wished that
those nefarious flies should place themselves on the mouth of my
Jacquot, as their sting is cruel. One day in biting into a peach a
bee stung me on the tongue, and I had to suffer fiendish pains. They
would be calmed only by a little earth, mixed up with spittle, which
Friar Ange put into my mouth in reciting the prayer of St Comis."

The priest gave her to understand that he spoke of bees in an
allegorical sense only. And my father said reproachfully: "Barbe,
you're a holy and worthy woman, but many a time I have noticed that
you have a peevish liking to throw yourself thoughtlessly into
serious conversation like a dog into a game of skittles."

"Maybe," replied my mother. "But had you followed my counsels
sorts of bees, but I know how to manage a home and understand the
good manners a man of a certain age ought to practise, who is the
father of a family and standard-bearer of his guild."

My father scratched his ear, and poured some wine for the priest,
who said with a sigh:

"Certainly, in our days, knowledge is not as much honoured in our
kingdom of France, as it had been by the Romans, although
degenerated at the time when rhetoric brought Eugenius to the
Emperor's throne. It is not a rarity in our century to find a clever
man in a garret without fire or candle. _Exemplum ut talpa_--I
am an example."

Thereafter he gave us a narration of his life, which I'll report
just as it came out of his own mouth--that is, as near it as the
weakness of my age allowed me to hear distinctly and hereafter keep
in my memory. I believe I have been able to restore it after the
confidences he gave me at a later time, when he honoured me with his
friendship.

CHAPTER III
'As you see me,' he said, "or rather as you do not see me, young, slender, with ardent eyes and black hair, I was a teacher of liberal and Baffier. I had been ordained, and expected to make a big name in letters. But a woman upset my hopes. Her name was Nicole Pigoreau and she kept a bookseller's shop at the _Golden Bible_ on the square near the college. I went there frequently to thumb the books she received from Holland and also those bipontic editions illustrated with notes, comments and commentaries of great erudition. I was amiable and Mistress Pigoreau became aware of it, which was my misfortune.

"She had been pretty, and still knew how to be pleasing. Her eyes spoke. One day the Cicero, Livy, Plato and the Aristotle, Thucydides, Polybius and Varro, the Epictetus, Seneca, Boethius and Terence, the Diodorus of Sicily and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, St John Chrysostom and St Basil, St Jerome and St Augustine, Erasmus, Saumaise, Turnebe and Scaliger, St Thomas Aquinas, St Bonaventure, Maimbourg, Fabricius, Father Lelong and Father Pitou, all the poets, all the historians, all the fathers, all the doctors, all the theologians, all the humanists, all the compilers, assembled high and low on the walls, became witnesses to our kisses.

"I could not resist you,' she said to me; 'don't conceive a bad opinion of me.'
"She expressed her love for me in singular raptures. Once she made me try on neck and wrist bands of fine lace, and finding them suit me well she insisted on my accepting them. I did not want to. But on her becoming irritated by my refusal, which she considered an offence against love, I finally consented to accept them, afraid to offend her.

"My good fortune lasted till I was to be replaced by an officer. I became spiteful over it, and in the ardour of avenging myself I informed the College Regents that I did not go any longer to the _Golden Bible_, for fear of seeing there expositions rather offensive to the modesty of a young clerical. To say the truth, I had not to congratulate myself on this contrivance. Madame Pigoreau, becoming aware of my sayings, publicly accused me of having robbed her of a set of lace neck and wrist bands. Her false complaint reached the ears of the College Regents, who had my boxes searched; therein was found the garment, a matter of considerable value. I was expelled from college and had, like Hippolyte and Bellerophon, to put up with the wiles and wickedness of woman.

"Finding myself in the streets with my few rags and my copybooks, I ran great risk of starving, when, dressed in my clerical suit, I recommended myself to a Huguenot gentleman, who employed me as secretary and dictated to me libels on our religion."

"Ah!" exclaimed my father, "that was wrong of your reverence. An
honest man ought not to lend his hand to such abominations. And as far as I am concerned, although ignorant, and of a working condition, I cannot bear the smell of Colas’ cow."

"You’re quite right, my host," continued the priest. "It is the worst point in my life. The very one I am most sorry for. But my man was a Calvinist. He employed me to write against Lutherans and Socinians only; these he could not stand at all, and, I assure you, he compelled me to treat them worse than ever it was done at the Sorbonne."

"Amen," said my father. "Lambs graze together while wolves devour one the other."

The priest continued his narrative:

"Besides, I did not remain for long with that gentleman, who made more fuss about the letters of Ulric von Hutten than of the harangues of Demosthenes, and in whose house water was the only drink. Afterwards I followed various callings, but all without success. I became a pedlar, a strolling player, a monk, a valet, and at last, by resuming my clerical garb, I became secretary to the contained in his library. This catalogue consists of two volumes in folio, which were placed in his gallery, bound in red morocco, with his crest on and the edges gilded. I venture to say it was a good
"It would have depended on myself alone to get old and grey in studies and peace with the right reverend prelate, but I became enamoured of the waiting-maid of the bailiff's lady. Do not blame me severely. Dark she was, buxom, vivacious, fresh. St Pacomus himself would have loved her. One day she took a seat in the stage coach to travel to Paris in quest of luck. I followed her. But I did not succeed as well as she did. On her recommendation I entered the service of Mistress de Saint Ernest, an opera dancer, who, aware of my talents, ordered me to write after her dictation a lampoon on Mademoiselle Davilliers, against whom she had some grievance. I was a pretty good secretary, and well deserved the fifty crowns she had promised me. The book was printed at Amsterdam by Marc-Michel Key, with an allegoric frontispiece, and Mademoiselle Davilliers received the first copy of it just when she went on the stage to sing the great aria of Armida.

"Anger made her voice hoarse and shaky. She sang false and was hooted. Her song ended, she ran as she was, in powder and hoop petticoats, to the Intendant of the Privy Purse, who could not refuse her anything. She fell on her knees before him, shed abundant tears and shouted for vengeance. And soon it became known that the blow was struck by Mistress de Saint Ernest.

"Questioned, hard pressed, sharply threatened, she denounced me as
the author, and I was put into the Bastille, where I remained four years. There I found some consolation in reading Boethius and Cassiodorus.

"Since then I have kept a public scrivener's stall at the Cemetery of the Saints Innocent, and lend to servant girls in love a pen, which should rather have described the illustrious men of Rome and commented on the writings of the holy fathers. I earn two farthings for every love letter, and it is a trade by which I rather die than live. But I do not forget that Epictetus was a slave and Pyrrho a gardener.

"Just now, unexpectedly, I have been paid a whole crown for an anonymous letter. I have not had anything to eat for two days. Therefore I at once looked out for a cook-shop. From outside in the street I perceived your illuminated sign and the fire of your chimney throwing joyful flaming lights on the windows. On your threshold I smelt delicious odours. I came in, and now, my dear host, you have the history of my life."

"I have become aware that it is the life of a good man," said my father, "and with the exception of Colas' cow there is hardly anything to complain of. Give me your hand! We are friends, what's your name?"
CHAPTER IV

and Life.

The marvellous in the affairs of mankind is the concatenation of

"To consider that strange following of bounds and rebounds wherein
our destinies clash, one is obliged to recognise that God in His
perfection is in want neither of mind nor of imagination nor comic
force; on the contrary He excels in imbroglio as in everything else,
and if after having inspired Moses, David and the Prophets He had
thought it worth while to inspire M. le Sage or the interluders of a
fair, He would dictate to them the most entertaining harlequinade."
And in a similar way it occurred that I became a Latinist because
Friar Ange was taken by the watch and put into ecclesiastical
penance for having knocked down a cutler under the arbour of the
me lessons and, finding me tractable and intelligent, he took
pleasure in instructing me in the ancient languages.

In but a few years he made me a tolerably good Latinist.

In memory of him I have conceived a gratitude which will not come to
an end but with my life. The obligation I am under to him is easily
to be conceived when I say that he neglected nothing to shape my
heart and soul, together with my intellect. He recited to me the
"Maxims of Epictetus," the "Homilies of St Basil" and the
"Consolations of Boethius." By beautiful extracts he opened to me
the philosophy of the Stoics, but he did not make it appear in its
sublimity without showing its inferiority to Christian philosophy.
He was a subtle theologian and a good Catholic. His faith remained
whole on the ruins of his most beloved illusions, of his most
cherished hopes. His weaknesses, his errors, his faults, none of
which he ever tried to dissemble or to colour, have never shaken his
confidence in the Divine goodness. And to know him well, it must be
known that he took care of his eternal salvation on occasions when,
to all appearance, he cared the least about it. He imbued me with
the principles of an enlightened piety. He also endeavoured to
attach me to virtue as such, and to render it to me, so to say,
homely and familiar by examples drawn from the life of Zeno.

To make me acquainted with the dangers of vice, he went for
arguments to the nearest fountain-head, confessing to me that by
having loved wine and women too much, he had lost the honour of
taking the professor's chair of a college in long gown and square
cap.

To these rare merits he joined constancy and assiduity, and he gave
his lessons with an exactitude hardly to be expected of a man given
as he was to the freaks of a strolling life, and always carried away
by a luck less doctoral than picaresque. This zeal was the effect of
his kindness and also of his liking of that good St James's Street,
where he found occasion to satisfy equally the appetites of his body
and intellect. After having given me, during a succulent repast,
some profitable lesson, he indulged in a stroll to the _Little
Bacchus_ and the _Image of St Catherine_, finding in that
narrow piece of ground that which was his paradise--fresh wine and
books.

He became a constant visitor of M. Blaizot the bookseller, who
received him well, notwithstanding that he only used to thumb the
books without ever making the smallest purchase. And it was quite
marvellous to see my good teacher in the most remote part of the
shop, his nose closely buried in some little book recently arrived
from Holland, suddenly raising his head to discourse, as it might
happen, with the same abundant and laughing knowledge, on the plans
of an universal monarchy attributed to the late king, or, it may be,
to the _aventures galantes_ of a financier with a ballet girl.
M. Blaizot was never tired of listening to him. This M. Blaizot was
a little old man, dry and neat, in flea-coloured coat and breeches
and grey woollen stockings. I admired him very much, and could not
think of anything more glorious than, like him, to sell books at the
_Image of St Catherine_.

One recollection of mine gave to M. Blaizot's shop quite a
mysterious charm. It was there, I was still very young, I saw for
the first time the nude figure of a female. I can see her now. It
was an Eve in an illustrated Bible. Her stomach was rather big, her
legs were rather short, and she held converse with a serpent in a
Dutch landscape. The proprietor of this engraving inspired me with a
consideration which grew afterwards when I took, thanks to M.
Coignard, a great liking for books.

At the age of sixteen I knew Latin pretty well, and also a little
Greek. My good teacher said to my father:

"Do you not think, my dear host, that it is rather an indecency to
let a young Ciceronian go about dressed as a scullion?"

"I never thought of it," replied my father.

"It is true," said mother, "that it would be suitable to give our
son a dimity vest. He is of an agreeable appearance, has good
manners and is well taught. He will do honour to his dress."

For a moment my father remained thoughtful and then he asked if it
would be quite suitable for a cook to wear a dimity vest. But M.
Coignard reminded him that, being suckled by the Muses, I would
never become a cook, and that the time was not far off when I should
wear a clerical neckband.

My father sighed, thinking that never would I be the banner-bearer
of the Guild of Parisian Cooks, and my mother became quite
glittering with pleasure and pride at the idea of her son belonging
The first effect my dimity vest produced was to give me a certain confidence in myself, and to encourage me to get a more complete idea of women than the one I had from the Eve of M. Blaizot. I reasonably thought first on Jeannette the hurdy-gurdy player, and on Catherine the lacemaker, both of whom I saw pass our shop twenty times a day, showing when it rained, a fine ankle and a tiny foot, the toes of which turned from one stone to the other. Jeannette was not so pretty as Catherine. She was somewhat older and less well dressed. She came from Savoy and did her hair _en marmotte_, with a checked kerchief covering her head. But her merit was, not to stick to ceremony and to understand what was wanted of her without being spoken to. This character agreed well with my timidity. One stone seats all round, she taught me what till then I had not known, but which she had known for a long time.

But I was not so grateful to her as it should have been my duty to be, and thought of nothing else but to bring the science she had taught me to others, prettier ones. As an excuse for my ingratitude I ought to say that Jeannette the hurdy-gurdy player did not value her lessons any higher than I did myself, and that she willingly gave them to every ragamuffin of the district.

Catherine was of more reserved manners. I stood in awe of her and did not dare to tell her how pretty I considered her to be. She made
me doubly uncomfortable by making game of me and not losing a single occasion of jeering at me. She teased me by reproaching my chin for being hairless. I blushed over it and wished to be swallowed by the earth. On seeing her I affected a sullen mien and chagrin. I pretended to scorn her. But she was really too pretty for my scorn to be true.

CHAPTER V

My Nineteenth Birthday--Its Celebration and the Entrance of M. d'Asterac.

On that night, the night of Epiphany and the nineteenth anniversary of my birth, the sky poured down with the melting snow a cold ill-humour, penetrating to the bone, while an icy wind made the by goose grease, sparkled in the shop and the soup steamed in the myself were seated. My mother, as was her habit, stood behind her husband's chair, ready to serve him. He had already filled the priest's dish when, through the suddenly open door, we saw Friar Ange, very pale, the nose red, the beard soaked. In his surprise my father elevated the soup ladle up to the smoked beams of the ceiling.

My father's surprise was easily explained. Friar Ange, after his fight with the cutler, had at first disappeared for a lapse of six
months, and now two whole years had passed without his giving any
sign of life. On a certain day in spring he went off with a donkey
laden with relics, and, worse still, he had taken with him Catherine
dressed as a nun. Nobody knew what had become of them, but there was
a rumour at the _Little Bacchus_ that the little friar and the
little sister had had some sort of difference with the authorities
between Tours and Orleans. Without forgetting that one of the vicars
rascal of a Capuchin had stolen his donkey.

"What," exclaimed my father, "this rogue does not lie in a dungeon?
There is then no more justice in this kingdom."

But Friar Ange recited the _Benedicite_ and made the sign of
the cross over the soup-tureen.

"Hola!" continued my father. "Peace to all cant, my beautiful monk!
Confess that you have passed in an ecclesiastical prison at least
one of the two years that your Beelzebub-face has not been seen in
our parish. James Street has been more honest for your absence and
the whole quarter of the town more respectable. Look on that fine
Olibrius, who goes into the fields with the donkey of someone and
the girl of everyone."

"Maybe," replied Friar Ange, eyes on the ground and hands in his
had the happiness to convert her to a better life, so much and so
well that she ardently wished to follow me, and the relics I was
carrying, and to go with me on some nice pilgrimage, especially to
the Black Virgin of Chartres! I consented under the condition that
she clad herself in ecclesiastical dress, which she did without a
murmur."

"Hold your tongue!" replied my father, "you are a dissipated fellow.
You have no respect for your cloth. Return to where you came from
suffering from chilblains."

But my mother made the friar a sign to sit down under the chimney-
mantle, which he softly did.

sin without malice."

My father begged of M. Coignard not to speak any more of the breed,
the name alone of which burnt his ears.

clemency. As far as I am concerned I willingly give absolution to
knaves, rogues and rascals and all the wretched. And more, I owe no
grudge to good people, though in their case there is much insolence.

with respectable people, you would know that they are not a rap
better than the others, and are often of a less agreeable
companionship. I have been seated at the third table of the Bishop
constraint and weariness."

"It must be acknowledged," said my mother, "that the servants of his
Grace had some queer names. Why did he not call them Champagne,
Olive or Frontin as is usual?"

The priest continued:

"It's true, certain persons get easily accustomed to the
inconveniences to be borne by living with the great. There was at
the second table of the bishop a very polite canon who kept on
ceremony till his last moment. When the news of his bodily decline
reached the bishop he went to his room and found him dying. 'Alas,,'
said the canon, 'I beg your Grace's pardon to be obliged to die
before your eyes.' 'Do, do! Don't mind me,' said the bishop with the
utmost kindness."

At this moment my mother brought the roast and put it on the table
with a movement of homely gravity which caused my father some
emotion; with his mouth full he shouted:

"Barbe, you're a holy and worthy woman."
"Mistress," said my dear teacher, "is as a fact to be compared to
the strong women of the scripture. She is a godly wife."

"Thank God!" said my mother, "I have never been a traitor to the
well, now that the most difficult part is passed, not to fail him
till my last hour is come. I wish he would keep his faith to me as I
keep mine to him."

"Madam, when first I looked on you I could see you to be an honest
woman," replied the priest, "because I have experienced near you a
quietude more connected with heaven than with this world."

My mother, who was simple-minded, but not stupid, understood very
well what he wanted to say, and replied that if he had known her
twenty years ago, he would have found her to be quite another than
she had become in this cookshop, where her good looks had vanished
with the fire of the spit and the fumes of the dishes. And as she
was touched she mentioned that the baker at Auneau had found her to
be so much to his liking that he had offered her cakes every time
she passed his shop. "Besides," she added angrily, "there is neither
girl nor woman ugly enough to be incapable of doing wrong if she had
a fancy to do it."

"This good woman is right," said my father. "I remember when I was a
prentice at the cookshop of the _Royal Goose_ near the Gate of
St Denis, my master, who was then the banner-bearer of the guild, as I myself am to-day, said to me: 'I'll never be a cuckold, my wife is too ugly.' This saying gave me the idea to attempt what he thought to be impossible. I succeeded at my first attempt, one morning when but high spirited and grateful."

At this anecdote my mother broke out and said that such things ought not to be told by a father to his wife and son, if he wanted to have their respect.

conversation with kindly meant ability. He addressed himself abruptly to Friar Ange, who, hands in his sleeves, sat humbly at the corner of the fireside:

"Little friar, what kind of relics did you carry on the second vicar's donkey's back in company with Sister Catherine? Was it your small clothes you gave the devotees to kiss, in the manner of some grey friars, of whom Henry Estienne has narrated the adventures?"

"Ah! your reverence," meekly said Friar Ange with the expression of a martyr suffering for truth, "it was not my small clothes, it was a foot of St Eustache."

"I should have taken my oath on it, if it would not be a sin to do
so," exclaimed the priest, brandishing the drumstick of a fowl.

"Those Capuchins turn out saints utterly ignored by good authors, who work on ecclesiastical history. Neither Tillemont nor Fleury speak of that St Eustache to whom a church is consecrated, very wrongly, at Paris, when so many saints recognised by writers well deserving to be believed, are still waiting for a similar honour. The 'Life of St Eustache' is a tissue of ridiculous fables; the same is the case of that of St Catherine, who has never existed except in the imagination of some wicked Byzantine monk. But I do not want to attack her too hardly, as he is the patroness of men of letters, and serves as a signboard to the bookshop of that good M. Blaizot, which is the most delectable abode in this world."

"I also had," continued quickly the little friar, "a rib of St Mary the Egyptian."

"Ah! Ah!" shouted the priest, throwing the chicken bone across the room, "concerning this one, I do consider her to be very, very holy, as during her lifetime she gave a fine example of humility."

"You know, madam," he said and took mother's sleeve, "that St Mary the Egyptian, going on pilgrimage to the sepulchre of our Lord, was stopped by a deep flowing river, and not possessing a single farthing to pay for the passage on the ferry-boat she offered to the boatmen her own body as a payment. What do you say to that, my good mistress?"
First of all my mother asked if the story was quite true. After she had been assured that the matter had been printed in a book and painted on a stained window in the Church of La Jussienne she believed it.

"I think," she said, "that one has to be as holy as she was to do the like without committing a sin. I must say that I should not like to do it."

"As far as I am concerned," said the priest, "I approve of the conduct of that saint, quite in accord with the most subtle doctors. It is a lesson for honest women stubborn in too much pride of their haughty virtue. Thinking well over it there is some sensuality in prizing too highly the flesh and guarding excessively what one ought to despise. There are some matrons to be met with who believe they have a treasure and who visibly exaggerate the interest God and the angels may have in them. They believe themselves to be a kind of natural Holy Sacrament. St Mary the Egyptian was a better judge. Pretty and divinely shaped as she was, she considered that it would be all too proud of her flesh to stop in the course of a holy pilgrimage for a paltry indifferent reason which is no more than a piece of mortification and far from being a precious jewel. She humbled herself, madam, and entered by using so admirable a humility the road of penitence, where she accomplished marvellous works."
"Your reverence," said my mother, "I do not understand you. You are too learned for me."

"That grand saint," said Friar Ange, "is painted in a state of nature in the chapel of my convent, and by the grace of God all her body is covered with long and thick hair. Reproductions of this picture have been printed, and I'll bring you a fully blessed one, my dear madam."

Tenderly touched, my mother passed the soup-tureen to him, behind the back of my teacher. And the holy friar, seated on the cinder board, silently soaked his bread in the savoury liquid.

"Now is the moment," said my father, "to uncork one of those bottles which I keep in reserve for the great feasts, which are Christmas, Twelfth Night, and St Laurence's Day. Nothing is more agreeable than to drink a good wine quietly at home secure of unwelcome intruders."

Hardly had these words been uttered when the door was opened and a tall man in black entered the shop in a squall of snow and wind exclaiming:

"A Salamander! A Salamander!"
And without taking notice of anyone he bent over the grate, rummaging in the cinders with the end of his walking stick, very much to the detriment of Friar Ange, who coughed fit to give up the ghost, swallowing the ashes and coal-dust thrown into his soup plate. And the man in black still continued to rummage in the fire, shouting, "A Salamander! I see a Salamander!" while the stirred-up flames made the shadow of his bodily form tremble on the ceiling like a large bird of prey.

My father was surprised and rather annoyed by the manners of the visitor. But he knew how to restrain himself. And so he rose, his napkin under his arm, and went to the fireplace, bending to the hearth, both his fists on his thighs.

When he had sufficiently considered the disordered fireplace, and Friar Ange covered with ashes, he said:

"Your lordship will excuse me. I cannot see anything but this paltry monk, and no Salamander.

"Besides," my father went on, "I have but little regret over it. I have it from hearsay that it is an ugly beast, hairy and horned, with big claws."

"What an error!" replied the man in black. "Salamanders resemble
women, or, to speak precisely, nymphae, and they are perfectly
beautiful! But I feel myself rather a simpleton to ask you if you're
able to see this one. One has to be a philosopher to see a
Salamander, and I do not think philosophers could be found in this
dish.

of Divinity and Master of Arts. I have also studied the Greek and
Latin moralists, whose maxims have strengthened my soul in the
vicissitudes of my life, and I have particularly applied Boethius as
an antidote for the evils of existence. And here near me is Jacobus
Tournebroche, my disciple, who knows the sentences of Publius Syrus
by heart."

The stranger turned his yellow eyes on the priest, eyes strangely
marked over a nose like the beak of an eagle, and excused himself
with more courtesy than his fierce mien led one to expect, for not
having at once recognised a person of merit, and further he said:

"It is very likely that this Salamander has come for you or your
pupil. I saw it very distinctly in passing along the street before
this cookshop. She would appear better if the fire were fiercer; for
this reason it is necessary to stir the fire vigorously when you
believe A Salamander to be in it."

At the first movement the stranger made to rummage again in the
fire, Friar Ange anxiously covered the soup-tureen with a flap of
his frock and shut his eyes.

"Sir," said the Salamander-man, "allow your young pupil to approach
the fireplace to say if he does not see something resembling a woman
hovering over the flames."

At this very moment the smoke rising under the slab of the chimney
bent itself with a peculiar gracefulfulness, and formed rotundities
quite likely to be taken for well-arched loins by a rather strangely
strained imagination. Therefore I did not tell an absolute lie by
saying that, maybe, I saw something.

No sooner had I given this reply than the stranger, raising his huge
arm, gave me a straight hander on the shoulder so powerful that I
thought my collar-bone was broken. But at once he said to me, with a
very sweet voice and a benevolent look:

"My child, I have been obliged to give you so strong an impression
that you may never forget that you have seen a Salamander, which is
a sign that your destiny is to become a learned man, perhaps a
magician. Your face also made me surmise favourably of your
intelligence."

"Sir," said my mother, "he learns anything he wants to know and
he'll be a priest if it pleases our Lord."

lessons, and my father asked the stranger if his lordship would not be disposed to eat a morsel.

"I am not in want of anything," said the stranger, "and it's easy for me to go without any food for a year or longer because of a certain elixir the composition of which is known only to the philosophical. This faculty is not confined to myself alone, it is the common property of all wise men, and it is known that the illustrious Cardan went without food during several years without being incommode[d] by it. On the contrary his mind became singularly vivacious. But still I'll eat what it pleases you to offer me, simply to please you."

And he took a seat at our little table without any ceremony. At once Friar Ange also noiselessly pushed his stool between mine and that of my teacher and sat on it to receive his portion of the partridge pie my mother was dishing up.

The philosopher having thrown his cape over the back of his seat, we could see that he wore diamond buttons on his coat. He remained thoughtful. The shadow of his nose fell on his mouth and his hollow cheeks went deep into his jaws. His gloomy humour took possession of the whole company. No other noise was audible but the one made by
the little friar munching his pie.

Suddenly the philosopher said:

"The more I think it over, the more I am convinced that yonder Salamander came for this lad." And he pointed his knife at me.

"Sir," I replied, "if the Salamanders are really as you say, this one honours me very much, and I am truly obliged to her. But, to say the truth, I have rather guessed than seen her, and this first encounter has only awakened my curiosity without giving me full satisfaction."

Unable to speak at his ease, my good teacher was suffocating.

Suddenly, breaking out very loud, he said to the philosopher:

"Sir, I am fifty-one years old, a master of arts and a doctor of divinity. I have read all the Greek and Latin authors, who have not been annihilated either by time's injury or by man's malice, and I have never seen a Salamander, wherefrom I conclude that no such thing exists."

"Excuse me," said Friar Ange, half suffocated by partridge pie and half by dismay; "excuse me! Unhappily some Salamanders do exist and a learned Jesuit father, whose name I have forgotten, has discoursed
on their apparition. I myself have seen, at a place called St
Claude, at a cottager's, a Salamander in a fireplace close to a
kettle. She had a cat's head, a toad's body and the tail of a fish.
I threw a handful of holy water on the beast, and it at once
disappeared in the air, with a frightful noise like sudden frying
and I was enveloped in acrid fumes, which very nearly burnt my eyes
out. And what I say is so true that for at least a whole week my
beard smelt of burning, which proves better than anything else the
maliciousness of the beast."

toad with a cat's head is no more real than the Nymph of that
gentleman, and it is quite a disgusting invention."

The philosopher began to laugh, and said Friar Ange had not seen the
wise man's Salamander. When the Nymphs of the fire meet with a
Capuchin they turn their back on him.

"Oh! Oh!" said my father, bursting out laughing, "the back of a
Nymph is still too good for a Capuchin."

And being in a good humour, he sent a mighty slice of the pie to the
little friar.

My mother placed the roast in the middle of the table, and took
advantage of it to ask if the Salamanders are good Christians, of
which she had her doubts, as she had never heard that the
inhabitants of fire praised the Lord.

"Madam," replied my teacher, "several theologians of the Society of
Jesus have recognised the existence of a people of incubus and
succubus who are not properly demons, because they do not let
themselves be routed by an aspersion of holy water and who do not
belong to the Church Triumphant; glorified spirits would never have
attempted, as has been the case at Perouse, to seduce the wife of a
baker. But if you wish for my opinion, they are rather the dirty
imaginings of a sneak than the views of a doctor.

"You must hate and bewail that sons of the Church, born in light,
could conceive of the world and of God a less sublime idea than that
formed by a Plato or a Cicero in the night of ignorance and of
paganism. God is less absent, I dare say, from the Dream of Scipio
than from those black tractates of demonology the authors of which
call themselves Christians and Catholics."

"Sir," replied the priest, "I found a very old MS. of Cicero spoke
with effluence and facility, but he was but a commonplace intellect,
and not very learned in holy sciences. Have you ever heard of Hermes
Trismegistus and of the Emerald Table?"

"Sir," replied the priest, "I found a very old MS. of the Emerald
marvelled over it one day or another, but for the chamber-maid of
the bailiff's lady who went to Paris to make her fortune and who
made me ride in the coach with her. There was no witchcraft used,
Sir Philosopher, and I only succumbed to natural charms:

'Non facit hoc verbis; facie tenerisque lacertis
Devovet et flavis nostra puella comis.'"

"That's a new proof," said the philosopher, "women are great enemies
of science, and the wise man ought to keep himself aloof from them."

"In legitimate marriage also?" inquired my father.

"Especially in legitimate marriage," replied the philosopher.

"Alas!" my father continued to question, "what remains to your poor
wise men when they feel disposed for a little fun?"

The philosopher replied:

"There remains for them the Salamanders."

At these words Friar Ange raised a frightened nose over his plate
and murmured:
"Don't speak like that, my good sir; in the name of all the saints of my order, do not speak like that! And do not forget that the Salamander is naught but the devil, who assumes, as everyone knows, the most divergent forms, pleasant now and then when he succeeds in disguising his natural ugliness, hideous sometimes when he shows his true constitution."

"Take care on your part, Friar Ange," replied the philosopher, "and as you're afraid of the devil, don't offend him too much and do not excite him against you by inconsiderate tittle-tattle. You know that this old Adversary, this powerful Contradictor, has kept, in the spiritual world, such a power, that God Almighty Himself reckons with him. I'll say more, God, who was in fear of him, made him His business man. Be on your guard, little friar, the two understand one another."

In listening to this speech, the poor Capuchin thought he heard and saw the devil himself, whom the stranger resembled, pretty near, by his fiery eyes, his hooked nose, his black complexion and his long and thin body. His soul, already astonished, became engulfed in a kind of holy terror, feeling on him the claws of the Malignant, he began to tremble in all his limbs, hastily put in his wide pockets all the decent eatables he could get hold of, rose gently and reached the door by backward steps, muttering exorcisms all the while.
The philosopher did not take any notice of this. He took from his pocket a little book covered with horny parchment, which he opened and presented to my dear teacher and myself. It contained an old Greek text, full of abbreviations and ligatures which at first gave me the effect of an illegible scrawl. But M. Coignard, having put on his barnacles and placed the book at the necessary distance, began to read the characters easily; they looked more like balls of thread that had been unrolled by a kitten than the simple and quiet letters of my St John Chrysostom, out of which I studied the language of Plato and the New Testament. Having come to the end of his reading he said:

"Sir, this passage is to be translated as: _Those of the Egyptians who are well informed study first the writings called epistolographia, then the hieratic, of which the hierogrammatists make use, and finally the hieroglyphics._"

And then taking off his barnacles and shaking them triumphantly he continued:

"Ah! Ah! Master Philosopher, I am not to be taken as a greenhorn. This is an extract of the fifth book of the _Stromata_, the author of which, Clement of Alexandria, is not mentioned in the martyrology, for different reasons, which His Holiness Benedict XI. has indicated, the principal of which is, that this Father was often
erroneous in matters of faith. It may be supposed that this
exclusion was not sensibly felt by him, if one takes into
consideration what philosophical estrangement had during his
lifetime inspired this martyr. He gave preference to _exile_
and took care to save his persecutors a crime, because he was a very
honest man. His style of writing was not elegant; his genius was
lively, his morals were pure, even austere. He had a very pronounced
liking for allegories and for lettuces."

The philosopher extended his arm, which seemed to me to be
remarkably elongated as it reached right over the whole of the
table, to take back the little book from the hands of my learned
tutor.

"It is sufficient," he said, pushing the _Stromata_ back into
his pocket. "I see, reverend sir, that you understand Greek, You
have well translated this passage, at least in a vulgar and literal
sense. I intend to make your and your pupil's fortune; I'll employ
both of you to translate at my house the Greek texts I have received
from Egypt."

And turning towards my father, he continued:

"I think, Master Cook, you will consent to let me have your son to
make him a learned man and a great one. Should it be too much for
your fatherly love to give him entirely to me, I would pay out of my
own pocket for a scullion as his substitute in your cookshop."

"As your lordship understands it like that," replied my father, "I
shall not prevent you doing good to my son."

"Always under the condition," said my mother, "that it is not to be
at the expense of his soul. You'll have to affirm on your oath to me
that you are a good Christian."

"Barbe," said my father, "you are a holy and worthy woman, but you
oblige me to make my excuses to this gentleman for your want of
politeness, which is caused less, to say the truth, by the natural
disposition, which is a good one, than by your neglected education."

"Let the good woman have her say," remarked the philosopher, "and
let her be reassured; I am a very religious man."

"That's right!" exclaimed my mother. "One has to worship the holy
name of God."

"I worship all His names, my good lady. He has more than one. He is
called Adonai, Tetragrammaton, Jehovah, Otheres, Athanatos and
Schyros. And there are many more names."
"I did not know," said my mother. "But what you say, sir, does not surprise me; I have remarked that people of condition have always more names than the lower people. I am a native of Auneau, near the town of Chartres, and I was but a child when the lord of our village left this world for another. I remember very well when the herald proclaimed the demise of the late lord, he gave him nearly as many names as you find in the All Saints litany. I willingly believe that God has more names than the Lord of Auneau had, as His condition is a much higher one. Learned people are very happy to know them all and if you will advance my son Jacques in this knowledge I shall, my dear sir, be very much obliged to you."

"Well, the matter is understood," said the philosopher, "and you, reverend sir, I trust it will please you to translate from the Greek, for salary, let it be understood."

My good tutor, who was collecting all this while the few thoughts in his brain which were not already desperately mixed up with the fumes of wine, refilled his goblet, rose and said:

"Sir Philosopher, I heartily accept your generous offer. You are one of the splendid mortals; it is an honour, sir, for me to be yours. If there are two kinds of furniture I hold in high esteem, they are the bed and the table. The table, filled up by turns with erudite books and succulent dishes, serves as support to the nourishment both of body and spirit; the bed propitious for sweet repose as well
as for cruel love. He certainly was a divine fellow who gave to the
sons of Deucalion bed and table. If I find with you, sir, those two
precious pieces of furniture, I'll follow your name, as that of my
benefactor, with immortal praise, and I'll celebrate you in Greek
and Latin verses of all sorts of metres."

So he said, and drank deeply.

"That's well," replied the philosopher. "I'll expect both of you to-
morrow morning at my house. You will follow the road to St Germain
till you come to the Cross of the Sablons, from that cross you'll
count one hundred paces, going westward, and you'll find a small
green door in a garden wall. You'll use the knocker which represents
a veiled figure having a finger in her mouth. An old follower will
open the door to you; you'll ask to see M. d'Asterac."

"My son," said my good tutor, pulling my coat sleeve, "put all that
in your memory, put cross, knocker, and the rest, so that we'll be

But the philosopher was gone. No one had seen him leaving.

CHAPTER VI

Arrival at the Castle of M. d'Asterac and Interview with the
On the following day at an early hour we walked, my tutor and I, on the St Germain road. The snow which covered the earth under the russet light of the sky, rendered the atmosphere dull and heavy. The road was deserted. We walked in wide furrows between the walls of orchards, tottering fences and low houses, the windows of which looked suspiciously on us. And, after having left behind two or three tumbledown huts built of clay and straw, we saw in the middle of a disconsolate heath the Cross of the Sablons. At fifty paces farther commenced a very large park, closed in by a ruined wall, wherein was the little door, and on it the knocker representing a horrible-looking figure with a finger in her mouth. We recognised it easily as the one the philosopher had described, and used the knocker.

After some rather considerable time, an old servant opened it and made us a sign to follow him across the untidy park. Statues of nymphs, who must have seen the boyhood of the late king, secreted under tree ivy their gloominess and mutilations. At the end of an alley, the sloughs of which were covered with snow, stood a castle of stone and brick, as morose as the one of Madrid, which, oddly covered by a high slate roof, looked like the castle of the Sleeping Beauty in the wood.

Following the silent valet, M. Coignard whispered to me:
"I confess, my son, that this lodging has no smiling appearance. It shows the ruggedness wherein the customs of Frenchmen were still immured in the time of King Henry IV., and it drives the soul to gloom and nearly to melancholy by the state of forlornness in which unhappily it has been left. How much sweeter it would be to climb the enchanted hillocks of Tusculum with the hope of hearing Cicero discourse of virtue, under the firs and pines of his villa so dear to the philosopher! And have you not observed, my boy, that all along yonder road neither taverns nor hostels are to be met with, and that it would be necessary to cross the bridge and go up the thereabout a hostel of the _Red Horse_, where, if I remember well, Madame de St Erneest took me once to dinner in the company of her monkey and her lover. You can't imagine, Tournebroche, how excellent the victuals are there. The _Red Horse_ is as well known for its morning dinners as for the abundance of horses and carriages which it has on hire. I convinced myself of it when I followed to the stables a certain wench who seemed to be rather pretty. But she was not; it would be a truer saying to call her ugly. But I illuminated her with the colours of my longings. Such is the condition of men when left to themselves; they err wretchedly. We are all abused by empty images; we go in chase of dreams and embrace shadows. In God alone is truth and stability."

Meanwhile we ascended, behind the old servant, the disjointed flight of steps.
"Alas!" said my tutor, "I begin to regret your father's cookshop, where we ate such good morsels while explaining Quintilian."

After having scaled the first flight of large stone stairs, we were introduced into a saloon, where M. d'Asterac was occupied with writing near a big fire, in the midst of Egyptian coffins of human form raised against the walls, their lids painted with sacred figures and golden faces with long glossy eyes.

Politely M. d'Asterac invited us to be seated and said:

"Gentlemen, I expected you. And as you have both kindly consented to do me the favour of staying with me, I beg of you to consider this house as your own. You'll be occupied in translating Greek texts I have brought back with me from Egypt. I have no doubt you will do your best to accomplish this task when you know that it is connected with the work I have undertaken, to discover the lost science by which man will be re-established in his original power over the elements. I have no intention of raising the veil of nature and showing you Isis in her dazzling nudity; but I will entrust you with the object of my studies without fear that you'll betray the mystery, because I have confidence in your integrity and also in the power I have to guess and to forestall all that may be attempted against me and to dispose for my vengeance of secret and terrible forces. From the defaults of a fidelity, of which I do not doubt; my
power, gentlemen, assures me of your silence.

"Know then that man came out of Jehovah's hands with that perfect knowledge he has since lost. He was very powerful and very wise when he was created, that's to be seen in the books of Moses. But it's necessary to understand them. Before all it is clear that Jehovah is not God, but a grand Demon, because he has created this world. The idea of a God both perfect and creative is but a reverie of a barbarity worthy of a Welshman or a Saxon. As little polished as one's mind may be one cannot admit that a perfect being tags anything to his own perfection, be it a hazelnut. That's common sense; God has no understanding, as he is endless how could he understand? He does not create, because he ignores time and space, which are conditions indispensable to all constructions. Moses was too good a philosopher to teach that the world was created by God. He took Jehovah for what he really is--for a powerful Demon, or if he is to be called anything, for the Demiurgos.

"It follows that Jehovah, creating man, gave him knowledge of the visible and the invisible world. The fall of Adam and Eve, which I'll explain to you another day, had not fully destroyed that knowledge of the first man and the first woman, who passed their teachings on to their children. Those teachings, on which the domination of nature relies, have been consigned to the book of Enoch. The Egyptian priests have kept the tradition which they fixed with mysterious signs on the walls of the temples and the coffins of the dead. Moses, brought up in the sanctuary of Memphis, was one of
the initiated. His books, numbering five, perhaps six, contain like very precious archives the treasures of divine knowledge. You'll discover there the most beautiful secrets if you have cleared them of the interpolations which dishonour them; one scorns the literal and coarse sense, to attach oneself to the most subtle. I have penetrated to the largest part, as it will appear to you also later on. Meanwhile, the truth, kept like virgins in the temples of Egypt, passed to the wizards of Alexandria, who enriched them still more and crowned them with all the pure gold bequeathed to Greece by Pythagoras and his disciples, with whom the forces of the air conversed familiarly. Wherefore, gentlemen, it is convenient to explore the books of the Hebrews, the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians and those treatises of the Greeks which are called Gnostic precisely because they possessed knowledge. I reserve for myself, as is quite equitable, the most arduous part of this extensive work. I apply myself to decipher those hieroglyphics which the Egyptians used to inscribe in the temples of their gods and on the graves of their priests. Having brought over from Egypt a great number of those inscriptions, I fathom their sense by means of a key I was able to discover with Clement of Alexandria.

re-establishment of the true sense of the Pentateuch. He is an old man very well versed in magic, who has lived seventeen years shut up in the crypt of the Great Pyramid, where he read the books of Toth. Concerning yourselves, gentlemen, I intend to employ your knowledge, in reading the Alexandrian MSS. which I have collected myself in great numbers. There you'll find, no doubt, some marvellous secrets,
and I do not doubt that with the help of these three sources of
light—the Egyptian, the Hebrew and the Greek—I'll soon acquire the
means I still want, to command absolutely nature, visible as well as
invisible. Believe me I shall know how to reward your services by
making you in some way participators of my power.

"I do not speak to you of a more vulgar means to recognise them. At
the point I have reached in my philosophical labours, money is for
me but a trifle."

Arrived at this part of M. d'Asterac's discourse my good tutor
interrupted by saying:

"Sir, I'll not conceal from you that this very money, which seems to
be a trifle to you, is for myself a smarting anxiety, because I have
experienced that it is not easy to earn some and remain an honest
man or even otherwise. Therefore I should be thankful for the
assurance you would kindly give on that subject."

M. d'Asterac, with a movement which seemed to remove an invisible
object, gave M. Jerome Coignard the wished-for assurance; for
myself, curious as I was of all I saw, I did not wish for anything
better than to enter into a new life.

At his master's call, the old servant who had opened the door to us
appeared in the study.

"Gentlemen," said our host, "I give you your liberty till dinner at
noon. Meanwhile I should be very much obliged to you for ascending
to the rooms I have had prepared for you, and let me know that there
is nothing wanting for your comfort. Criton will conduct you."

Having assured himself that we were following him, silent Criton
went out and began to ascend the stairs. He went up to the roof
timbers, then, having taken some steps down a long passage, he
indicated to us two very clean rooms where fires sparkled. I could
never have believed that a castle as shattered on the outside, the
front of which showed nothing but cracked walls and dark windows,
was as habitable in some of its inner parts. My first care was to
know where I was. Our rooms looked on the fields, the view from them
embraced the marshy slopes of the Seine, extending up to the Calvary
bed, a grey coat, breeches to match and a sword. On the carpet were
buckle shoes neatly coupled, the heels joined and the points
separated just as if they had of themselves the sentiment of a fine
deportment.

I augured favourably of the liberality of our master, To do him
honour, I dressed very carefully and spread abundantly on my hair
the powder a box full of which I found on a small table. And very
welcome were the laced shirt and white stockings I discovered in one
of the drawers of the chest.
Having put on shirt, stockings, breeches, vest and coat, I walked up
and down my room with hat under the arm, hand on the guard of my
sword, thinking all the time on the looking-glass, and regretting
that Catherine, the lace-maker, could not see me in such finery.

In this way I was occupied for a little while, when M. Jerome
Coignard came into my room with a new neckband and very respectable
clerical garb.

"Tournebroche," he exclaimed, "is it you, my boy? Never forget that
you owe these fine clothes to the knowledge I have given you. They
fit a humanist like yourself, as who says humanities says also
elegance. But look on me and say if I have a good mien. In this
dress I consider myself to be a very honest man. This M. d'Asterac
seems to be tolerably magnificent. It's a pity he's mad. Wise he is
in one way, as he calls his valet Criton, which means judge. And
it's very true that our valets are the witnesses of all our actions.
When Lord Verulam, Chancellor of England, whose philosophy I esteem
but little, entered the great hall to be tried, his lackeys, who
were clad with an opulence by which the copiousness of the
Chancellor's household could be judged, rose to render him due
honour. Lord Verulam said to them: 'Sit down, your rising is my
falling.' As a fact, those knaves, by their extravagance, had pushed
him to ruin and compelled him to do things for which he was indicted
as a peculator. Tournebroche, my boy, always remember this
misfortune of Lord Verulam, Chancellor of England and author of the 'Novum Organum.' But to return to that Sire d'Asterac, in whose service we are; it is a great pity that he is a sorcerer and given to cursed science. You know, my boy, I pride myself on my delicacy in matters of faith I find it hard to serve a cabalist who turns our Holy Scriptures upside down under the pretext to understand them better that way. However, if he is, as his name and speech indicate, a Gascon nobleman, we have nothing to be afraid of. A Gascon may make a contract with the devil and you may be sure that the devil will be done."

The dinner bell interrupted our conversation.

But while descending the stairs, my kind tutor said: "Tournebroche, my boy, remember, during the whole meal, to follow all my movements, to enable you to imitate them. Having dined at the third table of the Bishop of Seez, I know how to do it. It's a difficult art. It's harder to dine than to speak like a gentleman."

CHAPTER VII

Dinner and Thoughts on Food

We found in the dining-room a table laid for three, where M. d'Asterac made us take our places.
Criton, who acted as butler, served us with jellies, and thick soup strained a dozen times. But we could not see any joints. As well as we could, my kind tutor and myself tried to hide our surprise. M. d'Asterac guessed it and said:

"Gentlemen, this is only an attempt, and may seem to you an unfortunate one. I shall not persist in it. I'll have some more customary dishes served for you and I shall not disdain to partake of them. If the dishes I offer you to-day are badly prepared, it is less the fault of my cook than that of chemistry, which is still in its infancy. But they will at all events give you an idea of what will be in the future. At present men eat without philosophy. They do not nourish themselves like reasonable beings. They do not think of such. But of what are they thinking? Most of them live in stupidity and actually those who are capable of reflection occupy their minds with silly things like controversies and poetry.

Consider mankind, gentlemen, at their meals since the far-away times when they ceased their intercourse with Sylphs and Salamanders. Abandoned by the genii of the air they grew heavy and dull in ignorance and barbarity. Without policy and without art they lived, nude and miserable, in caverns, on the border of torrents or in the trees of the forest. The chase was their only industry. After having surprised or captured by quickness a timid animal, they devoured that prey still palpitating.
"They also fed on the flesh of their companions and infirm relatives; the first sepulchres of human beings were living graves, famished and insensible intestines. After long fierce centuries a divine man made his appearance: the Greeks call him Prometheus. It cannot be doubted that this sage had intercourse in the homes of the Nymphs with the Salamander folks. He learnt of them and showed to the unhappy mortals the art of producing and conserving fire. Of all the innumerable advantages that men have drawn from this celestial present, one of the happiest was the possibility of cooking food, and by this treatment, to render it lighter and more subtle. And it's in a large part due to the effect of a nourishment submitted to the action of the flame that slowly and by degrees mankind became intelligent, industrious, meditative and apt to cultivate the arts and sciences. But that was only a first step, and it is grievous to think that so many millions of years had to pass before a second step was made. From the time when our ancestors toasted beasts' quarters on fires of brambles in the shelter of a rock, we have not made any true progress in cooking, for sure, gentlemen, you cannot put a higher value on the inventions of Lucullus and that gross pie to which Vitellius gave the name of Shield of Minerva than on our roasts, patties, stews, our stuffed meats and all the fricassee which still suffer from the ancient barbarity.

"At Fontainebleau, the king's table, where a whole stag is dished up in his skin and his antlers, presents to the eye of the philosopher a spectacle as rude as that of the troglodytes, cowering round the smoking cinders, gnawing horse bones. The brilliant paintings of the
hall, the guards, the richly clad officers, the musicians playing
the melodies of Lambert and Lulli in the gallery, the golden
goblets, the silver plate, the silken tablecloth, the Venetian
glass, the chased épergnes full of rare flowers, the heavy
candlesticks--they cannot change, cannot lend a dissimulating charm
to the true nature of this unclean charnel-house, where men and
women assemble over animal bodies, broken bones and torn meats to
gloat greedily over them. Oh, what unphilosophical nourishment! We
swallow with stupid gluttony muscle, fat and intestines of beasts
without discerning in those substances such parts as are truly
adapted to our nourishment and those much more abundant which we
ought to reject; and we fill our stomach indiscriminately with good
and bad, useful and injurious. That's the very point, where a
separation is to be made, and, if the whole medical faculty could
boast of a chemist and philosopher, we should no more be compelled
to partake of such disgusting feasts.

"They would prepare for us, gentlemen, distilled meats, containing
nothing but what is in sympathy and affinity with our body. Nothing
would be used but the quintessence of oxen and pigs, the elixir of
partridges and capons, and all that is swallowed could be digested.
I do not give up all hope, gentlemen, of obtaining such results by
thinking somewhat deeper over chemistry and medicine than I have had
leisure to do up till now."

over the thin black broth in his plate, looked uneasily at M.
d'Asterac, who continued to say:

"But that would still be quite insufficient progress. No honest man can eat animal flesh without disgust, and people cannot call themselves refined as long as they keep slaughter-houses and butchers' shops in their towns. But the day will come when we shall know exactly the nourishing elements contained in animal carcasses, and it will become possible to extract those very same elements from bodies without life, and which will furnish an abundance of them. Those bodies without life contain, as a fact, all that is to be found in living beings, because the animal has been built up by the vegetable, which has itself drawn the substance out of the inert ground.

"Then people will feed on extracts of metal and mineral conveniently treated by physicians. I have no doubt but that the taste of them will be exquisite and the absorption salutary. Cookery will be done in retorts and stills and alchemists will be our cooks. Are you not impatient, gentlemen, to see such marvels? I promise them to you at a very near time. But you are not able at present to unravel the excellent effects that they will produce."

"In truth, sir, I do not unravel them," said my kind tutor, and had a long draught of wine.

"If such is the case," said M. d'Asterac, "listen to me for a
moment. No more burdened with slow digestions, mankind will become
mavellously active, their sight will become singularly piercing,
and they will see the ships gliding on the seas of the moon. Their
understanding will be clearer, their ways softer. They will greatly
advance in their knowledge of God and nature.

"But it also seems necessary to look forward on all the changes
which cannot fail to occur. Even the structure of the human body
will be modified. It is an uncontradictable fact that without
exercise all organs flatten and end by disappearing altogether. It
has been observed that fishes deprived of light become blind. I
myself have seen in Valais that shepherds who fed on curdled milk
lost their teeth very early; some of them never had any at all, When
men feed on the balms I have spoken of, their intestines will be
shortened by ells and the volume of the stomach will shrink
considerably."

"For once, sir," said my tutor, "you go too quickly and risk making
a mess of it. I never considered it to be disagreeable when women
get a little corporation, especially if all the remainder of her
body is well proportioned. It's a kind of beauty I'm rather partial
to. Do not transform it inconsiderately."

"No matter, we'll leave woman's body and flanks formed after the
canons of the Greek sculptors. That will be to give you pleasure,
reverend sir, and also in due consideration of the labours of
maternity. It is true, I intend in that case also, to make several
changes of which I'll speak to you on a future day. But to return to
our subject. I have to acknowledge that all I have till now
predicted is nothing but a preparatory measure for the real
nourishment, which is that of the Sylphs and all aerial spirits.
They drink light, which is sufficient to give to their bodies
marvellous strength and subtility. It is their only potion, one day
it will be ours also. Nothing more is to be done than to render the
rays of the sun drinkable. I confess that I do not see with
sufficient clearness the means to arrive at it, and I do foresee
many encumbrances and great obstacles on the road. But whenever
some sage shall be able to do it, mankind will be the equal of
Sylphs and Salamanders in intelligence and beauty."

My good tutor listened to these words, folded in himself, his head
sadly lowered. He seemed to contemplate the changes to himself from
the kind of food imagined by our host.

"Sir," he said after a while, "did you not speak at yonder cookshop
of an elixir which dispenses with all kinds of food?"

"True, I did," replied M. d'Asterac, "but that liquor is only good
for philosophers, and by that you may understand how restricted is
the use of it. It will be better not to mention it."

One doubt tormented me. I asked leave of our host to submit it to
him, certain that he would enlighten me at once. He allowed me to
speak and I said:

"Sir, those Salamanders, who you say are so beautiful, and of whom, after your relation, I have conceived a charming idea, have they unhappily spoiled their teeth by light drinking, as the shepherds at Valais lost theirs by feeding only on milk diet? I confess I am rather uneasy about it."

"My son," replied M. d'Asterac, "your curiosity pleases me and I will satisfy it. The Salamanders have no teeth that we should call such. But their gums are furnished with two ranges of pearls, very white and very brilliant, lending to their smiles an inconceivable gracefulness. You should know that these pearls are light-hardened."

I said to M. d'Asterac that I was glad it was so and he continued:

"Men's teeth are a sign of ferocity. Once people are properly fed, their teeth will give way to some ornament similar to the pearls of the Salamander. Then it will become incomprehensible that a lover could, without horror and disgust, contemplate dogs' teeth in the mouth of his beloved."

CHAPTER VIII

The Library and its Contents
After dinner our host conducted us to a vast gallery adjoining his study; it was the library. There were to be seen ranged on oaken shelves an innumerable army, or rather a grand assembly, of books in duodecimo, in octavo, in quarto, in folio, clad in calf, sheep, morocco leather, in parchment and in pigskin. The light fell through six windows on this silent assembly extended from one end of the hall to the other, all along the high walls. Large tables, alternated with globes and astronomical apparatus, occupied the middle of the gallery. M. d'Asterac told us to make choice of the place most convenient for our work.

My dear tutor, his head high, with look and breath inhaled all these books drivelling with joy.

"By Apollo!" he exclaimed, "what a splendid library! The Bishop of to this. There is no pleasanter abode in my opinion, actually the Elysian Fields as described by Virgil. At first sight I can discover such rare books and precious collections that I have my doubts, sir, if any other private library prevails over this, which is inferior in France only to the Mazarin and the Royal. I dare say, seeing all these Greek and Latin MSS. closely pressed together in this single corner, one may, after the Bodleian, the Ambrosian, the Laurentinian and the Vatican also name, sir, the Asteracian. Without flattering myself I may say that I smell truffles and books at a long distance and I consider myself from now, to be the equal of Peiresc, of
Grolier and of Canevarius, who are the princes of bibliophiles."

"I consider myself to be over them," said M. d'Asterac quietly, "as this library is a great deal more precious than all those you have named. The King's Library is but an old bookshop in comparison with mine--that is, if you do not consider the number of books only and both librarians of fame, are, compared to me, indolent shepherds of a vile herd of sheep-like books. I concede that the Benedictines are diligent, but they have no high spirit and their libraries reveal the mediocrity of the souls by whom they have been collected. My gallery, sir, is not on the pattern of others. The works I have got together form a whole which doubtless will procure me knowledge. My library is gnostic, oecumenic and spiritual. If all the lines traced on those numberless sheets of paper and parchment could enter in good order into your brain, you, sir, would know all, could do all, would be the master of Nature, the plasmator of things, you would hold the whole world between the two fingers of your hand as I now hold these grains of tobacco."

With these words he offered his snuff-box to my tutor.

Letting his transported looks wander over the learned walls he continued:
"Between these third and fourth windows are shelves bearing an illustrious burden. There is the meeting place of Oriental MSS., who seem to converse together. I see ten or twelve venerable ones under shreds of purple and gold figured silks, their vestments. Like a Byzantine emperor, some of them wear jewelled clasps on their mantles, others are mailed in ivory plates."

"They are the writings of Jewish, Arabian and Persian cabalists," said M. d'Asterac. "You have just opened 'The Powerful Hand.' Close to it you'll find 'The Open Table,' 'The Faithful Shepherd,' 'The Fragments of the Temple' and 'The Light of Darkness.' One place is gentlemen, is in my house, occupied with the discovery of the deepest secrets contained in the scriptures of the Hebrews, and, over a century old as he is, the rabbi consents not to die, before penetrating into the sense of all cabalistic symbols. I owe him much gratitude, and beg of you gentlemen, when you see him, to show him the same regard as I do myself.

"But let us pass that over and come to what is your special concern. I thought of you, reverend sir, to transcribe and put into Latin some Greek MSS. of inestimable value. I confide in your knowledge and in your zeal, and have no doubt that your young disciple cannot but be of great help to you."
And addressing me specially he said:

"Yes, my son, I lay great hopes on you. They are based for a large part on the education you have received. For, you have been brought up, so to say, in the flames, under the mantel of the chimney haunted by Salamanders. That is a very considerable circumstance."

Without interrupting his speech, he took up an armful of MSS. and deposited them on the table.

"This," he said, showing a roll of papyrus, "comes from Egypt. It is a book of Zosimus the Panopolitan, which was thought to be lost and which I found myself in a coffin of a priest of Serapis.

"And what you see here," he added, showing us some straps of glossy and fibrous leaves on which Greek letters traced with a brush were hardly visible, "are unheard-of revelations, due, one to Gophar the Persian, the other to John, the arch-priest of Saint Evagia.

"I should be very glad if you would occupy yourselves with these works before any others. Afterwards we will study together the MSS. of Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemy, of Olympiodorus and Stephanus, which I discovered at Ravenna, in a vault where they have been locked up since the reign of that ignoramus Theodosius who has been surnamed the Great."
As soon as M. d'Asterac was gone, my tutor sat down over the papyrus of Zosimus and, with the help of a magnifying glass commenced to decipher it. I asked him if he was not surprised by what he had just heard.

Without raising his head he replied:

"My dear boy, I have known too many kinds of persons and traversed fortunes too various to be surprised at anything. This gentleman seems to be demented, less because he really is so, but from his thoughts differing in excess from those of the vulgar. But if one listened to discourses commonly held in this world, there would be found still less sense than in those of that philosopher. Left to itself, the sublimest human reason builds its castles and temples in the air and, truly, M. d'Asterac is a pretty good gatherer of clouds. Truth is in God alone, never forget it, my boy. But this is really the book 'Jmoreth' written by Zosimus the Panopolitan for his sister Theosebia. What a glory and what a delight to read this unique MS. rediscovered by a kind of prodigy! I'll give it my days and night watches. How I pity, my boy, the ignorant fellows whom idleness drives into debauchery! What a miserable life they lead!

What is a woman in comparison with an Alexandrian papyrus? Compare, if you please, this noble library with the tavern of the _Little Bacchus_ and the entertainment of this precious MS. with the caresses given to a wench under the bower; and tell me, my boy,
where true contentment is to be found. For me, a companion of the
Muses, and admitted to the silent orgies of meditation of which the
rhetor of Madama speaks with so much eloquence, I thank God for
having made me a respectable man."

CHAPTER IX

At Work on Zosimus the Panopolitan--I visit my Home and hear Gossip
about M. d'Asterac.

During all the next month or six weeks, M. Coignard applied himself,
day and night, just as he had promised, to the reading of Zosimus
the Panopolitan. During the meals we partook of at the table of M.
d'Asterac the conversation turned on the opinions of the gnostics
and on the knowledge of the ancient Egyptians. Being only an
ignorant scholar I was of little use to my good master. I did my
best by making such researches as he wanted me to make; I took no
little pleasure in it. Truly, we lived happily and quietly. At about
the seventh week, M. d'Asterac gave me leave to go and see my
parents at their cookshop. The shop appeared strangely smaller to
me. My mother was there alone and sad. She cried aloud on seeing me
fitted out like a prince.

"My Jacques," she said, "I am very happy!"
And she began to cry. We embraced, then wiping her eyes with a corner of her canvas apron she said:

"Your father is at the _Little Bacchus_. Since you left he often goes there; in your absence the house is less pleasant for him. He'll be glad to see you again. But say, my Jacques, are you satisfied with your new position? I regretted letting you go with that nobleman; I even accused myself in confession to the third vicar of giving preference to your bodily well-being over that of your soul and not having thought of God in establishing you. The third vicar reproved me kindly over it, and exhorted me to follow the example of the pious women in the Scriptures, of whom he named several to me; but there are names there that I'll never be able to remember. He did not explain his meaning minutely as it was a Saturday evening and the church was full of penitents."

I reassured my good mother as well as I could and told her that M. d'Asterac made me work in Greek, which was the language in which the New Testament was written; this pleased her, but she remained pensive.

"You'll never guess, my dear Jacquot," she said, "who spoke to me of M. d'Asterac. It was Cadette Saint-Avit, the serving-woman of the village called Laroque-Timbaut, quite near Saint Eulalie, of which M. d'Asterac is the lord. You know that Cadette Saint-Avit is elderly, as the waiting-woman of a rector ought to be. In her youth
she knew, in her country, the three Messieurs d'Asterac, one of whom was captain of a man-of-war and has since been drowned. He was the youngest. The second was colonel of a regiment, went to war and was killed. The eldest, Hercules d'Asterac, is the sole survivor of the three brothers. It is the same one in whose service you are for your good, at least I hope so. He dressed magnificently in his youth, was liberal in his manners but of a sombre humour. He kept aloof from all public business and was not anxious to go into the king's service, as his two brothers had done and found in it an honourable end. He was accustomed to say that it was no glory to carry a sword at one's side, that he did not know of a more ignoble thing than the calling of arms, and that a village scavenger was, in his opinion, high over a brigadier or a marshal of France. Those were his sayings. I confess it does not seem to me either bad or malicious, rather daring and whimsical. But in some way they must be blameable, as Cadette Saint-Avit said that the rector of her parish considered them to be contrary to the order established by God in this world and opposed to that part of the Bible where God is given a name which means Lord of Hosts, and that would be a great sin.

"This M. Hercules had so little sympathy with the court that he refused to travel to Versailles to be presented to his Majesty according to his birthright. He said, 'The king does not come to me and I do not go to him,' and anyone of sense, my Jacquot, can understand that such is not a natural saying."

My good mother looked inquiringly and anxiously at me and went on:
"What more I have to inform you about, my dear Jacquot, is still less believable. However, Cadette Saint-Avit spoke of it as of a certainty. And so I will tell you that M. Hercules d'Asterac, when he lived on his estate, had no other care but to bottle the rays of the sun. Cadette Saint-Avit does not know how he managed it, but she is sure that after a time, in the flagons well corked and heated in water baths, tiny little women took form, charming figures and dressed like theatre princesses. You laugh, Jacquot; however, one ought not to joke over such things when one can see the consequence. It is a great sin to create in such a way creatures who cannot be baptised and who never could have a part in the eternal blessings. You cannot suppose that M. d'Asterac carried those grotesque figures to a priest in their bottles to hold them over the christening font. No godmother could have been found for them."

"But, my dear mamma," I replied, "the dolls of M. d'Asterac were not in want of christening, they had no participation in original sin."

"I never thought of that," said my mother. "And Cadette Saint-Avit herself did not mention it, although she was the servant of a rector. Unhappily she left Gascony when quite young, came to France and had no more news of M. d'Asterac, of his bottles and his puppets. I sincerely hope, my dear Jacquot, that he renounced his wicked works, which could not be accomplished without the help of the devil."
I asked:

"Tell me, my dear mother, did Cadette Saint-Avit, the rector's servant, see the bodies in the bottles with her own eyes?"

"No, my dear child; M. d'Asterac kept his dolls very secret and did not show them to anybody. But she heard of them from a churchman of the name of Fulgence, who haunted the castle, and swore he had seen those little creatures step out of their glass prisons and dance a minuet. And she had every reason to believe it. It is possible to doubt of what one sees, but you cannot doubt the word of an honest man, especially when he belongs to the Church. There is another misfortune with such secret practices, they are extremely costly and it is hard to imagine, as Cadette Saint-Avit said, what money M. Hercules spent to procure all those bottles of different forms, those furnaces and conjuring books wherewith he filled his castle. But after the death of his brothers he became the richest gentleman of his province, and while he dissipated his wealth in follies, his good lands worked for him. Cadette Saint-Avit rates him, with all his expenses, as still a very rich man."

These last words spoken, my father entered the shop. He embraced me tenderly and confided to me that the house had lost half its Coignard, who was honest and jovial. He complimented me on my dress
and gave me a lesson in deportment, assuring me that trade had accustomed him to easy manners by the continuous obligation he was under to greet his customers like gentlemen, if as a fact they were only vile riff-raff. He gave me, as a precept, to round off the elbows and to turn my toes outward and counselled me, beyond this, myself exactly on him.

We dined together with a good appetite, and we parted shedding floods of tears. I loved them well, both of them, and what principally made me cry was that, after an absence of six weeks only, they had already become somewhat strange to me. And I verily believe that their sadness was caused by the same sentiment.

CHAPTER X

I see Catherine with Friar Ange and reflect--The Liking of Nymphs for Satyrs--An Alarm of Fire--M. d'Asterac in his Laboratory.

When I came out of the cookshop, the night was black. At the corner of the Rue des Ecrivains I heard a fat and deep voice singing:

"Si ton honneur elle est perdue
La bell', c'est tu l'as bien voulu."
And soon I could see on the other side, whence the voice sounded, Friar Ange, with wallet dangling on his shoulder, holding Catherine the lacemaker round the waist, walking in the shadow with a wavering and triumphal step, spouting the gutter water under his sandals in a magnificent spirit of mire which seemed to celebrate his drunken glory, as the basins of Versailles make their fountains play in honour of the king. I put myself out of the way against the post in the corner of a house door, so as not to be seen by them, which was a needless precaution as they were too much occupied with one another. With her head lying on the monk's shoulder, Catherine laughed. A moonray trembled on her moist lips and in her eyes, like the water sparkles in a fountain; and I went my way, with my soul irritated and my heart oppressed, thinking on the provoking waist of that fine girl pressed by the arm of a dirty Capuchin.

"Is it possible," I said to myself, "that such a pretty thing could be in such ugly hands? And if Catherine despises me need she render her despisal more cruel by the liking she has for that naughty Friar Ange?"

This preference appeared singular to me and I conceived as much Coignard for nothing. This incomparable teacher had formed my mind to meditate. I recalled to myself the satyrs one can see in gardens carrying off nymphs, and reflected that if Catherine was made like a nymph, those satyrs, at least as they are represented to us, are as horrible as yonder Capuchin. And I concluded that I ought not to be
so very much astonished by what I had just seen. My vexation, however, was not dissipated by my reason, doubtless because it had not its source there. These meditations got me along through the shadows of the night and the mud of the thaw to the road of Saint the Cross of the Sablons after having supped in town.

"My boy," he said, "I have conversed of Zosimus and the gnostics at the table of a very learned ecclesiastic, quite another Peiresc. The wine was coarse and the fare but middling, but nectar and ambrosia floated through the discourse."

Then my dear tutor spoke of the Panopolitan with an inconceivable eloquence. Alas! I listened badly, thinking of that drop of moonlight which had this very night fallen on the lips of Catherine the lacemaker.

At last he came to a stop and I asked on what foundation the Greeks had established the liking of the nymphs for satyrs. My teacher was so widely learned that he was always ready to reply to all questions. He told me:

"That liking is based on a natural sympathy. It is lively but not so ardent as the liking of the satyrs for the nymphs, with which it corresponds. The poets have observed this distinction very well. Concerning it I'll narrate you a singular adventure I have read in a
have it before my eyes) a collection in folio, written in a good
hand of last century. This is the singular fact reported in it. A
Norman gentleman and his wife took part in a public entertainment,
disguised, he as a satyr, she as a nymph. By Ovid it is known with
what ardour the satyrs pursue the nymphs; that gentleman had read
the 'Metamorphoses.' He entered so well into the spirit of his
disguise that nine months after, his wife presented him with a baby
whose forehead was horned and whose feet were those of a buck. It is
not known what became of the father beyond that he had the common
end of all creatures, to wit, that he died, and that beside that
capriped he left another younger child, a Christian one and of human
form. This younger son went to law claiming that his brother should
not get a part of the deceased father's inheritance for the reason
that he did not belong to the species redeemed by the blood of Jesus
Christ. The Parliament of Normandy, sitting at Rouen, gave a verdict
in his favour, which was duly recorded."

I asked my teacher if it was possible that a disguise could have
such an effect on nature and if the shape of the child could follow

"Jacques Tournebroche, my son," he said, "remember always that a
good mind repels all that is contrary to reason, except in matters
of faith, wherein it is convenient to believe implicitly. Thank God!
I have never erred about the dogmas of our very holy religion, and I
trust to find myself in the same disposition in the article of
death."
Conversing in this manner we arrived at the castle. The roof seemed in a red glow in the dark. Out of one in dark shadows. We heard the roaring of the fire, like fiery rain under the dense smoke wherewith the sky was veiled. We both believed the flames to be devouring the building. My good tutor tore his hair and moaned:

"My Zosimus, my papyrus, my Greek MSS.! Help! Help! my Zosimus!"

Running up the great lane over puddles of water reflecting the glare of the fire, we crossed the park buried in dark shadows. We heard the roaring of the fire, which filled the sombre staircase. Two at a time we ran up the steps, stopping now and again to listen whence came that appalling noise.

It appeared to us to come from a corridor on the third floor where we had never been. In that direction we fumbled our way, and seeing through the slits of a door the red brightness, we knocked with all our might on the panel. It opened at once.

M. d'Asterac, who opened the door, stood quietly before us. His long black figure seemed to be enveloped in flaming air. He asked quietly on what pressing business we were looking for him at so late an hour. There was no conflagration but a terrible fire, burning in a big furnace with reflectors, which as I have since learned are
called thanons. The whole of the rather large room was full of
glass bottles with long necks twined round glass tubes of a duck-
beak shape, retorts, resembling chubby cheeks out of which came
noses like trumpets, crucibles, cupels, matrasses, cucurbits and
vases of all forms.

My dear old tutor wiping his face shining like live coals said:

"Oh, sir, we were afraid that the castle was alight like straw.
Thank God, the library is not burning. But are you practising the
spagyric art, sir?"

"I do not want to conceal from you," said M. d'Asterac, "that I have
made great progress in it, but withal I have not found the theorem
capable of rendering my work perfect. At the moment you knocked at
the door I was picking up the Spirit of the World, and the Flower of
Heaven, which are the veritable Fountains of Youth. Have you some
understanding of alchemy, Monsieur Coignard?"

books, but that he considered the practice of it to be pernicious
and contrary to religion. M. d'Asterac smiled and said:

"You are too knowing a man, M. Coignard, not to be acquainted with
the Flying Eagle, the Bird of Hermes, the Fowl of Hermogenes, the
Head of a Raven, the Green Lion and the Phoenix."
"I have been told," said my good master, "that by these names are distinguished the philosopher's stone in its different states. But I have doubts about the possibility of a transmutation of metals."

With the greatest confidence M. d'Asterac replied:

"Nothing is easier, my dear sir, than to bring your uncertainty to an end."

He opened an old rickety chest standing in the wall and took out of it a copper coin, bearing the effigy of the late king, and called our attention to a round stain crossing the coin from side to side.

"That," he said, "is the effect of the stone, which has transmuted the copper into silver, but that's only a trifle."

He went back to the chest and took out of it a sapphire the size of an egg, an opal of marvellous dimensions and a handful of perfect fine emeralds.

"Here are some of my doings," he said, "which are proof enough that the spagyric art is not the dream of an empty brain."
At the bottom of the small wooden bowl lay five or six little diamonds, of which M. d'Asterac made no mention. My tutor asked him if they also were of his make, and, the alchemist having acknowledged it:

those diamonds prior to the other stones by way of caution. If you let them look first at the sapphire, opal and the emeralds, you run the risk of a persecution for sorcery, because everyone will say that the devil alone was capable of producing such stones. Just as the devil alone could lead an easy life in the midst of these furnaces, where one has to breathe flames. As far as I am concerned, having stayed a single quarter of an hour, I am already half baked."

Letting us out, with a friendly smile M. d'Asterac spoke as follows:

"Well knowing what to think of the devil and the Other, I willingly consent to speak of them with persons who believe in them. The devil and the Other are, as it were, characters; one may speak of them just as of Achilles and Thersites. Be assured, gentlemen, if the devil is like what he is said to be, he does not live in so subtle an element as fire. It is wholly wrong to place so villainous a beast in the sun. But as I had the honour to say, Master Tournebroche, to the Capuchin so dear to your mother, I reckon that the Christians slander Satan and his demons. That in some unknown world there may exist beings still worse than man is possible, but
hardly conceivable. Certainly, if such exist, they inhabit regions
deprived of light, and if they are burning, it would be in ice,
which, as a fact, causes the same smarting pain, and not in
illustrious flames among the fiery daughters of the stars. They
suffer because they are wicked, and wickedness is an evil; but they
can only suffer from chilblains. With regard to your Satan,
gentlemen, who is a horror for your theologians, I do not consider
him to be despicable, if I judge him by all you say of him, and,
should he peradventure exist, I would think him to be, not a nasty
beast, but a little Sylph, or at least a Gnome, and a metallurgist a
trifle mocking but very intelligent."

My tutor stopped his ears with his fingers and took to flight so as
not to hear anything more.

"What impiety, Tournebroche, my boy," he exclaimed, when we reached
the staircase. "What blasphemies! Have you felt all the odium in the
maxims of that philosopher? He pushes atheism to a joyous frenzy,
which makes me wonder. But this indeed renders him almost innocent,
for being apart from all belief, he cannot tear up the Holy Church
like those who remain attached to her by some half-severed, still
bleeding limb. Such, my son, are the Lutherans and the Calvinists,
who mortify the Church till a separation occurs. On the contrary,
atheists damn themselves alone, and one may dine with them without
committing a sin. That's to say, that we need not have any scruple
about living with M. d'Asterac, who believes neither in God nor
devil. But did you see, Tournebroche, my boy, the handful of little
diamonds at the bottom of the wooden bowl?--the number of which apparently he did not know, and which seemed to be of pure water. I have my doubts about the opal and the sapphires, but those diamonds looked genuine." When we reached our chambers we wished each other a very good-night.

CHAPTER XI

Up till springtime my tutor and myself led a regular and secluded life. All the mornings we were at work shut up in the gallery, and Coignard used to say, to give ourselves in the manner of gentlemen and valets a paltry spectacle, but to listen to the sublime, if contradictory, dialogues of the ancient authors.

In this way the reading and translating of the Panopolitan advanced quickly. I hardly contributed to it. Such kind of work was above my knowledge and I had enough to do to learn the figure that the Greek letters make on papyrus. Sometimes I assisted my tutor by consulting the authors who could enlighten him in his researches, and foremost Olympiodorus and Plotinus, with whom since then I have remained familiar. The small services I was able to render him increased considerably my self-esteem.
After a long sharp winter I was on the way to become a learned person, when the spring broke in suddenly with her gallant equipage of light, tender green and singing birds; the perfume of the lilacs coming into the library windows caused me vague reveries, out of which my tutor called me by saying:

"Jacquot Tournebroche, please climb up that ladder and tell me if contradictions tortures one like a devil."

And my good master filled his nose with tobacco and looked quite content.

On another occasion he said:

"My boy, it is remarkable how great an influence our garments have on our moral state. Since my neckband has become spotted with different sauces I have dropped upon it I feel a less honest man. Now that you are dressed like a marquis, Tournebroche, does not the desire tickle you to assist at the toilet of an opera girl, and to put a roll of spurious gold pieces on a faro-table--in one word, do you not feel yourself to be a man of quality? Do not take what I say amiss, and remember that it is sufficient to give a coward a busby to make him hasten to become a soldier and be knocked on the head in the king's service. Tournebroche, our sentiments are composed of a thousand things we cannot detect for their smallness, and the
destiny of our immortal soul depends sometimes on a puff too light
to bend a blade of grass. We are the toy of the winds. But pass me,
if you please, 'The Rudiments of Vossius,' the red edges of which I
see stand out under your left arm."

On this same day, after dinner at three o'clock, M. d'Asterac led
us, my teacher and myself, to walk in the park. He conducted us to
deepest and most desolate part. Ivy and grass, cropped by the
rabbits, covered the paths, now and then obstructed by large trunks
of dead trees. The marble statues on both sides of the way smiled,
unconscious of their ruin. A nymph, with her broken hand near her
mouth, made a sign to a shepherd to remain silent. A young faun, his
head fallen to the ground, still tried to put his flute to his lips.

And all these divine beings seemed to teach us to despise the
injuries inflicted by time and fortune. We followed the banks of a
canal where the rainwater nourished the tree frogs. Round a circus
rose sloping basins where pigeons went to drink. Arrived there we
went by a narrow pathway driven through a coppice.

"Walk with care," said M. d'Asterac. "This pathway is somewhat
dangerous, as it is lined by mandrakes which at night-time sing at
the foot of the trees. They hide in the earth. Take care not to put
your feet on them; you will get love sickness or thirst after
wealth, and would be lost, because the passions inspired by
mandrakes are unhappy."
I asked how it was possible to avoid the invisible danger. M. d'Asterac replied that one could escape it by means of intuitive divination, and in no other way.

"Besides," he added, "this pathway is fatal."

It went on in a direct line to a brick pavilion, hidden under ivy, which no doubt had served in time gone by as a guard house. There the park came to an end close to the monotonous marshes of the Seine.

"You see this pavilion," said M. d'Asterac; "in it lives the most penetrates, with majestic self-will, the mysteries of nature. He has left Imbonatus and Bartoloni far behind. I wanted to honour myself, gentlemen, by keeping under my roof the greatest cabalist since his place at my table, which he supposes to be a Christian's, by which he does me too much honour. You cannot conceive the violence of hate, of this sage, of everything Christian. I had the greatest difficulty to make him dwell in the pavilion, where he lives alone with his niece, Jahel. Gentlemen, you shall not wait longer before you to this divine man."

And having thus spoken, M. d'Asterac pushed us inside the pavilion, where between MSS. strewn all round was seated in a large arm-chair
an old man with piercing eyes, a hooked nose, and a couple of thin streams of white beard growing from a receding chin; a velvet cap, formed like an imperial crown, covered his bald skull, and his body, of an inhuman emaciation, was wrapped up in an old gown of yellow silk, resplendent but dirty.

Right piercing looks were turned on us, but he gave no sign that he noticed our arrival. His face had an expression of painful stubbornness, and he slowly rolled between his rigid fingers the reed which served him for writing.

"For a long time this sage does not communicate with anyone but the genii and myself. His discourses are sublime. As he will never converse with you, gentlemen, I'll endeavour to give you in a few words an idea of his merits. First he has penetrated into the spiritual sense of the books of Moses, after that into the value of the Hebrew characters, which depends on the order of the letters of the alphabet. This order has been thrown into confusion from the Atrabis, Philo, Avicenne, Raymond Lully, P. de la Mirandola, Reuchlin, Henry More and Robert Flydd have been unable to do.

the world of spirits, and you must agree, gentlemen, that that is of infinite consequence."

My dear tutor took his snuff-box in hand, presented it civilly to us, took a pinch himself and said:
"Do you not believe, M. d'Asterac, that this sort of knowledge is the very kind to bring one to the devil at the end of this transient life?

the Holy Scriptures. When our Lord expired on the cross for the salvation of mankind the synagogue felt a bandage slip over her eyes, she staggered like a drunken woman and the crown fell from her head. Since then the interpretation of the Old Testament is confined to the Catholic Church, to which in spite of my many iniquities I belong."

and said to my dear tutor, in a slow and musty voice sounding as from far away:

"The Masorah has not confided to thee her secrets and the Mischna has not revealed to thee her mysteries."

Moses but also that of Enoch, which is much more important, and which has been rejected by the Christians, who were unable to understand it; like the cock of the Arabian fable, who disdained the more precious because therein are to be seen the first talks the daughters of man had with the Sylphs. You must understand that those
angels which as Enoch shows us had love connection with women were
Sylphs and Salamanders."

"I will so understand, sir," replied my good master, "not wishing to
gainsay you. But from what has been conserved of the book of Enoch,
which is clearly apocryphal, I suspect those angels to have been not
Sylphs but simply Phoenician merchants."

"And on what do you found," asked M. d'Asterac, "so singular an
opinion?"

"I found it, sir, on what is said in that very book that the angels
taught the women how to use bracelets and necklaces, to paint the
eyebrows and to employ all sorts of dyes. It is further said in the
same book, that the angels taught the daughters of men the peculiar
qualities of roots and trees, enchantments, and the art of observing
the stars. Truly, sir, have not those angels the appearance of
Syrians or Sidonians gone ashore on some half-deserted coast and
unpacking in the shadow of rocks their trumpery wares to tempt the
girls of the savage tribes? These traffickers gave them copper
necklaces, armlets and medicines in exchange for amber, frankincense
and furs. And they astonished these beautiful but ignorant creatures
by speaking to them of the stars with a knowledge acquired by
seafaring. That's clear, I think, and I should like to know in what
"M. Coignard, you do not reason so badly, ignorant as you still are
of gnosticism and the Cabala. And what you say makes me think that
there may have been some metallurgistic and gold-working Gnomes
among the Sylphs who joined themselves in love with the daughters of
men. The Gnomes, and that is a fact, occupied themselves willingly
with the goldsmith's art, and it is probable that those ingenious
demons forged the bracelets you believe to have been of Phoenician
manufacture.

"But I warn you, you'll be at some disadvantage, sir, to compete
rediscovered monuments which were believed to have been lost; among
of Noah and the most ancient of the sybils."

"Oh!" exclaimed my tutor as he stamped on the powdery floor so that
a cloud of dust whirled up. "Oh! what dreams! It is too much, you
head, under his large bonnet, resembling the crown of Charlemagne;
that column of Seth is a ridiculous invention of that shallow
Flavius Josephus, an absurd story by which nobody has been imposed
pretty sparing of his words, would oblige by uttering a few by words
of mouth, because it is not possible for him, I am quite pleased to
recognise it, to pronounce them by the more secret voice in which
the ancient sybils habitually gave their mysterious responses."
laughs and mocks will not hear the voice which goes forth from the
seventh tabernacle, the infidel walketh miserably to his ruin."

After this oracular pronouncement all three of us took leave of

CHAPTER XII

I take a Walk and visit Mademoiselle Catherine

In that year the summer was radiant, and I had a longing to go
walking. One day, strolling under the trees of the Cours-la-Reine
with two little crowns I had found that very morning in the pocket
of my breeches, and which were the first by which my goldmaker had
shown his munificence, I sat down at the door of a small coffee-
house, at a table so small that it was quite appropriate to my
solitude and modesty. Then I began to think of the oddness of my
destiny, while at my side some musketeers were drinking Spanish wine
with girls of the town. I was not quite sure that Croix-des-Sablons,
were not dreams, out of which I should wake to find myself clad in
the dimity vest, back again turning the spit at the Queen
I came out of my reverie on feeling my sleeve pulled, and saw
standing before me Friar Ange, his face nearly hidden by his beard
and cowl.

who wishes you well, expects you in her carriage on the highway,

My heart began to beat violently. Afraid and charmed by this
adventure, I went at once to the place indicated by the Capuchin,
but at a quiet pace, which seemed to me to be more becoming. Arrived
at the embankment I saw a carriage and a tiny hand on the door.

This door was opened at my coming, and very much surprised I was to
find inside the coach Mam'selle Catherine, dressed in pink satin,
her head covered with a hood of black lace, underneath which her
fair hair seemed to sport.

Confused I remained standing on the step.

"Come in," she said, "and sit down near me. Shut the door if you
please; you must not be seen. Just now in passing on the Cours I saw
friar, whom I had attached to me for the Lenten exercises, and whom
I have kept since, because, in whatever position one may be, it is
necessary to have piety. You looked very well, M. Jacques, sitting
before your little table, your sword across your thighs and with the
sad look of a man of quality. I have always been friendly disposed
towards you and I am not of that kind of women who in their
prosperity disregard their former friends."

"Eh! What? Mam'selle Catherine," I exclaimed, "this coach, these
lackeys, this satin dress----"

"They are the outcome," she replied, "of the kindness of M. de la
He has lent money to the king. He is an excellent friend whom, for
all the world, I should not wish to offend. But he is not as amiable
as you, M. Jacques. He has also given me a little house at Grenelle,
which I will show you from the cellar to the garret. M. Jacques, I
am mighty glad to see you on the road to fortune. Real merit is
always discovered. You'll see my bedroom, which is copied from that
of Mademoiselle Davilliers. It is covered all over with looking-
glass and there are lots of grotesque figures. How is the old fellow
your father? Between ourselves, he somewhat neglects his wife and
his cook-shop. It is very wrong of a man in his position. But let us
speak of yourself."

"Let us speak of you, Mam'selle Catherine," said I. "You are so very
pretty and it is a great pity you love the Capuchin." Nothing could
be said against a government contractor.
"Oh!" she said, "do not reproach me with Friar Ange. I have him for

it would be----"

"Would be?"

"Don't ask me, M. Jacques; you're an ungrateful man, for you know

that I always singled you out, but you do not care about me."

"Quite the contrary, Mam'selle Catherine. I smarted under your

mockery. You sneered at my beardless chin. Many a time you have told

me that I am but a ninny."

"And that was true, M. Jacques, truer than you believed it to be.

Why could you not see that I had a liking for you?"

"Why, Catherine, you are so pretty as to make one fear. I did not
dare to look at you. And one day I clearly Law that you were

thoroughly offended with me."

"I had every reason for it, M. Jacques; you took that Savoyard in

preference to me, that scum of the Port Saint Nicolas."

"Ah! be quite sure, Catherine, that I did not do so by wish or

inclination, but only because she found ways and means energetic
enough to vanquish my timidity."

"Oh! my friend, you may believe me, as I am the elder of us two, timidity is a great sin against love. But did you not see that that beggar had holes in her stockings and a seam of filth and mud, half-an-ell high, on the bottom of her petticoat?"

"I saw it, Catherine."

"Have you not seen, Jacques, how badly she is made and that really she is skinny?"

"I saw it, Catherine."

"And withal you loved that Savoyard she-monkey, you who have a white skin and distinguished manners!"

"I cannot understand it myself, Catherine. It must have been that at that moment my imagination was full of you. And it was your image only gave me the pluck and strength you reproach me with to-day. Imagine yourself, Catherine, my rapture to press you in my arms, yourself or only a girl who resembled you a little. Because I loved you desperately."
She took my hand and sighed, and in a tone of sadness I continued to say:

"Yes, I did love you, Catherine, and I could still love you except for that disgusting monk."

She cried out:

"What a suspicion! You offend me. It is a folly."

"Then you do not love the Capuchin?"

"Fie!"

As I did not consider it to be any use to press the subject further, I took her round the waist, we embraced, our lips met and all my being seemed to melt in voluptuousness.

After a short moment of luxurious confusion, she disentangled herself, her cheeks rosy, her eyes moistened, her lips half separated. It is from that day that I knew how much a woman is embellished and adorned by a kiss lovingly pressed on her mouth. Mine had made roses of the sweetest hue bloom on Catherine's cheeks and strewn into the flowery blue of her eyes drops of diamantine
"You are a baby," she said, readjusting her hood. "Go! you cannot
loves me with an impatience which continually runs ahead of the
meeting time."

Reading in my face how upset I was by this saying she spoke again
with a quick vivacity:

"Listen, Jacques, he returns every night at nine to his old woman,
who shrewish by age, cannot bear his infidelities since she herself
is unable to pay him in the same coin and has become awfully
jealous. Come to-night at half-past nine. I'll receive you. My house
is at the corner of the Rue du Bac. You'll recognise it by its three
windows on every floor and by its balcony covered with roses; you
know I always did like flowers. Good-bye till to-night."

Caressingly she pushed me back, hardly able to hide the wish to keep
me with her, then placing one finger over her mouth she whispered
again:

"Till to-night."

CHAPTER XIII
Taken by M. d'Asterac to the Isle of Swans I listen to his Discourse on Creation and Salamanders.

I really do not know how it was possible to tear myself out of Catherine's arms. But it is a fact that in jumping out of her carriage I nearly fell on M. d'Asterac, whose tall figure leant against a tree on the roadside. Courteously I saluted him and showed the surprise I felt at this pleasant encounter.

"Chance," he said, "lessens as knowledge grows; for me it is suppressed. I knew, my son, that I had to meet you at this place. It is necessary for me to have a conversation with you already too long delayed. Let's go, if you please, in quest of solitude and quietness required by what I wish to tell you. Do not become anxious. The mysteries I desire to unveil before you are sublime, it is true, but pleasant also."

Having so spoken he conducted me to the bank of the Seine opposite the Isle of Swans, which rose out of the middle of the river like a ship built of foliage. There he made a sign to a ferryman, whose boat brought us quickly to the green isle, frequented only by invalids, who on fine days play there at bowls and drink their pint of wine. Night lit her first stars in the sky and lent a humming voice to the myriads of insects in the grass. The isle was deserted. M. d'Asterac sat down on a wooden bench at the end of an alley of
walnut-trees, invited me to sit close to him and spoke:

"There are three sorts of people, my son, from whom the philosopher has to hide his secrets. They are princes, because it would be imprudent to enlarge their power; the ambitious, whose pitiless genius must not be armed, and the debauchees, who would find in hidden sciences the means to satiate their evil passions. But I can talk freely to you, who are neither debauched--for I quite overlook the error you nearly gave way to in the arms of yonder girl--nor ambitious, having lived, till recently, contented to turn the paternal spit. Therefore I may disclose to you the hidden laws of the universe.

"It must not be believed that life is limited by narrow rules wherein it is manifested to the eyes of the profane. When they teach that creation's object and end was man, your theologians and your philosophers reason like the multiped of Versailles or the Tuileries, who believe the humidity of the cellars is made for their special use and that the remainder of the castle is uninhabitable. The system of the world, as Canon Copernicus taught in the last century, following the doctrines of Aristarchus of Samos and Pythagorean philosophers, is doubtless known to you, as there have actually been prepared some compendiums of them for the urchins of village schools and dialogues abstracted from them for the use of town children. You have seen at my house a kind of machine which shows it distinctly by means of a kind of clockwork."
"Raise your eyes, my son, and you'll see over your head David's chariot, drawn by Mizar and her two illustrious companions, circling round the pole; Arcturus, Vega of the Lyre, the Virgin's Sword, the Crown of Ariadne and its charming pearls. Those are suns. One single look on that world will make it clear to you that the whole of creation is the work of fire and that life, in its finest forms, is fed on flames.

"And what are the planets? Drops of a mixture of mind, a little mire and plenty of moisture. Behold the august choir of the stars, the assembly of the suns; they equal or excel ours in magnitude and power and after I have shown you on a clear winter's night, through my telescope, Sirius, your eyes and soul will be dazzled.

"Do you in good faith believe that Sirius Altair, Regulus, Aldebaran, all these suns are luminary only? Do you believe that this old Phoebus, who incessantly forces into space, wherein we are swimming, his inordinate surge of heat and light, has no other function but to light the earth and some other paltry and imperceptible planets? What a candle! A million times greater than the dwelling.

"I have to present to you first of all the idea that the universe is composed of suns and that the planets which may be in it are less than nothing. But as I foresee your wish to make an objection, I'll
reply to it beforehand. The suns, you want to say, put themselves 
out in the course of centuries and by that also change into mud. No!
is my reply; they keep themselves alive by means of comets which 
they attract and which fall on them. It is the dwelling of true 
life. The planets and this our earth are but the abode of ghosts. 
Such are the verities of which I have to convince you.

"Now that you understand, my son, that fire is the principal 
element, you'll easier comprehend what I wish to teach you and which 
is of greater importance than anything you may have learned up to 
now, or was even known to Erasmus, Turnebe or Scaliger. I do not 
speak of theologians like Quesnel or Bossuet who, between ourselves, 
I consider as the lees of human spirit, and who have no better 
understanding than a simple captain of guards. Don't let us hamper 
ourselves by despising those brains comparable in volume, as well as 
in construction, to wrens' eggs, but let us at once enter fully into 
the object of our conference.

"Whilst those earth-born creatures do not surpass a degree of 
the faculty known to Democritus and myself; the beings formed by 
fire enjoy a wisdom and an intelligence of which we cannot possibly 
conceive the limit.

"Such is, my son, the nature of the glorious children of the suns; 
they know the laws of the universe just as we know the rules of
chess, and the course of the stars does not trouble them any more
than the moves on the chessboard of the king and the other men
trouble us. Those genii create worlds in such spaces of the infinite
where none at present exist, and organise them at their will. It
distracts them momentarily from their principal business, which is
to unite among themselves in unspeakable love. Only last night I
turned my telescope on the Sign of the Virgin and saw on it a far-
away vortex of light. No doubt, my son, that was the still
unfinished work of one of those fire beings.

"Truly the universe has no other origin; far from being the effect
of a single will, it is the result of the sublime freaks of a great
many genii, recreating themselves by working on it each in his own
turn and on his own side. That's what explains the diversity, the
splendour and the imperfection. For the force and foresight of those
genii, immense as they were, had still their limits. I should
deceive you were I to say that a man, philosopher or magician, can
have familiar intercourse with them.

"None of them gave me a direct manifestation of himself, and what I
tell you of them is known to me by induction only, and by hearsay.
Certain as their existence is, I should not attempt to describe
their habits and their character. It is necessary to know when not
to know, my son, and I make it a point not to bring forward other
than perfectly well-observed facts.
"Let those genii, or rather demiurguses, abide in their glory, and let us treat of illustrious beings who stand nearer to us. Here, my son, is where one has to lend an open ear.

"If in speaking of the planets I have given vent to a feeling of disdain, it was that I only took into consideration the solid surface and shell of those little balls or tops and the animals who sadly crawl on them. I should have spoken in quite another tone, if in my mind I had included with the planets the air and the vapours wherein they are enveloped. For the air is an element in no way of lesser nobility than fire, whence it follows that the dignity and importance of the planets is in the air wherein they are bathed. Those clouds, soft vapours, puffs of wind, transparencies, blue waves, moving islets of purple and gold which pass over our heads, are the abode of adorable people. They are called Sylphs and Salamanders, and are creatures infinitely amiable and lovely. It is possible for us, and convenient, to form with them unions, the delights of which are hardly conceivable.

"The Salamanders are such that in comparison with them the prettiest person at court or in the city is but an ugly woman. They surrender themselves willingly to philosophers. Doubtless you have heard of that marvel by which M. Descartes was accompanied on his travels. Some say that she was a natural daughter of his, that he took with him everywhere; others think that she was an automaton manufactured with inimitable art. As a fact she was a Salamander, whom that clever man had taken as his lady love. He never left her. During a
voyage in the Dutch Sea he took her with him on board, shut in a box
of precious wood lined with the softest satin. The form of this box,
and the precaution with which M. Descartes took care of it, drew the
attention of the captain, who, while the philosopher was asleep,
raised the cover and discovered the Salamander. This ignorant, rude
fellow imagined that such a marvellous creature was the creation of
the devil. In his dismay, he threw it into the sea. But you will
easily believe that the beautiful little person was not drowned, and
that it was no trouble to her to rejoin M. Descartes. She remained
faithful to him during his natural life, and when he died she left
this world never more to return.

"I give you this example, chosen from many, to make you acquainted
with the loves between philosophers and Salamanders. These loves are
too sublime to be in need of contracts, and you will agree that the
ridiculous display usual at human weddings would be entirely out of
place at such unions. It would be indeed fine, if a proctor in a wig
and a fat priest put their noses together over it! That sort of
gentleman is good only to join vulgar man to woman. The marriages of
Salamanders and sages have witnesses more august. The aerial people
celebrate them in ships which, moved by celestial breath, glide,
their sterns crowned with roses, to the sound of harps, on invisible
waves. But do not believe that, not being entered in a dirty
register in a shabby vestry, they would be of little solidity and
could be easily torn asunder. They have for guarantors the spirits
who gambol on the clouds whence flashes the lightning and roars the
thunder. I reveal matters to you, my son, which be useful to you to
know, because I conclude from certain indications that your destiny is the bed of a Salamander."

"Alas! monsieur," I exclaimed, "this destiny alarms me, and I have nearly as many scruples as the Dutch captain who threw the lady love of Descartes into the sea. I cannot help thinking these aerial dames are demons. I should fear to lose my soul with them, for after all, sir, such marriages are against nature and in opposition to the present to hear you! I am sure he would strengthen me by his valuable arguments against the delights of your Salamanders, sir, and your eloquence."

of Greek. But you must not want anything from him beyond his books.

He has no philosophy. As far as you are in question, my son, you reason with the infirmity of ignorance, and the weakness of your arguments afflicts me. You say, those unions are against nature. What do you know about it? What means have you to gain knowledge of it? How is it possible to make a distinction between what is natural and what is not? Is the universal Isis known enough to discriminate between what is assisting her and what thwarts her? But to speak better still; nothing thwarts her and everything assists her, because nothing exists which does not enter into the functions of her organs and does not follow the numberless attitudes of her body. I beg of you to say, whence could enemies come to offend her? Nothing acts against her nor outside of her; the forces which seem to fight against her are nothing else but movements of her own life.
"The ignorant alone have assurance enough to decide if an action is natural or not. Let's admit their illusions for a moment and their prejudice, and let us feign to recognise the possibility of committing acts against nature. These acts, are they for that reason worse and condemnable? On this point I cannot but remember the vulgar opinion of moralists who represent virtue as an effort over instincts, as an enterprise on the inclinations we carry within us, as a fight with the original man. They own themselves that virtue is against nature, and going further on that opinion they cannot condemn an action of whatever kind, for what is common to it and virtue alike.

"I have made this digression, my son, to call your attention to the contemptible lightness of your reason. I should offend you by believing you still have any doubts of the innocence of the sensual intercourse men may have with Salamanders. Know then, now, that such marriages, far from being interdicted by religious law, are commanded by that law to the exclusion of all others I will give you some conclusive evidence for it."

He stopped talking, took his snuff-box from his pocket, and filled his nose with a pinch.

The night was densely dark. The moon shed her limpid light over the river, and tremulously enlaced with the reflections of the street
lamps. The flying ephemerides enveloped us like a vaporous eddy. The shrill voice of insects rose into the world's silence. Such a sweetness fell slowly down from the sky that it seemed as if milk had been mixed with the sparkling of the stars.

M. d'Asterac spoke again:

"The Bible, my son, and especially the books of Moses, contains grand and useful verities. Such an opinion may appear absurd and unreasonable, in consequence of the treatment the theologians have inflicted on what they call the Scriptures, and of which they have made, by means of their commentaries, explications, and meditations, a manual of errors, a library of absurdities, a magazine of foolery, a cabinet of lies, a gallery of stupidities, a lyceum of ignorance, a museum of silliness, and a repository of human imbecility and wickedness. Know, my son, that at its origin it was a temple filled with celestial radiance.

"I have been fortunate enough to re-establish it in its primal much assisted me with his deep comprehension of the language and the alphabet of the Hebrews. But let us not lose sight of our principal subject. Be informed from the outset, my son, that the sense of the Bible is figurative, and that the capital error of the theologians was to take it literally, whereas it is to be understood as symbolical. Follow this truth in the whole course of my discourse.
"When Demiurge, who is commonly called Jehovah, and by many more names, as all terms expressing quality or quantity are generally applied to him, had, I do not want to say 'created' the world--for such would be an absurdity--but had laid out a small corner of the universe, as a dwelling place for Adam and Eve, there were some subtle creatures in space, which Jehovah had not formed, was not capable of forming. They were the work of several other demiurges, older and more skillful. His craft was not beyond that of a very clever potter, capable of kneading clay beings in the manner of pots, such as we men are now. What I say is not to slight him, because such work is still much beyond human power.

"But it became necessary to brand the inferior character of the work of the seven days. Jehovah worked, not in and with fire, which alone gives birth to the masterpieces of life, but with mud, out of which he could not produce other than the work of a clever ceramist. We are nothing, my son, but animated earthenware. Jehovah is not to be reproached for having illusions over the quality of his work. If he did find it well done in the first moment, and in the ardour of composition, he did not take long to recognise his error, the Bible is full of expressions of his discontent, which often becomes ill-humour, sometimes actual rage.

"Never has artisan treated the objects of his industry with more disgust and aversion. He intended to destroy them, and, in fact, did drown the larger part. This deluge, the memory of which has been
conserved by Jews, Greeks and Chinese alike, gave a last deception
to the unhappy demiurges, who, aware of the uselessness and
ridiculousness of such violence, became discouraged, and fell into
an apathy, the progress of which has not been stopped from Noah's
time to our present day, wherein it is extreme. But I see I have
advanced too far. The inconvenience of these extensive subjects is
the impossibility of remaining within their limits.

"Our mind thrown into them resembles yonder sons of the suns, who
cross the whole of the universe in one single jump.

"Let us return to the earthly paradise, wherein the demiurge had
placed the two vases formed by his hand, Adam and Eve. They did not
live there alone, between the animals and plants. The spirits of the
air, created by the demiurges of the fire, were flowing over and
looking at them with a curiosity mixed with sympathy and pity. It
was exactly as Jehovah had foreseen. Let us hasten to say, to his
praise, he had relied on the genii of the fire, to whom we may now
give their true names of Elves and Salamanders, to ameliorate and
perfect his clay figures. In his prudence he may have said to
himself: 'My Adam and my Eve, opaque and cemented in clay, are in
want of air and light. I have failed to give them wings. But united
to Elves and Salamanders, the creations of a demiurge more powerful
and more subtle than myself, they will give birth to children,
equally originated by light and clay, and who in their turn will
have children still more luminous than themselves, till in the end
their issue will be equal in beauty to the sons and daughters of air
and fire.'

"It must be said he had neglected nothing to attract the eyes of Sylphs and Salamanders in forming Adam and Eve. He had modelled the woman in form of an amphora, with a harmony of curved lines quite sufficient to make him recognised as the prince of geometers, and he succeeded in amending the coarseness of the material by the magnificent charm of the form. For modelling Adam he made use of a less caressing, but more energetic, hand, forming his body with such order, and in such perfect proportions, that, applied later by the Greeks to their architecture, those same ordinances and measures made the beauty of the temples.

"You see, my son, that Jehovah applied his best means to render his creatures worthy of the aerial kisses he expected for them. I shall not insist on the care he took with a view of making these unions prolific. The harmony between the sexes is an ample proof of his wisdom in this regard. And surely at the outset he had reason to congratulate himself on his shrewdness and ability.

"I have said the Sylphs and Salamanders looked on Adam and Eve with that curiosity, sympathy and tenderness which are the first ingredients of love. They approached them, and fell into the clever traps Jehovah had disposed and spread intentionally in the body and
"The first man and the first woman enjoyed during centuries the delicious embraces of the genii of the air, which conserved them in eternal youth.

"Such was their lot, and such could still be ours. Why was it that the parents of the human species, fatigued by celestial luxury, should try to find criminal enjoyments with one another?

"But what could you expect, my son? Kneaded of clay they had a taste for mud. Alas! they became acquainted with one another in the same way as they had known the genii.

"And that was what the demiurge had expressly forbidden them. Afraid, and with reason, that they would produce between them children as clumsy as themselves, terrestrial and heavy, he forbade them, under severest penalties, to approach each other. Such is the sense of Eve's words: 'But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it lest ye die.' For you well understand, my son, that the apple which tempted wretched Eve was not the fruit of an apple-tree; that was an allegory the sense of which I have explained to you. Although imperfect, and sometimes violent and capricious, Jehovah was too intelligent a demiurge to be offended about an apple or a pomegranate. One has to be a bishop or a Capuchin to support such extravagant imaginations. And the proof that the apple was what I said, is that Eve was stricken by a punishment suitable to her
fault. She had not been told 'You will digest laboriously,' but it
was said to her 'You'll give birth in pain'; for logic sake what
connection can be established, I beg of you, between an apple and
difficult confinement? On the other hand, the suffering is correctly
applied if the fault has been such as I showed you.

"That is, my son, the truthful explanation of original sin. It will
teach you your duty, which is, to keep away from women. To follow
this bent is fatal. All children born by those means are imbecile
and miserable."

I was stupefied, and exclaimed:

"But, sir, could children be born in another way?"

"Happily, some are born in another way," was his reply; "a
considerable number by the union of men with genii of the air. And
such are intelligent and beautiful. By such means were born the
giants of whom Hesiod and Moses speak. Thus also Pythagoras was
born, to whose bodily formation his mother, a Salamander, had
contributed a thigh of pure gold. Such also Alexander the Great,
said to have been the son of Olympias and a serpent; Scipio
Africanus, Aristomenes of Messina, Julius Caesar, Porphyry, the
Emperor Julian, who re-established the oath of fire abolished by
Constantine the Apostate, Merlin the enchanter, child of a Sylph and
a nun daughter of Charlemagne; Saint Thomas Aquinas, Paracelsus and,
but recently, M. Van Helmont."

I promised M. d'Asterac, as such were the facts, that I would be willing to lend myself to the friendship of a Salamander, if one were to be found obliging enough to wish for me. He assured me that I should meet not one but a score or more, between whom I should have my free choice. And less by longing for the adventure than to give him pleasure, I asked the philosopher how it is possible to enter into communication with these aerial persons.

"Nothing easier," he replied. "All that's wanted is a glass ball, the use of which I'll explain to you. I have always at home a pretty good number of such balls, and in my study I'll very soon give you all necessary enlightenment. But, for to-day, my son, enough is said of it."

He rose, and walked in the direction of the ferry, where the ferryman waited for us, lying outstretched on his back and snoring at the moon. As soon as we had reached the opposite shore he quickly went on, and was soon lost in the darkness.

CHAPTER XIV

Visit to Mademoiselle Catherine--The Row in the Street and my Dismissal.
A confused sentiment as of a dream remained with me after this long conversation, but the thoughts of Catherine became keener. In despite of the sublimities I had been listening to, I was overcome by a powerful desire to see her, although I had not had any supper. The ideas of philosophy had not sufficiently penetrated me to cause anything like a disgust at that pretty girl. I was resolved to follow my good fortune to its end before becoming the prey of one of those beautiful furies of the air, who do not want any human rival. My only fear was that Catherine, at so late an hour, had become tired of waiting for me. So running along the river bank, and passing the royal bridge at a gallop, I stormed into the Rue du Bac. Within a single minute I had reached the Rue de Grenelle, where I heard shouting mixed up with the clashing of swords. The noise came out of the very house Catherine had described to me. In front of it, on the pavement, shadows and lanterns were visible, and voices to be heard.

"Help, Jesus! I'm being murdered!... fall on the Capuchin! Forward!
Spike him!... Jesus, Mary, help me!... Look on the pretty favourite lover! On him! On him! Spike him, rascals, spike him hard!"

The windows of the adjoining houses were opened, heads in night-caps appeared.

Suddenly all this noise and bustle passed before me like a hunt in
the forest, and I recognised Friar Ange running away at such a speed
that his sandals hammered on his behind, while three long devils of
lackeys, armed like Swiss guards, followed him closely, larding him
with the points of their javelins. Their master, a young gentleman,
thick-set and ruddy-faced, continued to encourage them by voice and
gesture, just as he would have done with dogs:

"Fall on! Fall on! Spike! The beast is tough!"

As he came close to me, I said:

"Oh! sir, have you no pity?"

"Sir," he replied, "it's easily seen that yonder Capuchin has not
coured your mistress, and you have not surprised madam, whom you
see here, in the arms of this stinking beast. One cannot say
anything about her financier, because one has manners. But a
Capuchin cannot be borne. Burn the brazen-faced hussy!"

And he showed me Catherine under the doorway, clad in nothing but a
chemise, her eyes glistening with tears, wringing her hands, more
beautiful than ever, and murmuring in a dying voice, which cut deep
into my soul:

"Don't kill him! It's Friar Ange, the little friar!"
The rascally lackeys returned, announcing that they had given up the pursuit at the appearance of the watch, but not without driving half a finger deep their pikes in the holy man's behind. The night-caps vanished from the windows, which were closed again, and whilst the young nobleman talked to his followers, I went up to Catherine, whose tears began to dry in the pretty folds of her smile. She said to me:

"The poor friar is safe, but I trembled for him. Men are terrible. When they love you they will not listen to anything."

"Catherine," I said, with no slight grudge, "did you make me come here for no other purpose than to listen to the quarrels of your friends? Alas! I have no right to take part in them."

"You would have had, M. Jacques," she said, "you should have had, if you had wanted."

"But," I continued, "you are the most courted lady in Paris. You never mentioned yonder young gentleman."

"I had no occasion to think of him. He came quite unexpectedly."
"And he surprised you with Friar Ange?"

"He fancied he saw things which did not occur. He is hot-headed and does not want to listen to any reason."

The half-opened chemise disclosed under transparent laces a breast swollen like a beautiful fruit and adorned like a budding rose. I took her in my arms and covered her bosom with kisses.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, "in the street! Before M. d'Anquetil, who sees us."

"Who is M. d'Anquetil?"

"Pardi! he is the murderer of Friar Ange. Who else do you fancy he may be?"

"True, Catherine, no others are wanted. Your friends surround you in sufficient numbers."

"M. Jacques, do not insult me, if you please."

"I do not insult you, Catherine. I acknowledge your charms, to which I should like to render the same homage that others do."
"M. Jacques, what you have now said smells odiously of the cookshop, of that old codger who is your father."

"Not so very long ago, Mam'selle Catherine, you were mighty glad to smell its cooking-stove."

"Fie! the villain! the mean rascal! He outrages a woman!"

And now she began to squeak and squeal, and M d'Anquetil left his servants, came up to us, and pushed her into the house, calling her a cheat and a rake, went into the passage behind her, and slammed the door in my face.

CHAPTER XV

In the Library with M. Jerome Coignard--A Conversation on Morals-- Taken to M. d'Asterac's Study--Salamanders again--The Solar Powder-- A Visit and its Consequences.

The thought of Catherine occupied my mind all the week following that vexatious adventure. Her image glittered on the leaves of the folios over which I bent in the library, close to my dear tutor; so much so that Plotinus, Olympiodorus, Fabricius, Vossius spoke of
nothing else to me than a tiny damsel in a lace chemise. These visions rendered me lazy. But, indulgent to others, as to himself, M. Jerome Coignard had a kind smile for my trouble and distraction.

"Jacques Tournebroche," he said to me, one day, "are you not struck by the variations in morals during the course of the centuries? The books in this admirable Asteracian collection witness to the uncertainties of mankind on this subject. If I reflect upon it, my son, it is to put into your mind that solid and salutary idea that no good morals are to be found outside religion, and that the maxims of the philosophers, who pretend to institute a natural morality, are nothing but whims and babblings of foolish trash. The rationality of good morals is not to be found in nature, which in itself is indifferent, ignorant of good or evil. It is in the divine word, which is not to be trespassed against without after regret. The laws of humanity are based on utility, and that can only be an apparent and illusory utility, for nobody knows naturally what is useful to mankind, nor what is really appropriate to them. And we must not forget that our habits contain a good moiety of articles which are of prejudice alone. Upheld by the menace of chastisement, human laws may be eluded by cunning and dissimulation. Every man capable of reflection stands above them. Really they are nothing but booby traps.

"It is not the same thing, my boy, with laws divine. They are indefeasible, unavoidable and lasting. Their absurdity is in appearance only, and hides an inconceivable wisdom. If they wound
our reason, it is because they are superior to it, and agree with
the true issues of mankind, and not with the visible ends. It is
useful to observe them when one has the good luck to know them. Yet
I find no difficulty in confessing that the observance of those
laws, contained in the Decalogue and in the commandments of the
Church, is difficult at most times, even impossible without grace,
and that sometimes has to be waited for, because it is a duty to
hope. And therefore we are all miserable sinners.

"And that is where the dispositions of the Christian religion must
be admired, which founds salvation principally on repentance. It
must not be overlooked, my boy, that the greatest saints are
penitents, and, as repentance is proportioned to the sin, it is in
the greatest sinners that the material is found for the greatest
saints. I could illustrate this doctrine with scores of admirable
examples. But I have said enough to make you feel that the raw
material of sanctity is concupiscence, incontinencies, all
impurities of flesh and mind. After having collected the raw
material nothing signifies but to fashion it according to theologic
art and to model, so to say, a figure of penitence, which is a
matter of a few years, a few days, sometimes of a single moment
only, as is to be seen in the case of a perfect contrition. Jacques
Tournebroche, if you listen well to my sayings, you will not consume
yourself in miserable cares to become an honest man in a worldly
sense, and you'll exclusively study to satisfy divine justice."

I could not help feeling the elevated wisdom enshrined in the maxims
of my dear, good tutor; I was only afraid that these morals, should they be exercised without discrimination, would carry man to a disorderly life. I unfolded my doubts to M. Jerome Coignard, who reassured me in the following terms:

"Jacobus Tournebroche, you do not take note of what I have just expressly told you, to wit, that what you call disorder is only such in the opinion of laymen and judges in law--ordinary and ecclesiastical--and in its bearing on human laws, which are arbitrary and transitory, and, in a word, to follow these laws is the act of a silly soul. A sensible man does not pride himself on gaol.

"He is uneasy about his salvation, and does not think himself dishonoured by going to heaven by indirect ways as followed by the profession by which Jeannette, the hurdy-gurdy player you know, copious penitence; and it is extremely probable that, after having lived in indifferent and banal chastity, she would not, at this very moment speak of her, be playing the psaltery before the tabernacle where the Holy of Holies reposes in his glory. Do you call disorder, so fine a regulation of a predestinated life? Certainly not! Leave such mean ways of speech to the Superintendent of Police, who after his death will hardly find the smallest place behind the unfortunates whom now he carries ignominiously to the spittel. Beyond the loss of the soul and eternal damnation there can be no
other disorders, crimes or evils whatsoever in this perishable world, where one and all is to be ruled and adjusted with regard to a divine world. Confess, Tournebroche, my boy, that acts the most reprehensible in the opinion of men can lead to a good end, and do not try to reconcile the justice of men with the justice of God, which alone is just, not in our sense but with finality. And now, my boy, you’ll greatly oblige me by looking into Vossius for the signification of five or six rather obscure words which the Panopolitan employs, and wherewith one has to do battle in the darkness of that insidious manner which astonished even the willing heart of Ajax, as reported by Homer, prince of poets and historians. These ancient alchemists had a tough style. Manilius, may it not displease M. d’Asterac, writes on the same subjects with more elegance."

Hardly had my tutor said these last words when a shadow arose between him and myself. It was that of M. d’Asterac, or rather it was M. d’Asterac himself, thin and black like a shadow.

It may be that he had not heard that talk, maybe he disdained it, for certainly he did not show any kind of resentment. On the contrary, he congratulated M. Jerome Coignard on his zeal and knowledge, and further said that he relied on his enlightenment for the achievement of the greatest work that man had ever attempted. And turning to me he said:
"Be so good as to come for a moment to my study, where I intend to make known to you a secret of consequence."

I went with him to the same room where he had first received us, my tutor and myself, on the day we entered his service. I found there, exactly as on that occasion, ranged along the walls, the ancient Egyptians with golden faces. A glass globe of the size of a pumpkin stood on a table. M. d'Asterac sank on a sofa, and signed to me to take a seat near him, and having twice or thrice passed a hand covered with jewels and amulets across his forehead said:

"My son, I do not wish to injure you by believing that, after our conversation on the Isle of Swans, you still doubt of the existence of Sylphs and Salamanders, who are as real as men and perhaps more so, if one measures reality by the duration of the appearances by which it is displayed, their existence being very much longer than ours. Salamanders range from century to century in unalterable youth; some of them have seen Noah, Moses and Pythagoras. The wealth of their recollections and the freshness of their memory render their conversation attractive to the utmost. It has been pretended that they gain immortality in the arms of men, and that the hope of never dying led them into the beds of the philosophers, But those are fables unfit to seduce a reflecting mind. All union of sexes, far from ensuring immortality to lovers, is a sign of death, and we could not know love were we to live indefinitely. It could not be otherwise with the Salamanders, who look in the arms of the wise for nothing else but for one single kind of immortality--that is, of the
race. It is also the only one which can be reasonably expected. And, much as I promise myself to prolong human life in a notable manner--that is, to extend it over at least five or six centuries--I have never flattered myself to assure it perpetuity. It would be insane to want to go against the established rules of nature. Therefore, my son, reject as a vain fable the idea of immortality to be sucked in with a kiss. It is to the shame of more than one of the cabalists to have ever conceived such an idea. But for all that it is quite evident that Salamanders are inclined to man's love. You'll soon experience it yourself. I have sufficiently prepared you for a visit from them, and as, since the night of your initiation, you have not had any impure intercourse with a woman you will obtain the reward of your continency."

My natural candidness suffered by receiving praise which I had merited against my own will, and I wished to confess to M. d'Asterac my guilty thoughts. But he did not give me time to do so, and continued with vivacity:

"Nothing now remains for me, my son, but to give you the key which opens the empire of the genii. That is what I am going to do at once."

Rising he put a hand on the globe which covered one half of the table.
"This globe," he said, "is full of a solar powder which escapes being visible to you by its own purity. It is much too delicate to be seen by means of the coarse senses of men. So comes it, my son, that the finest parts of the universe are concealed from our sight and reveal themselves only to the learned, provided with apparatus proper for this discovery. The rivers and the aerial landscapes, for example, remain invisible, even as their aspect is a thousand times richer and more variegated than the most beautiful terrestrial landscape.

"Know, then, that in this bowl is a solar powder superlatively proper to exalt the fire we have within us. The effect of this exaltation is imminent. It consists of a subtlety of the senses allowing us to see and touch the aerial figures floating around us. As soon as you have broken the seal which locks the aperture of this globe, and inhaled the escaping solar powder, you will in this room discover one or more creatures resembling women by the system of curved outlines forming their bodies, but much more beautiful than was ever any woman, and who are in fact Salamanders. No doubt the one I saw last year in your father's cookshop will be the first one to appear here to you, as she has a liking for you, and I strongly counsel you to hasten to comply with her wishes. And now make yourself easy in that arm-chair, open the globe, and gently inhale the contents. Very soon you will see all I have announced to you realised, point by point. I leave you. Good-bye."
And he disappeared in a manner which was strangely sudden. I remained alone before that glass globe, hesitating to unlock it, afraid lest some stupefying exhalation should escape from it. I thought that perhaps M. d'Asterac had put in it, as an artifice, some of those vapours which benumb those who inhale them and make them dream of Salamanders. I was still not enough of a philosopher to be desirous of becoming happy by such means. Possibly, I said to myself, such vapours predispose to madness; and finally I became defiant enough to think of going to the library to ask advice of M. Jerome Coignard. But I soon became aware that such would be a needless trouble; as soon as I began to speak to him of solar powder and aerial genii he would start: "Jacques Tournbroche, remember, my boy, that you must never put faith in absurdities, but bring home to your reason all matters except those of our holy religion. Stuff and nonsense all these globes and powders, with all the other follies of the cabala and the spagyric art."

I imagined I could hear him talk like that in the interval between two pinches of snuff, and I really did not know what to reply to such a Christian speech. On the other hand, I thought in advance how puzzled I should be to reply to M. d'Asterac when he inquired of me after news of the Salamander. What could I say? How was I to avow my reserve and my abstention without betraying my defiance and fear? And after all, without being aware of it, I was curious to try the adventure. I am not credulous. On the contrary I am marvellously inclined to doubt, and by this inclination to brave common-sense, as well as evidence and everything else. Of the strangest things that
may be told me, I say to myself, "Why not?" This "Why not?" wronged my natural intelligence in sight of that globe. This "Why not?"
pushed me towards credulity, and it may be interesting to remark, on this occasion, to believe in nothing means to believe in everything, and that the mind is not to be kept too free and too vacant, for fear that commodities of extravagant form and weight should enter by a loophole, commodities of a kind which could not find room in minds reasonably and tolerably well furnished with belief. And while, with my hand on the wax seal, I remembered what my mother had narrated to me of the magic bottle, my "Why not?" whispered to me that perhaps, after all, aerial fairies may be visible through the dust of the sun. But as soon as this idea, having entered into my mind, began to become easy therein, I found it to be odd, absurd and grotesque. Ideas, when they impose themselves, very soon become impudent. But few are apt to be better than pleasant passers-by; and, decidedly, this very one had somehow an air of madness. During the time I asked myself, "Shall I open it?" "Shall I not?" the seal, which I had held continuously between my pressing fingers, broke suddenly in my hand, and the flagon was open.

I waited, I observed, I saw nothing, I felt nothing. And I was disappointed, so much the hope of stepping out of nature is prone and ready to glide into our souls! Nothing! Not even a vague or confused illusion, an uncertain image! What I had foreseen occurred. What a deception! I felt somewhat vexed. Reclined in my arm-chair I vowed to myself, before all the black-haired Egyptians surrounding me, to close my soul better in the future to the lies of the
cabalists; and once more recognised my dear teacher's wisdom and
resolved, like him, to be guided by reason in all matters not
connected with faith, Christian and Catholic. Expecting the visit of
a lady Salamander, what silliness! Is it possible that Salamanders
exist? But what is known about it, and "Why not?"

Since noon the air was heavy, now it became stifling. Rendered
torpid by long days of quietness and seclusion, I felt a weight on
my forehead and eyes. The approach of a thunderstorm lay heavy on
me. I let my arms hang down, and, with head thrown back, and eyes
closed, I glided into a doze full of golden Egyptians and lustful
shadows. In this uncertain state the sense of love alone was alive
in my body, like a fire in the night. How long it had lasted I could
not say, when I was awakened by a sound of light steps and the
rustling of a dress. I opened my eyes and gave a great shout.

A marvellous creature stood before me, clad in black satin, a lace
veil on her head--a dark woman with blue eyes, of resolute features
in a juvenile and pure skin, round cheeks and the mouth animated as
by an invisible kiss. The short skirt let little feet be seen,
dancing, jolly, spirited feet. She held herself upright, but was
round, somewhat thick-set, in her voluptuous perfection. Under the
black velvet ribbon round her throat a little square of her bosom
was visible, brown, but dazzling. She looked on me with an air of
curiosity. I have said already how sleep had rendered me amorous. I
rose quickly, and stepped forward.
"Excuse me," she said, "I am looking for M. d'Asterac."

I said to her:

"Madam, there is no M. d'Asterac. There is you and I. I expected you. You are a Salamander. I have opened the crystal flagon. You have come. You are mine."

I took her in my arms and covered with kisses all places my lips could find uncovered by her dress.

She tore herself away and said:

"You are mad."

"That is quite natural," I replied. "Who in my place could remain sane?"

She lowered her eyes, blushed, and smiled. I fell at her feet.

"As M. d'Asterac is not here," she said, "I had better retire."
"Remain!" I cried, and bolted the door.

"Do you know if he will soon be back?"

"No, madam! He will not return for a long time. He left me alone with the Salamanders. But I want one only, and that one is you."

I lifted her in my arms, carried her to the sofa, fell down on it with her, and smothered her with kisses. I was out of my senses. She screamed, I did not hear her; she pushed me back with outstretched hands; her fingernails scratched me all over, and her vain defence only excited my frenzy. I pressed, enlaced her, she fell back worn out. Her mollified body gave way, she closed her eyes and soon, in my triumph, her beautiful arms, reconciled, pressed me on her bosom.

Released, alas! from that delicious embrace, we looked at one another with surprise. Occupied to get up again decently she put her dress in order and remained silent.

"I love you," I said. "What is your name?"

I did not think her to be a Salamander, and to say the truth never did think so.
"My name is Jahel," she said.

"Yes; but keep quiet. If he should know--"

"What would he do?"

"Oh! nothing to me--nothing. But to you the worst. He dislikes Christians."

"And you?"

"Oh! I? I dislike the Jews."

"Jahel, do you love me a little?"

"It seems to me, sir, that after what we have just now said to one another, your question is an offence."

"True, mademoiselle, but I try to obtain forgiveness for a vivacity, an ardour, which did not take the leisure to consult your sentiments."
"Oh! monsieur, do not make yourself out to be more guilty than you really are. All your violence, and all your passion, would not have served you at all, had I not found you lovable. When I saw you sleeping in that arm-chair, I liked your looks, waited for your awakening—the rest you know."

As reply I gave her a kiss, she gave it me back, what a kiss! I fancied fresh-gathered strawberries melting in my mouth. My desire revived and passionately I pressed her on my heart.

"This time," she said, "be less hasty, and do not think only of yourself. You must not be selfish in love. Young men do not sufficiently know that. But we teach them."

And we immersed ourselves in an unfathomable depth of deliciousness.

After that the divine Jahel asked of me:

"Have you a comb? I look like a witch."

"Jahel," I answered, "I have no comb. I had expected a Salamander. I adore you."
"What, Jahel. Is he still so terrible as that, at the age of one hundred and thirty years, of which he has lived sixty-five inside a pyramid?"

"I see, my friend, that stories of my uncle have been told you and that you were simple enough to believe them. Nobody knows his age; I myself am ignorant of it, but I have always known him as an old man. I know only that he is robust and of uncommon strength. He has been a banker at Lisbon, where he killed a Christian he surprised in the arms of my Aunt Myriam. He took to flight, and carried me with him. Since then he loves me with the tenderness of a mother. He tells me things that are told to little children only, and he cries when he sees me asleep."

"Do you live with him?"

"Yes, in the keeper's lodge, at the other end of the park."

"I know; you reach it by the lane where mandrakes are to be found. How is it that I did not meet you before? By what sinister destiny, living so near you, have I lived without seeing you? But what do I say, lived? Is it to live without knowing you? Are you shut up in yonder lodge?"
"It is true I am somewhat of a recluse, and cannot go for walks as I
me any liberty. He guards me jealously, and, besides six small gold
cups he brought with him from Lisbon, he loves but me on earth. As
he is much more attached to me than he was to my Aunt Myriam, he
would kill you, dear, with a better heart than he killed the
Portuguese. I warn you so, to impress the necessity of discretion on
you, and because it is not a consideration which could stop a brave
gentleman. Are you of a good family, my friend?"

"Alas! no; my father applies himself to a mechanic art, and has a
sort of trade."

"And he is not of any of the professions? Does not belong to the
banking world? No? It is a pity. Well. you're to be loved for
yourself. But speak the truth. Is M. d'Asterac to be back shortly?"

At this name and question a terrible doubt came in my mind. I
suspected the enchanting Jahel to have been sent by the cabalist to
play the part of a Salamander with me. I went so far as to excuse
her in my mind of being the nymph of that old fool. To obtain an
immediate explanation I bluntly and coarsely asked her if she was in
the habit of acting the Salamander in the castle.

"I don't understand you," she replied, looking at me with eyes full
of innocent surprise. "You speak like M. d'Asterac himself, and I
could believe you to be attacked by his mania also, if I had not
proved that you do not share the aversion to women that he has. He
cannot stand any female, and it is a real annoyance to me to see and
speak with him. Nevertheless I was looking for him when I found
you."

The pleasure of being reassured made me again smother her with
kisses.

She managed to let me see that she had black stockings which, over
the knees, were held up by garters ornamented with diamond buckles
and that sight brought back my mind to ideas pleasant to her.
Besides she entreated me on the welcome subject with much ability
and fervour, and I was aware that she became excited over the game
at the very moment I began to get fatigued from it, However I did my
best, and was fortunate enough to spare the beautiful girl a
disgrace which she did not deserve in the least. It seemed to me
that she was not discontented with me. She rose, very quietly, and
said:

"Do you really not know if M. d'Asterac will soon be back? I confess
to you that I came to ask him for a small amount of that pension he
owes to my uncle, a trifle only. I very badly want it just now."

I took my purse out and handed her, with due excuses, the three
crowns it contained. It was all that remained of the too rare
liberalities of the cabalist who, professing to dislike money,
unluckily forgot to pay me my salary.

I asked Mademoiselle Jahel if I should not have the pleasure of
seeing her again.

"You will," she replied.

And we agreed that she should ascend at night-time to my room
whenever she could escape from the lodge, where she was pretty
nearly a prisoner.

"Take care to remember," I told her, "that my room is the fourth on
give access to the lofts, where two or three scullions lodge, and
hundreds of rats."

She assured me that she would be very careful not to make a mistake,
and would scratch on my door and not on any other.

good man, and I am pretty sure that we have in no way to be afraid
of him. I looked at him, through a peephole, on the day he came with
you to visit my uncle! I thought him amiable, though I could not
hear what he said. Principally his nose I thought to be really
ingenious and capable. A man with such a nose ought to be full of
expedients and I very much wish to become acquainted with him. One can but better one's mind by having intercourse with people of high spirit. I am only sorry that my uncle was not pleased with his words no Christian can form an idea."

very learned man, and he has in addition philosophy and kindness. He knows the world, and you are quite right in believing him to be a good counsellor. I regulate myself fully after his advice. But, tell me, did you see me also, on yonder day, at the lodge, through the peephole you spoke of?"

"I saw you," she said to me, "and I will not hide from you that I was pleased. But I must return to my uncle. Good-bye."

The same evening, after supper, M. d'Asterac did not fail to ask me for news of the Salamander. His curiosity troubled me somewhat. My answer was that the meeting had surpassed all my expectations, but that I thought it my duty to confine myself to a discretion due to such kind of adventures.

"That discretion, my son," he said, "is not of so much use in your case as you represent. Salamanders do not want their amours to be kept secret, they are not ashamed of them. One of those nymphs who loves me does not know of a sweeter pastime than to engrave my initials enlaced with hers on the bark of trees, as you can see for
you yourself by examining the stems of five or six Scotch firs, the exquisite tops of which you can see from yonder windows. But have you not, my son, learned that that kind of amour, truly sublime, far from leaving any fatigue behind, lends to the heart a new vigour? I am sure that after what passed to-day you'll employ your night in translating at least sixty pages of Zosimus the Panopolitan."

I confessed that on the contrary I felt very sleepy, which he explained by reason of the astonishment produced by such a first meeting. And so the great man remained convinced that I had had intercourse with a Salamander. I felt some scruples at deceiving him, but I was compelled to do it and, besides, he deceived himself to such a degree that it was hardly possible to add anything to his illusions. So I ascended peacefully to my room, went to bed, and blew the candle out at the end of the most glorious day of my life.

CHAPTER XVI

Jahel kept her word. On the second day after, she scratched at my door. We were a great deal more comfortable in my room than we had been in M. d'Asterac's study, and what had taken place at our first meeting was but child's play in comparison to what love inspired us at our second opportunity. She tore herself out of my arms at the dawn with a thousand oaths to join me again very soon, calling me
her soul, her life, her dearest sweetheart.

That day I rose very late. When I reached the library, my master was already sitting over the papyrus of Zosimus, his pen in one hand, his magnifying-glass in the other, and worthy of the admiration of anyone having due consideration for good literature.

"Jacques Tournebroche," he said to me, "the principal difficulty of this reading consists in not a few of the letters being easily confounded with others, and it is important for the success of the deciphering to make a list of the characters lending themselves to similar mistakes, because by not taking such precautions we are running the risk of employing the wrong terminations, to our eternal shame and just vituperation. I have to-day already committed some ridiculous blunders. It must have been because, since daybreak, my mind has been troubled by what I saw last night, and of which I will give you an account.

"I woke up in the morning twilight, and I felt a longing for a glass of that light white wine about which I made yesterday my compliments to M. d'Asterac, if you remember. For there exists, my son, between white wine and the crowing of the cock a sympathy, doubtless dating from Noah's time, and I am certain that if Saint Peter, in that sacred night he passed in the yard of the great high priest, had had just a mouthful of Moselle claret or only wine of Orleans, he never would have disowned Jesus Christ before the cock crowed a second
time. But in no sense, my boy, have we to regret that bad action; it was of the utmost importance that the prophecies were fulfilled, and if Peter, or Cephas, had not committed on that very night the worst of infamies, he would not now be the greatest saint in heaven, and the corner-stone of our holy Church, to the confusion of honest men according to the world, who have to see the keys of their eternal bliss held by a dastardly knave. O salutary example, which, drawing man out of the fallacious inspirations of human honour, leads him on the road of salvation! O masterly disposition of religion! O divine wisdom, exalting the meek and wretched to the humiliation of the haughty! O marvel! O mystery! To the eternal shame of the Pharisees and lawyers, a common mariner of the Lake of Tiberias, who by his gross cowardice had become the laughing-stock of the kitchen wenches who warmed themselves with him in the courtyard of the high priest, a churl and a dastard, who denied his master and his faith before slatterns certainly not so pretty by far as the chamber-maid of the on his finger and rules over princes and bishops, over kings and emperors, is invested with the right to bind and loose; the most respectable of men, the most honest dame, cannot enter heaven unless he gives them admission.

"But tell me, Tournebroche, my boy, at what part of my narrative had I arrived when I got muddled over that great Saint Peter, the prince of apostles? If I remember well I spoke to you of a glass of white wine I drank at daybreak. I came down to the pantry in my shirt, and took out of a certain cupboard, the key of which I had prudently kept by me the day before, a bottle, the contents of which I emptied
with no little pleasure. Afterwards reascending the stairs I met,
between the second and third flights, a tiny damsel clad as a
pierrot, who descended the steps. She seemed to be mightily afraid,
and fled into the farthest corner of the passage. I followed her,
cought her, took her in my arms, and kissed her in a sudden and
irresistible outbreak of sympathy. Don't blame me, my boy; in my
place you would have done as much, perhaps more. It was a pretty
girl, reminding me of the serving-maid of the bailiff's wife, but
with more vivacity in her looks. She did not dare to scream. She
whispered breathless in my ear: 'Leave me, leave me; you're mad!'
Look here, Tournebroche, I still have the marks of her finger nails
on my wrist. O that I could keep as vivid on my lips the impression
of the kiss she gave me!"

"Be sure, my boy, that in my place you would have had one too--that
is to say, if you, as I did, seized the opportunity. I believe I
told you that I held the damsel in close embrace. She tried to fly
from me, she suppressed her screams, she murmured groans. 'For
heaven's sake, leave me! It begins to be light, a moment more and I
am lost.' Her fears, her fright, her danger--who could be barbarous
enough not to be affected by them? I am not inhuman. I gave her
freedom at the price of a kiss, which she gave me quickly. On my
word, I never enjoyed a more delicious one."

At this part of his tale, my dear tutor, raising his nose to sniff a
pinch of snuff, became aware of my confusion and pain, which he thought to be utter astonishment, and continued to say:

"Jacques Tournebroche, all that remains for me to tell will astonish you still more. To my regret I let the pretty girl go, but curiosity tempted me to follow her. I went down the stairs after her, saw her cross the lobby, go out by a little door opening on the fields in the direction where the park extends farthest, and run up the lane. I followed swiftly. I was quite sure that she would not go far, dressed as a pierrot and wearing a night-cap. She took the path wherein the mandrakes dwell. My curiosity doubled, and I followed at a window in his dressing-gown and monstrous headgear, like one of those figures who show themselves at the stroke of noon, outside those old clocks more Gothic and more ridiculous than the churches wherein they are kept, for the enjoyment of the yokels and the profit of the beadle.

"He discovered me, hidden as I was behind the foliage, at the very moment when that pretty girl, fleet as Galatea, slipped into the lodge. It looked as if I had followed her up in the manner, way and habit of those satyrs of which we have spoken of late when conferring on the finest passages of Ovid. My dress could but add to such resemblance--did I tell you, my boy, that I wore only a shirt? Seeing me, Mosaide's eyes vomited fire. Out of his dirty yellow greatcoat he drew a neat little stiletto and shook it through the window with an arm in no way weighed down by age. He roared
bilingual curses on me. Yes, Tournebroche, my grammatical knowledge authorises me to say that his curses were bilingual, that Spanish, or rather Portuguese, was mixed in them with Hebrew. I went into a rage at not being able to catch their exact sense, as I do not know these languages, although I can recognise them by certain sounds which are frequent when they are spoken. It is very possible that he accused me of wanting to corrupt that girl, whom I believe to be his niece Jahel, whom, as you will remember, M. d'Asterac has repeatedly mentioned to us. As such his invectives were rather flattering to me, as I have become, my boy, by the progress of age and the fatigues of an agitated life, so that I cannot aspire any longer to the love of juvenile maidens. Alas! should I become a bishop that is a dish of which I shall never taste. I am sorry for it. But it is no good to be closely attached to the perishable things of this world, brandishing his stiletto, squalled out his hoarse sounds mingled with sharp yelpings in such a manner that I felt insulted, as well as vituperated, in a chant or song. And without flattering myself, my dear boy, I can say that I have been treated as a rake and a seducer in a tune solemn and ceremonious. When yonder Mosaide brought his imprecations to an end, I endeavoured to let him have my reply in two languages also. I replied in a mixture of Latin and French that he was a manslayer and a sacrilegist, who murdered tiny babes and stabbed sacred hosts. The fresh morning wind blowing between my naked legs reminded me that I wore a shirt only. I felt somewhat embarrassed, because it is evident, my boy, that a man without breeches is in a state highly inconvenient to speak of sacred truth, to confound error and to prevent crime. Withal I gave
him a prodigious sketch of his outrages, and I threatened him with
the terrors of justice both human and divine."

"What do you say, my good master?" I nearly screamed, "yonder
hosts?"

besides cannot know it. But those crimes are his, they are of his
race, and I can charge him with them without slandering him. I place
on that miscreant's back a long array of flagitious ancestors. You
cannot have remained ignorant of all that is said of the Jews and of
their abominable rites. You may see in an ancient cosmography of
Munster in Westphalia a drawing representing some Jews mutilating a
child; they are recognisable by the wheel or round of cloth they
wear on their clothes in sign of infamy. For all that I do not
believe these misdeeds to be of their daily and domestic use. I also
doubt that the majority of Israelites are inclined to outrage the
holy wafers. To accuse them of doing so would be to believe that
they are as deeply convinced of the divinity of our Lord Jesus
Christ as we are ourselves. Sacrilege without faith is unbelievable,
and the Jew who stabbed a host rendered by that very deed a sincere
homage to the truth of transubstantiation. These are fables, my boy,
to be left to the ignorant and, if I throw them in the face of that

than by the impressive suggestions of resentment and anger."

"Oh! sir," I said, "you might have contented yourself with
reproaching him for the murder of the Portuguese he killed in the 
frenzy of his jealousy; that certainly was a murder."

He is dangerous, my dear Tournebroche. You'll have to come to the 
same conclusion that I have arrived at myself about this adventure. 
It is quite certain that his niece is the mistress of M. d'Asterac, 
whose room she doubtless had just left when I met her on the stairs.

"I am too religious a man not to be sorry that so amiable a person 
comes of the Jewish race, who crucified Jesus Christ. Alas! do not 
doubt, my dear boy, that villain Mordecai is the uncle of an Esther 
who does not need to macerate six months in myrrh to become worthy 
of the bed of a king. That old spagyric raven is not the man fit for 
such a beauty, and I am rather inclined to take an interest in her 
myself.

she show herself once only at the promenade or the theatre, she 
would have all the world at her feet on the following morning. Don't 
you wish to see her, Tournebroche?"

I replied that I wished it very much. And then both of us drove 
deeper in our Greek.

CHAPTER XVII
Outside Mademoiselle Catherine's House--We are invited in by M. d'Anquetil--The Supper--The Visit of the Owner and the horrible Consequences.

That evening my tutor and I happened to be in the Rue du Bac, and as it was rather warm M. Jerome Coignard said to me:

"Jacques Tournebroche, my son, would it be agreeable to you to turn to the left, into the Rue de Grenelle, in quest of a tavern--that's to say, to some place where we could get a pot of wine for two sous? I am rather short of cash, my boy, and strongly suppose you to be no better off. M. d'Asterac, who possibly can make gold, does not give any to his secretaries and servants, as we well know, to our cost, you and I. He leaves us in a lamentable state. I have never a penny in my pocket, and it will become necessary to remedy that evil by industry and artifice. It is a fine thing to bear poverty with an even mind, like Epictetus of glorious memory. But it is an exercise I am tired of and which has become tedious by habit. I feel it is high time for a change of virtue, and to insinuate myself into the possession of wealth without being possessed by it, which certainly is the noblest state to be reached by the soul of a philosopher. I shall feel myself obliged, very soon, to earn profits of some kind to show that my sagacity has not failed me during my prosperity. I am in search of the means to reach such an issue; my mind is occupied by it, Tournebroche."
And as my dear tutor spoke with a noble distinction of that matter, we came near the pretty dwelling wherein M. de la Gueritude had lodged Mademoiselle Catherine. "You'll recognise it, she had said to me, by the roses on the balcony." There was not light enough to see the roses, but I fancied I could smell them. Advancing a few yards I saw her at the window watering flowers. She recognised me, laughed, and threw me kisses with her chubby little hand. Upon that a hand passing through the open window slapped her cheek. In her surprise she let the water jug slip out of her hand, it fell down into the street, at a hair's breadth from my tutor's head. The slapped beauty disappeared from the window, and the ear-boxer appeared; he leaned out and shouted:

"Thank God, sir, you are not the Capuchin. I cannot stand seeing my mistress throw kisses to that stinking beast, who continually prowls under this window. For once I have not to blush at her choice. You look quite an honest man, and I believe I have seen you before. Do me the honour to come up. Within a supper is prepared. You'll do me had a pot of water thrown over his head, and shakes himself like a wetted dog. After supper we'll have a game of cards, and at daybreak we'll go hence to cut one another's throats. But that will be purely and simply an act of civility and only to do you honour, sir, for, in truth, that girl is not worth the thrust of a sword. She is a hussy. I'll never see her any more."
I recognised in the speaker, the Monsieur d'Anquetil whom I had seen a short time ago excite his followers so vehemently to spike Friar Ange. Now he spoke with courtesy and treated me as a gentleman. I understood all the favour he conferred on me by his consent to cut my throat. Nor was my dear tutor less sensible of so much urbanity, and after having shaken himself he said to me:

"Jacques Tournebroche, my son, we cannot say nay to such a gracious invitation."

Already two lackeys had come down bearing torches. They led us to a room where a collation had been prepared on a table lit up by wax candles burning in two silver candelabra. M. d'Anquetil invited us to be seated, and my good master tied his napkin round his throat. He already had a thrush on his fork when heart-rending sobs were to be heard.

"Don't take any notice of yonder noise," said M. d'Anquetil, "it's only Catherine, whom I have locked in that room."

"Ah! sir; you must forgive her," said my kind-hearted tutor, looking sadly on the gold-brown toasted little bird on his fork. "The pleasantest meat tastes bitter when seasoned with tears and moans. Could you have the heart to let a woman cry? Reprieve this one, I beg of you! Is she then so blamable for having thrown a kiss to my
young pupil, who was her neighbour and companion in the days of their common mediocrity, at a time when this pretty girl's charms were only famous under the vine arbour of the _Little Bacchus_? It was but an innocent action, as much so as a human, and particularly a woman's, action can ever be innocent, and altogether free of the original stain. Allow me also to say, sir, that jealousy is a Gothic sentiment, a sad reminder of barbaric customs, which has no business to survive in a delicate, well-born soul."

presume me to be jealous? I am not! But I cannot stand a woman mocking me."

"We are playthings of the winds," said my tutor, and sighed.

"Everything laughs at us, the sky, the stars, rain and shadow, zephyr and light and woman. Let Catherine sup with us. She is pretty and will enliven our table. Whatever she may have done, that kiss and the rest, do not render her the less pleasant to look at. The infidelities of women do not spoil their beauty. Nature, pleased to adorn them, is indifferent to their faults; follow her, and forgive Catherine."

I seconded my tutor's entreaties, and M. d'Anquetil consented to free the prisoner. He went to the door of the room from whence the cries came, unlocked it, and called Catherine, whose only reply was to redouble her wailing.
"Gentlemen," her lover said to us, "there she is lying flat on her belly, her head plunged in the pillows, and at every sob raising her rump ridiculously. Look at that. It is for such we take so much trouble and commit so many absurdities! Catherine, come to supper."

But Catherine did not move, and continued to cry. He pulled her by the arm, by the waist. She resisted. He became more pressing, and said caressingly:

"Come, darling, get up."

But she was stubborn, would not change place, and stuck there, holding to pillows and mattress.

At last her lover lost patience, swore, and shouted rudely:

"Get up, slut!"

At once she got up, and, smiling amid her tears, took his arm and came with him to the dining-room, looking the very picture of a happy victim.

She sat down between M. d'Anquetil and me, her head inclined on the
shoulder of her lover the while her foot felt for mine under the
table.

"Gentlemen," said our host, "forgive my vivacity, an impulse I
cannot regret, because it gives me the honour to entertain you at
this place. To say the truth, I cannot endure all the whims of this
pretty girl, and I have been very suspicious since I surprised her
with her Capuchin."

"My dear friend," Catherine said, pressing at the same time her foot
on mine, "your jealousy goes astray. You should know that my only
liking is for M. Jacques."

"She jests," said M. d'Anquetil.

"Do not doubt of it," said I. "It is quite evident that she loves
you, and you alone."

"Without flattering myself," he replied, "I have somehow attracted
her attachment. But she is coquettish and fickle."

"Give me something to drink," said the abbe.

M. d'Anquetil passed him the demijohn and exclaimed:
women love Capuchins."

M. Coignard wiped his lips and said:

"The reason is that Capuchins love humbly, and never refuse anything. Another reason is that neither reflection nor courtesy weakens their natural instincts. Sir, yours is a generous wine."

"You do me too much honour," replied M. d'Anquetil. "It is M. de la bottles."

"Nothing is more equitable," said my tutor. "I see, with pleasure, that you rise above prejudices."

"Do not praise me, abbe, more than I deserve. My birth renders easy to me what may be difficult for the vulgar. A commoner is compelled to have some restraint in all his doings. He is tied down to rigid probity; but a gentleman enjoys the honour of fighting for his king and his pleasure, and does not need to encumber himself with foolish trifles. I have seen active service under M. de Villars, and in the War of Succession, and have also run the risk of being killed without any reason in the battle of Parma. The least you can do is to leave me free to lick my servants, to balk my creditors, and
take, if it please me, the wives of my friends--likewise their
mistresses."

"You speak nobly," said my good master, "and you are careful to
maintain the prerogatives of the nobility."

"I have not," replied M. d'Anquetil, "those scruples which
intimidate the crowd of ordinary men, and which I consider good only
to stop the timorous and restrain the wretched."

"Well spoken!" said my tutor.

"I do not believe in virtue," replied the other.

"You're right," said my master again. "With his quite peculiar
shape, the human animal could not be virtuous without being somewhat
deformed. Look, for an example, on this pretty girl supping with us;
on her beautiful bosom, her marvellously rounded form, and the rest.
In what part of her enchanting body could she lodge a grain of
virtue? There is no room for it; everything is so firm, so juicy,
solid, and plump! Virtue, like the raven, nests in ruins. Her
dwellings are the cavities and wrinkles of the human body. I myself,
sir, who, since my childhood, have meditated over the austere
principles of religion and philosophy, could not insinuate into
myself a minimum of virtue otherwise than by means of constitutional
flaws produced by sufferings and age. And ever more I absorbed less virtue than pride. In doing so I got into the habit of addressing to the Divine Creator of this world the following prayer: 'My Lord, preserve me from virtue if it is to lead me from godliness.' Ah! godliness; this it is possible and necessary to attain. That is our decent ending. May we reach it some day! In the meantime, give me something to drink."

"I'll confess," said M. d'Anquetil, "that I do not believe in a God."

believe in God, and all the truths of our holy religion."

M. d'Anquetil protested.

really are. As I have said, I do not believe either in God or devil, and I never go to Mass--the king's Mass alone excepted. The sermons of the priests are stories for old women, bearable, perhaps, in such woman, distribute the holy bread at the Church of Saint Jacques du Haut Pas. In those times there may have been religion; to-day there is none, thank God!"

"By all the Saints and all the devils, don't speak like that, my friend," exclaimed Catherine. "As sure as that pie stands on this
table God exists! And if you want a proof of it, let me say, that
when, last year, on a certain day, I was in direful distress and
penury, I went, on the advice of Friar Ange, to burn a wax candle in
the Church of the Capuchins, and on the following I met M. de la
furniture it contains, the cellar full of wine, some of which we
enjoy to-night, and sufficient money to live honestly.

"Fie! fie!" said M. d'Anquetil, "the idiot makes God Almighty
interfere in dirty affairs. This shocks and wounds one's feelings,
even if one is an atheist."

"My dear sir," said my good tutor, "it is a great deal better to
compromise God in dirty business, as does that simple-minded girl,
than, as you do, to chase Him out of the world He has created. If He
has not expressly sent that burly contractor to Catherine, His
creature, He at least suffered her to meet him. We are ignorant of
His ways, and what this simpleton says contains more truth, maybe
mixed and alloyed with blasphemy, than all the vain words a
reprobate draws out of the emptiness of his heart. Nothing is more
despicable than the libertinism of mind that the youth of our days
make a show of. Your words make me shiver. Am I to reply to them by
proofs out of the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the fathers?
Shall I make you hear God speaking to the patriarchs and to the
prophets: _Si locutus est Abraham et semini ejus in saecula?_
Shall I spread out before you the traditions of the Church? Invoke
against you the authority of both Testaments? Blind you with
Christ's miracles, and His words as miraculous as His deeds? No! I will not arm myself with those holy weapons. I fear too much to pollute them in such a fight, which is not at all solemn. In her prudence the Church warns us not to risk turning edification into a scandal. Therefore I will not speak, sir, of that wherewith I have been fed on the steps of sanctuaries. But, without violating the chaste modesty of my soul, and without exposing to profanation the sacred mysteries, I'll show you God overawing human reason, I'll show you it by the philosophy of pagans, and by the tittle-tattle of ungodly persons. Yes, sir, I'll make you avow that you recognise Him, against your own free will. Much as you want to pretend He does not exist you cannot but agree that, if a certain order prevails in this world, such order is divine--flows out of the spring and fountain of all order."

"I agree," replied M. d'Anquetil, reclining in his armchair and fondling his finely shaped calves.

"Therefore, take care," said my good tutor. "When you say that God does not exist what else are you doing but linking thought, directing reason, and manifesting in your innermost soul, the principle of all thought, and all reason, which is God? Is it possible only to attempt to establish that He is not, without illuminating, by the most paltry reasoning, which still is reasoning, some remains of the harmony He has established in the universe?"
well known in our days that this world is the work of chance, and it
is superfluous to speak of a providence, since natural philosophers
have discovered, by means of their telescopes, that winged frogs are
living on the moon."

"Well, sir," replied my good master, "I am in no way angry that
winged frogs are living on the moon; such kind of marsh-birds are
very worthy inhabitants of a world which has not been sanctified by
the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. True, we only know the minor
part of the universe, and it is quite possible, as M. d'Asterac
says--who is a bit of a fool--that this earth is no more than a spot
of mud in the infinity of worlds. Maybe the astronomer Copernicus
was not altogether dreaming when he taught that, mathematically, the
earth is not the centre of creation. I have also read that an
Italian of the name of Galileo, who died miserably, shared
Copernicus' opinion, and in our days we see little M. de Fontenelle
entertaining the same ideas. But all this is but a vain imagination,
fit only to unhinge weak minds. What does it matter if the physical
world is larger or smaller, of one shape or another? It is quite
sufficient that it can be duly considered only by intelligence and
reason for God to be manifest therein.

"If a wise man's meditations could be of some use to you, sir, I
will inform you how such proof of God's existence, better than the
proof of St. Anselm, and quite independent of that resulting from
Revelation, appeared to me suddenly in unclouded limpidity. It was librarian. The gallery windows opened on a courtyard where, every morning, I saw a kitchen wench clean the saucepans. She was young, tall, sturdy. A slight down, shadowlike, over her lips lent irritating and proud gracefulness to her countenance. Her entangled hair, meagre bosom, and long, naked arms were worthy of an Adonis or a Diana. She was of a boyish beauty. I loved her for it, loved her strong, red hands. All in all that girl evoked in me a longing as rude and brutal as herself. You know how imperious such longings are. I made her understand by sign and word. Without the slightest hesitation she quickly let me know that my longings were not stronger than hers, and appointed the very next night for a meeting, to take place in the loft, where she slept on the hay, by gracious permission of the bishop, whose saucepans she cleaned. Impatiently I waited for the night. When at last her shadow covered the earth I climbed, by means of a ladder, to the loft, where the girl expected me. My first thought was to embrace her, my second to admire the links which brought me into her arms. For, sir, a young ecclesiastic—a kitchen wench—a ladder—a bundle of hay. What a train! What regulation! What a concourse of pre-established harmonies! What a concatenation of cause and effect! What a proof of God's existence! I was strangely struck by it, and mightily glad I am to be able to add this profane demonstration to the reasons furnished by theology, which are, however, amply sufficient."

the girl had a meagre bosom. A woman without breasts is like a bed
without pillows. But don't you know, d'Anquetil, what we might do?"

"Yes," said he, "play a game of ombre, which is played by three."

"If you will," she said. "But, dear, have the pipes brought in.
Nothing is pleasanter than to smoke a pipe of tobacco when drinking
wine."

A lackey brought the cards and pipes, which we lit. Soon the room
played gravely at piquet.

Luck followed my dear tutor up to the moment when M. d'Anquetil,
fancying he saw him for the third time score fifty-five when he had
only made forty points, called him a Greek, a villainous trickster,
a Knight of Transylvania, and threw a bottle at his head, which
broke on the table, flooding it with wine.

another bottle: we are thirsty."

gentleman does not mark points he has not made, and does not cheat
at cards except at the king's card-table, round which all sorts of
people are assembled, to whom one owes nothing. On any other table
adventurer?"
"It is remarkable," said my good tutor, "that you blame at cards or
dice a practice so much commended in the art of war, politics and
trade; in each of these people glorify themselves by correcting the
injuries of fortune. It is not that I do not pique myself on honesty
when playing at cards. Thank God, I always play straight, and you
must have been dreaming, sir, when you fancied I had marked points I
did not make. Had it been otherwise, I would appeal to the example
given by the blessed Bishop of Geneva, who did not scruple to cheat
at cards. But I cannot defend myself against the reflection that at
play men are much more sensitive than in serious business, and that
they employ the whole of their probity at the backgammon board,
where it incommodes them but indifferently, whereas they put it
totally in the background in a battle or a treaty of peace, where
language a book on Stratagems, wherein is shown to what excess
deceit is pushed by the great leaders."

not think I ever shall read him. But like every true gentleman, I
have been to the wars. I have served the king for eighteen months.
It is the noblest of all professions. I'll tell you exactly what war
is. I may tell the secret of it, as nobody is present to listen but
yourself, some bottles, yonder gentleman whom I intend to kill very
shortly, and that girl, who begins to undress herself."

"Yes," said Catherine, "I undress, and will keep only my chemise on,
because I feel too hot."

"Well then," M. d'Anquetil continued, "whatever may be printed of it in the gazettes, war consists, above all things, of stealing the pigs and chickens of peasants. Soldiers in the fields have no other occupation."

"You are right," said M. Coignard, "and in days of yore it was the saying in Gaul that the soldier's best friend was Madame Marauding. But I beg of you not to kill my pupil, Jacques Tournebroche."

"Ouf!" exclaimed Catherine, arranging the lace of her chemise on her bosom. "Now I feel easier."

But my kind-hearted tutor went on:

"Sir, Jacques Tournebroche is very useful to me for the translation, I have undertaken, of Zosimus the Panopolitan. I would give you many thanks not to fight him before the finishing touch has been given to that grand work."

"To the deuce with your Zosimus," said M. d'Anquetil. "To the deuce
would do with his first mistress."

And he sang:

"Pour dresser un jeune courrier
Laire lan laire."

"What's that Zosimus?"

"Zosimus, sir, Zosimus of Panopolis, was a learned Greek, who flourished at Alexandria in the third century of the Christian era, and wrote treatises on the spagyric art."

"Do you fancy it matters to me? Why do you translate it?

"Battons le fer quand il est chaud
Dit-elle, en faisant sonner haut
Laire lan laire."

"Sir," said my dear tutor, "I quite agree with you; there is no practical utility in it, and by it the course of the world will not be changed in the slightest. But making clearer by annotations and comments this treatise, which that Greek compiled for his sister
Catherine interrupted him by singing in a high-pitched voice:

Qu’on fasse duc mon epoux
Lasse de le voir secretairev
Laire lan laire."

And my tutor continued:

"--I contribute to the treasure of knowledge gathered by erudite
men, and bring forward one stone of my own for a monument to true
history, which is a better one than the chronicles of war and
treaties; for, sir, the nobility of man--"

Catherine continued to sing:

"Je sais bien qu'on murmurer
Que Paris nous chansonnera
Mais tant pis pour le sot vulgaire
Laire lan laire."

And my dear tutor went on:
"--is thought. And concerning that, it is not indifferent to know what idea the Egyptians had formed of the nature of metals and the qualities of the primitive substance."

emptied a big glass of wine, while Catherine sang:

Devenir due est toujours beau

Laire lan laire."

abstinence you lose your reason. In Italy, during the War of Succession, I was under the orders of a brigadier who translated Polybius. But he was an idiot. Why translate Zosimus?"

sensuality in it."

"That's something like!" protested M. d'Anquetil. "But in what can M. Tournebroche, who at this moment is caressing my mistress, assist you?"

"With the knowledge of Greek I have given him."
M. d'Anquetil turned round to me and said:

"What, sir, you know Greek! You are not then a gentleman?"

"No, sir," I replied, "I am not. My father is the banner-bearer of the Guild of Parisian Cooks."

"Well, under such conditions it is impossible for me to kill you. I believed you to be a real good tippler, and wished you to become my chaplain as soon as I could set up my own establishment."

However, M. Coignard did drink all that the bottle contained, and Catherine, inclining to me, whispered in my ear:

"Jacques, I feel that I shall never love anyone but you."

These words, spoken by a really fine woman clad in no other wrapper than a chemise, troubled me to the extreme. Catherine ended by fuddling me entirely, by making me drink out of her own glass, an action passing unobserved in the confusion of a supper which had overheated the heads of us all.

M. d'Anquetil knocked off the neck of a bottle on the corner of the
table and filled our bumpers; from this moment on, I cannot give a
reliable account of what was said and done around me. One incident I
remember: Catherine treacherously emptying her glass into her
lover's neck, between the nape and the collar of his coat; and M.
d'Anquetil retorting by pouring the contents of two or three bottles
over the girl. Wearing nothing beyond her chemise, it changed
Catherine into a kind of mythological figure of a humid species like
nymphs and naiads. She cried herself into a rage and twisted in
convulsions.

At that very moment, in the silence of the night, we heard knocks at
the house door. We became suddenly motionless and dumb, like people
bewitched.

The knocks soon redoubled in strength and frequency. M. d'Anquetil
was the first to break the silence by questioning himself aloud,
swearing horribly the while, who the deuce the pesterers could be.
My good tutor, to whom the most ordinary circumstances often
inspired admirable maxims, rose and said with unction and gravity:

"What does it matter whose hand knocks so violently at closed doors
for a vulgar, perhaps ridiculous, reason? Do not let us seek to
know, and consider them as knocking on the door of our hardened and
corrupted souls. At each knock let us say to ourselves: This one is
to give us notice to amend and think on the salvation we neglect in
the turmoil of our pleasures, that other one is to remind us of
eternity. In that way we shall draw the utmost profit out of an incident which, after all, is as paltry as it is frivolous."

sturdiness of their knocks, they'll burst the door open."

And as a fact the knocker resounded like thunder.

"They are robbers," exclaimed the soaked girl. "Jesus! We shall be massacred; it is our chastisement for having sent away the little friar. Many times I have told you. M. d'Anquetil, that misfortune comes to houses from which a Capuchin has been driven."

"Hear the stupid!" replied M. d'Anquetil. "That damned monk makes her believe any imbecility he chooses to dish her up. Thieves would be more polite, or at least more discreet. I rather think it is the watch."

"The watch! Worse and worse," said Catherine.

"Bah!" M. d'Anquetil exclaimed, "we'll lick them."

My dear tutor took the precaution to put one bottle in one of his pockets, and as an equipoise another bottle in the other pocket. The house shook all over from the furious knocks. M. d'Anquetil, whose
military qualities were aroused by the knocker's onslaught, after
reconnoitring, exclaimed:

"Ah! Ah! Ah! Do you know who knocks? It is M. de la Gueritude with
his full-bottomed periwig and two big flunkeys carrying lighted
torches."

"That's not possible," said Catherine, "at this very moment he is in
bed with his old woman."

"Then it is his ghost," said M. d'Anquetil. "And the ghost also
wears his periwig, which is so ridiculous that any self-respecting
spectre would refuse to copy it."

"Do you speak the truth, and not jeer at me?" asked Catherine. "Is

"It's himself, Catherine, if I may believe my own eyes."

"Then I am lost!" exclaimed the poor girl. "Women are indeed
unhappy! They are never left in peace. What will become of me? Would
you not hide, gentlemen, in some of the cupboards?"

"That could be done," said M. Jerome Coignard, "as far as we are
concerned, but how are we to hide all those empty bottles, mostly
smashed, or at least broken necked; the remains of that demijohn M. d'Anquetil threw at me; that tablecloth; those plates, candelabra and mademoiselle's chemise, which in its soaked state is nothing but a transparent veil encircling her beauty?"

"It is true," said Catherine, "yonder idiot has drenched my chemise, and I am catching cold. But listen. Perhaps M. d'Anquetil could hide his brother."

"No good at all," said M. d'Anquetil. "I'll go myself and kindly ask M. de la Gueritude to have supper with us."

We urged him, all of us—my tutor, Catherine and I—to keep quiet; we entreated him, hung on his neck. It was useless. He got hold of a candelabra and descended the stairs. Trembling we followed him. He d'Anquetil had described him, with his periwig, between two flunkeys bearing torches. M. d'Anquetil saluted with the utmost correctness and said:

"Accord us the favour to come in, sir. You'll find some persons as amiable as singular. Tournebroche, to whom Mam'selle Catherine throws kisses from the window, and a priest who believes in God."

Wherewith he bowed respectfully.
M. de la Gueritude was of the dry sort, very tall, and little
inclined to the enjoyment of a joke. That of M. d'Anquetil provoked
him strongly, and his anger rose when he saw my good tutor, one
bottle in hand and two peeping out of his pockets, and by the look
of Catherine with her wet chemise sticking to her body.

"Young man," he said in an icy fit of passion to M. d'Anquetil, "I
have the honour to know your father, of whom I will inquire, not
later than to-morrow, the name of the town to which the king shall
send you to meditate over the shame of your behaviour and
impertinence. That worthy nobleman, to whom I have lent some money I
do not reclaim, can refuse me nothing. And our well-beloved Prince,
who is in precisely the same position as your father, has always a
kindness for me. Consider it a matter done. I have settled, thank
God, others more difficult. Now as to that lady yonder, of whom
neither repentance nor improvement can be expected. I'll say to-
morrow before noon, two words to the Lieutenant of Police, whom I
know to be well disposed, to send her to the spittel. I have nothing
else to say to you. This house is my property, I have paid for it
and I intend to enter when I like." Then, turning to his flunkeys,
and pointing out my tutor and myself with his walking stick, he
said:

"Throw these two drunkards out."
used to say that he owed his gentleness to the vicissitudes of life; chance having treated him as the sea treats the pebbles— that is, polishing them by means of the rolling of flood and ebb. He could easily stand insults, as much by Christian spirit as by philosophy. But what helped him best thereto was his deep-rooted contempt of mankind, not excepting himself. However, for once he lost all measure and forgot all prudence.

"Hold your tongue, vile publican," he shouted and brandished a bottle like a crowbar. "If yonder rascals dare to approach me I'll smash their heads, to teach them respect for my cloth, which proves in an ample way my sacred calling."

In the faint glimmer of the torches, shiny from sweat, his eyes starting out of their sockets, his coat unbuttoned, and his big belly half out of his breeches, he looked a fellow not easy to be got rid of. The lackeys hesitated.

this bag of wine! Can't you see that all you have to do is to push him in the gutter, where he'll remain till the scavengers throw him into the dustcart? I would throw him out myself were I not afraid to pollute my clothes."

My good tutor flew into a passion, and shouted in a voice worthy to
"You odious money-monger, infamous partisan, barbarous evildoer, you pretend this house to be yours? So that everyone may know it belongs to you, inscribe on the door the gospel word _Aceldema_, which in our language means Bloodmoney. And then we'll let the master enter his dwelling. Thief, robber, murderer, write with the piece of charcoal I throw in your face, write with your own filthy hand, on the floor, your title deed. Bloodmoney of the widow and orphans, bloodmoney of the just. _Aceldema_. If not, out with you, man of quantities! We'll remain."

M. de la Gueritude had never in his life heard anything of this sort, and thought he had to deal with a madman, as one might easily suppose, and, more for defence than attack, he raised his big stick. My good tutor, out of his senses, threw a bottle at the head of the contractor, who fell headlong on the floor, howling, "He has killed me!" And as he was swimming in red wine he really looked as though murdered. Both the flunkeys wanted to throw themselves on the murderer, and one of them, a burly fellow, tried to grasp him, when M. Coignard gave the fellow such a butt that he rolled in the stream beside the financier.

Unluckily he rose quickly, and, arming himself with a still burning torch, jumped into the passage, where bad luck awaited him. My good master was no longer there; he had taken to his heels. But M.
d'Anquetil was still there with Catherine, and he it was who received the burning torch on his forehead, an outrage he could not stand. He drew his sword, and drove it to the hilt in the unlucky knave's stomach, teaching him, at his own expense, how fatal it may be to attack a gentleman. Now M. Coignard had not got twenty yards away from the house when the other lackey, a tall fellow, with the limbs of a daddy-longlegs, ran after him, shouting for the guard.

could see him, at the corner of the Rue Saint Guillaume, extending his arms to catch M. Coignard by the collar of his gown. But my dear tutor, who had more than one trick, veering abruptly, got behind the fellow, tripped him up, and sent him on to a stone post, where he got his head broken. It was done before M. d'Anquetil and I, running Coignard in this pressing danger.

"Abbe," said M. d'Anquetil, "give me your hand. You're a gallant man."

"I really cannot help thinking," my good master replied, "that I have been somewhat murderously inclined; but I am not cruel enough to be proud of it. I am quite satisfied so long as I am not reproached too vehemently. Such violence does not lie in my habits, and as you can see, sir, I am better fitted to lecture from the chair of a college on belles-lettres than I am to fight with lackeys at the corner of a street."
"Oh!" replied M. d'Anquetil, "that's not the worst of the whole business. I fully believe you have knocked the Farmer-general on the head."

"As true as that I have perforated with my sword yonder scoundrel's tripes."

"Under such circumstances we ought to ask pardon of God, to whom alone we are responsible for the blood shed by us, and secondly to hasten to the nearest fountain, there to wash ourselves, because I perceive that my nose is bleeding."

dying in the gutter has cut my forehead. What an impertinence!"

At the place where the Rue de Bac loses itself in the fields, we fortunately found along the wall of a hospital a little bronze Triton, shooting a spirt of water into a stone tub. We stopped to wash and drink, for our throats were dry.
"What have we done," said my master, "and how could I have lost my temper, usually so peaceable? True men must not be judged by their deeds, which depend on circumstances, but rather, on the example of God our Father, by their secret thoughts and their deepest intentions."

"And Catherine," I asked, "what has become of her through this horrible adventure?"

"I left her," was M. d'Anquetil's answer, "breathing into the mouth of her financier, to revive him. But she had better save her breath. I know La Gueritude. He is pitiless. He'll send her to the spittle, perhaps to America. I am sorry for her. She was a fine girl. I did not love her, but she was mad after me. And, an extraordinary state of things, I am now without a mistress."

"Don't bother," said my good tutor. "You'll soon find another, not different, or hardly differing in essentials, from her. What you look for in a woman, as it appears to me, is common to all females."

"It is clear," said M. d'Anquetil, "that we are in danger: I of Tournebroche, who certainly has not killed anybody, of being hanged."

"That's but too true," said my good master. "We have to look out for
safety. Perhaps it will be necessary to leave Paris, where, no
doubt, we shall be wanted; and even to fly to Holland. Alas! I
foresee that there I shall write lampoons for ballet girls with that
same hand which has been employed to annotate right amply the
alchemistic treatises of Zosimus the Panopolitan."

hide us at his country seat for any length of time. He lives within
four miles of Lyons, in a country horrid and wild, where nothing is
to be seen but poplars, grass and woods. There we must go. There
we'll wait till the storm is over. We'll pass the time hunting and
shooting. But we must at once find a post-chaise or, better still, a
travelling coach."

well as all sorts of vehicles. I made the acquaintance of the
landlord at the time I was secretary to Madame de Saint Ernest. He
liked to oblige people of quality. I am not quite sure if he is
still alive, but he ought to have a son like himself. Have you
money?"

"I have with me a rather large sum," replied M. d'Anquetil, "and I
am glad of it, as I cannot dream of going home, where the constables
will not fail to be on the lookout to arrest and conduct me to the
Chatelet. I forgot my servants, whom I left in Catherine's house,
and I do not know what has become of them. I thrashed them, and
never paid their wages, and withal I am not sure of their fidelity.
In whom can you have confidence? Let's be off at once for the Circus agreeable to you. We are living, Tournebroche and I, in an alchemistic and ramshackle castle at the Cross of the Sablons, where we can easily stay for a dozen hours without being seen by anyone. There we will take you and wait quietly till our carriage is ready. The advantage is that the Sablons is very near the Circus of the resolved in front of the Triton, who blew the water out of his fat cheeks, to go first to the Cross of the Sablons, and to hire, later on, at the _Red Horse_ hotel, a travelling coach for our journey to Lyons.

"I want to inform you, gentlemen," said my dear tutor, "that of the three bottles I took care to carry with me, one was broken on the during my flight. They are both regretted. The third, against all hope, has been preserved. Here it is!"

Pulling it out of his pocket, he placed it on the edge of the fountain.

"That's well," sail M, d'Anquetil. "You have some wine, I have dice and cards in my pocket. We can play."
"It is true," said my good master, "that is a pleasant pastime. A pack of cards is a book of adventure, of the kind called romances. It is so far superior to other books of a similar kind that it can be made and read at the same time, and that it is not necessary to have brains to make it, nor knowledge of reading to read it. It is a marvellous work, also, in that it offers a regular and new sense every time its pages are shuffled. It is a contrivance never to be too much admired, because out of mathematical principles it extracts thousands on thousands of curious combinations, and so many singular affinities that it is believed, contrary to all truth, that in it are discoverable the secrets of hearts, the mystery of destinies and the arcanum of the future. What I have said is particularly applicable to the tarot of the Bohemians, which is the finest of all games, piquet not excepted. The invention of cards must be ascribed to the ancients, and as far as I am concerned--I have, to speak candidly, no kind of documentary evidence for my assertion--I believe them to be of Chaldean origin. But in their present appearance the piquet cards cannot be traced further back than to King Charles VII., if what is said in a learned essay, that I an emblematical likeness of the beautiful Agnes Sorel, and that the queen of spades is, under the name of Pallas, no other than that Jeanne Dulys, better known as Joan of Arc, who by her bravery re-established the business of the French monarchy and was afterwards boiled to death by the English, in a cauldron, shown for two farthings at Rouen, where I have seen it in passing through that city. Certain historians pretend that she was burnt alive at the
stake. It is to be read in the works of Nicole Gilles and in
Pasquier that St Catherine and St Margaret appeared to her.
Certainly it was not God who sent these saints to her, because there
is no person of any learning and solid piety who does not know that
Margaret and Catherine were invented by Byzantine monks, whose
abundant and barbarous imaginations have altogether muddled up the
martyrology. It is a ridiculous impiety to pretend that God made two
saints who never existed appear to Jeanne Duls. However, the
ancient chroniclers were not afraid to publish it. Why have they not
Berthe the Bigfooted, and all the other heroines of the romances of
chivalry the existence of whom is not more fabulous than that of the
two virgins, Catherine and Margaret? M. de Valois, in the last
century, rose with full reason against these clumsy fables, as much
opposed to religion as error is to truth. It is desirable that an
ecclesiastic learned in history undertook to show the distinction
between real saints and saints such as Margaret, Luce or Lucie,
Eustache, and perhaps Saint George, about whom I have my doubts.

"If on a future day I should be able to retire to some beautiful
abbey, possessing a rich library, I will devote to this task the
remainder of a life, half worn out in frightful tempests and
frequent shipwrecks. I am longing for a harbour of refuge, and I
have the desire and the taste for a chaste repose suitable to my age
and profession."

While M. Coignard was holding this memorable discourse, M.
"You are right," said my good master; "it is a bad light, and I am somewhat displeased over it, less because I cannot play cards than because I have a desire to read a few pages of the 'Consolations' of Boethius, of which I always carry a small edition, so as to have it handy when something unfortunate overcomes me, as has been the case this day. It is a cruel disgrace, sir, for a man of my calling to be a homicide, and liable at any moment to be locked up in one of the ecclesiastical prisons. I feel that a single page of that admirable book would strengthen my heart, crushed by the very idea of the officer."

Having spoken, he let himself gently slide over the edge of the basin, so deep that the best part of his body went into the water. But not taking the slightest notice, and hardly feeling it, he took the Boethius out of his pocket--it was really there--and putting his spectacles on, wherein one glass only remained, and that one cracked in three places, he looked in the little book for the page most appropriate for his present situation. He doubtless would have found it, and extracted from it new strength, if the rotten state of his barnacles, the tears that came into his eyes, and the feeble light which came from the sky, had permitted him to search for it. Very soon he had to confess that he was unable to see a wink, and became angry with the moon, who showed her pointed sickle on the edge of a cloud. He reproached her and heaped bitter invectives on her. He
shouted:

"Luminary obscene, mischievous and libidinous, you never tire of illuminating men's wickedness, and you deny a ray of your light to him who searches for virtuous maxims!"

to find our way along the streets, and not sufficient to play a game of piquet. Let's go at once to the castle you spoke of, where I have to slip in without being seen."

That was good advice, and after we had drunk the wine to the last drop we took the road, all three of us, to the Cross of the Sablons. I walked with M. d'Anquetil. My good tutor, hindered by the water his breeches had soaked in, followed us, crying, moaning and disgusted.

CHAPTER XVIII

Our Return--We smuggle M. d'Anquetil in--M. d'Asterac on Jealousy--Laboratory--Jahel persuaded to elope.

The morning light already pricked our jaded eyes when we reached the green door to the park. We had not to use the knocker, as some time ago the porter had given us the keys of his domain. It was agreed
that my good tutor, with d'Anquetil, should cautiously advance in
the shadow of the lane, and that I should remain behind on the
lookout for the faithful Criton, and the kitchen boys who might
perhaps see us coming along. This arrangement, which was nothing but
reasonable, was to turn out rather badly for me. My two companions
had gone up without being discovered, and reached my room, where we
had decided to hide M. d'Anquetil until the moment of escape in the
post-chaise, but as I was climbing the second flight of steps I met
M. d'Asterac, in a red damask gown, carrying a silver candlestick.
He put, as he habitually did, his hand on my shoulder.

"Hello! my son," he said, "are you not very happy, having broken off
all intercourse with women, and by that escaped all dangers of bad
company? With the august maidens of the air you need not be in fear
of quarrels, scuffles, injurious and violent rows which usually
occur with creatures following a loose life. In your solitude, which
delights the fairies, you enjoy a delicious peace."

I thought at first that he mocked me. But I soon found out that
nothing was further from his thoughts.

"I am pleased to have met you, my son," he continued, "and will
thank you to come with me to my studio for a moment."

I followed him. He unlocked, with a key nearly an ell long, that
confounded room where I had seen the glare of infernal fires. When
we were inside the laboratory he asked me to kindly make up the
smouldering fire. I threw some short logs into the furnace, where I
don't know what was steaming, exhaling a suffocating odour. While he
was occupied with his black cookery, cupellating and matrassing, I
remained seated on a settle, and, against my will, closed my eyes.
He made me reopen them to admire a green earthenware vessel, with a
glass top, which he had in his hand.

"You ought to know, my son," he said, "that this subliming pot is
called aludel. It contains a liquid to be looked at with the
greatest attention, as it is nothing less than the mercury of the
philosophers. Do not suppose that it is to keep its present dark
colour for ever. Soon it will change to white and in that state will
change all metals into silver. Hereafter, by my art and industry, it
will turn red, and acquire the virtue of transmuting silver into
gold. It certainly would be of advantage to you that, shut in this
laboratory, you should not leave it before these sublime operations
have fully taken place, a process which cannot require more than two
or three months. But as to ask you to do so would perhaps be
imposing too hard a restriction on your youth, be satisfied, for
this time, to observe the preludes of the work, while putting, if
you please, as much wood on the fire as possible."

Having said that he returned to his phials and retorts, and I could
not help thinking of the sad position wherein ill-luck and
imprudence had placed me.
"Alas!" I said to myself, and threw logs into the fire, "at this very moment the constables are searching for my good tutor and myself; perhaps we shall have to go to prison, certainly we have to leave this castle. I have in default of money, at least board and an honourable position. I shall never again dare to stand before M. d'Asterac, who believes me to have passed the night in the silent voluptuousness of magic, which perhaps would have been better for me. Alas! I'll never more see Mosaide's niece, Mademoiselle Jahel, who at night-time woke me in my room in such a charming way. No doubt she will forget me. Perhaps she'll love someone else, and bestow on him the same caresses as she gave to me." The idea of such an infidelity became unbearable. But as the world goes, one has to be ready for anything.

"My son," M. d'Asterac began to say again, "you do not sufficiently feed the athanor. I see that you are still not fully convinced of the excellency of fire, which is capable of ripening this mercury and transforming it into the wonderful fruit I expect to gather very soon. More wood! The fire, my son, is the superior element; I have told you enough, and now I'll show you an example. On a very cold day last winter, visiting Mosaide in his lodge, I found him sitting, his feet on a warming pan. I observed that the subtle particles of fire escaping from the pan had power enough to inflate and lift up the folds of his gown, wherefrom I inferred, that had the fire been hotter, it would have raised Mosaide himself into the air, of which he is certainly worthy, and that, if it should be possible to close
into some kind of a vessel a very large quantity of such fire
particles, it would be possible to sail on the clouds as easily as
we sail on the sea, and to visit the Salamanders in their aerial
abodes, a problem I shall keep in mind. I do not despair of
constructing such a fireship. But let us go back to our work of
putting wood on the fire."

He kept me for some time in the glow of the laboratory whence I
wanted to escape as quickly as possible, to join Jahel, whom I was
anxious to inform of my misfortune. At last he left me, and I
thought myself free, a hope shortly to be disappointed by his
return.

"It is rather mild this morning," he said, "but the sky is somewhat
cloudy. Would it please you to go for a walk in the park with me
before returning to the translation of Zosimus the Panopolitan,
which will be a great honour to you and your tutor if you finish it
as you have begun?"

With much regret I followed him into the park, where he said to me:

"I am not sorry, my son, to be alone with you, to warn you, as it is
high time to do, against a great danger by which you may be
threatened one day; I reproach myself not to have thought of warning
you before, as what I shall communicate to you is of the utmost
consequence."
And speaking in this way, he led me through the grand avenue which leads down to the marshes of the Seine, whence Rueil is to be seen and Mont Valerien with its calvary. It was his usual walk. The alley was practicable in spite of some dead trees which had fallen across it.

"It is important for you to know to what you expose yourself by betraying your Salamander. I do not want to interrogate you as to what intercourse you have had with that superhuman person I have been fortunate enough to make you acquainted with. I dare say you feel somewhat reluctant to discuss it. Possibly you deserve praise for that. If the Salamanders have not, in what concerns the discretion of their lovers, the same ideas that court ladies and tradeswomen have, it is not less true that it is the special quality of beautiful amours to be unutterable, and that it would profane a grand sentiment to spread it abroad.

"But your Salamander (of which I could easily find the name if I had any idle curiosity) has perhaps omitted to give you information about one of the most violent passions--jealousy; this character is common to them. Know well, my son, Salamanders are not to be betrayed without punishment awaiting you. Their vengeance on the perjurer is of the cruelest. The divine Paracelsus gives one example, which will suffice to inspire in you a salutary fear.
"There was in the German town of Staufen a spagyric philosopher who had, like yourself, connection with a Salamander. He was depraved enough to deceive her with a woman, certainly pretty, but not more beautiful than a woman can be. One evening, having supper with his new mistress in company with some friends, they saw a thigh of marvellous beauty shining over their heads. The Salamander exposed it to impress on them all, that she did not deserve the wrong inflicted by her lover; after that the outraged celestial struck down the unfaithful lover with apoplexy. The vulgar, who are made to be deceived, believed his to be a natural death; the initiated knew by whose hand he was slain. I owed you this advice, my son, and this example."

They were less useful to me than M. d'Asterac thought. Listening to them I mused on other subjects of alarm. Without doubt my face must have betrayed the state of anxiety I was in; because the great cabalist, having looked at me, asked me if I was not afraid that an engagement, guarded by conditions so severe, would be troublesome to my youth.

"I am able to reassure you," he added. "The jealousy of a Salamander is awakened only by rivalry with women, and to speak truly it is more resentment, indignation, disgust, than real jealousy. The souls of the Salamanders are too noble, their intelligence too subtle, to envy one another, and to give way to a sentiment pertaining to the barbarity wherein humanity is still half plunged. On the contrary
they delight to share with their playmates the joys they taste 
beside a sage, and are pleased to bring to their lovers the most 
beautiful of their sisters. Very soon you'll experience that, as a 
fact, they push politeness to the point I mentioned, and not a year, 
nay not six months, will pass before your room will be the trysting 
place of five or six daughters of the light, who will untie before 
you their sparkling girdles. Do not be afraid, my son, to answer 
their caresses. Your own fairy love will not take umbrage. How could 
she be offended, wise as she is? And on your side, do not get 
irritated if your Salamander leaves you for a moment to visit 
another philosopher. Consider that the proud jealousy men bring into 
the union of the sexes is but a savage sentiment, founded on the 
most ridiculous of illusions. It rests on the idea that a woman 
belongs to you because she has given herself to you, which is 
nothing but a play on words."

While making this speech, M. d'Asterac had turned into the lane of 
the mandrakes, where we could see Mosaide's cottage, half hidden by 
foliage, when suddenly an appalling voice burst upon us and made my 
heart beat faster--hoarse sounds, accompanied by a sharp gnashing, 
and on getting nearer the sounds seemed to be modulated, and each 
phrase ended in a sort of very feeble melody, which could not be 
listened to without shuddering.

Advancing a few paces we could, by listening closely, understand the 
sense of the strange words. The voice said:
"Hear the malediction with which Elisha cursed the insolent and mirthful children. Listen to the anathema Barak flung on Meros.

"I curse thee in the name of Archithuriel, who is also called the lord of battles, and holds the flaming sword. I doom thee to perdition in the name of Sardaliphonos, who presents to his master the flowers and garlands of merit offered by the children of Israel.

"Be cursed, hound! Anathema, swine!"

Looking from whence the voice came, we could see Mosaide on the threshold of his house, standing erect, his arms raised, his hands in the form of fangs, with nails crooked, appearing inflamed by the fiery light of the sun. His head was covered with his dirty tiara, and he was enveloped in his gorgeous gown, showing when flying open his meagre bow-legs in ragged breeches. He looked like some begging magician, immortal, and very old. His eyes glared, and he said:

"Be cursed in the name of all globes, be cursed in the name of all wheels, be cursed in the name of the mysterious beasts Ezekiel saw."

Out he stretched his long arms, ending in claws, and continued:

"In the name of the globes, in the name of the wheels, in the name
of the mysterious beasts, descend among those who are no more."

We advanced a few paces between the half-grown trees to see the object over which Mosaide extended his arms and his anger, and lapel of his gown on an evergreen thorn bush. The night's disorder was visible all over his body; his collar and his shoes torn, his stockings smeared with mud, his shirt open, all reminded me of our common misadventures, and, worse than all, the swelling of his nose spoilt entirely the noble and smiling expression which never left his features.

I ran up to him and unhooked him so luckily off the thorns that only a small piece of his breeches stuck to them. Mosaide, having had his say, re-entered the cottage. As he wore only slippers I could observe that his legs fitted right into the middle of his feet, so that the heel stuck out behind pretty nearly as much as the forefoot in front, a singular deformation, rendering his walking uncouth, which otherwise would have been noble and full of dignity.

"Jacques Tournebroche! my dear boy," said my tutor, with a sigh, "that Jew must be Isaac Laquedem in person, so to blaspheme in all languages. He vowed me to a death near and violent with an enormous abundance of metaphors, and he called me a pig in fourteen distinct languages, if I counted them correctly. I could believe him to be the Antichrist, and he does not want some of the signs by which that enemy of God is to be recognised. Under any circumstances he is a
dirty Jew, and never has the wheel as a brand of infamy been exposed on the vestments of a worse or more rabid miscreant. As for himself, he not only deserves the wheel formerly attached to the garments of Jews, but also that other wheel on which scoundrels have their bones broken."

And my good master, mightily angry in his turn, shook his fist in the direction where Mosaide had disappeared, and accused him of crucifying children and devouring the flesh of new-born babes.

M. d'Asterac went up to him and touched his breast with the ruby he used to wear on his finger.

"It is useful," said the great cabalist, "to know the peculiar qualities of precious stones. Rubies soothe resentments, and you'll

My dear tutor smiled already, less by virtue of the stone than by the influence of a philosophy which raised this admirable man above all human passions, for I feel it my duty to say, at the very moment given me examples of wisdom under circumstances in which it is but rarely met with.

We inquired the cause of the quarrel, but easily understood by the vagueness of his embarrassed replies that he did not intend to
satisfy our curiosity. I surmised at once that Jahel was mixed up
with it in some way, when I heard with the gnashing of Mosaide's
voice the grating of locks and bolts, and later on the noise, in the
lodge, of a violent dispute between uncle and niece. When we tried
again to bring my tutor to some explanation, he said:

"Hate for Christians is deeply rooted in every Jew's heart, and
yonder Mosaide is an execrable example of it. I fancy I discovered
in his horrible yelpings some parts of the imprecations the
Amsterdam synagogue vomited in the last century on a little Dutch
Jew called Baruch or Benedict, but better known under the name of
Spinoza, for having framed a philosophy which has been perfectly
refuted, as soon as it was brought to public knowledge, by excellent
theologians. But this old Mordecai has added to it, so it seems to
me, many and much more horrible imprecations, and I confess to
having somewhat resented them. For a moment I thought of escaping by
flight this torrent of abuse, when to my dismay I found myself
entangled in yonder thorn, and sticking to it by different parts of
my clothes and skin so fast that I really expected to have to leave
the one or the other behind me. I should still be there, in smarting
agony, if Tournebroche, my dear pupil, had not freed me."

"The thorns count for nothing," said M. d'Asterac, "but I'm afraid,
cares."
"You're wrong," said M. d'Asterac. "It suffices to tread on a mandrake to become involved in a love crime, and perish by it miserably."

"Ah! sir," my dear tutor replied, "here are all sorts of dangers, and I become aware that it was necessary to be closely shut in between the eloquent walls of the 'Asteracian,' which is the queen of libraries. For having left it for a moment only, I get the beasts of Ezekiel thrown at my head, not to speak of anything else."

"Would you kindly give me news of Zosimus the Panopolitan?" inquired M. d'Asterac.

"He goes on," replied my master; "goes on nicely, though slowly at the moment."

greatest secrets is attached to the knowledge of those ancient texts."

M. d'Asterac, after this assurance, left us standing at the statue of the faun, who continued to play the flute without taking any
notice of his head, fallen into the grass. He disappeared rapidly
between the trees, looking for Salamanders.

My tutor linked his arm in mine with the air of one who can at last
speak freely.

"Jacques Tournebroche, my son, I must not conceal from you that this
very morning, in the attics of the castle, a rather peculiar chance
meeting has taken place, while you were kept in the room of yonder
mad fire-blower. I plainly heard him ask you to assist him for a
moment in his cooking, which is a great deal less savoury and
Christian than that of Master Leonard your father. Alas! when shall
I be lucky enough to see again the cookshop of the _Queen
_Saint Catherine_, where I enjoyed myself so heartily thumbing
the books newly arrived from The Hague and Amsterdam!"

"Alas!" I exclaimed, the tears coming into my eyes, "when shall I
return to it again? When shall I return to the Rue St Jacques again,
where I was born, and see my dear parents, who'll feel burning shame
when they hear of our misfortunes? But do be so good, my dear tutor,
as to explain that strange encounter you said you had this very
morning, and also the events of the day."

enlightenment I wished for. He did it in the following words:
"Know then, my dear boy, that I reached the upper storey of the castle without hindrance in company with M. d'Anquetil, whom I like well enough, although rude and uncultured. His mind is possessed neither of fine knowledge nor deep curiosity. But youth's vivacity sparkleth pleasantly with him, and the ardour of his blood results in amusing sallies. He knows the world as well as he knows women, because he is above them, and without any kind of philosophy. It's a great frankness on his part to call himself an atheist. His ungodliness is without malice, and will disappear with the exuberance of his sensuality. In his soul God has no other enemies than horses, cards and women. In the mind of a real libertine, like M. Bayle for example, truth has to meet more formidable and malicious adversaries. But, my dear boy, I give you a character sketch instead of the plain narrative you wish to have of me.

"I'll satisfy you. Let's see. Having arrived at the top storey of the castle in company with M. d'Anquetil, I made the young gentleman enter your room, and wished him, in accordance with the promise we made him at the Triton fountain, to use the room as his own. He did so willingly, undressed, and, keeping nothing on but his boots, went into your bed, the curtains of which he closed so as not to be incommmoded by the bright morning light, and was not long before he was sound asleep.

"As to myself, my dear boy, having reached my room, tired as I was, I did not want to go to rest before I had looked up in my Boethius
one or two sentences appropriate to my state of mind. I could not
find the very one fit for it. It must not be forgotten that this
great thinker had not had occasion to meditate on the disgrace of
having broken the head of a Farmer-general with a bottle out of his
own cellar. But I was able to pick up here and there, in his
admirable treatise, some maxims applicable to present conjunctures.
Having done so, I drew the night-cap over my eyes, recommended my
soul to God, and quietly went to sleep. After what seemed to me,
without being able to measure it, a very short space of time--be
mindful, my son, that our actions are the only measure for time,
which, if I may say so, is suspended for us by sleep--I felt my arm

wake up! Half dozing as I was, I believed it was a constable
wanting to conduct me to the officer, and I deliberated with myself
the easiest way in which I could break his head, and rapidly came to
the conclusion that the candlestick would be the handiest weapon. It
is unhappily, too true, my dear boy, that having once stepped aside
from the road of kindness and equity, where the wise man walks with
a firm and prudent step, one becomes compelled to sustain violence
by violence and cruelty by cruelty, thereby proving that a first
fault leads invariably to other faults--evil always follows evil
done. One has to be reminded of this if one wants to fully
understand the lives of the Roman emperors, of whom M. Crevier has
given such an exact account. Those princes were not born more evilly
disposed than other men. Caius, surnamed Caligula, was wanting
neither in natural spirit nor in judgment, and was quite capable of
friendship. Nero had an inborn liking for virtue, and his
temperament disposed him towards all that is grand and sublime. Both
of them were led by a first fault on the nefarious, villainous road
whereon they walked to their miserable end. Their history is
cleverly treated in M. Crevier's book. I knew that remarkable writer
when he was a teacher of literature and history at the College of
Beauvais, as I might be teaching to-day, had my life not been
crossed by a thousand impediments, and if the natural easiness of my
spirit had not drawn me into the manifold snares laid in my way. M.
Crevier, my boy, led a pure life; his morals were severe, and I have
myself heard him say that a woman who had broken her conjugal vows
was capable of the crimes of murder and incendiaryism. I repeat this
saying of his, to impress you with the saintly austerity of that
model priest.

"But, once more, I digress, and I must hasten to return to my
narrative. Well, as I have said, I thought a constable had come to
arrest me, and I could see myself in one of the archbishop's
dungeons, when I opened my eyes and recognised the features and
have just had a singular adventure in Tournebroche's room. During my
sleep a woman entered my room, glided into my bed, and awoke me with
a shower of caresses, tender epithets, sweet murmurings, and
passionate kisses. I pushed the curtains back to see the features of
my good luck. She was dark and had ardent eyes, one of the finest
women I have ever held in my arms. But all at once she screamed and
jumped out, violently angry, but not quick enough to prevent me
catching her in the passage and pressing her closely in my arms. She
began by striking me and scratching my face. After having lacerated
it sufficiently to satisfy her outraged womanly honour, we began to
explain ourselves. She was well pleased to learn that I am a
gentleman, and none of the poorest, and sooner than I might have
expected I ceased to be odious to her, and she began to be tender
with me, when a scullion appeared in the passage; his appearance put
her to flight at once.

"'I am quite aware,' said M. d'Anquetil, 'that that admirable girl
had come for another than myself; she must have entered the wrong
room, and the surprise frightened her. I did my best to reassure
her, and should doubtless have won her amity had not that sot of a
scullion come between us.'

"I confirmed him in that supposition. We put our heads together to
get an idea of the man for whom that beautiful woman had ventured on
such an early morning visit, and were easily agreed that it could be
no other but that old fool d'Asterac--you know, Tournebroche, I
suspected him before--who awaits her intimacy in an adjoining room,
if not, and without your knowledge, in your own. Are you not of the
same opinion?"

"Nothing is more credible," I replied.

"No doubt it is so. That sorcerer amuses himself when he talks to us
of his Salamanders. The truth is, he caresses that amazingly pretty
girl. He's an impostor."
I asked my tutor to favour me with the continuance of his narrative.

He willingly complied and said:

"Well, my dear boy, I'll briefly report the remainder of M. d'Anquetil's discourse. I know very well that it's rather commonplace, almost vulgar, to lay much stress on trifling circumstances. It is, on the contrary, some sort of duty to express them in the fewest possible words, to condense them carefully and reserve the tempting abundance of word-flow to moral instruction and exhortation, which may be hurled as the avalanches are hurled from the mountains. On this principle I shall have mentioned enough of M. d'Anquetil's sayings when I have told you that he impressed on me that yonder young girl's beauty, charms, and accomplishments are quite extraordinary. In the end he inquired of me if I knew her name and position. And I replied to him that, from his description of her, I was pretty sure that she was Rabbi Mosaide's niece Jahel, whom by a lucky accident I had embraced one night on that very same staircase, with this difference only, that my luck occurred between the first and second flights of steps. 'I hope and trust,' said M. d'Anquetil, 'that there may be other differences too, for, as far as I am concerned, I embraced her very closely. I am also sorry that, as you say, she is a Jewess, as, without believing in God, I feel that I should have liked better for her to be a Christian. But can anyone be sure of his own family? Who knows if she has not been kidnapped as a child? Jews and gypsies steal children daily. And we do not, as a rule, remember sufficiently that the Holy Virgin was
born a Jewess. But let her be Jewess or not, she pleases me; I want her and shall have her!' Such were that reckless youngster's words.

But allow me, my boy, to sit down on yonder moss-covered stone; last night's work, my fights, my flight, too, have nearly broken my legs."

He sat down, took his snuff-box out of his pocket, and looked quite disconsolate when he found it void of tobacco.

I took a seat at his side, agitated, crestfallen. Coignard's discourse caused me acute pain. I cursed Fate for having given my place to a brute at the very moment when my beloved mistress had come to bring me her most passionate tenderness, expecting to find me in my bed, the while I had to throw logs of wood on the fire in the alchemist's furnace. The but too probable inconstancy of Jahel tore my heart to pieces, and I could have wished that my dear tutor had been more discreet with my rival. So I took the liberty to reproach him mildly for his disclosure of Jahel's name.

"Sir," I said, "was it not somewhat imprudent to furnish such indications to a gentleman so luxurious and violent as M. d'Anquetil?"

M. Coignard seemed not to hear what I said, and continued his speech:
"My snuff-box has unfortunately opened itself in my pocket during the fight at Catherine's house, and the tobacco it contained, mixed with the wine of the broken bottle, has formed a quite disgusting paste. I do not dare ask Criton to grind down a few leaves for me; the hard and cold features of that servant and judge inspire me with awe. I suffer from the want of snuff, as my nose is irksome in consequence of the shock I had last night, and I am quite disconcerted by my failure to satisfy the never-tiring wants of that nose of mine. I shall have to bear the misfortune quietly, till M. d'Anquetil may, perhaps, let me have a few grains out of his box. Now to return to that young gentleman, he said expressly to me: 'I in the post-chaise should I be compelled to stay here a week, a month, six months or longer; I will not go away without her.' I represented all the dangers to him, which might occur through any delay in our departure. He said he did not care a rap for those dangers, less so as they were smaller for him than for us. 'You, risk is the Bastille only, where I can get cards and girls, and whence my family could, and would, soon deliver me, as my father would interest some duchess or some ballet dancer in my doom, and my mother, devotee as she has become, could and would still get the assistance of one or other of the royal princes. It is irrevocably fixed; I take Jahel with me or I remain here. You and Tournebroche are at liberty to hire a post-chaise of your own.'

"The cruel boy knows but too well that we have not the means to do
it. I tried to make him change his mind. I became pressing, unctuous, parental. It was no use, and I wasted on him an eloquence which, employed in the pulpit of a parish church, would have brought me a full reward in honour and coin. Alas! my dear boy, it seems to be written that none of my actions will ever produce any kind of savoury fruit, and for me ought to have been written the following words from Ecclesiastes:--'Quid habet am plus homo de universe labore suo, quo laborat sub sole?' Far from bringing him to reason, my discourses strengthened the young nobleman's obstinacy, and I cannot deny that he actually counted on me for the success of his desires, and pressed me to go to Jahel and induce her to fly with him, promising her the gift of a trousseau of Dutch linen, of plate, jewels and a handsome annuity."

"Oh, sir!" I exclaimed, "this M. d'Anquetil is very insolent. What do you think will be Jahel's reply to his propositions when she knows of them?"

"My boy, she knows by now, and I think she will accept them."

"If such is the case," I said, "then Mosaide must be warned."

"That he is already," replied my tutor. "You have just assisted at the outbreak of his rage."
"What, sir?" said I, with much warmth, "you have informed yonder Jew of the disgrace awaiting his family! That's nice of you! Allow me to embrace you. But, if so, Mosaide's wrath threatened M. d'Anquetil, and not yourself?"

indulgence for human weaknesses, an obliging sweetness, and the imprudent kindness of an easy heart--by all of which men are often induced to do inconsiderate things and expose themselves to the severity of the futile judgments of mankind:

"I will not keep it a secret from you, my dear Tournebroche, that, giving way to the pressing solicitations of that young gentleman, I obligingly promised to go on his errand to Jahel and to neglect nothing to induce her to elope with him."

"Alas!" I exclaimed, "you did, sir. I cannot fully tell how deeply your action wounds and affects me."

"Tournebroche," replied he sternly, "you speak like a Pharisee. One of the fathers, as amiable as he was austere, has said: 'Turn your eyes on yourself and take care not to judge the doings of others. Judging others is an idle labour; usually one is erring, often sinning, by so doing, but by examining and judging oneself your labour will always be fruit-bearing.' It is written, 'Thou shalt not be afraid of the judgment of men,' and the Apostle Paul said that he
did not trouble himself about being judged by men. If I refer to
some of the finest texts in morals it is to enlighten you,
Tournebroche, to make you return to the humble and sweet modesty
which suits you, and not to defend my innocence, when the multitude
of my iniquities weighs on me and bears me down. It is difficult not
to glide into sin, and proper not to fall into despondency at every
step one takes on this earth, whereon everything participates, at
one and the same time, in the original curse, and the redemption
effected by the blood of the Son of God. I do not want to colour my
faults, and I freely confess that the embassy I undertook at the
request of M. d'Anquetil is an outcome of Eve's downfall, and it
was, to say it bluntly, one of the numberless consequences, on the
wrong side, of the humble and painful sentiment which I now feel,
and is drawn out of the desire and hope of my eternal welfare. You
have to represent to yourself mankind balancing between damnation
and redemption to understand me truly when I say that at the present
hour I am sitting on the good end of the seesaw after having been
this very morning on the wrong end. I freely avow that in passing
through the mandrake lane, from whence Mosaide's cottage is to be
seen, I hid behind an ivy-thorn bush, waiting for Jahel to appear at
her window. Very soon she came. I showed myself, and beckoned her to
come down. She came as soon as she was able to escape her uncle's
vigilance. I gave her a brief report of the events of the night, of
which she had not known. I informed her of M. d'Anquetil's impetuous
plans, and represented to her how important it was for her own
interest, and for my and your safety, to make our escape sure by
coming with us. I made the young nobleman's promises glitter before
her eyes and said to her: 'If you consent to go with him to-night
you'll have a solid annuity, inscribed at the Hotel de Ville, and an
get, and a cupboard full of the finest silver.' 'He thinks me to be
one of those creatures,' she said; 'he is an impudent fellow.' 'He
loves you,' I replied; 'you could not expect to be venerated?' 'I
must have an olio pot,' she said, 'an olio pot, and the heaviest

'What shall I tell him?' 'That I am an honest girl.' 'And what
else?' 'That he is very audacious!' 'Is that all, Jahel? Think on
our safety!' 'Tell him that I shall not depart before he has given
me his legally worded written promise for everything.' 'He'll do it,
consider it as done. 'Oh, monsieur, I will not consent to anything
if he does not consent to have lessons given me by M. Couperin; I
want to study music.

"We had just reached this item of our negotiations when, unhappily,
Mosaide surprised us, and without having overheard our conversation
got the scent of its meaning.

"He called me at once a suborner, and heaped outrageous insults on
me. Jahel went and hid herself in her own room, and I remained alone
exposed to the fury of that God-killer, in the state you found me,
and out of which you helped me, you dear boy! As a fact, I may say
that the business had been concluded, the elopement assented to, our
flight assured. The wheels and Ezekiel's beasts are of no value
against a heavy silver olio pot. I am only afraid that yonder old
Mordecai has imprisoned his niece too securely."
"I must avow," I replied, without disguising my satisfaction, "that I heard a loud noise of keys and bolts at the very moment I freed you from the midst of the thorns. But is it really true, that Jahel agreed so quickly to your propositions, which have not been quite decorous, and which, for certain, you did not make with an easy heart? I am abashed; and, say, my good master, did she not speak of me, not mention my name, with a sigh or otherwise?"

"No, my boy, she did not pronounce your name, at least not in an audible way. Neither did I hear her mention the name of M. d'Asterac her lover, which ought to have been nearer to her feelings than yours. But do not be surprised by her forgetting the alchemist. It is not sufficient to possess a woman to impress on her soul a profound and durable mark. Souls are almost impenetrable, a fact showing the cruel emptiness of love. The wise man ought to say to himself, I am nothing in the nothingness which that creature is. To hope that you could leave a remembrance in a woman's heart is equivalent to trying to impress a seal on running water. And therefore let us never nurse the wish to establish ourselves in what is fleeting and let us attach ourselves to that which never dies."

"After all," I said, "Jahel is locked and bolted up, and one may rely on the vigilance of her guardian."

"My son, this very evening she has to join us at the Red
Horse... Twilight is favourable to evasions, abductions, stealthy movements and underhand actions. We have to trust to the cunning of that girl. As to you, be sure to attend at the Circus of the quite the man to start without you."

When he gave me this counsel, the luncheon bell sounded.

"Have you by chance," he said to me, "a needle and thread? My garments are torn at more than one place, and I should like to repair them as much as possible before going to luncheon. Especially my breeches do not leave me without some apprehension. They are so much torn that, should I not promptly mend them, I run the risk of losing them altogether."

CHAPTER XIX

Our last Dinner at M. d'Asterac's Table--Conversation of M. Jerome Coignard and M. d'Asterac--A Message from Home--Catherine in the Spittel--We are wanted for Murder--Our Flight--Jahel causes me much Misery--Account of the Journey--The Abbe Coignard on Towns--Jahel's Midnight Visit--We are followed--The Accident--M. Jerome Coignard is stabbed.

I took my accustomed place that day at the dining-table of the cabalist, oppressed by the idea that I sat down at it for the last
time. Jahel's treachery had saddened my soul. Alas! thought I, my most fervent wish had been to fly with her, a wish which looked like being granted, and was now fulfilled in a very cruel manner. Again and again I admired my beloved tutor's wisdom who, on a day when I desired too vivaciously the success of some affair, answered with the following citation: _"Et tributt eis petitionem eorum."_ My sorrows and anxieties spoilt my appetite, and I partook sparingly of the dishes served. However, my dear tutor had preserved the unalterable gracefulness of his soul.

He abounded in amiable discourse, and one might have said that he was one of those sages which Telemachus shows us conversing in the shades of the Elysian Fields, and not a man pursued as a murderer and reduced to a roving and miserable life. M. d'Asterac, believing that I had passed the night at the cookshop, kindly inquired after my parents, and, as he could not abstract himself for a single moment from his visions, said:

"When I speak of that cook as being your father it is quite understood that I express myself in a worldly sense, and not according to nature. Nothing proves, my son, that you have not been begot by a Sylph. It is the very thing I prefer to believe, in so far as your spirit, still delicate, shall grow in strength and beauty."

"Oh, sir! don't speak like that,' replied my tutor, and smiled. "You
oblige him to hide his spirit so as not to damage his mother's good name. But if you knew her better you could not but think with me that she never had any intercourse with a Sylph; she is a good Christian who has never accomplished the work of the flesh with any other man than her husband, and who carries her virtue written distinctly on her features, very different from the mistress of that other cookshop, Madame Quonion, about whom they talked so much in Paris, as well as in the provinces, in the days of my youth. Have you never heard of her, sir? Her lover was M. Mariette, who later on became secretary to M. d'Angervilliers. He was a stout man, who left a jewel every time he visited his beloved; one day a Cross of Lorraine or a Holy Ghost; another day a watch or a chatelaine, or perhaps a handkerchief, a fan, a box. For her sake he rifled the jewellers and seamstresses of the fair of St Germain. He gave her so much that, finding his shop decorated like a shrine, the master-cook became suspicious that all that wealth could not have been honestly acquired. He watched her, and very soon surprised her with her lover. It must be said that the husband was but a jealous fellow. He flew into a temper, and gained nothing by it, but very much the reverse. For the amorous couple, plagued by his wrangling, swore to get rid of him. M. Mariette had no little influence. He got a _lettre de cachet_ in the name of that unhappy Quonion. On a certain day the perfidious woman said to her husband:

"Take me, I beg of you, on Sunday next out to dinner somewhere in the country. I promise myself uncommon pleasure from such an excursion."
"She became caressing and pressing, and the husband, flattered, agreed to all her demands. On the Sunday, he got with her into a paltry hackney coach to go to Porcherons. But they had hardly got to Roule when a posse of constables placed in readiness by Marietta arrested him, and took him to Bicetre, from whence he was sent to the Mississippi, where he still remains. Someone composed a song which finished thus:

'Un mari sage et commode
N'ouvre les yeux qu'a demi
Il vaut mieux etre a la mode,
Que de voir Mississippi.'

And such is, doubtless, the most solid lesson to be derived from the example given by Quonion the cook.

"As to the story itself, it only needs to be narrated by a Petronius or by an Apuleius to equal the best Milesian fables. The moderns are inferior to the ancients in epic poetry and tragedy. But if we do not surpass the Greeks and Latins in story-telling it is not the fault of the ladies of Paris, who never cease enriching the material for tales by their ingenious and graceful inventions. You certainly know, sir, the stories of Boccaccio. I am sure that had that Florentine lived in our days in France he would make of Quonion's misfortune one of his pleasantest tales. As far as I am myself
concerned I have been reminded of it at this table for the sole purpose, and by the effect of contrast, to make the virtue of Madame Leonard Tournebroche shine. She is the honour of cookshops, of which Madame Quonion is the disgrace. Madame Tournebroche, I dare affirm it, has never abandoned those ordinary commonplace virtues the practice of which is recommended in marriage, which is the only contemptible one of the seven sacraments."

"I do not deny it," said M. d'Asterac. "But Mistress Tournebroche would be still more estimable if she should have had intercourse with a Sylph, as Semiramis had and Olympias and the mother of that grand pope Sylvester II."

Sylphs and Salamanders. Now, in simple good faith, have you ever seen any of them?"

"As clearly as I see you this very moment," replied M. d'Asterac, "and certainly closer, at least as far as Salamanders are concerned."

"That is not sufficient, my dear sir, to make me believe in their existence, which is against the teachings of the Church. For one may be seduced by illusions. The eyes, and all our senses, are messengers of error and couriers of lies. They delude us more than they teach us, and bring us but uncertain and fugitive images. Truth
escapes them, because truth is eternal, and invisible like
eternity."

"Ah!" said M. d'Asterac, "I did not know you were so philosophical,
nor of so subtle a mind."

"That's true," replied my good master. "There are days on which my
soul is heavier, and with preference attached to bed and table. But
last night I broke a bottle on the head of an extortioner, and my
mind is very much exalted over it. I feel myself capable of
dissipating the phantoms which are haunting you, and to blow off all
that mist. For after all, sir, these Sylphs are but vapours of your
brain."

M. d'Asterac stopped him with a kind gesture and said:

"Without difficulty I can reply," said my good master, "that I
believe of demons all that is reported of them in the Scriptures,
and that I reject as error and superstition all and every belief in
spells, charms and exorcism. Saint Augustine teaches that when the
Scriptures exhort us to resist the demons, it requires us to resist
our passions and intemperate appetites. Nothing is more detestable
than the deviltries wherewith the Capuchins frighten old women."
"I see," said M. d'Asterac, "you do your best to think as an honest man. You hate as much as I do myself the coarse superstitions of the monks. But, after all, you do believe in demons, and I have not had much trouble to make you avow it. Know, then, that they are no other than Sylphs and Salamanders, ignorance and fear have disfigured them in timid imaginations. But, as a fact, they are beautiful and virtuous. I will not lead you in the ways of the Salamanders, as I am not quite sure of the purity of your morals; but I can see no fields of air, and voluntarily approach man in a spirit of friendliness and affection, so that they have been rightly named helping genii. Far from driving us to perdition, as the theologians believe, who change them into devils, they protect and safeguard their terrestrial friends. I could make you acquainted with numberless examples of the help they give. But to be short I'll repeat to you one single case which was told to me by Madame la several years, when, one night, in her bed, she received the visit of a Sylph, who said to her: 'Madame, have a search made in the wardrobe of your deceased husband. In the pocket of a pair of his breeches a letter will be found, which, if it became known, would ruin M. des Roches, my good friend and yours. Find that letter and burn it.'

however, disappeared without giving any reply. On waking she summoned her women, and bade them look if some of the late
reported that nothing was left, and that the lackeys had sold them all to old clothes dealers. Madame de Grancey insisted on her women trying to find at least one pair of breeches.

"Having searched in every corner they finally discovered a very old-fashioned pair of black satin, embroidered with carnations, and handed them to their mistress, who found a letter in one of the pockets, which contained more than would have been needed to incarcerate M. des Roches in one of the state prisons. She burned the letter at once, and so that gentleman was saved by his good

you another startling hit on the matter, which will impress you more, and will I am sure go to the heart of a learned man such as yourself. It is doubtless known to you that the Academy of Dijon is rich in wits. One of them, whose name cannot be unknown to you, living in the last century, prepared with great labour an edition of Pindar. One night, worrying over five verses the sense of which he could not disentangle, so much was the text corrupt, he dozed off, quite despairing, at cockcrow. During his sleep, a Sylph, who wished him well, transported his spirit to Stockholm into the palace of Queen Christina, conducted him to the library, and took from one of the shelves a manuscript of Pindar's showing him the difficult passage. The five verses were there, as well as two or three annotations which rendered them perfectly intelligible.
"In the violence of his contentment, our savant woke up, struck a light, and pencilled down the verses as they appeared to him in his sleep. After that he went to sleep again profoundly. On the following morning, thinking over his night's adventure, he at once resolved to try to get a confirmation. M. Descartes happened at that very time to be in Sweden, reading to the queen on philosophy. Our Pindarist knew him, but was on still closer terms with M. Chanut, the Swedish ambassador in France. He wrote requesting him to forward a letter to M. Descartes, in which he asked him to be informed if there really was in the queen's library at Stockholm a manuscript of Pindar containing the version he mentioned. M. Descartes, an extremely courteous man, replied to the academician of Dijon that, as a fact, her Majesty possessed a manuscript of Pindar, and that he had himself read there the verses, with the various readings contained in the letter."

M. d'Asterac, who had been peeling an apple during his narration, looked at M. Coignard to enjoy the success of his discourse.

My dear tutor smiled and said:

"Ah, sir! I clearly see that I flattered myself with an idle hope, and that one cannot make you give up your vain imaginations. I confess with a good grace that you have shown us an ingenious Sylph, and that I actually wish for such an obliging secretary. His assistance would be particularly useful to me on two or three
passages in Zosimus the Panopolitan which are very obscure. Could you not be so good as to give me the means to evoke, if necessary, some Sylph librarian as expert as that of Dijon?"

M. d'Asterac replied gravely:

warned that you would be a lost man should you communicate it to a profane person."

fine a secret, but I will not conceal from you that I do not expect any effect from it, as I do not believe in Sylphs. Instruct me, if you please."

"You request me?" replied the cabalist. "Well, then, know that whenever you want the assistance of a Sylph, you have but to pronounce the simple word _Agla_, and the sons of the air will spoken by the heart as well as by the lips, and that faith alone gives it its virtue. Without faith it is nothing but a useless murmur. Pronounce it as I do at this moment, putting in it neither soul nor wish, it has, even in my own mouth, but a very slight power, and at the utmost some of the children of light, if they have heard it, glide into this room, the light shadows of light. I've divined rather than seen them on yonder curtain, and they have vanished when hardly visible. Neither you nor your pupil has
suspected their presence. But had I pronounced that magic word with
real fervour you would have seen them appear in all their splendour.
They are of a charming beauty. Now, sir, I have entrusted you with a
grand and useful secret. Let me say again, do not divulge it

who, for having revealed their secrets, was murdered by the Sylphs,
on the road to Lyons."

"On the Lyons road?" said my good tutor. "How strange!"

M. d'Asterac left us suddenly.

library where I have enjoyed such austere pleasures and which I
shall never see again. Do not fail, Tournebroche, to be at nightfall

I promised to be there; it was my intention to lock myself in my
room for the purpose of writing to M. d'Asterac, and my dear
parents, asking them to kindly excuse me for not taking personal
leave of them, as I had to fly after an adventure wherein I was more
unlucky than guilty.

When I reached the door of my room, I heard heavy snoring from
within. Peeping in I saw M. d'Anquetil in my bed, sleeping, his
sword at the bedside, playing cards strewn all over the quilt. For a
moment I felt tempted to run him through with his own sword, but the
temptation did not last, and I left him sleeping. Notwithstanding my
grief I could not help laughing when I thought that Jahel, being
locked and bolted in by Mosaide, could not rejoin him.

So I went to my tutor's room, to write my letters, where I disturbed
five or six rats, who had begun to make a meal off his Boethius,
which had remained on the night table. I wrote to my mother and to
M. d'Asterac, and I composed the most touching epistle to Jahel. My
tears fell on this when I read it over for a second time. "Perhaps,"
I said to myself, "the faithless girl will cry too, and her tears
will mix with mine."

Then, overwhelmed as I was by fatigue and sorrow, I threw myself on
my tutor's bed, and soon went off into a kind of semi-sleep,
troubled by dreams, erotic and sinister. I was awakened by the
taciturn Criton, who had entered the room and presented to me, on a
silver salver, a sort of curling paper, whereon a few badly written
words were scribbled in pencil. Someone expected me at once outside
the castle. The note was signed "Friar Ange, unworthy Capuchin." I
went as quickly as I could, and found the little friar seated on the
bank of a ditch in a state of pitiable dejection. Wanting strength
to get up, he looked at me with his big dog's eyes, nearly human and
full of tears; his sighs moved his beard and chest. In a tone which
really pained me he said:

"Alas! Monsieur Jacques, the hour of trial has come to Babylon, as
the Lieutenant of Police had Mam'selle Catherine taken by the constables to the spittel, from whence she'll be sent to America by the next convoy. I was informed of it by Jeannette the hurdy-gurdy player, who saw Catherine brought in a cart to the spittel, as she left it herself after having been cured of an evil ailment by the surgeon's art—at least I hope so, please God! And Catherine is to be transported, and no reprieve to be expected."

And Friar Ange at this point in his discourse groaned and shed tears abundantly. After doing my best to console him I asked if he had nothing else to tell me.

"Alas! M. Jacques," he replied. "I have intimated the essential, and the remainder floats in my head like the Spirit of God on the waters, without comparison if you please. The matter is dark altogether. Catherine's misfortune has taken away my senses. It needed the necessity of giving you important news to bring me to the threshold of this cursed house, where you live in company with all sorts of devils, and it was with dismay, and after having recited the prayer of Saint Francis, that I ventured to knock at the door for the purpose of handing to a lackey the note I wrote to you. I do not know if you have been able to read it, as I have but little practice in forming letters, and the paper was not of the best to write on, but you see it is the honour of our holy order not to give way to the vanities of our century! Ah! Catherine at the spittel! Catherine in America! Is it not enough to break the hardest heart? Jeannette herself wept abundantly, and did so in spite of her
jealousy of Catherine, who prevails over her in youth and beauty just as Saint Francis surpasses in holiness all the other blessed ones. Ah, M. Jacques! Catherine in America! Such are the strange ways of Providence. Alas! our holy religion is true, and King David was right in saying that we are like the grass of the field—is not Catherine at the spittle? The stones on which I am sitting are happier man I, notwithstanding that I wear the signs of a Christian and a monk. Catherine at the spittle!

He sobbed again. I waited till the torrent of his sorrow had passed away, and then asked him if he had any news of my parents.

"M. Jacques," he replied, "’tis they who have sent me to you, bearer of a pressing message. I must tell you that they are not very happy, drinking and gambling all the days God has given him. And savoury fumes of roasting geese and fowls do not now arise to the signboard it. Where are the times when the smell of your father’s cookshop perfumed the Rue Saint Jacques, from the _Little Bacchus_ to the _Three Maids_? Since yonder sorcerer visited it, everything wastes away, beasts and men, in consequence of the spell he has thrown on it. And vengeance divine is manifest there since that fat beginning of the evil, inaugurated by M. Coignard, who prides himself on the depths of his knowledge, and the distinction of his manners. Pride is the spring of all evil. Your pious mother was very wrong, M. Jacques, not to have been satisfied with such teaching as
I charitably gave you, and which would have made you fit to
superintend the cooking, to manage the larding, and to carry the
banner of the guild after the demise, the funeral service and the
obsequies of your worthy father, which cannot be very far off, as
all life is transitory and he drinks to excess."

It may be easily understood how sorely I was afflicted by this news.
My tears and those of Friar Ange mixed freely together. However, I
inquired after my mother.

Friar Ange replied:

"God, who afflicted Rachel in Rama, has sent to your mother,
Monsieur Jacques, sundry tribulations for her good, and to chastise
my humble person, our Lord Jesus Christ from his cookshop. He has
transferred most of the purchasers of poultry and pies to the
daughter of Madame Quonion, who turns the spit at the other end of
the Rue Saint Jacques. Your mother sees with sorrow that the other
house is blessed at the cost of her own, and that her shop is now
deserted to such a degree that, figuratively speaking, moss covers
its threshold. She is sustained in her trials, firstly, by her
devotion to Saint Francis; secondly, by the consideration of the
progress of your worldly position, which enables you to wear a sword
like a man of condition."
"But this second consolation has been much shaken by the constables calling this very morning at the cookshop to take you into custody, and carry you to the Bicetre Prison, to break stones for a year or you must not blame her for it; she did her duty as a Christian by M. d'Anquetil's accomplices, and gave a faithful account of all the murder and bloodshed perpetrated in the course of that terrible night. Alas! her truthfulness was of no use; she was carried to the spittel. It's downright horrible to think of it."

At this point of his story, the little friar covered his face with his hands and sobbed and cried anew.

Night had come, and I was afraid to fail in my appointment. Pulling the little friar out of the ditch, I put him on his feet, and wished him to keep me company on my walk along the Saint Germain road to my side, he asked my assistance in disentangling the mixed-up threads of his thoughts. I put him back to where the constables came to search for me at the cookshop.

"As they could not find you," he continued, "they wanted to take hidden. Your mother said the same, and took her sacred oath on it. May God forgive her, Monsieur Jacques, as evidently she perjured herself. The constables began to get cross. Your father reasoned well with them, and took them to have a drink with him, after which
they parted quite friendly. Meanwhile your mother went after me to
the _Three Maids_, where I was soliciting alms according to the
holy rules of my order. She sent me to you to warn you that
immediate flight is your only safety, as the Lieutenant of Police
would soon discover your retreat."

Listening to this sad news, I walked with a quicker step, and we
passed the bridge of Neuilly.

On the rather steep hill leading to the circus, the elms of which
soon became visible, the little friar said with a dying voice:

"Your mother particularly asked me to warn you of the danger you are
in, and handed to me a little bag she had secreted under her dress.
I cannot find it," he added, after having felt all over his body.
"How do you expect me to find anything after losing Catherine? She
was devoted to Saint Francis, and lavish of alms, and now they have
treated her like a harlot, and will shave her head; it's
heartbreaking to think that she will look like a milliner's doll,
and be shipped in that state to America, where she runs the risk of
dying by fever and being eaten by cannibal savages."

When he ended this discourse with a sigh we had reached the circus.
To the left, the inn of the _Red Horse_ showed its roof over a
double row of elms, its dormer windows with their pulleys, while
under the foliage the gateway was to be seen wide open.
I slackened my walk, and the little friar sat down on the roots of a
tree.

"Friar Ange," I said to him, "you mentioned a satchel my dear mother
handed you for me."

"Quite right; she wished me so to do," replied the little Capuchin,
"and I have put it somewhere so safely that I cannot remember where,
and you ought to know, Monsieur Jacques, that I could not have lost
it for any other reason but from too much carefulness."

I rather sharply said that I did not believe he had lost the
satchel, and should he not find it at once I would search for it
myself.

He understood and, sighing deeply, brought out from under his frock
a little bag made of coloured calico, and handed it to me. It
contained a crown piece and a medal with the effigy of the Black
Virgin of Chartres, which I kissed fervently, shedding tears of
tenderness and repentance. The little friar took out of his large
pockets a parcel of coloured prints and prayers, badly illuminated,
made a rapid selection, and gave me two or three of them, those he
considered the most useful to pilgrims, travellers, and all
wandering people, saying:
"They are blessed and of good effect against danger of death and sickness. You have only to recite the text printed on them, or to lay them on the skin of your body, I give them to you, M. Jacques, for the love of God. Do not forget to give me an alms. Keep in mind that I beg in the name of Saint Francis. He'll protect you, without fail, if you assist the most unworthy of his sons, and that is precisely myself."

Listening to his speech, I saw in the doubtful twilight a post-chaise and four come out of the gateway of the _Red Horse_ inn, heard the whips cracking and the horses pawing the ground when the driver stopped on the highroad, close to the tree on the roots of which Friar Ange was sitting. It was not an ordinary post-chaise, but a very large, clumsy vehicle, having room to seat four, and a small coupe in front. I looked at it for a minute or two, when up the hill came M. d'Anquetil, with Jahel, carrying several parcels under her cloak and wearing a mob-cap. M. Coignard followed them, loaded with five or six books wrapped up in an old thesis. When they reached the carriage the post boys lowered the carriage steps, and my beautiful mistress, raising her skirt like a balloon, ascended into the carriage, pushed from behind by M. d'Anquetil.

I ran towards them and shouted:

"Stop, Jahel! Stop, sir!"
But the seducer only pushed the perfidious girl the more, and her charming rounded figure quickly disappeared. Preparing himself to climb after her, one foot on the steps, he looked at me with surprise.

"Oh! Monsieur Tournebroche! You would then take from me all my mistresses! Jahel after Catherine. Do you do it for a wager?"

But I did not hear what he said, and continued to call Jahel, the while Friar Ange, having risen from his seat under the elm-tree, came up to the carriage door, and offered to M. d'Anquetil pictures of Saint Roch, a prayer to be recited during the shoeing of a horse, another against fever, and asked him for charity with a mournful voice.

I should have stopped there the whole of the night, calling Jahel, if my good tutor had not got hold of me and pushed me inside the large compartment of the carriage, which he entered after me.

let us travel in the large compartment. I have been looking for you, Tournebroche, and, not to withhold anything from you, had quite made up my mind to depart without you when, happily, I discovered you in company with the Capuchin under yonder elm-tree. We could not delay
everywhere for us. He has a long arm, having lent money to the
king."

The carriage was moving on, but Friar Ange clung to the door, with
hand outstretched, begging pitifully.

I sank into the cushions.

"Alas, sir," I exclaimed, "did you not tell me that Jahel was locked
in threefold?"

"My son," replied my good master, "not too much confidence may be
placed in women, who always play their tricks on the jealous and
their locks. If the door is closed, they jump out of the window. You
have no idea, my dear Tournebroche, of the cunning of women. The
ancients have reported admirable examples of it, and many a one
you'll find in Apuleius, where they are sprinkled like salt in the
'Metamorphoses.' But the best example is given in an Arabian tale
recently brought to Europe by M. Galand, and which I will tell you.

"Schariar, Sultan of Tartary, and his brother, Schahzenan, walked
one day on the seashore, when they saw rise suddenly above the waves
a black column, moving towards the shore. They recognised it as a
genie of the most ferocious kind, in the form of an immensely tall
giant, carrying on his head a glass case locked with four iron
locks. Both were seized with dismay, so much so that they hid
themselves in the fork of a tree standing near. The genie however
came on shore, and brought the glass case to the tree where the two
princes were hiding. Then he lay down and soon went to sleep. His
outstretched legs reached the sea, and his breathing shook earth and
heaven. During his terrifying repose the cover of the glass case
rose by itself, and out of it came a woman with a majestic body and
of the most perfect beauty. She raised her head--"

Here I interrupted his narrative, which I had hardly-listened to,
and exclaimed:

"Ah! sir, what do you think Jahel and M. d'Anquetil are saying at

"I don't know," replied my dear tutor: "it's their business, not
ours. But let me finish the Arabian tale, which is full of sense.
You've interrupted me inconsiderately, Tournebroche, at the very
moment when the damsel, looking up, discovered the two princes in
the tree. She made them a sign to come down; but desirous as they
were to respond to the appeal of a person of so much beauty, they
were afraid to approach so terrible a giant. Seeing that they
hesitated she said to them in an undertone: 'Come down at once, or I
wake up the genie.' Her resolute and resolved countenance made them
understand that it was not a vain threat, and that the safest, as
also the most pleasant, thing to do was to go down without delay,
which they did as quietly as possible, so as not to wake the giant.
The lady, taking their hands, led them somewhat farther away under
the trees, and gave them to understand very clearly that she was
ready at once to give herself to both. Gracefully they accepted the
beauty's offer, and as they were men of courage, fear did not spoil
their enjoyment. Having obtained from both what she had wished for,
and seeing that each of the two princes wore a ring, she asked them
for their rings. Returning to the glass case where she lived, she
took out of it a chaplet of rings, and showed it to the princes.

"Do you know what is the meaning of this chaplet of rings? They are
those of all the men for whom I have had the same kindness as for
you. Their number, all told, is ninety-eight. I keep them as
souvenirs, for that same reason, and to complete the century I have
asked for yours. And now to-day I have had a full hundred lovers, in
spite of the vigilance and care of yonder giant, who never leaves
me. He may lock me in the glass case as much as he likes, and hide
me in the depths of the sea. I deceive him as often as I please."

"That ingenious apologue," added my good tutor, "shows you that the
women of the Orient, who are shut up and cloistered, are as cunning
as their sisters of the Occident, who are free of their movements.
Whenever a woman wants something there is no husband, lover, father,
uncle, or tutor able to prevent her carrying out her will. And
therefore, my dear boy, you ought not to be surprised that to
deceive that old Mordecai was but child's play for Jahel, whose
perverse spirit is made up of all the cuteness of our she-geldings
and the perfidy of the Orient. I guess her to be as ardent in
sensual pleasure, as greedy after gold and silver; altogether a
worthy descendant of the race of Aholah and Aholibah.

"She is of an acid and mordant beauty, and I do not deny that
somehow she excites me, although age, sublime meditations, and the
miseries of an agitated life have sufficiently mortified in me the
lust of the flesh. You're suffering over the success of M.
d'Anquetil's adventure with her, wherefore I reckon that you feel
much more than I do the sharp tooth of desire, and that jealousy is
tearing you. And that's the reason you blame an action, irregular
certainly, contrary to vulgar propriety, but withal indifferent in
character, or at least not adding much to the universal evil.
Inwardly you condemn me for having had a part in it, and you fancy
you defend the principle of chaste living when you do nothing except
from the prompting of your passions. Such is the way, my dear boy,
that we colour for the use of our own eyes our worst instincts.
Human morals have no other origin. Confess, however, that it would
have been a pity to leave such a fine girl for a single day longer
with that old lunatic. Acknowledge that M. d'Anquetil, young and
handsome, is a better mate for such a delicious creature, and resign
yourself to accept what cannot be altered. Such wisdom is difficult
to practise; but it would have been more difficult still, had your
own mistress been taken from you. In such a case you'd feel the iron
teeth torture your flesh, filling your soul with images odious and
precise. This consideration, my boy, ought to ease your present
sufferings. Besides, life is full of labour and pain. It is this
which evokes in us the just hope of an eternal beatitude."
Thus spoke my good tutor, while the elms of the king's highway passed quickly before our eyes. I did not let him know that he irritated my griefs in trying to soothe them, and that he, without being aware of it, had laid his finger on my wound.

Our first stoppage was at Juvisy, where we arrived in the rain early in the morning. Entering the post inn I found Jahel in the corner of the fireplace, where five or six fowls were roasting on a spit. She was warming her feet, and showed part of a silken stocking, which was a great trouble to me, because it brought her leg to my mind. I seemed to see all the beauty of her satin skin, the down, and all other striking circumstances. M. d'Anquetil was leaning on the back of the chair whereon she was sitting, holding her cheeks with his hands. He called her his soul and his life, asked her if she was hungry, and on her saying yes, he went out to give the necessary orders.

Remaining alone with the unfaithful one I looked in her eyes, which reflected the flames of the fire.

"Ah! Jahel," I exclaimed, "I am very unhappy; you have betrayed me, and you no longer love me."

"Who says that I do not love you any more?" she asked, and looked at
me with her velvety eyes of flame.

"Alas! mademoiselle, your conduct shows it sufficiently."

"But, Jacques, could you envy the trousseau of Dutch linen and the godroon plate that the gentleman is to present me with! I only ask for your forbearance till he has fulfilled his promises, and after that you'll see that I am still to you as I was at the Croix-des-Sablons."

"And in the meantime, Jahel? Alas! he will enjoy your favours."

"I feel," she replied, "that that will be a trifle, and that nothing will efface the strength of the feeling you have inspired me with. Do not torment yourself with such mere nothings; they are only of value by your idea of them."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "my idea of them is horrible, and I am really afraid that I shall not be able to survive your treachery."

She looked at me with a somewhat mocking sympathy, and said with a smile:

"Believe me, my friend, neither of us will die of it. Think,
Jacques, that I am in want of plate and linen. Be prudent, do not show the feelings that agitate you, and I promise to reward you for your discretion, later on."

This hope softened somewhat my poignant grief. The innkeeper's wife laid on the table the lavender-scented cloth, the pewter plates, goblets and pitchers. I was very hungry, and when M. d'Anquetil, in eat a morsel with him, I willingly sat down between Jahel and my dear old tutor. We were afraid of being followed, so after having put away three omelets and a couple of spring chickens we resumed our journey. We resolved, seeing the danger of pursuit, to pass every halting place without stopping as far as Sens, where we decided to stay the night.

My imagination went horribly to that night at Sens, thinking that there Jahel's treachery would be completed. And so much was I troubled by those but too legitimate apprehensions that I listened with but half an ear to the discourse of my good master, to whom every trifling incident of our journey suggested the most admirable reflections.

My jealous fears were not groundless. We alighted at the best inn at Sens, that paltry hostelry of _The Armed Man_. Supper hardly over, M. d'Anquetil took Jahel with him to his room, which was next to mine. You may believe that I could not enjoy a wink of sleep. Jumping out of bed at daybreak, I left my chamber of torture. I
seated myself under the waggoner's porch, where the postboys drank white wine and played the deuce with the servants. I remained there two or three hours contemplating my misery. The horses were already harnessed when Jahel appeared under the porch, shivering all over, under her black cloak. I could not bear the sight of her, and turned my moistened eyes away. She came to me, sat close to me on the stone, and told me sweetly not to be disconsolate, as what I thought monstrous was but a trifle; that one has to be reasonable; that I was too much a man of spirit to want a woman for myself alone; that if one wished for that one had to take a housekeeper without brains or beauty, and even then it was a big risk to run.

"And now, Jacques," she added somewhat hurriedly, "I must leave you, and quickly; I can hear the steps of M. d'Anquetil descending the stairs."

She pressed a hasty kiss on my burning lips, giving and prolonging it with the violent voluptuousness of fear, as the spurred boots of her sweetheart made the wooden steps of the stairs creak, and the intriguer was in fear of losing her Dutch linen trousseau and her godroon silver pot.

asked Jahel if it would not be more pleasant to travel all four together in the large compartment, and I recognised that that was the first effect of his intimacy with Jahel, and that the full satisfaction of his desires had left it less agreeable to be alone.
with her. My good old tutor had taken care to provide himself with
five or six bottles of white wine from the cellar of _The Armed
Man_, which he laid under the cushions, and which we drank to
overcome the monotony of the journey.

At midday we arrived at Joigny, a neat and pretty town. Foreseeing
that my ready money would be all used before we could arrive at the
end of our journey, and finding the idea intolerable of letting M.
d'Anquetil pay my part in the travelling expenses unless I was
compelled to do so by the most unavoidable necessity, I resolved to
sell a ring and a medallion, gifts from my mother, and went about
the town in quest of a jeweller ready to buy them. I discovered one
in the square opposite the church, who sold crosses and chains in a
shop under the sign of _The Good Faith_. What was my astonishment
to find in this very shop, before the counter, my good master, showing
to the jeweller five or six little diamonds, and asking the shopman what
price he would offer for those stones. I recognised them immediately as
those which M. d'Asterac had shown us.

his spectacles said:

"Sir, these stones would be of great value if they were genuine. But
they are not, and no touchstone is needed to find that out. These
are nothing but glass beads, good only for children to play with, or
to be used in the crown of a village Holy Virgin, where they would
have a charming effect."
Having listened to that reply, M. Coignard picked up his diamonds and turned his back on the jeweller. In so doing he became aware of my presence, and looked rather confused over it. I brought my business to an end promptly, and meeting my dear old tutor at the shop door I mildly reproached him with the wrong he had done to himself, as well as to his companions, by taking these stones, which for his greater guilt might have been real.

"My son," he replied, "God, to keep me innocent of crime, willed these stones to be false and a mere sham. I avow to you that I did wrong to take them. You seem sorry about it; it's a leaf of my life's book I should like to tear out, like some others not so neat and immaculate as they ought to be. I understand deeply all that is reprehensible in my conduct. But no man has a right to be entirely cast down when he is faulty, and just now, and in this special case, I think I ought to say of myself, in the words of an illustrious learned man: 'Consider your great frailty, of which you make but too often a show; and withal it is for your salvation that such things should rise up in the road of your life. Not everything is lost for you if oftentimes you find yourself afflicted and rudely tempted; and if you succumb to temptation you're a man, not a god; you're flesh and blood, not an angel. How could you expect to remain always in a state of virtue when the angels in heaven and the first man in Eden could not remain faithful to virtue?' Such are, my dear Tournebroche, the only conversations adapted to the present state of my soul. But, after this unhappy occurrence, which I do not wish to
dwell on longer, is it not time to return to the inn, there to
drink, in company with the postboys, who are simpleminded and of
easy intercourse, one or more bottles of country wine?"

I quite agreed, and we soon reached the hostelry, where we found M.
d'Anquetil, who, returning like ourselves from the town, had brought
some playing cards. He played a game of piquet with my tutor, and
when we resumed our journey they continued to play in the carriage.
That rage for play which occupied my rival gave me occasion for an
undisturbed conversation with Jahel, who liked very much to chat
with me, since she was left to herself. Her talk had a kind of
bitter sweetness for me. Reproaching her for her perfidy and
unfaithfulness, I gave vent to my grief in feeble or violent
complaints.

"Alas! Jahel!" I said, "the memory and the image of your tenderness,
which made but lately my dearest delight, have become a cruel
torture to me when I think that to-day you belong to another person,
whereas formerly you were mine."

She replied:

"A woman does not behave equally to all men."

And when I prolonged my lamentations and reproaches to excess she
“I am quite aware that I have caused you some pain. But that is no reason for you to plague me a hundred times a day with your useless moans.”

M. d’Anquetil when he lost was in a bad temper and molested Jahel, while she, anything but patient, threatened to write to her Uncle rather pleasant to me, and gave me no small hopes; but after a repeated renewal of them I became rather anxious, as they were always followed by impetuous reconciliations, which exploded suddenly into kisses and lascivious whisperings. M. d’Anquetil could hardly bear my presence. He had on the other hand a vivid tenderness for my good tutor, which he well deserved for his always joyful humour and the incomparable elegance of his mind. They played and drank together with a daily growing sympathy. Knee to knee, so as to steady the table whereon they played cards they laughed, bantered, chaffed each other, and if occasionally they became angry, and threw the cards in one another’s face, and swore at each other with such oaths as would have made the boxers of Port Saint Nicolas or the bargemen of the Mail blush, M. d’Anquetil swore by God Almighty, the Holy Virgin and all the saints, that in all his life he had never remained clearly evident that he liked my good tutor; and it was a real pleasure, as soon as one of these quarrels had terminated, to listen to his laughter as he said:
have to hunt with us. In the remotest corner of the Perche we will
look out for a horse strong enough to carry your weight, and you'll

It is, besides, high time you had a new suit of clothes; your

Jahel also inclined towards the irresistible charm with which my
dear tutor influenced all mankind. She made up her mind to repair,
if possible, all the disorders of his dress. First she tore up one
of her gowns and used the pieces to patch up the coat and breeches
of my venerable friend; she also made him a present of a laced
handkerchief to use as a band. My good tutor accepted these little
presents with a dignity full of graciousness. More than once I had
occasion to observe that he was a gallant when talking to women. He
took a lively interest in them without ever showing the slightest
indiscretion. He praised them with the science of a connoisseur,
giving them counsels out of his long experience, diffusing over them
the unlimited indulgence of a heart always ready to forgive any kind
of human weakness, and withal, never omitted any occasion to make
them understand the great and useful truths.

We arrived on the fourth day of our journey at Montbard, and
alighted on a hill, from which we could overlook the whole town,
which appeared in a small space as if it had been painted on canvas
by a clever limner anxious to reproduce every detail.
"Look," my dear old tutor said, "on these steeples, towers, roofs, which rise up out of the green. It is a town, and without actually searching for its history and name, it is well to contemplate it as the worthiest subject of meditation we may encounter on the surface of the world. As a fact any town furnishes material for speculations of the spirit. The postboys tell us that yonder is Montbard, a place utterly unknown to me. Nevertheless I am not afraid to affirm, by analogy, that the people living therein resemble ourselves, are egotistic cowards, perfidious gluttons, dissolute. Otherwise they could not be human beings and descendants of Adam, at once miserable and venerable, and in whom all our instincts, down to the most ignoble, have their august origin. The only possible doubtful matter with yonder people, is to know if they are more inclined to food or to procreation. But a doubt is hardly permissible; a philosopher will soundly opine that hunger is for these unhappy ones a more pressing necessity than love. In the greenness of my youth I believed that the human animal is before all things inclined to sexual intercourse. But that was a wanton error, as it is quite clear that human beings are more interested in conserving their own life than in giving life to others. Hunger is the axis of humanity; but after all, as it seems to be useless to discuss the matter any further, I'll say, with your permission, that the life of mortals has two poles--hunger and love. And here it is that one has to open ears and soul! These hideous creatures who are born only to devour or to embrace furiously, one the other, live together under the sway of laws which precisely interdict their satisfying that double and fundamental concupiscence. These ingenious animals, having become
citizens, voluntarily impose on themselves all sorts of privations; they respect the property of their neighbours, which is prodigious, if you take their avaricious nature into consideration; they observe the rules of modesty, which is an enormous hypocrisy, but generally consists in but seldom speaking of that of which they think without ceasing. Then, let's be true and honest, gentlemen, when we look on a woman, we do not attach our thoughts to the beauties of her soul or the pleasantness of her spirit; when we approach her we have in view principally her natural form. And the amiable creatures know it so well that they have their dresses made by the fashionable dressmakers and take good care not only not to veil their charms, but to exaggerate them by all sorts of artifices. And Mademoiselle Jahel, who certainly is not a savage, would be distressed if, on her, art had gained the advantage over nature to such a degree as to prevent the fulness of her bosom and the roundness of her thighs being seen. And so it is that, since Adam's fall, we see mankind hungry and incontinent. Why do they, when assembled in towns, impose on themselves privations of all kinds, and submit to a rule of life contrary to their own corrupted nature? It is said that they find it advantageous, and that they feel that their individual security depends on such restriction. But that would be to suppose them to have too much reasoning power, and, what's more, a false reasoning, because it is absurd to save one's life at the expense of all that makes it reasonable and valuable. It is further said that fear keeps them obedient, and it is true that prison, gallows and wheels are excellent assurers of submission to existing laws. But it is also certain that prejudice conspires with the laws, and it is not easy to see how compulsion could have been universally established. Laws
are said to be the necessary conformity of things; but we have
become aware that that conformity is contradictory to nature, and
far from being necessary. Therefore, gentlemen, I'll look for the
source and origin of the laws not in man, but outside man, and I
should think that, being strangers to mankind, they derive from God,
who not only formed with His own mysterious hands earth and water,
plants and animals, but the people also, and human society. I'm
inclined to believe that the laws come direct from Him, from His
first decalogue, and that they are inhuman because they are divine.
It must be well understood that I here consider the codes in their
principles and in their essence, without taking note of their
ridiculous diversities and their pitiable complications. The details
of customs and prescriptions, the written as well as the oral, are
man's work, and to be despised. But do not let us be afraid to
recognise that the town is a divine institution. As a result, every
government ought to be theocratic. One priest, famous for the part
he took in the declaration of 1682, M. Bossuet, was not in error,
when he wanted to form the rules of polity after the maxims of the
Scriptures; and if he has pitiably failed in this endeavour, you
have to accuse the weakness of his genius alone, which was too
narrowly attached to examples taken from the books of Judges and
Kings, without seeing that God, when He works on this world,
proportions Himself to time and space, and knows the difference
between Frenchmen and Israelites. The city established under His
ture and sole legitimate authority will not be the town of Joshua,
Saul and David; it will rather be the town of the gospels, the town
of the poor, where working-man and prostitute will not be humiliated
by the Pharisee. Oh, sirs, how excellent it would be to extract from
the Scriptures a polity more beautiful and more saintly than that
which was extracted therefrom by that rocky and sterile M. Bossuet!
What a city, more harmonious than that erected by the sounds of the
lyre of Orpheus, could be built on the maxims of Jesus Christ, on
the day when His priests, no more sold to emperors and kings,
manifest themselves as the true princes of the people!"

While, standing round my good master, we listened to his discourse,
we were, without noticing it, surrounded by a troop of beggars, who,
limping, shivering, spitting, frightening the sparrows, shook their
swellings and deformities, spreading evil smells and suffocating us
with their blessings. They struggled passionately for some small
silver pieces M. d'Anquetil threw among them, fell to the ground,
and rolled in the dust.

"It's painful to look on these people," said Jahel with a sigh.

"That pity," said M. Coignard, "suits you like a jewel,
Mademoiselle Jahel; your sighs ornament your bosom heaving under
them like a breath each of us would like to respire from your lips.
But allow me to say that such tenderness, which is not less touching
from being an interested one, troubles you inwardly by a comparison
of yonder miserable beings with yourself, and by the instinctive
idea that your young body touches, so to say, this hideous,
ulcerated and mutilated flesh, as in truth it is bound and attached
to them in as far as members of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In
consequence you cannot look on such corruption of a human body
without seeing it at the same time as a possibility of your own
body. And these wretches have shown themselves to you like prophets,
announcing that sickness and death are the lot of the family of Adam
in this world. For this very reason you sighed, mademoiselle.

"As a fact, there is not the slightest reason to believe yonder
ulcerated and verminous beggars less happy than kings and queens. It
must not be said that they are poorer, if, as it appears, that
farthing picked up by that crippled woman, and which she presses on
her heart in frantic joy, seems to her more precious than a pearl
collar is to the mistress of a prince-bishop of Cologne and
Salzburg. To really understand our spiritual and true interests we
should rather envy the life of that cripple who crawls towards us on
his hands than that of the King of France or the Emperor of Germany,
Being equal before God, they perhaps have peace in their hearts,
which the other has not, and the invaluable treasure of innocence.
But hold up your petticoats, mademoiselle, for fear that you
introduce the vermin with which I see they are covered."

Such was my good tutor's speech, and we all listened willingly.

At the distance of three leagues from Montbard, one of the harnesses
broke, and, the postboys having failed to bring rope with them, we
were detained on the road, as the place of the accident was far from
any human dwelling. My good master and M. d'Anquetil whiled away the
time by playing and sympathetic quarrels, of which they had made a
habit. While the young nobleman was surprised to see his opponent
turn up the king oftener than seemed possible by the laws of chance,
Jahel, full of emotion, asked me in a whisper if I could not see
behind us a carriage in one of the turnings of the road. Looking
back to the place she indicated, I could actually see a kind of
Gothic vehicle of a ridiculous and strange form.

"Yonder carriage," said Jahel, "stopped at the same moment as ours.
That means that we are followed. I am curious to discover the
features of the people travelling in that vehicle. I feel very
uneasy about it. Does not one of the travellers wear a very narrow
and high headgear? The carriage very much resembles the one in which
my uncle brought me, when a child, to Paris after he had killed the
Portuguese. It remained, I believe, in one of the coach-houses at
the Castle of Sablons. It really seems to be the same, of horrible
memory, because I remember my uncle in it, fuming with rage. You
cannot conceive, Jacques, how violent his hate is. I myself had to
bear his rage the day I came away. He locked me in my room and
I think what his rage must have been when he found my room empty and
the sheets still attached to the window by which I left to fly with
you."

"You ought to say with M. d'Anquetil."

"How punctilious you are! Did we not depart together? Yonder
carriage torments me, it is so much like my uncle's."

"Be sure, Jahel, that it's the carriage of some honest Burgundian,
who goes about his business and does not think of us."

"You don't know," said Jahel. "I'm afraid."

"You cannot fear, however, that your uncle could run after you in
his state of decrepitude. He does not occupy himself with anything
but cabala and Hebraic dreams."

"You don't know him," she replied, and sighed. "He is occupied with
naught but myself. He loves me as much as he hates the rest of the
universe. He loves me in a manner--"

"In a manner?"

"--In all the manners--in short he loves me."

"Jahel, I shudder to hear you. Good heavens: that Mosaide loves you
without that disinterestedness which is so admirable in an old man,
and so well suited for an uncle? Tell me all, Jahel-all!"

"Oh! you can tell it better than I, Jacques."
"I remain stupid. At his age, is it possible?"

"My dear friend, your skin is white, and your soul also. Everything astonishes you. That candour is your most striking charm. You're deceived by anyone who wants to deceive you. They make you believe that Mosaide is a hundred and thirty years old; but he is hardly older than sixty. They told you that for years he lived in the Great Pyramid, but as a fact he has been a banker at Lisbon. And it depended only on me to pass in your eyes as a Salamander."

"What, Jahel, do you tell me the truth? Your uncle--"

Coignard to be his rival. He disliked him instinctively, at first sight. But it is a great deal worse since he overheard a few words I'm sure he hates him now as the cause of my flight and my elopement. For, after all, I've been abducted, my friend; a fact that ought to enhance my worth in your eyes. I was certainly very ungrateful to leave so good an uncle. But I could not endure any longer the slavery he kept me in. And I also had an ardent wish to become rich, and it is very natural, is it not, to wish for all the good things when one is young and pretty? We have but one life, and that is short enough. No one has taught me all the fine lies about the immortality of the soul."
"Alas! Jahel," I exclaimed, in an ardour of love, provoked by her own coolness. "Alas! I did not want anything else with you at the Chateau des Sablons. What was wanting for your happiness?"

She made me a sign to show that M. d'Anquetil was observing us. The harness had been repaired and our carriage rolled on again along the road bordered on both sides by vineyards.

We stopped at Nuits to sup and to sleep. My dear tutor drank half-a-dozen bottles of Burgundy, which warmed up his eloquence marvellously. M. d'Anquetil kept him company, glass in hand, but to hold his own in conversation also was a thing of which this nobleman was not quite capable.

The meat was good, the beds were bad. M. Coignard slept in the lower chamber, under the stairs, in the same feather bed with the host and his wife, and all three thought they would be suffocated. M. d'Anquetil with Jahel took the upstairs room, where the bacon and the onions were suspended on hooks driven into the ceiling. I myself climbed by means of a ladder to a loft and stretched out on a bundle of straw. Being awakened by the moonlight, a ray of which fell into my eyes, I suddenly saw Jahel in her night-cap coming through the trap door. At a cry that I gave she put her finger to her lips.

"Hush!" she said to me, "Maurice is as drunk as a stevedore and a
marquis. He sleeps the sleep of Noah."

"Who is Maurice?" I inquired, rubbing my eyes.

"It's Anquetil. Who did you think it was?"

"Nobody, but I did not know that his name was Maurice."

"It's not long that I knew it myself, but never mind."

"You are right, Jahel, it's of no importance."

She was in her chemise, and the moonlight fell like drops of milk on her naked shoulders. She slipped down at my side, called me by the sweetest of names and by the most horrid of coarse names, in whispers sounding out of her lips like heavenly murmurs. And then she became dumb, and kissed me with the kisses she alone was able to give, and in comparison with which the caresses of any other woman were but an insipidity.

The constraint and the silence enhanced the furious tension of my nerves. Surprise, the joy of revenge, and, perhaps, a somewhat perverse jealousy inflamed my desires. The elastic firmness of her flesh and the supple violence of the movements wherewith she
enveloped me demanded, promised, and deserved the most ardent caresses. We became aware, during that wonderful night, of voluptuousness the abyss of which borders on suffering.

When I came down to the innyard in the morning I met M. d'Anquetil, who, now that I had deceived him, appeared to me less odious than formerly. On his part he felt better inclined to me than he had yet done since we started on our travels. He talked familiarly to me, with sympathy and confidence; his only reproach was that I did not show to Jahel all the regard and attention she deserved, and did not give her the care an honest man ought to bestow on every woman.

"She complains," he said, "of your want of civility. Take care, my dear Tournebroche; I should be sorry for a difference to arise between her and yourself. She's a pretty girl, and loves me immensely."

The carriage had rolled on for more than an hour when Jahel put her head out of the coach window and said to me:

"The other carriage has reappeared. I should like to discover the features of the two men who occupy it, but I cannot."

I replied that at such a distance, and in the morning mist, it would be impossible to discern them.
"But," she exclaimed, "those are not faces."

"What else do you want them to be?" I questioned, and burst out laughing.

Now, in her turn, she inquired of me what silly idea had sprung into my brain to laugh so stupidly and said:

"They are not faces, they are masks. Yonder two men follow us and are masked."

I informed M. d'Anquetil that seemingly an ugly carriage followed us. But he asked me to let him alone.

"If all the hundred thousand devils were on our track," he exclaimed, "I should not care a rap for it as I have enough to do to in the most artful way, and who robs me of my money. I almost suspect, Tournebroche, you call my attention to yonder coach for the purpose of aiding and abetting that old sharper. Cannot a carriage be on the same road as ours without causing you anxiety?"

Jahel whispered to me:
"I predict, Jacques, that yonder carriage brings trouble for us. I have a presentiment of it, and my presentiments have never failed to come true."

"Do you want to make me believe that you have the gift of prophecy?"

Gravely, she replied:

"Yes; I have."

"What, you are a prophetess!" I cried, smiling. "Here is something strange!"

"You sneer and you doubt because you have never seen a prophetess so near at hand. How did you wish them to look?"

"I thought that they must be virgins."

"That's not necessary," she replied, with assurance.

The threatening carriage had disappeared at a turning of the road. But Jahel's uneasiness had, without his acknowledging it, impressed M. d'Anquetil, who ordered the postboys to hurry their horses,
promising them extra good tips. And by an excess of care he passed
reserve in the bottom of the carriage.

The postillions made their horses feel the stimulus that the wine
gave to them.

"You can calm yourself, Jahel," said he; "at the speed we are going
that antique coach, drawn by the horses of the Apocalypse, will
never catch us."

"If only it would last!" said Jahel.

We saw the vineyards on our right disappear rapidly. On the left the
Tournus. The town itself rose on the other side of the river on a
hill crowned by the walls of an abbey, proud as a fortress.

which are strewn like so many gems on the robe of ecclesiastical
Gaul. If it had pleased God that my destiny should match my
character I should have lived an obscure life, gay and sweet, in one
of these abodes. There is no other religious order I hold in such
high esteem, for their doctrines as well as for their morals, as the
Benedictines. They have admirable libraries. Happy he who wears
their habit and follows their holy rules! It may be from the inconvenience I feel at this moment in being shaken to pieces in this carriage, which no doubt will very soon be upset by sinking into one of the many holes of this confounded road, or it may perhaps be the effect of age, which is the time for retreat and grave thinking; whatever be the cause I wish more ardently than ever to seat myself at a table in one of those venerable galleries, where books plenty and choice are assembled in quiet and silence. I prefer their entertainment to that of men, and my dearest wish is to wait, in the work of the spirit, for the hour in which it will please God to call me from this earth. I shall write history, and by preference that of the Romans at the decline of the Republic, because it is full of great actions and examples. I'll divide my zeal between Cicero, Saint John Chrysostom and Boethius and my modest and fruitful life would resemble the garden of the old man of Tarentum.

"I have experienced different manners of living, and I think the best is to give oneself to study, to look on peacefully at the vicissitudes of men, and to prolong, by the spectacle of centuries and empires, the brevity of our days. But order and continuity are needed. And that's the very thing that has always been wanting in my existence. If, as I hope, I am able to disentangle myself from the bad position I'm in just now, I'll do my best to find an honourable and safe asylum in some learned abbey where _bonnes lettres_ are held in honour and respect. I can see myself there already, enjoying the illustrious peace of science. Could I obtain the good offices of the Sylph assistants of whom that old fool d'Asterac
speaks, and who appear, it is said, when they are invoked by the cabalistic name of AGLA--"

At the very moment my dear tutor spoke these words a violent shock brought down a rain of glass on our heads, in such confusion that I felt myself blinded, as well as suffocated under Jahel's petticoats, while the abbe complained in a smothered voice that M. d'Anquetil's sword had broken the remainder of his teeth, and over my head Jahel screamed fit to tear to pieces all the air of the Burgundian valleys. M. d'Anquetil, in rough, barrack-room style, promised to get the postboys hanged. When at last I was able to rise, he had already jumped out through a broken window. We followed him, my dear tutor and I, by the same exit, and then all three of us pulled Jahel out of the overturned vehicle. No harm had been done to her, and her first thought was to adjust her head-dress.

"Thank God!" said my tutor, "I have not suffered any other damage than the loss of a tooth, and that was neither whole nor white. Time had already effected its decay." M. d'Anquetil, legs astride and arms akimbo, examined the carriage.

"The rascals," he said, "have put it in a nice state. If the horses no good for anything else but to play spillikins with."

The horses had fallen topsy-turvy, one on the other, and were
kicking furiously. In a heap of croups and legs and steaming bellies, one of the postboys was buried, his boots in the air. The other was spitting blood in the ditch, where he had been thrown. M. d'Anquetil shouted to them:

"Idiots! I really don't know why I do not spit you on my sword."

fellow out of the midst of these horses wherein he is entangled?"

We all went to work with a will, and when the horses were freed and raised we were able to discover the extent of the damage done. One of the springs was broken, one of the wheels also, and one of the horses lame.

"Fetch a smith," ordered M. d'Anquetil.

"There is no smith in the neighbourhood," was the postboy's reply.

"A mechanic of some kind."

"There is none."

"A saddler."
"There is no saddler."

We looked round. To the west the vineyards extended to the horizon their long peaceful lines. On the hill smoke came out of a chimney near a steeple. On the other side, the Saone, veiled by a light mist, lost itself slowly in the calm running of her flowing waters. The shadows of the poplars elongated themselves on the banks. The shrill cry of a bird pierced the deep silence.

"Where are we?" asked M. d'Anquetil.

"At two full leagues from Tournus," replied the postillion, spitting

And, extending his arm towards the smoking chimney:

"Up there, that village ought to be Vallars, but it's not up to much."

"Blast you!" roared M. d'Anquetil.

While the horses struggled we went near the carriage, which was lying sadly on its side.
The little postboy who had been taken out from the midst of the horses said:

"As to the spring, that could be mended by a strong piece of wood. It will only make the carriage shake you more. But there is the broken wheel! And, worst of all, my hat is under it, smashed to pieces."

"Damn your hat!" said M. d'Anquetil.

"Your lordship may not be aware that it was quite new," was the postboy's meek reply.

"And the window glasses are broken!" sighed Jahel, seated on a portmanteau, at the side of the road.

"If it were but the glasses," said M. Coignard, "a remedy could soon be found by lowering the blinds, but the bottles cannot be in the same state as the windows. I must look to it as soon as the coach can be raised. I am also in fear for my Boethius, which I had placed under the cushions with some other good books."

"It does not matter," said M. d'Anquetil. "I have the cards in my
waistcoat pocket. But shall we not get any supper?"

has given to the use of men the animals who crowd the earth, the sky
and the water. I am an excellent angler; the care necessary to
allure the fish particularly suits my meditative mind, and the River
Orne has seen me managing my line while meditating on the eternal
verities. Do not trouble over your supper. If Mademoiselle Jahel
will be good enough to give me one of the pins which keep her
garments together I'll soon make a hook of it, to enable me to fish
in yonder river, and I flatter myself I shall return before
nightfall laden with two or three carp, that we will grill over a
brushwood fire."

"I am quite aware," said Jahel, "that we are reduced to somewhat of
giving me something in exchange for it; otherwise our friendship
would be jeopardised. And that I do not want in any case."

"Then I will make an advantageous exchange, mademoiselle: I'll pay
for your pin with a kiss."

And, taking the pin out of Jahel's hand, he kissed her on both
cheeks with inconceivable courtesy, gracefulness and decency.

After having lost plenty of time, a reasonable step was at last
taken. The big postillion, who no longer spat blood, was sent to Tournus on one of the horses to bring back with him a blacksmith; the other boy was ordered to light a fire, as the air became fresh, and a sharp wind was rising.

We discovered on the road, a hundred paces from the place of our breakdown, a cliff of soft stone, the foot of which was quarried in several places. We resolved to wait in one of those caves, warming ourselves until the return of the boy sent to Tournus. The second boy tied the three remaining horses to the trunk of a tree, near our willow-tree, some string, a cork and a pin, went a-fishing as much for his philosophical and meditative inclination as for the sake of bringing us back fish. M. d Anquetil, remaining with Jahel and me in the grotto, proposed a game of _l'ombre,_ which is played by three, and which he said, being a Spanish game, was the very one for persons as adventurous as ourselves. And true it is that, in that quarry, in a deserted road, our little company would not have been unworthy to figure in some of the adventures of Don Quixote in which menials take such a strong interest. And so we played _l'ombre._ I committed a great many errors, and my impetuous partner got cross, when the noble and laughing face of my good tutor became visible at the light of our fire. He untied his handkerchief, and took out of it some four or five small fish, which he opened with his knife, decorated with the image of the late king, dressed as a Roman emperor, standing on a triumphal column; and cleaned them with dexterity, as if he had never lived anywhere else than in the midst of the fishwomen at the market. He excelled as much in trifles as
in matters of the greatest importance. Arranging the fish on the embers, he said:

"I will tell you, in all confidence, that following the river in search of a favourable place for fishing, I perceived the apocalyptic coach which frightens Mademoiselle Jahel. It stopped somewhat behind our carriage. You ought to have seen it pass by while I was fishing, and mademoiselle's soul ought to have been comforted by it."

"We have not seen it," replied Jahel.

"Then it may have moved on only after the night had become dark. But at least you heard it rumbling?"

"We have not," said Jahel.

"It is then that this night is blind as well as deaf. It is not to be supposed that yonder coach, which had not a wheel broken, not a horse lamed, would have remained standing still on the road. What for?"

"Yes, what for?" said Jahel.
"Our supper," said my good tutor, "reminds me of the simplicity of
the repasts described in the Bible, where the pious traveller
divided with an angel, on the bank of the river, the fishes of the
Tigris. But we are in want of bread, salt and wine. I'll try to take
out of our coach the provisions put there, and look if by a
fortunate chance some bottles have remained intact. There are
occasions when glass remains whole but steel is broken.
Tournebroche, my son, give me your steel; and you, mademoiselle, do
not fail to turn the grilling fish. I'll be back in a moment."

He left. His somewhat heavy tread sounded in a de crescendo, and
soon we could hear him no more.

"This very night," said M. d'Anquetil, "reminds me of the night
before the battle of Parma. You may be aware that I have served
under Villars and been in the War of Succession. I was with the
scouts. We could not see anything. That's one of the best ruses of
war. Men are sent out to reconnoitre the enemy who return without
having reconnoitred anything. But reports are drawn up, after the
battle, and then it is that the tacticians are triumphant. Thus, at
nine o'clock at night, I was sent out scouting with twelve men--"

And he gave us a narrative of the War of Succession and of his
amours in Italy; his story had lasted for well-nigh a quarter of an
hour when he exclaimed:
wine which remained in the coach."

Thinking that my dear tutor might possibly be embarrassed, I rose and went to help him. It was a moonless night, and if the sky was resplendent in the light of thousands of stars, the earth was clad in a darkness which my eyes, dazzled by the light of the flames, could not pierce.

Having walked about fifty steps on the black road. I heard a terrible cry, which did not sound as if coming from a human breast, a cry altogether unlike all cries I had heard before, a horrible cry. I ran in the direction from whence came this clamour of fatal distress. But fear and darkness checked my steps. Arrived at last at the place where our coach lay on the road, shapeless and enlarged by the night, I found my dear tutor seated on the side of the ditch, bent double. Trembling I asked him:

"What's the matter? Why did you shout?"

"Yes; why did I shout?" he said, in a new and altered voice. "I did not know I had cried out. Tournebroche, did you not see a man? He struck me in the dark, very fiercely; he gave me a blow with his fist."
"Come," I said to him, "get up, my dear master."

Having risen he fell back heavily on the ground.

I tried to raise him, and my hands became moist when I touched his breast.

"You're bleeding!"

"Bleeding? I'm a dead man. He has killed me. I thought that it was but a blow with the fist. But it's a wound, and I feel that I shall never recover from it."

"Who struck you, my dear tutor?"

"It was the Jew. I did not see him, but I know it was he. How can I know that it was the Jew, when I did not see him? Yes; how is it? What strange things! It's not to be believed, is it, Tournebroche? I have the taste of death in my mouth, which cannot be defined. It was to be, my God! But why rather here than somewhere else? That's the mystery! '_Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini--Domine exaudi orationem meam--_' "

For a short time he prayed in a low voice, then:
"Tournebroche, my son," he said to me, "take the two bottles I found in the coach and have placed here beside me. I can do no more.

Tournebroche, where do you think the wound is? It's in the back I suffer most, and it seems to me that life runs out by the legs. My spirits are going."

Murmuring these words he fainted softly in my arms. I tried to carry him, but I had only strength enough to lay him lengthwise on the ground. Opening his shirt, I discovered the wound; it was in the breast; very small, and bleeding little. I tore my wristbands to pieces and laid them on the wound; I called out, shouted for help.

Soon I thought I heard help coming from the side of Tournus, and I recognised M. d'Asterac. Unexpected as the meeting was, I did not actually feel surprised; too deeply was I the prey of the immense sorrow I felt holding in my arms, dying, that best of all masters.

"What's the matter, my son?" asked the alchemist.

killed him."

"It is true," said M. d'Asterac, "that Mosaide has come here in an old chariot in pursuit of his niece, and that I have accompanied him to exhort you, my son, to return to your employment with me. Since yesterday we came near your coach, which we saw break down just now
in a rut. At that very moment Mosaide alighted from the carriage, and it may be that he wanted to take a walk, or perhaps he made himself invisible, as he can do. I have not seen him again. It is possible that he has already found his niece to curse her; such is the intention. But he has not killed M. Coignard. It is the Elves, my son, who have killed your master, to punish him for the disclosure of their secrets. Nothing is surer than that."

"Ah! sir," I exclaimed, "what does it matter, if it was the Jew or the Elves who killed him; we must assist him."

"On the contrary, my son," replied M. d'Asterac, "it is of the greatest importance. For should he have been stricken by a human hand it would be easy for me to cure him by magic operation; but having provoked the Elves he could never escape their infallible vengeance."

As he spoke, M. d'Anquetil and Jahel, having heard my shouts, approached, with the postboy, who carried a lantern.

"What," said Jahel, "is M. Coignard unwell?"

And kneeling close to my good tutor, she raised his head and made him inhale the smell of her salts.
"Mademoiselle," I said to her, "you're the cause of his death, which
is the vengeance for your abduction. Mosaide has killed him."

From my dying master she lifted up her face pale with horror and
shining with tears.

"And you too," she said, "believe that it's easy to be a pretty girl
without causing mischief?"

"Alas!" I replied, "what you say is but too true. But we have lost
the best of men."

for his book of Boethius, and fainted again into unconsciousness.

The postboy thought it would be best to carry the wounded man to the
village of Vallars, which was only half-a-league distant.

"I'll go," he said, "to fetch the steadiest of the horses which
remain. We'll tie the poor fellow securely on it, and lead it slowly
ahead. I think him very ill. He looks exactly like the courier who
was murdered at Saint Michel on the same road, at four stages from
here, near Senecy, where my sweetheart lives. That poor devil moved
his eyelids and turned up the whites of his eyes like a bad woman,
mam'selle tickled his nose with her bottle. It's a bad sign with a wounded man; girls don't die of it when they turn their eyes up in that fashion. Your lordships know it well. And there is some distance, thank God! between the little death and the great. But it's the same turning up of the eyes... Remain, gentlemen, I'll go and fetch the horse."

"This rustic is amusing," said M. d'Anquetil, "with his turned-up eyes and his bad women. I've seen in Italy soldiers who died on the battlefield with a fixed look and eyes starting out of their head. There are no rules for dying of a wound, actually not even in the military service, where exactitude is pushed to the extreme. But will you, Tournebroche, in default of a better qualified person, present me to yonder gentleman in black, who wears diamond studs, and whom I reckon to be M. d'Asterac?"

"Ah! sir," I replied, "consider the presentation to be made. I have no other feelings but to assist my dear tutor."

"Be it so!" said M. d'Anquetil.

And approaching M. d'Asterac:

"Sir, I have taken your mistress away: I'm ready to answer for my deed."
"Sir," replied M. d'Asterac. "Grace be to heaven! I have no connection with any woman, and do not understand what you mean."

At this very moment the postboy returned with a horse. My dear tutor had slightly recovered. We lifted him up, all four of us, and put him with the greatest difficulty on the horse, where we tied him as securely as possible. And we went off. I held him on one side, M. d'Anquetil on the other. The postboy led the horse and carried the lantern. M. d'Asterac had returned to his carriage. All went well as long as we kept on the highroad; but when it became necessary to climb the small lanes of the vineyards, my dear master, slipping at every movement of the horse, lost the rest of his little strength, and fainted away again. We thought it best to take him off the horse and carry him in our arms. The postboy held him under the arms and I by the legs. The ascent was very rough, and I expected to fall at least four times with my living cross, on the stones of the path. At last the hill became easier. We entered a small lane bordered by bushes, and soon discovered on our left the first roofs of Vallars. We laid our burden softly on the turf, and for a moment took breath. Lifting up the abbe again, we carried him into the village.

A pink light appeared eastwards on the horizon. The morning star, in the pale sky, shone as white and peaceful as the moon, the light crescent of which paled away in the west. The birds began to chirp; my master sighed heavily.
Jahel ran before us, knocking at the doors, in quest of a bed and a surgeon. Carrying baskets and panniers the vine-growers went grape-gathering. One of them said to Jahel that Gaulard on the market place lodges man and beast.

"As to the surgeon, Coquebert, you'll see him yonder under the shaving plate which serves as his trade sign. He leaves his house to go to his vineyard."

He was a very polite little man. He told us that he had a bed free in his house, as a short time ago his daughter had got married.

By his order, his wife, a stout dame wearing a white cap covered by a felt hat, put sheets on the bed in the lower chamber. She helped us to undress the Abbe Coignard and to put him to bed. And then she went out to fetch the vicar.

In the meanwhile M. Coquebert examined the wound

"You see," I said, "it's small, and bleeds but little."

"That's not good at all," he replied, "and I do not like it, my dear young gentleman. I like a large wound which bleeds freely."
"I see," said M. d'Anquetil, "that for a leech and a village squirt
your test is not a bad one. Nothing is worse than those little but
deep wounds which look a mere nothing. Tell me of a nice cut across
the face. It's pleasant to look on, and heals in no time. But know,
my good sir, that this wounded man is my chaplain, and plays piquet
with me. Are you the man to put him on his legs again,
notwithstanding your looks, which are rather those of a vet?"

"At your service," replied the barber-surgeon, bowing profoundly.
"But I also set broken bones and treat wounds. I'll examine this
one."

"Make haste, sir," I said.

"Patience!" he replied. "First of all the wound must be washed, and
I must wait till the water gets warm."

My good tutor, a little restored, said slowly, but with a fairly
strong voice:

"Lamp in hand, he'll visit the corners of Jerusalem, and what is
hidden in darkness will be brought to light."
"What do you mean, dear master?"

"Don't, my son," he replied; "I'm entertaining the sentiments fit for my state."

"The water is hot," the barber said to me. "Hold the basin close to the bed. I'll wash the wound."

And while he pressed on my tutor's breast a sponge soaked in hot water, the vicar entered the room with Madame Coquebert. He had a basket and a pair of vine shears in his hand.

"Here is then the poor man," said he. "I was going to my vineyard, but that of Jesus Christ has to be attended to first; my son," he Lord. Perhaps it's not so serious as it's thought to be. And for the rest, we must obey God's will."

Turning to the barber, he asked:

"Is it very urgent, M. Coquebert, or could I go to my vineyard? The white ones can wait; it's not bad if they do get a little overripe, and a little rain would only produce more and better wine. But the red must be gathered at once."
"You speak the truth, Monsieur le Cure," M. Coquebert replied. "I've in my vineyard some grapes which cover themselves with a certain moisture, and which escape the sun only to perish by the rain."

"Alas!" said the vicar, "humidity and drought are the two enemies of the vine-grower."

"Nothing is truer," said the barber, "but I'll inspect the wound."

Having said so he pushed one of his fingers into the wound.

"Ah! Torturer!" exclaimed the patient.

"Remember," said the vicar, "that our Lord forgave His torturers."

"They were not barbarous," said the abbe.

"That's a wicked word," said the vicar.

"You must not torment a dying man for his jokes," said my good master. "But I suffer horribly; that man assassinates me and I die twofold. The first time was by the hands of a Jew."
"What does he mean?" asked the vicar.

"It is best, reverend sir," said the barber, "not to trouble yourself about it. You must never want to hear the talk of a patient. They are only dreams."

"Coquebert," said the vicar, "you don't speak well. Patients' confessions must be listened to, and some Christians who never in all their lives said a good word may, at the end, pronounce words which open Paradise to them."

"I spoke temporally only," said the barber.

"Monsieur le Cure," I said, "the Abbe Coignard, my good master, does not wander in his mind, and it is but too true that he has been murdered by a Jew of the name of Mosaide."

"In that case," replied the vicar, "he has to see a special favour of God, who willed that he perishes by the hand of a nephew of those who crucified His Son. The behaviour of Providence is always admirable. M. Coquebert, can I go to my vineyard?"

"You can, sir," replied the barber. "The wound is not a good one, but yet not of the kind by which one dies at once. It's one of those
wounds which play with the wounded like a cat with a mouse, and with such play time may be gained."

"That's well," said the vicar. "Let's thank God, my son, that He lets you live, but life is precarious and transitory. One must always be ready to quit it."

My good tutor replied earnestly:

"To be on the earth without being of it, to possess without being in possession, for the fashion of this world passes away."

Picking up his shears and his basket, the vicar said:

"Better than by your cloak and shoes, which I see on yonder cupboard, I recognise by your speech that you belong to the Church and lead a holy life. Have you been ordained?"

"He is a priest," I said, "a doctor of divinity and a professor of eloquence."

"Of which diocese?" queried the vicar.

"Of Seez in Normandy, a suffragan of Rouen."
"An important ecclesiastical province," said the vicar, "but less important by antiquity and fame than the diocese of Reims, of which I am a priest."

And he went away. M. Jerome Coignard passed the day easily. Jahel wanted to remain the night with him. At about eleven o'clock I left the house of M. Coquebert and went in search of a bed at the inn of M. Gaulard. I found M. d'Asterac in the market place. His shadow in the moonlight covered nearly all the surface. He laid his hands on my shoulder as he was wont to do, and said with his customary gravity:

"It's time for me to assure you, my son, that I have accompanied Mosa'ide for nothing else than this. I see you cruelly tormented by the goblins. Those little spirits of the earth have attacked you, deceiving you with all sorts of phantasmagoria, seducing you by a thousand lies, and finally forcing you to fly from my house."

"Alas! sir," I replied, "it's quite true that I left your house in apparent ingratitude, for which I beg your pardon. But I have been persecuted by the constables, and not by goblins. And my dear tutor has been murdered. That's not a phantasmagoria."

"Do not doubt," the great man answered, "that the unhappy abbe has
been mortally wounded by the Sylphs, whose secrets he has revealed. He has stolen from a sideboard some stones, which were the work of the Sylphs, and which they left unfinished, and still very different from diamonds in brilliancy as well as in purity.

"It was that avidity, and the indiscreet pronouncing of the name of Agla, which has angered them. You must know, my son, that it is impossible for philosophers to arrest the vengeance of this irascible people.

"I have heard from a supernatural voice, and also from Criton's reports, of the sacrilegious larceny M. Coignard committed by which he flattered himself to find out the art by which Salamanders, Sylphs, and Gnomes ripen the morning dew and insensibly change it into crystals and diamonds."

"Alas! sir, I assure you he thought of no such thing, and that it was that horrible Mosa'ide who stabbed him with a stiletto on the road."

My words very much displeased M. d'Asterac, who urged me in the most pressing manner never to repeat them again.

"Mosaide," he further said, "is a good enough cabalist to reach his enemies without going to the trouble of running after them. Know, my
son, that, had he wanted to kill M. Coignard, he could have done it easily from his own room by a magic operation. I see that you're still ignorant of the first elements of the science. The truth is that this learned man, informed by the faithful Criton of the flight of his niece, hired post-horses to rejoin her and eventually carry her back to his house, which he certainly would have done, had he discovered in the mind of that unhappy girl the slightest idea of regret and repentance. But, finding her corrupted by debauchery, he preferred to excommunicate and curse her by the globes, the wheels and the beasts of Ezekiel. That is precisely what he has done under my eyes in the calashr where he lives alone, so as not to partake of the bed and table of Christians."

I kept mute, astonished by such dreams, but this extraordinary man talked to me with an eloquence which troubled me deeply.

"Why," he said, "do you not let yourself be enlightened by the counsels of philosophers? What kind of wisdom do you oppose to mine? Consider that yours is less in quantity without differing in essence. To you as well as to me nature appears as an infinity of figures, which have to be recognised and classified, and which form a sequence of hieroglyphics. You can easily distinguish some of those signs to which you attach a sense, but you are too much inclined to be content with the vulgar and the literal, and you do not search enough for the ideal and the symbolic. And withal the world is comprehensible only as a symbol, and all you see in the universe is naught but an illuminated writing, which vulgar men
spell without understanding it. Be afraid, my son, to imitate the universal bray in the style of the learned ones who congregate in the academies. Rather receive of me the key of all knowledge."

For a moment he stopped speaking, and then continued in a more familiar tone:

"You are persecuted, my son, by enemies less terrible than Sylphs. And your Salamander will not have any difficulty in freeing you from the goblins as soon as you request her to do so. I repeat that I came here with Mosa’ide for no other purpose than to give you this good advice, and to press you to return to me and continue your work. I quite understand that you want to assist your unhappy master till the end. You have full license to do it. But afterwards do not fail to return to my house. Adieu! I'll return this very night to Paris with that great Mosaide whom you have accused so unjustly."

I promised him all he wanted, and crawled into my miserable bed, where I fell asleep, weighed down as I was by fatigue and suffering.

CHAPTER XX

Illness of M. Jerome Coignard

The next morning, at daybreak, I returned to the surgeon's house,
and there found Jahel at the bedside of my dear tutor, sitting upright on a straw chair, with her head wrapped up in her black cape, attentive, grave and docile, like a sister of charity. M. Coignard, very red, dozed.

"The night was not a good one," she said to me in a whisper. "He has talked, he sang, he called me Sister Germaine, and has made proposals to me. I am not offended, but it is a proof that his mind wanders."

"Alas!" I exclaimed, "if you had not betrayed me, Jahel, to ramble about the country in company with a gallant, my dear master would not lie in bed stabbed in his breast."

"It is the misery of our friend," she replied, "that causes me bitter regrets. As for the rest, it is not worth while to think of it, and I cannot understand, Jacques, how you can occupy your mind with it just now."

"I think of it always."

"For my part, I hardly think of it. You are the cause of three-fourths of your own unhappiness."

"What do you mean by that, Jahel?"
"I mean, my friend, that I have given the cloth, but that you do the embroidery, and that your imagination enriches far too much the plain reality. I give you my oath that the present hour I cannot remember the quarter of what causes you grief, and you meditate over it so obstinately that your rival is more present to your mind than I am myself. Do not think of it any more, and let me give the abbe a cooling drink, for he wakes up."

At this very moment M. Coquebert approached the bedside, his instrument-case in hand, dressed the wound anew, and said aloud that the wound was on the best way to heal up. But taking me aside he said:

"I can assure you, sir, that the good abbe will not die from the wound he has received, but to tell the truth I am afraid it will be difficult for him to escape from a pleurisy caused by his wound. He is at present the prey of a heavy fever. But here comes the vicar"

My good master recognised him without any difficulty, and inquired after his health.

"Better than the grapes," replied the vicar. "They are all spoiled by _fleurebers_ and vermin, against which the clergy of Dijon organised this year a fine procession with cross and banners. Next
year a still finer one will have to be arranged, and more candles
burnt. It also will be necessary for the official to excommunicate
anew the flies which destroy the grapes."

"Vicar," said my good master, "it is said that you seduce the girls
in your vineyards. Fie! it is not right at your age. In my youth,
like you I had a weakness for the creatures. But time has altered me
very much, and quite lately I let a nun pass without saying anything
to her. You do otherwise with the damsels and the bottles, vicar.
But you do worse by not celebrating the masses you have been paid
for, and by trafficking the goods and chattels of the Church. You
are a bigamist and a simoniac."

Hearing this discourse the vicar was painfully surprised; his mouth
remained open, and his cheeks dropped wistfully on both sides of his
big face. And at last, with eyes on the ground, he sighed:

"What an unworthy attack on the character of my profession! What
it for you to speak in that way, you who have lived a holy life and
studied in so many books?"

My dear master raised himself on his elbows. The fever gave him,
unhappily, that jovial mien of his that we had always liked so much.

"It is true," he said, "that I have studied the ancient authors. But
for, as he had the look and the mind of an ass, he was able to read
two pages at the same time, one with each eye. What do you say to
that, you villain of a vicar, you old seducer, who runs after the
chicks by moonlight? Vicar, your lady friend is built like a witch.
She has hairs on her chin, she's the barber-surgeon's wife. He is
fully a cuckold, and well he deserves it, that homunculus, whose
whole medical science consists in the art of blood-letting and
giving a clyster."

"God Almighty! What does he say?" exclaimed Madame Coquebert, "for
sure he has the devil in him."

"I have heard the talk of many delirious patients," said M.
Coquebert, "but not one has said such wicked things."

"I am discovering," said the vicar, "that we'll have more trouble
than we expected to conduct this unhappy man to a peaceful end.
There is a biting humour in his nature and impurities I did not find
out at first. His speech is malicious, and unfit for a priest and a
patient."

"It's the effect of the fever," said the barber-surgeon. "But,"
continued the vicar, "that fever, if it's not stopped, will bring
him to hell. He has gravely offended against what is due to a
priest. But still, I'll come back to-morrow and exhort him, for I
owe him, by the example of our Lord, unlimited compassion. But I
have my doubts about it. Unhappily there is a break in my winepress, and all the labourers are in the vineyard. Coquebert, do not fail to give word to the carpenter, and to call me to your patient if he should suddenly get worse. These are many troubles, Coquebert!

The following day was such a good one for M. Coignard that we hoped he would remain with us. He drank meat broth, and was able to rise in his bed. He talked to each of us with his accustomed grace and sweetness. M. d'Anquetil, who dwelt at Gaulard's, came to see him, and rather indiscreetly asked him to play piquet Smiling, my good master promised to do so next week. But in the evening the fever returned. With pale eyes swimming in unspeakable terror, and shivering and chattering teeth, he shouted:

"There he is, the old fornicator. He is the son of Judas Iscariot begot on a female devil, taking the form of a goat. But hanged he will be on his father's fig-tree, and his intestines will gush out to earth. Arrest him. ...He kills me! I feel cold!"

But a moment later he threw the blanket off and complained of the heat.

"I'm very thirsty," he said. "Give me some wine! And let it be cool! Madame Coquebert, hasten to cool it in the fountain: the day will be a burning one."
It was night-time, he confounded the hours in his head.

"Be quick," he also said to Madame Coquebert, "but do not be as simple as the bell-ringer of the Cathedral of Seez, who, going to lift out of the fountain some bottles he had put there to cool, saw his own shadow in the water and shouted: 'Hello, gentleman; come and help me. There are on the other side some Antipodeans, who'll drink our wine if we don't take good care.'"

"He is jovial," said Madame Coquebert. "But just now he talked of me in a manner quite indecent. Should I have deceived Coquebert I certainly would not have done it with the vicar, out of regard for his profession and his age."

This very moment the vicar entered the room and asked:

"Well, abbe, what are your dispositions now? What is there new?"

"Thank God," answered M. Coignard, "there is nothing new in my soul, for, as said Saint Chrysostom, beware of new things. Don't walk in untrodden ways, one wanders without end when one commences to wander. I have had that sad experience, and lost myself for having followed untrodden roads. I have listened to my own counsels, and they have conducted me to the abyss. Vicar, I am a poor sinner, the
number of my iniquities oppresses me."

"These are fine words," said the vicar. "'Tis God Himself who dictates them to you. I recognise His inimitable style. Do you want to advance somewhat the salvation of your soul?"

"Willingly," said M. Coignard. "My impurities rise against me. I see big ones and small. I see red ones and black. I see infinitesimals which ride on dogs and pigs, and I see others which are fat and naked, with breasts like leather bottles, bellies in great folds, and thighs of enormous size."

"Is it possible," said the vicar, "that you can see as distinctly as that? But if your faults are such as you say, it would be better not to describe them and to be content to detest them in your own mind."

"Would you, then, vicar," replied the abbe, "that my sins were all made like an Adonis? Don't let us speak of it any more. And you, barber, give me a drink. Do you know M. de la Musardiere?"

"Not that I know of," said M. Coquebert.

"Then know," replied my dear master, "that he was very taken with the ladies."
"That's the way," interrupted the vicar, "by which the devil takes
his advantage over men. But what subject do you follow, my son?"

"You'll soon know," said my good master. "M. de la Musardiere gave
an appointment to a virgin in a stable. She went, and he let her go
away just as she entered it. Do you know why?"

"I do not," said the vicar, "but let us leave it."

"Not at all," continued M. Coignard. "You ought to know that he took
good care to have no intercourse with her as he was afraid of
begetting a horse, on which account he would have been subject to
criminal prosecution."

"Ah!" said the barber, "he ought rather to have been afraid to
engender an ass."

"Doubtless," said the vicar. "But such talk does not advance us on
the road to heaven. It would be useful to retake the good way. But a
little while ago you spoke so edifyingly!"

Instead of giving reply, my good master began to sing, with rather a
strong voice:
"Pour mettre en gout le roi Louison
On a pris quinze mirlitons
Landerinette
Qui tous le balai ont roll
Landeriri."

"If you want to sing, my son," said the vicar, "you'd better sing a fine Burgundian Christmas carol. You'd rejoice your soul by it and sanctify it."

"With pleasure," replied my dear tutor. "There are some by Guy Barozai which, I think, in their apparent rusticity, to be finer than diamonds and more precious than gold. This one, for example:

'Lor qu'au lai saison qu'ai jaule
Au monde Jesu-chri vin
L'ane et le beu l'echaufin
De le leu sofle dans l'etaule.
Que d'ane et de beu je sai
Dans ce royaume de Gaule,
Que d'ane et de beu je sai
Qui n'en a rien pas tan fai.'"

The surgeon, his wife and the vicar sang together:
"Que d'ane et de beu je sai
Dans ce royaume de Gaule,
Que d'ane et de beu je sai
Qui n'en a rien pas tan fai."

And my good master replied in a weaker voice:

"Mais le pu beo de l'histoire
Ce fut que l'ane et le beu
Ainsin passire to deu
La nuit sans manger ni boire
Que d'ane et de beu je sai
Couver de pane et de moire
Que d'ane et de beu je sai
Que n'en a rien pas tan fai!"

Then he let his head fall on the pillow and sang no more.

"There is good in this Christian," said the vicar, "much good, and a while ago he really edified me with his beautiful sentences. But I am not without a certain apprehension, as everything depends on the end, and nobody knows what's hidden at the bottom of the basket God in His kindness wills that one single moment brings us salvation, but this moment must be the last one, so that everything depends on a single minute, in comparison with which the whole life does not
count. That's what makes me tremble for the patient, over whom angels and devils are furiously quarrelling. But one must never despair of divine mercy."

CHAPTER XXI

Two days passed in cruel alternations. After that my good master became extremely weak.

"There is no more hope," M. Coquebert told me. "Look how his head lies on the pillow, how thin his nose is."

As a fact, my good master's nose, formerly big and red, was nothing now but a bent blade, livid like lead.

"Tournebroche, my son," he said to me in a voice still full and strong but of a sound quite strange to me, "I feel that I have but a short time to live. Go and fetch that good priest, that he may listen to my confession."

The vicar was in his vineyard. There I went.
"The vintage is finished," he said, "and more abundant than I had hoped for; now let's go and help that poor fellow."

I conducted him to my master's bedside and we left him alone with the dying.

An hour later he came out again and said:

sentiments of piety and humility. At his request, and in consideration of his fervour, I'll give him the viaticum. During the time necessary for putting on my holy garments, you, Madame Coquebert, will do me the favour to send to the vestry the boy who serves me at mass every morning and make the room ready for the reception of God."

Madame Coquebert swept the room, put a white coverlet on the bed, placed a little table at the bedside, and covered it with a cloth; she put two candlesticks on the table and lit the candles, and an earthenware bowl wherein a sprig of box swam in the holy water.

Soon we heard the tinkling of the little bell, saw the cross coming in, carried by a child, and the priest clad in white carrying the holy vessels. Jahel, M. d'Anquetil, Madame Coquebert and I fell on our knees.

"_Pax huic domui_," said the priest.
"Et omnibus habiantibus in en_," replied the servitor.

Then the vicar took holy water and sprayed it over the patient and the bed.

A moment longer he meditated and then he said with much solemnity:

"My son, have you no declaration to make?"

"Yes, sir," said M. Abbe Coignard, with a firm voice, "I forgive my murderer."

Then the priest gave him the holy wafer:

"Ecce Agnus Dei, qui tollit peccata mundi._" 

My good master replied with a sigh:

"May I speak to my Lord, I who am naught but dust and ashes? How can I dare to come unto you, I who do not feel any good in me to give me courage? How can I introduce you into me, after having so often wounded your eyes full of kindness?"
And the Abbe Coignard received the holy viaticum in profound silence, interrupted by our sobs and by the great noise Madame Coquebert made blowing her nose.

After having received, my good master made me a sign to come near him, and said with a feeble but distinct voice:

"Jacques Tournebroche, my son, reject, along with the example I gave you, the maxims which I may have proposed to you during my period of lifelong folly. Be in fear of women and of books for the softness and pride accords the little ones a clearer intelligence than the wise one takes in them. Be humble of heart and spirit. God can give them. 'Tis He who gives all science. My boy, do not listen to those who, like me, subtilise on the good and the evil. Do not be taken in by the beauty and acuteness of their discourses, for the kingdom of God does not consist of words but of virtue."

He remained quiet, exhausted. I took his hand, lying on the sheet, and covered it with kisses and tears. I told him that he was our master, our friend, our father, and that I could not live without him.

And for long hours I remained waiting at the foot of his bed.
He passed so peaceful a night that I conceived a quite desperate hope. In this state he remained part of the following day. But towards the evening he became agitated and pronounced words so indistinctly that they remained a secret between God and himself.

At midnight he fell into a kind of swoon, and nothing could be heard but the slight scratching of his finger nails on the sheet. He no longer knew me.

About two o'clock the death rattle began. The hoarse and rapid breathing which came from his breast was loud enough to be heard far away in the village street, and my ears were so full of it that I fancied I heard it long after that unhappy day. At daybreak he made a sign with his hand which we could not understand, and sighed long and deeply. It was his last. His features took in death a majesty worthy of the genius that had animated him, and the loss of which will never be repaired.

CHAPTER XXII

Funeral and Epitaph

The Vicar of Vallars prepared a worthy funeral for M. Jerome Coignard. He chanted the death mass and gave the benediction.
My good master was carried to the graveyard close by the church; and M. d'Anquetil offered supper at Gaulard's to all the people who had assisted at the funeral. They drank new wine and sang Burgundian songs.

Afterwards I went with M. d'Anquetil to the vicar to thank him for his good offices.

"Ah!" he said, "that priest has given us a grand consolation by his edifying end. I have seldom seen a Christian die in such admirable sentiments, and I think it fit to fix his memory by a suitable inscription on his tombstone. Both of you, gentlemen, are learned enough to do that successfully, and I engage myself to have the epitaph of the defunct engraved on a large white stone, in the manner and style wherein you compose it. But remember, in making the stone speak, to make it proclaim nothing but the praise of God."

I begged of him to believe that I should apply all my zeal to this work, and M. d'Anquetil promised to give the matter a gallant and graceful turn.

"I will," he said, "try to write French verse in the style of M. Chapelle."
"That's right!" said the vicar. "But are you not curious to look at my winepress? The wine will be good this year, and I have made enough for my own and my servants' use. Alas! save for the _fleurebers_ we should have had far more."

After supper M. d'Anquetil called for ink, and began the composition of his French verses. But he soon became impatient and threw up in the air the pen, ink and paper.

"Tournebroche," he said, "I've made two verses only, and I am not quite sure that they are good. They run as follows:

'Ci-dessus git monsieur Coignard
Il faut bien mourir tot ou tard.'"

I replied that the best of it was, that he had no written a third one.

And I passed the night composing the following epitaph in Latin:

D. O. M.

HIC JACET

IN SPE BEATAE AETERNITATIS
DOMINUS HIERONYMUS COIGNARD

PRESBYTER

QUONDAM IN BELLOVACENSI COLLEGIO

ELOQUENTILE MAGISTER ELOQUENTISSIMU

SAGIENSIS EPISCOPI BIBLIOTHECARIUS SOLERTISSIMUS

ZOZIMI PANOPOLITANI INGENIOSISSIMUS

TRANSLATOR

OPERE TAMEN IMMATURATA MORTE INTERCEPTO

PERIIT ENIM CUM LUGDUNUM PETERET

JUDEA MANU NEFANDISSIMA

ID EST A NEPOTE CHRISTI CARNIFICUM

IN VIA TRUCIDATUS

ANNO AET. LII

COMITATE FUIT OPTIMA DOCTISSIMO CONVITU

INGENIO SUBLIMI

FACETIIS JUCUNDUS SENTENTTIS PLENUS

DONORUM DEI LAUDATOR

TIDE DEVOTISSIMA PER MULTAS TEMPESTATIS

CONSTANTER MUNITTJS
HUMILITATE SANCTISSIMA ORNATUS
SALUTI SUAE MAGIS INTENTUS

QUAM VANO ET FALLACI HOMINUM JUDICIO
SIC HONORIBUS MUNDANIS
NUNQUAM QUIESITIS
SIBI GLORIAM SEMPTERNAM
MERUIT

which may be translated:

HERE SLEEPS
In the hope of a happy eternity
THE REVEREND JEROME COIGNARD
Priest

Formerly a very eloquent professor of eloquence
At the college of Beauvais
Very zealous librarian to the Bishop of Seez
Author of a fine translation of Zosimus the Panopolitan
Which he unhappily left unfinished
When overtaken by his premature death
He was stabbed on the road to Lyons
In the 52nd year of his age
By the very villainous hand of a Jew
And thus perished the victim of a descendant of the murderer
Of Jesus Christ

He was an agreeable companion
Of a learned conversation
Of an elevated genius
Abounding in cheerful speech and in good maxims
And praising God in his works
He preserved amid the storms of life an unshakable faith
In his truly Christian humility
More attentive to the salvation of his soul
Than to the vain and erroneous opinions of men
It was by living without honour in this world
That he walked towards eternal glory

CHAPTER XXIII

Farewell to Jahel-Dispersal of the Party

Three days after the demise of my good master, M. d'Anquetil decided to continue his journey. The carriage had been repaired. He gave the postboys the order to be ready on the following morning. His company had never been agreeable to me; in the state of sorrow I was in, it became odious. I could not bear the idea of following him and Jahel. I resolved to look for employment at Tournus or at Macon, and to remain hidden till the storm had calmed down sufficiently to enable me to return to Paris, where I was sure to be received with
outstretched arms by my dear parents. I imparted my intention to M.
d'Anquetil, and excused myself for not accompanying him any farther.

He tried to retain me with a gracefulness I was not prepared for,
but soon willingly gave me leave to go where I wished. With Jahel
the matter was more difficult, but, being naturally reasonable, she
accepted the reasons I had for leaving her.

On the night before my departure, while M. d'Anquetil drank and
played cards with the barber-surgeon, Jahel and I went to the market
place to get a breath of air. It was embalmed by the scent of herbs
and full of the song of crickets.

"What a night!" I said to Jahel. "The year cannot produce another
like it, and perhaps all my life long I shall never see one so
sweet."

The flower-decked village graveyard extended before our eyes its
motionless turf, and the moonlight whitened the scattered graves on
the dark grass. The same thought came to both of us to say a last
farewell to our friend. The place where he was put to eternal rest
was marked by a tear-sprinkled cross planted deep in the mellow
earth. The stone whereon the epitaph was to be engraved had not yet
been placed. We seated ourselves very close to the grave on the
grass, and there, by an insensible but natural inclination, we fell
into one another's arms without fearing to offend by our kisses the
memory of a friend whom deep wisdom had rendered indulgent to human
weakness.

Suddenly, Jahel whispered in my ear, where her mouth was already placed:

"I see M. d'Anquetil, who, from the top of the wall, looks eagerly towards us."

"Can he see us in this shadow?" I asked.

"He certainly sees my white petticoat," she said; "it's enough, I think, to tempt him to look for more."

I first thought to draw my sword, and was quite decided to defend two existences, which were at this moment still very much mixed. Jahel's calm surprised me, neither her movements nor her voice showed any fear.

"Go," she said to me, "fly, and don't fear for me. It's a surprise I have rather wished for. He began to get tired of me, and this encounter is quite efficacious to reanimate his desires and season his love. Go and leave the alone. The first moment will be hard, for he is of a very violent disposition. He'll strike me, but after, t shall be still dearer to him. Farewell!"
"Alas!" I exclaimed, "did you take me then, Jahel, for Nothing but
to sharpen the desires of my rival?"

"I wonder that you also want to quarrel with me. Go, I say!"

"What! leave you like this?"

"It's necessary. Farewell! He must not meet you here, I want to make
him jealous, but in a delicate manner. I Farewell! Farewell."

I had hardly gone a few steps between the labyrinth of tombstones
when M. d'Anquetil, having come forward to enable him to recognise
his mistress, began to shout and to curse loud enough to awaken the
village dead. I was anxious to tear Jahel away from his rage; I
thought he would kill her. I glided between the tombstones to her
assistance. But after a few minutes, observing them very closely, I
saw M. d'Anquetil pulling her out of the cemetery and leading her
towards Gaulard's inn with a remainder of fury she was easily
capable of calming, alone and without help.

I returned to my room after they had entered theirs I could not
sleep the whole of the night, and looking out at daybreak, through
an opening in the window curtains I saw them crossing the courtyard
apparently the best of friends.
Jahel's departure augmented my sorrow. I stretched myself full length on my stomach on the floor of my room, and with my face in my hands cried until the evening.

CHAPTER XXIV

I am pardoned and return to Paris--Again at the _Queen Pedauque_--I go as Assistant to M. Blaizot--Burning of the Castle of Sablons--Death of Mosaide and of M. d'Asterac.

From now onwards my life loses the interest which events had lent it, and my destiny, having again become in conformity with my character, offers nothing but ordinary occurrences. If I should prolong my memoirs my narrative would very soon become tiresome. I'll bring it to a close with but few words. The Vicar of Vallars gave me a letter of introduction to a wine merchant at Macon, with whom I was employed for a couple of months, after which my father wrote to me that he had arranged my affair and that I was free to return to Paris.

I took coach immediately and travelled with some recruits. My heart beat violently when I again saw the Rue Saint Jacques, the clock of Saint Benoit le Betourne, the signboard of the _Three Virgins_ and the _Saint Catherine_ of M. Blaizot.
My mother cried when she saw me; I also cried, and we embraced and cried together again.

My father came in haste from the _Little Bacchus_ and said with a moving dignity:

"Jacquot, my son, I cannot and will not deny that I was very angry when I saw the constables enter the _Queen Pedauque_ in search of you, or, in default of you, arresting me. They would not listen to any sort of remonstrance, alleging that I could easily explain myself after being taken to jail. They looked for you on a complaint of M. de la Gueritude. I conceived a most horrible idea of your disorders. But having been informed by letter that it was a question only of some peccadillo I had no other thought but to see you again. Many a time I consulted the landlord of the _Little Bacchus_ on the means to hush up your affair. He always replied: 'Master Leonard, go to the judge with a big bag full of crown pieces and he will give you back your lad as white as snow.' But crown pieces are scarce with us, and there is neither hen nor goose nor duck who lays golden eggs in my house. At present I hardly get sufficient by my poultry to pay the expenses of the roasting. By good luck, your saintly and worthy mother had the good idea of going to the mother of M. d'Anquetil whom we knew to be busy in favour of her son, who was sought after at the same time as you were, and for the identical affair. I am quite aware, my Jacquot, that you played the man about
town in company with a nobleman, and my head is too well placed not
to feel the honour which it reflects on our whole family. Mother
dressed as if she intended to go to mass; and Madame d’Anquetil
received her with kindness. Thy mother, Jacquot, is a holy woman,
but she has not the best of society manners, and at first she talked
without aim or reason. She said: 'Madame, at our age, besides God
Almighty nothing remains to us but our children.' That was not the
right thing to say to that great lady who still has her gallants."

"Hold your tongue, Leonard," exclaimed my mother. "The behaviour of
Madame d'Anquetil is unknown to you, and it appears that I spoke to
her in the right way, because she said to me: 'Don't be troubled,
Madame Menetrier; I will employ my influence in favour of your son;
be sure of my zeal.' And you know, Leonard, that we received before
the expiration of two months the assurance that our Jacquot could
return unmolested to Paris."

We supped with a good appetite. My father asked me if was my
intention to re-enter the service of M. d'Asterac. I replied that
after the lamented death of my kind master I did not wish to
encounter that cruel Mosaide in the house of a nobleman who paid his
servants with fine speeches and nothing else. My father very kindly
invited me to turn the spit as in former days,

"Latterly, Jacquot," he said, "I gave the place to Friar Ange, but
he did not do as well as Miraud or yourself. Don't you want to take
your old place at the corner of the fireside?"

My mother, plain and simple as she was, did not want common-sense
and said:

"M. Blaizot, the bookseller of the _Image of Saint Catherine_,
is in want of an assistant. This employment, Jacquot, ought to suit
you like a glove. Thy dispositions are sweet, thy manners are good,
and that's what's wanted to sell Bibles."

I went at once to M. Blaizot, who took me into his service.

My misfortunes had made me wise. I did not feel discouraged by the
humbleness of my employment, and I fulfilled my duties with
exactitude, handling the duster and broom to the satisfaction of my
employer.

One of my duties was to pay a visit to M. d'Asterac. I went to the
great alchemist on the last Sunday of November, after the midday
dinner. It's a long way from the Rue Saint Jacques to the Croix-des-
Sablons, and the almanac does not lie when it announces that in
November the days are short. "When I arrived at the Roule it was
quite dark, and a black haze covered the deserted road. And
sorrowful were my thoughts in the darkness."
"Alas," I said to myself, "it will soon be a full year since I first
walked on this road, in the snow, in company with my dear master,
who now rests in a small village in Burgundy encircled by vineyards.
He sleeps in the hope of eternal life. And it is but right to have
the same hope as a man as wise as he. God preserve me from ever
doubting of the immortality of the soul! But, one must confess to
oneself, all that is connected with a future existence and another
world is of those verities in which one believes without being moved
and which have neither taste nor savour of any kind, so that one
swallows them without perceiving it. As for me I find no consolation
in the idea of meeting again the Abbe Coignard in Paradise. Surely I
could not recognise him, and his speeches would not contain the
agreeableness which he derived from circumstances."

Occupied with these reflections, I saw before me a fierce light
covering one-half of the sky; the fog was reddened by it, and the
light palpitated in the centre. A heavy smoke mixed with the vapours
of the air. I at once became afraid that the fire had broken out at
the d'Asterac castle. I quickened my steps, and very soon
ascertained that my fears were but too well founded. I discovered
the calvary of the Sablons, an opaque black on a background of
flame, and I saw nearly all the windows of the castle flaring as for
a sinister feast. The little green door was broken in. Shadows
gesticulated in the park and murmured the horror they felt. They
were the inhabitants of the borough of Neuilly, who had come for
curiosity's sake and to bring help. Some threw water from a fire
engine on the burning edifice, making a fiery rain of sparks arise.
A thick volume of smoke rose over the castle. A shower of sparks and of cinders fell round me, and I soon became aware that my garments and my hands were blackened. With much mortification I thought that all that burning dust in the air was the end of so many fine books and precious manuscripts, which were the joy of my dear master, the remains, perhaps, of Zosimus the Panopolitan, on which we had worked together during the noblest hours of my life.

I had seen the Abbe Jerome Coignard die. Now, it was his soul, his sparkling and sweet soul, which I fancied reduced to ashes together with the queen of libraries. The wind strengthened the fire and the flames roared like voracious beasts.

Questioning a man of Neuilly still blacker than myself, and wearing only his vest, I asked him if M. d'Asterac and his people had been saved.

"Nobody," he said, "has left the castle except an old Jew, who was seen running laden with packages in the direction of the swamps. He lived in the keeper's cottage on the river, and was hated for his origin and for the crimes of which he was suspected. Children pursued him. And in running away he fell into the Seine. He was fished out when dead, pressing on his heart a cup and six golden plates. You can see him on the river bank in his yellow gown. With his eyes open he is horrible."
"Ah!" I replied, "his end is due to his crimes. But his death does not give me back the best of masters whom he slew. Tell me again; has nobody seen M. d'Asterac?"

At the very moment when I put the question I heard near me one of the moving shadows cry out:

"Thereof is falling in!"

And now I recognised with unspeakable horror the great black form of M. d'Asterac running along the gutters. The alchemist shouted with a sounding voice:

"I rise on wings of flame up to the seat of life divine!"

So he said, and suddenly the roof fell in with a tremendous crash, and the flames as high as mountains enveloped the friend of the Salamanders.

CHAPTER XXV

I become a Bookseller--I have many learned and witty Customers but none to equal the Abbe Jerome Coignard, D. D., M. A,
There is no love will stand separation. The memory of Jahel, smarting at first, was smoothed down little by little, and nothing remained but a vague irritation, of which she was no longer the only object.

M. Blaizot aged quickly. He retired to Montrouge, to his cottage in the fields, and sold me his shop against a life annuity. Having become in his place the sworn bookseller of the _Image of Saint Catherine_, I took with me my father and mother, whose cookshop flourished no more. I liked my humble shop and took care to trim it up. I nailed on the doors some old Venetian maps and some theses ornamented with allegorical engravings, which made a decoration old and odd no doubt, but pleasant to friends of good learning. My knowledge, taking care to hide it cleverly, was not detrimental to my trade. It would have been worse had I been a publisher like Marc-Michel Rey, and obliged like him to gain my living at the expense of the stupidity of the public.

I keep in stock, as they say, the classical authors, and that is a merchandise in demand in that learned Rue Saint Jacques of which it would please me one day to write an account of its antiquities and celebrities. The first Parisian printer established his venerable presses there. The Cramoisys, whom Guy Patin calls the kings of the Rue Saint Jacques, published there the works of our historians. Before the erection of the College of France, the king's readers, Pierre Danes, Francois Votable, Ramus, gave their lectures there in...
a shed which echoed with the quarrels between the street porters and
the washerwomen. And how can we forget Jean de Meung, who composed
in one of the little houses of this street the _Roman de la Rose_. [Footnote: Jacques Tournebroche did not know that Francois
Villon also dwelt in the Rue Saint Jacques, at the Cloister Saint
Benoit, in a house called the _Porte Verte_. The pupil of M.
Jerome Coignard would no doubt have had great pleasure in recalling
the memory of that ancient poet, who, like himself, had known
various sorts of people.]

I have the whole house at my disposal: it is very old, and dates at
least from the time of the Goths, as may be seen by the wooden
joists crossed on the narrow front and by the mossy tiles. It has
but one window on each floor. The one on the first floor is all the
year round garnished with flowers, strings are attached, and all
sorts of climbers run up them in springtime. My good old mother
takes care of this.

It is the window of her room. She can be seen from the street,
reading her prayers in a book printed in big letters over the image
of Saint Catherine. Age, devotion and maternal pride have given her
a grand air, and to see her wax-coloured face under her high white
cap one could take his oath on her being a wealthy citizen's wife.

My father, in getting old, also acquired some dignity. As he likes
exercise and fresh air I employ him to carry books about town. First
I employed Friar Ange, but he begged of my customers, made them kiss relics, stole their wine, caressed their servant girls, and left one-half of my books in the gutters. I soon gave him the sack. But my good mother, whom he makes believe that he is possessed of secrets for gaining heaven, gives him soup and wine. He is not a bad man, and in the end I became somewhat attached to him.

Several learned men and some wits frequent my shop. And it is a great advantage to my trade to be in daily contact with men of merit. Among those who often come to look at new books and converse familiarly among themselves there are historians as learned as Tillemont, sacred orators the equals of Bossuet and Bourdaloue in eloquence, comic and tragic poets, theologians who unite purity of morals with solidity of doctrine, the esteemed authors of "Spanish" novels, geometers and philosophers capable, like M. Descartes, of measuring and weighing the universe. I admire them, I enjoy the least of their words. But not one, to my thinking, is equal in genius to my dear master, whom I had the misfortune to lose on the road to Lyons; not one reminds me of that incomparable elegance of thought, that sweet sublimity, that astonishing wealth of a soul always expanding and flowering, like the urns of rivers represented in marble in gardens; not one gives me that never-failing spring of science and of morals, wherein I had the happiness to quench the thirst of my youth, none give me more than a shadow of that grace, Coignard. I hold him to be the most amiable spirit who has ever flourished on the earth.