

Prologue

It was a wise philosopher who said, in the first page of his noble Metaphysics, that man naturally applies his intelligence to understanding, to learning, and to knowing.

This is a saying full of wisdom, for all human intelligence strives to understand that which it doesn't know, for good or for ill, above all when it is directly concerned. People love to hear stories of long ago recounted even more than new ones, as long as they are good and beautiful. Don't we speak constantly of King Arthur, who put to the test the valor of nobles and good knights? He's still spoken of today, just as Lancelot is spoken of without equal, and Percival and Gawain, whose heart never tired of achieving honor and glory. They were quite right to want to search and to know, by earth and by sea, the marvelous adventures that happened to people. Knowledge is an excellent thing: just as the rose is the most beautiful of all the flowers, science surpasses all the other virtues. He who knows nothing values nothing, so it is best for all good men to interest themselves in stories of long ago. And the greater his birth, the more he should know, from generation to generation: who his ancestors were, barons, counts, or dukes, to preserve their memories longer. It is the duty of all great lords, then, to have their family story written down so that it will never be forgotten. If I speak so, it's because I've put myself in the service of a grand lord of Poitou (may God bless him!), the sire of Parthenay, who recently took it upon himself to give me this order. He has the power to give me orders and it is not for me to gainsay him, as everyone knows and can plainly see that one must obey one's betters, unless one is truly lacking wisdom. He said to me, in his gentle language, to take as my model a book, which he gave me: he had it written to know just who built the noble and prodigious castle of Lusignan, as well as the city. I responded so:

– I ask nothing, my lord, but to obey your orders!

– Don't rush yourself! said he : You have all the time you need. The castle was built by a fairy, as the story goes, and I descend from this fairy, myself and all the lineage of Parthenay, don't doubt it! This fairy is named Mélusine; we take our arms from her. We wish to preserve her memory: to this end, put this story in verse. I hold to what one puts in verse: it can more easily be recounted.

– My lord, I said, I agree. I'm ready to follow your orders. I will do my best, but I don't want to steal all the credit. I've heard this story has already been translated into French – it would be a shame for me to take credit for a work already produced. But I will do my best, if God is willing, to give the story a form which pleases you better, if I can, because you don't like the other and wish to see me follow the books (which one has found) in which the story is known to be accurate. So, make a long story short, we found two good authentic Latin books in the tower of Maubergeon, which were translated into French. And then five or six months later, this same story was confirmed by the count of Salisbury, who had a book on the magnificent and powerful castle of Lusignan. This book contained exactly the same story as the two other books. As for your book, it comes from three others, as they say. And if I know it, it is because I have already seen it. I then applied all my talent to putting it into good form. May the sweet Jesus Christ permit me to write a good work!

Then I took leave of my lord (God give him joy and honor!) and went straight to the magnificent castle of Lusignan: you will soon hear its story, if the good King of Glory will give me inspiration for it, for without him one can do

nothing, no more in French than in Hebrew. All knowledge comes from God, the clear source from which all artists draw their inspiration: from God comes all good ideas. No one has knowledge that doesn't come from God. I ask Him with all my heart to respond to my need, and may his Glorious Mother please guide my telling and permit me to finish this work that I wish to publish, for the pleasure of my good lord. (God give him joy and honor, and at the end the perfect joy!) So closes our prologue.

Raymondin and Mélusine

In ancient times, after the epoch of Octavien, there lived in Poitou, it is the truth, a noble count named Aymeri. He had a strong reputation and was loved and cherished by all. He was wise in astronomy and in many other sciences; he knew nearly by heart the canon and civil law, and yet he was also a lay preacher, which strengthened his merit.

There wasn't a better astronomer among the Christians: he knew the science better than anyone but He who gave the stars their names. He was a very powerful lord, bringing together all the goods of the world. He quite loved to hunt hart as well as boar. This noble count of Poitiers had from his spouse a handsome son named Bertrand, whom he loved tenderly, and a pretty and sweet daughter named Blanchette. The count cherished his children. La Rochelle did not yet exist, neither did its foundation nor its buildings. Poitou was covered by grand forests, and the trees were thick in the forest of Colombiers, close to Poitiers. There was at that time in Forez a count who had a great number of children.

He wasn't particularly rich but lived in an exemplary and wise fashion, keeping his expenses within his reach. His noble conduct won him the love of the people. He was a cousin of Count Aymeri, who heard that he had an abundance of children, and wanted to relieve him of his charge. So Aymeri organized a great feast in Poitiers without delay, the most magnificent feast ever seen. The count of Forez was invited by the order of Count Aymeri, and with him all the barons that held their fiefs from the noble count of Poitiers: they all came willingly on the given day. The Count of Forez brought this day three of his sons to honor his cousin with a splendid following. The Count of Poitiers, overjoyed to see his cousin, had him feasted and welcomed him to the best of his abilities. The good count Aymeri set to regarding the three children and took a liking to the youngest, who he then felt he must keep with him. He said with goodness to his cousin:

— Listen, dear cousin! I've heard from your neighbors that you are overburdened with children: it would be good to relieve you of your charge. Give me one of them, and he won't have to lament his lot: I have such regard for him that I will make him rich forever!

— Lord, said the count of Forez, choose as you please among them and I will thank you humbly for it: it would not be right to refuse your offer. Here are all three before you: do with them what seems good to you, take whoever you wish. There'll be no disputing your decision!

— Give me the youngest then, as I've taken a liking to him!

— Quite willingly! said the count of Forez. Because you want him, you shall have him. Take him, he's yours!

- Dear cousin, tell me his name, if you please!

- Lord, he is called Raymondin, the handsome, the gentle, the courteous Raymondin, the best of the three!

At the end of the feast, two days later, after the meal, the count of Forez took his leave. The three brothers hugged and commended each other to God : they suffered in their separation. Raymondin stayed with his lord; he served him as best he could and knew how. The noble count Aymeri loved and cherished him for the devotion with which he served him. Raymondin did his duty perfectly. The count went nowhere without him, no other servant was as dear to him: it is true that he was his cousin. But misfortune would come from this, for Raymondin would kill him, topple him dead to the ground, through the fault of perfidious Fortune, which fears nothing and no one and stirs up marvelous adventures, as you'll soon see.

In Poitiers, the count Aymeri, who was loved and cherished by his men, both young and old, often went hunting in the forest of Colombiers. Five or six years passed this way. One day he left for the hunt, accompanied by numerous knights, his dearest friends, who were attending a party. He went deep into the forest. Raymondin rode at his side on a courser, wearing, as the story goes, the noble count's sword. So began a violent hunt. The beast had the beaters hot on its heels and fled before the hounds, who chased it at a lively pace. The count followed, spurring his horse, to meet a terrible evil of which I will tell you: he would never return. Raymondin followed him as best as he could, not wanting to lose him. The two kept at the boar for so long in the forest of Colombiers that they soon saw the moon rising in the sky. The boar had killed many of their dogs, toppling them dead to the earth. The count's following of more than twenty men had no idea what had become of him, for he had ridden at a great pace. So he said to Raymondin:

- Come then! we have lost our dogs and our men, we don't know where they are. It's no good retracing our steps - we couldn't find them. What'll we do? What do you think of the matter?

- Lord, said Raymondin, let us take shelter near here, where we'll be safe for today!

- Well spoken! replied the count. Let's do as you say, for the moon has already risen!

The night was beautiful and clear, the stars shining so brightly that they illuminated the woods. They set to trudging by the light of the moon, traversing the woods by frightening paths. But they discovered a good path and they followed it. The count said:

- Raymondin, this path leads to Poitiers, I believe. What do you think? Is it really true?

- I think so too, said Raymondin. Let's ride, then, by the grace of God! However late we arrive, we can always enter the town. Maybe we'll meet some of your men who could guide us.

- Let's go! said the count, I agree.

So they set off. The count began observing the stars, which burned clear and illuminated the heavens. He was a learned astronomer and knew his science perfectly.

Observing the sky, he noticed a star. In it he saw a marvelous adventure, which would be quite cruel to him. But if he could read the announcement of the happiness of another, he didn't discover in it his own misfortune. He sighed deeply, and wrung his hands. He said:

— God who created the angels, your wonders are strange! The decrees of Fortune are unforeseeable. True God, why does she raise up a man destined to do wrong? How cruel! I will happen that a great good is born of evil. I see it clearly in the stars. Raymondin, said he, listen to me: I have discovered here a great wonder.

— What then, lord? The young man said innocently.

— I will tell you. Know in all certainty and without the least doubt, that if a vassal kills his lord at this very hour, he will become greater and much more powerful than any of his family. His power will grow in all places, he will gain the love of all and dominate all his neighbors. It is the truth, believe it, dear cousin!

Raymondin said not a word: pensive, he dismounted, piled some wood — kindling and logs — that some townspeople had left in the area with the remainder of a fire. He took the wood and lit the fire, for it was cold. The count leapt to the ground to heat himself. Then they heard trees breaking in the woods. Raymondin seized his spear, the count did the same. They moved away from the bright fire and saw coming on them, at a frightening speed, a boar bristling with rage and hammering everything in its path with his tusks. At this sight, Raymondin cried to the count:

— Lord, save yourself, quick — climb a tree!

But the count yelled: — I have never been and will never be — thank God — accused of fleeing before the son of a sow.

At these words, Raymondin, frightened, threw himself in front of the boar, spear in hand. The count prepared to throw his spear, but at the moment that he released his weapon, the boar threw itself on him: the count would, by ill chance, find death.

Impetuously, the count struck the boar on the shoulder, on its armor, but failed to plant his spear and fell, face-down, to the earth. Raymondin threw himself on the beast and tried to stab it. But his spear slid off the its back and hit the count in the center of his chest. The whole iron spearhead drove in, sharp and slicing, piercing his entrails.

Raymondin withdrew his spear and hit the beast, striking it dead to the ground. Then he returned to his lord, whom he would have left for nothing in the world. But he found him dead; he'd given up the ghost. God have pity on this soul, as he was a worthy man and good, the best from here to Rome! Raymondin began weeping and hitting himself in the chest, tortured by remorse.

— Alas, said he, perfidious Fortune, how you are traitorous and hostile to me! You are cruel and without pity! One must be madder than a beast to trust you, as you know nothing but betrayal. You know not friendship; you are kind to one,

severe with another. No one can trust you. You make a poor man a king, the richest you make a beggar. You have no limits - you aid one to destroy another. Alas! unhappy as I am, my fate shows it well! You have destroyed me entirely and damned me forever, if Jesus Christ the charitable, the good, the sweet, the pitiable, has no pity for my poor soul!

Raymondin fainted and remained a good hour without speaking. Then, returning to himself, recommenced his grief. Regarding his lord laying dead, already cold, he cried:

- Death, come quickly, without delay! Come take me, it is time! I have lost body and soul. My dear lord, who lies dead there, I killed by my great crime. Death, come quickly, it is time! Come quickly, or I shall kill myself! Kill myself? No, by God, no! May God, my dear father, keep a Christian from falling into despair! But I lament the hour of my birth, I regret having lived! Better still-born than thus damned! Alas! my lord, my cousin, I am worth much less than a Saracen who follows the law of Mohammed.

Then he mounted his horse, without waiting more, having put his horn on the body of his lord. Miserable, he left by the forest, full of sadness and anguish. He dropped his reins, let the horse follow its will. He tortured and cursed himself; little kept him from killing himself. Livid, he didn't hide his grief. Riding in this state, he ended up near the fountain of Pretty Thirst, said to be frequented by fairies. Sad and exhausted, he went straight toward it. His horse, left to itself with the bridal over its neck, found a path and led its master to the fountain. Raymondin went rapidly down this path without stopping, carried at a gallop by his horse and plunged into despair.

There were three ladies of great power near the fountain with its clear, pure water. But overcome by sad thoughts, Raymondin saw nothing while passing by. Then the noblest, the most gracious and beautiful, spoke:

- Never in all my life have I seen a knight pass before ladies without greeting them: I will go speak with him.

She came to him, seized the bridal and said plainly:

- In the name of God, knight, your conduct is not that of a man of noble birth. You pass before the three of us without saying a word - this is not at all courteous!

Overwhelmed by grief, he started and, seeing the lady, took her for an apparition.

He didn't know if he were asleep or awake. Pale as a corpse, he said nothing. His sorrow kept him from hearing. The lady quickly took charge of the conversation and spoke forcefully:

- What, Raymondin? Who has taught you to refuse to speak with a lady whom you encounter? It is the act of abase-born rogue! You must ally gentleness and courtesy to honor. You dishonor yourself, you who are nobly born, letting your heart repudiate its nature!

Raymondin heard her, watched her, completely dumfounded to see that someone held the bridal of his horse. But when he saw who held it, when he saw the beauty of the lady, he forgot his troubles and knew not whether he were alive or dead. He jumped to the grass at the foot of his horse and said to her:

- Gracious creature, lady of beauty without equal, forgive me, in the name of

God! A prodigious evil has broken my heart! I swear to you, milady, on my faith, I was in such a state, plunged into indescribable grief and suffering, that I cannot remember what I was doing and did not see you. But I plead you, noble lady, to grant me pardon. Lady, I am ready to repair my wrong as you judge right!

– Raymondin, responded the lady, I understand your troubles!

Raymondin, hearing his name spoken, began to question her.

– Lady, said he, I am amazed you know my name. By my faith, I am ignorant of yours. But the beauty of your face persuades me that I will thank to you find some relief from my grief and my despair. For such a beautiful creature can bring only happy adventures and all sorts of good deeds. I don't believe that any other human being can join beauty, sweetness, and wisdom as in your gracious person!

– Raymondin, I know your whole story!
She began telling him all that you have just heard, to Raymondin's great delight.

Astonished, he asked himself how she knew all this. The gracious lady then told him:

– Listen, Raymondin, my friend! If you follow my advice, I will make your lord's prediction come true, if God the Father and as his Glorious Mother consent. Raymondin, hearing her speak of God, felt reassured:

– Sweet and gentle lady, said he, I will obey you with all my heart. But truthfully, I can not keep myself from asking you how you can know both my name and the evil with has struck me and which makes me worthy only of death.

– Raymondin, don't be surprised! God comes to you in aid, if you wish it. You will have more happiness yet than your lord could have predicted before resting, dead and cold, in the forest. Don't despair! I will help you find comfort. I am, after God, your sole supporter. You will have all the happiness in the world, if you give me your trust.

Don't fear that I am not one of God's creatures or that I do not believe in his miracles. I swear to you that I believe in the holy Catholic faith and in each of its articles. I believe that God, for our salvation, was born of the Virgin without damaging her virginity, that for us he suffered death before resurrecting on the third day, and that he then mounted to Heaven, at the same time true man and true God, where he sits at the right hand of the Father. Raymondin, listen to me, my friend! I have an unshakable faith in all these things, which nothing can make me doubt. Trust me, you will be wise, and you will mount so high in honor that you will be of higher nobility than any man of your lineage.

Raymondin started meditating and reflecting on what he had just heard. His heart found a little joy, his color returned and his grief abated. He replied at once:

– My well-loved lady, I will with good heart and without delay do all that you command!

– Raymondin, she said, that is well-spoken! Listen then without contradicting me! You will swear to me, on God and on His image, that you will marry me and that never in all your life, despite all that you might be told, will you seek to know or to discover where I go on Saturdays nor what I do then. As for me, I

swear to you that I will never go to an evil place, but that I will always spend this day increasing and heightening your honor with all my heart and with all my power. Never will I betray this oath!

Raymondin took this oath eagerly. But at the end he would betray his word and know great sadness for failing to keep his promise!

— Raymondin, she said, listen well: if you don't listen to me on this point, you are sure to lose me and never see me again. And after this, first you and then your heirs will begin to decline and lose lands and domains, with great sorrow to all.

Raymondin swore a second time never to perjure himself. Alas! the unfortunate, his faith must have been lacking. This earned him suffering without end and the loss of his well-loved lady, who he cherished so tenderly. But I will silence myself on this point for the moment and return to my story.

— Raymondin, said she, you will go fearlessly, without contradicting me, to Poitiers. Go there in all confidence! If you are asked about your lord, speak directly: say that you lost his trail in the forest during the boar hunt, that you waited for him a long time before leaving to look for him in the thick forest. Many others, arriving before you, have said the same thing. Then your lord will be found and his corpse brought to Poitiers. Grief will be widespread, and everyone will be grieved, more than anyone the countess and many other women in sympathy for her, as well as the children. Help them find peace and give them all the counsel necessary to observe the funeral with dignity, as a great lord must receive much honor at his funeral. Dress yourself in black like the others! And when the grief is over, when the heir is proclaimed count of Poitiers and has received homage from all the vassals of his lands, ask the lord a gift in recompense for your service to the dead count! Ask of him all the land and the forest that the skin of a hart can enclose, at the exact spot at which we stand now! He will grant you this without difficulty. Try to obtain a written promise, with the reason for which you are granted this gift. And make precise the date on which you must be given this land! Then when you have your letter, quit Poitiers for the countryside. You will see a man carrying a huge buckskin. Buy it, I command it, whatever the price! Then have a belt cut from this skin: make sure it is not too large, but as narrow as possible. Cut all along the skin until there is no more to cut! Have it rolled into a bundle, return to Poitiers and collect your gift immediately, near this clear fountain! Don't spare any effort! You will find the limits I wish fixed on your land traced all about. If the belt surpasses the circle you find traced, descend towards the valley: the clear, pure water which runs from this fountain will show you where to spread out the rest of the belt: do not worry, take it fearlessly! And when you have confirmation of your gift and you have returned to Poitiers, take your leave and return to my side: you can be sure to find me at this very spot. Keep your word to me, as you have promised!

— Lady, Raymondin quickly replied, I will obey your orders, whatever it costs me, for such is your desire!

He took leave and left with joy to complete his mission. When he arrived at Poitiers, in the early morning, many men asked him:

— Raymonnet, where is your lord? Why has he not returned?

— I lost sight of him yesterday, said Raymondin. His horse carried him off at a

great speed and I couldn't rejoin him, despite my efforts. I lost his trail in the forest and I couldn't find it afterwards.

That was how Raymondin justified himself, and no one accused him of the death of the count, for no one could ever believe he could be responsible. For this reason, the young man was full of anguish and sighed at the thought of this death, but he had to hide the evil that had fallen on the hunt. The hunters returned in great number. The great like the small assembled close to Raymondin, all very worried not to know where their lord spent the night. His afflicted wife had a face covered with tears, as did her two children.

And then arrived two vassals, carrying the corpse of the illustrious count, that they found in the forest, with that of the boar. Then the shouts arose. All cried: bourgeois and squires, ladies and knights, aged and youth alike, all lamented the death of the noble count. At the announcement of the news, the countess' heart was darkened with grief: she tore her hair, drowned in tears. Her daughter, her dear son cried, both like the noble Raymondin, the priests and the canons, the great and the small: all Poitiers was plunged in grief. I can't describe to you the grief the city showed at the sight of the dead count: everyone lamented his death. The funeral rites were celebrated nobly, as well as a mass which would be repeated every year, in the lighted church. As for the boar, the city's bourgeois had it burned on a pyre. The barons of the land attended the ceremony, as was proper. But grief must be put to an end when the ill cannot be mended. Raymondin played his role so well that the other attendants said:

– How this young man is afflicted! He loved his lord deeply.

It was the truth and a great pity to see.

After the funeral, the barons went with good heart to do homage to the new count, after the custom of the country. So Raymondin stepped forward and calmly presented his request, according to the recommendations of the lady he'd just left.

– Dear lord, he said, give me, near the Fountain of Thirst, all the expanse of forest, mountain, valley, and field that I can cover with a buck's skin! I am not asking a ruinous present of you. On my word, I want no other recompense for having served your father (God hold his soul!).

– I accept, responded the young count, if my barons consent.

The barons answered:

– Raymondin may receive this gift. He has certainly earned it, for he served our lord loyally.

– Then he shall have it! said the count.

The agreement was put in writing: the promise was described in detail, the letter was written and sealed with the great seal of the new count, precious and of great value.

The most powerful barons also placed their great seals on the letter, well drafted and done according to all the rules. The day for the giving of the gift was set. The next day, the hero found a man who brought him a buck's skin and paid him handsomely for it. He had it cut into a thin belt, then asked for his gift: the count commanded that he be obeyed. The servants assigned this task soon left Poitiers to give his gift to Raymondin and fulfill the count's promise. Guided by Raymondin, they arrived at the fountain straight away.

When he brought forth the skin, they were amazed to see it cut in such a manner and knew not what to do. Then two men came forward. They took the finely cut skin, rolled it into a ball, and made a huge bale of it. They attached the end to a post and made a tour of the rock. But there was a lot of skin left, so one of the men attached the belt to a stake and came down the slope with the rest of the skin, whose end was firmly fixed to the stake.

And along its length gushed a stream, dumfounding the spectators, for never before was there water at this spot. When they saw the area outlined by the skin and the land it encircled, they marveled to witness this. No one could have imagined seeing the skin encircling even half of the area. But they gave the land enclosed, as the charter instructed, and left. Upon their return to Poitiers, they recounted this marvel to the count. They had never seen such a thing: the buck's skin which extended for a circle of two leagues, and also the stream they saw spurt the length of the valley. The count said:

— I believe (God protect me!) that Raymondin has had an encounter with a fairy, for it is said that at this fountain many other marvels have suddenly appeared. Let him find happiness: that is what I wish him!

Raymondin spoke, all joyous, for he had come to thank the count for his gift:

— Great thanks, my lord, for this good deed! I don't know what the future brings, but God willing, I'll find happiness in it!

The night flowed by. In the morning, Raymondin arrived at the Fountain of Thirst on his horse and found his lady there. She said to him:

— Be welcome, my friend! You are wise, well educated, and you have fulfilled your mission well: you will be nothing but more honored for it.

They entered the chapel, which they found close by. It was full of ladies, knights, learned men, prelates, priests, and squires, all nobly adorned. Raymond marveled at the crowd he saw there and could not keep himself from asking the beautiful creature, the lady, where all these people could have come from.

— Don't be surprised, said the lady, they all belong to you!

She ordered them all to receive him as their lord; and they did so, as was proper.

They showed him much respect. But Raymondin, pensive, said very quietly, very softly:

— This is a good beginning: God grant that the end will be as happy!

Then the lady spoke again:

— Raymondin, what will you do now? Until you have married me, you cannot enjoy the rank I hope to give you.

—I am ready! he replied.

—Raymondin, my friend, it is not quite that simple. We will celebrate our nuptials nobly. You must make an effort to bring people here who will be witnesses to our marriage. Do not worry: all those who come will be greatly honored. But take care to be at this very spot by Monday!

—I will obey beyond reproach, replied Raymondin.

He left and returned to Poitiers by horse. He presented himself before the count without delay. The count received him amiably. Raymondin knew well to greet him without altering his expression and prostrated himself before the count. He then explained his situation to him:

— My lord, said the young man, I will hide nothing from you, but tell you all my story without deceit. I must marry on Monday and receive the oath of a great lady at the Fountain of Thirst. I love her more than the world itself. I beg you to come with your attendants, my lord, to honor me, and to bring your courtly mother, my lady whom I love and whom I respect and in whom all proclaim nobility.

—Raymondin, said the count, I will come. But first tell me: who is the lady you

marry? Do not lie! Where is she from, and of what lineage? Tell me, cousin, who she is, as I am ready to attend your wedding!

—Lord, I can say nothing. Do not ask me any more questions, as you cannot know more! You will know enough in seeing her.

—Who is this marvel? Said the count. I don't understand you: you marry a woman knowing neither who she is nor who her parents are!

—By saint Laurent, my lord, her train is that of the daughter of a king; never has its like been seen. I like her, and I want her. As for her lineage, I have not asked if she is born of a duke or a marquis, but I want her, and I like her. The good count held his peace and told Raymondin he'd come with his mother and a great number of his noble barons. Raymondin thanked him for it.

Monday came, and they prepared. The count woke up in the morning, brought with him his mother in great train and ladies and knights in great number. He asked with astonishment how and where they would be lodged by the fountain. But he need not have worried: all was taken care of. Raymondin and his guests approached the village of Colombiers on horse, crossed it and followed the rise. After the forest, they saw the rock, the tents mounted under the cliff, in the middle of the plain, and the stream which recently sprang from the fountain. And everyone marveled and said that fairies had passed through. They saw in the field the tents, the cabins, the pavilions, and the sweet song of birds, which resounded in the green-hedge farmland below the stream that ran in the thick woods. The place swarmed with people, the kitchens smoked, it seemed a huge army milled on the spot. Then suddenly nearly sixty knights came upon them. They were young and strong, light and agile, richly mounted and armed. But where did these riches come from? They asked after the noble count of Poitiers, he was pointed out to them.

They turned then toward Raymondin, who accompanied the count and was treated with honor. They came humbly to the count and greeted him courteously. The count returned their greeting without delay as best befit their status; to adults and children, even to the most humble, he knew how to return their greetings. And the knights without reproach gave him the thanks of their lady Mélusine for having come to the feast: she had charged them with his lodging. The count said: —Oh, happy hour! I see here magnificent preparations!

The count was nobly lodged and received a superb tent. The chargers were well placed near the mangers and racks installed in the immense and imposing tents. The countess was received in a pavilion of beaten gold erected near the fountain. A great number of very beautiful ladies kept the countess company; everyone wished her welcome. And every one marveled at the noble spectacle: they could never have believed they'd see so many things brought together in one place. Raymondin shared the count's lodging. The chapel, be sure of it, was richly ornamented and decorated with the most beautiful jewels. What more can be said? The countess and the noble count asked to see the fiancé; Mélusine was brought to see them in the chapel. The young lady was so beautiful and so richly attired that all those who saw her that day said that she was surely not a human being, but rather an angel. The count rushed to welcome Mélusine and to fulfill his duty, just as the noble countess. Both attended the mass. One could hear stringed instruments of all sorts. A more noble feast has not been held from there to Constantinople. The whole woods resounded with it. All the attendees said:

—I've never seen anything like it!

So they were married in joy. After the mass, they started back on their way: the count and a prince of the land escorted the bride. They entered the great hall, which everyone found magnificent. The meal was ready; they washed their hands then immediately sat down. The count took the place near the newlyweds, then the countess, then a great lord of the country placed there to honor him. Raymondin did the service (served the food) with the knights. The riders carried the plates. The food was so abundant that it seemed infinite: wine from Aunis, wine

from La Rochelle which heated the brain, wine from Thouars and wine from Beaune, which was not yellow; wine with honey, rosemary wine, hypocras (spiced and sugared red or white wine) flowed from one end of the hall to the other. With the wines of Tournus, of Dijon, of d'Auxerre and Saint-Gengous, and the highly prized wine of Saint-Jean d'Angely. The wine sold at the market and the wine of Villars followed bâtard wine (liqueur-like wine of Spanish or Portuguese origin). The wine of Sain-Pourçain and the wine of Ris gained victory for the light wines. The new Azoia and the wine of Donjon were proclaimed the best. And they even had wine from Bordeaux, which everyone also had in his lodging. The guests had all they asked for, to drink or to eat. After the meal, an excellent tournament was organized near the fountain. Raymondin exerted himself so well that he surpassed all his adversaries.

The jousts lasted until evening, when supper was served. After vespers, they sat down at the table and dined with great pleasure. Then, when everyone was full, they danced, I believe, right away and for a long time. When it was time to leave and go to bed, the newlyweds were led to their tent. It was a sumptuous tent of costly fabric painted entirely with birds. The bed was prepared and covered with lilies. Raymondin came in and went to bed. A bishop came then to bless the bed "in nomine Dei." Then everyone left, for it was very late. The count retired to his tent, and his mother went to bed in her chamber straight away. Everyone returned to their lodgings. Some spent all the night at play and distractions: they sang, danced, amused themselves, and sang good songs. But let us leave this celebration to return to Raymondin, who was stretched out next to Mélusine, listening to her sweet words:

-Listen to me, my good love: our love has joined us as it does men and women. I am yours alone if you respect the oath you made to me that first day. I know very well that when you asked the Count of Poitiers to come with his knights to honor you on your wedding day, he questioned you a great deal to know who I was and of what lineage. You responded perfectly. My love, be not afraid: if you keep your promise, you will be the most fortunate of the men of your line, however fortunate they were. But if you betray your oath, you will see pain, trouble, and adversity set upon you, and you will lose the greatest part of your domain: all this is sure and certain.

-My sovereign, said Raymondin, I swear to you that I will never betray the promise I made you, and I renew it now.

He put his hand in hers and made her a solemn oath to be perfectly loyal. Mélusine replied:

-My sweet love, if you keep your promise, you were born under a good star. Keep it well, I beg you, for I, I will never break mine!

What more can be said? They both did all they could to conceive a very handsome son. This son would be called Urien and would make himself renowned for his good deeds in his own age, as you will soon learn. The festivities lasted fifteen days, and to finish, Mélusine covered the lords and ladies who had come with the noble countess with presents. Everyone remarked:

-Lord God, what shall we see next? Raymondin has made a great marriage, God be praised! I couldn't have imagined better!

At the moment of their departure, Mélusine opened an ivory box holding a precious pin ornamented with fine stones and pearls of great value and made a gift of it to the countess, who received the present joyfully.

The count and his noble company left. Mélusine took leave of the noble countess, the count, the ladies and their attendants with all honors. Then the guests mounted and went straight on their way. Raymondin accompanied them with a noble escort of knights.

They left the forest of Colombiers and then Raymondin took leave of the Count of Poitiers. Had the count dared, he might well have asked him who Mélusine was. He thought of it, but held his peace for fear of angering him. Raymond mounted on a

courser, took leave of them and returned without delay. He embraced his wife, who welcomed him with joy.

The forest was cleared before eight days had run their course. There was a throng of workers of mysterious origins. They dug ditches so deep that looking into their depths caused fear. They had no reason to worry about the punctuality of their payment, as they received their money each day and were nothing but diligent in their work. They dug deep foundations: you have only to see if I lie! Mélusine explained the work to them as it progressed. They placed the first stones on the living rock. Then, as their lady directed, they quickly built and raised huge towers and high walls pressed close against the cliff. Two fortified works and a keep were constructed and surrounded by a high girdle of strong palisades. The whole country marveled at the speed of the construction. When the castle was built, Mélusine baptized it and gave it its own name before its beauty. She gave it the name of Lusignan; its court is still greatly renowned and its rally cry still resounds in many mouths. I write nothing but the truth: the good king of Cypress's battle cry is "Lusignan," as you will learn in the rest of the story, which I'll deliver later.

"Mélusine" signifies "Unceasing Marvel." This fortress is more marvelous and more striking than others. The castle was completed and entirely enclosed by high walls.

Everyone said:

—It's a wonder this fortress was built so quickly!

Mélusine arrived at her term and at the end of nine months put into the world a son named Urien, who later gained a great reputation. But he had a monstrous face: it was too short, too wide, with one red eye and the other green (as everyone could see), a huge mouth and the largest ears ever seen. His body, despite this, was well formed: his legs, arms, and feet were quite straight. Nature forgot nothing: he was perfectly well made.

After he was born, Mélusine had the burg constructed where it remains. All the alleys and roads were protected with high walls and thick towers. There were arrow slits built into the openings to defend the burg by throwing darts or shooting arrows. The burg was impenetrable even by a horde of assailants. The fortified work was superb, the ditches deep, large and covered with rocks on all sides. The doors to the burg were reinforced and were, in truth, extremely strong. And in the village of Lusignan, between the burg and the fortress, there was an amazingly strong fortification called the Mised Tower.

Horn-blowers were placed within it to guard the burg and the fortress and watch over the countryside and warn the citizens if anyone approached. Another child, this one named Eudes, was born the same year. His face and body were blazing red and had about them the glare of fire. But he had a fine body and well shaped limbs. That very year, the lady made the burg and the castle of Melle, then Vouvant and Mervent, followed by the tower and burg of Saint-Maixent, and she began the abbey consecrated to the cult of Our Lady.

Then came the village of Parthenay and its elegant castles. Raymondin was feared throughout the land and quickly came to the summit of his honors. Then Mélusine had another handsome son, the most handsome ever seen. No more can be said about his beauty except that one of his eyes was a little lower than the other. He was, in all honesty, named Guy. The same year, the beautiful lady Mélusine constructed La Rochelle and Pons in Poitou, and didn't even pause, so the story goes, before making a beautiful bridge at Saintes. Then she worked in Talmondais, which increased her fame. Soon afterwards, she had a son named Antoine, as the story goes. But he was born with a hairy lion's paw on his cheek, with sharp claws, which he had his whole life: everyone was shocked. Even the bravest couldn't approach him without fear — I tell you only the truth, don't doubt it!

He accomplished exploits in Luxembourg, as I will tell you. The lady nursed her children until they were strong enough to be weaned. Then, when it pleased God, she had yet another child. Named Renaud, he was born with only one eye placed right on the top of his head, but he saw more clearly than those with two eyes. He would accomplish marvels: you'll hear them, if you pay attention. Then she brought Geoffrey of the Great Tooth into the world: he had one tooth that pushed out of his mouth most fearsomely. He was strong, frightening and accustomed to accomplishing marvelous deeds. It was he who killed the black monks of the Abbey of Maillezais. This crime pushed his father, in his anger, to quarrel with Mélusine and to insult her so strongly that he lost her. This was the beginning of the end for Raymondin. The seventh son was Fromont. He was tall, handsome, and well built, wise and knowledgeable, but he had on his nose a hairy spot like a wolf's pelt. Shortly after came the birth of the Mélusine's eighth son, who had three eyes, one of which was on his forehead. Everyone marveled at it. This child was named Horrible, for he was terrible to behold and so terrible that he thought of nothing but doing evil.

The conquests of the sons of Lusignan

Let us return now to Urien, the oldest child, then speak of each of the brothers by turn, until there is nothing more to tell. Urien was a good rider, robust and strong, sharp and agile. Wanting to go to war by land and by sea, he took a magnificent ship at La Rochelle, a great barge, and declared that he would, with God's aid, conquer a foreign land. He was followed by many men, who filled the barge, and by his brother Guy, who needed to prove his valor. Mélusine gave them a great treasure of silver and of gold so they could pay their men well. They took to the sea with full sail and went right to Cypress, where a grand adventure waited for them. The king of Cypress was holed up in the town of Famagouste, nearly reduced to famine, for the sultan was beneath his walls with a hundred thousand fighters. Seeing Famagouste's state, Urien debarked, refreshed his supplies, and took off for the city right away, following a good road. He advanced at good clip, deploying his richly embroidered banner of fine silk to the wind. His approach was seen by both the city and the Saracen camp. The Saracens took up their arms, went out from their camp, and arranged themselves around the sultan. The Cypriotes thought the sultan was fleeing and decided to pursue him. The king had his daughter, the beautiful Hermine, arm him. The trumpets sounded, the king went forth from the town behind his banner. In the ensuing tumult, the pagans saw the king's approach and fell upon him. The two troops clashed violently: many of the Christians were killed, and many of the Saracens fell dead from their horses. But the Saracens were too strong, despite the effort of the Cypriotes. A poisoned arrow of carefully forged iron transpierced the king, beyond any hope of cure. The doctors' verdict caused a general despair. The Saracens pursued the Cypriotes, who fled before them: they forced them back to the town, killing and wounding many of their men. In the town, the dead and wounded were lamented, as was the king's wound, which aggravated the general despair. Hermine was desolate, despairing, and tore her hair before the king, her father and her lord, whom she saw mortally wounded and beyond help.

But leaving there the king of Cypress and returning to Urien, the proud and valorous warrior, clever, lively and quick, and his noble brother Guy, born of the same father and mother. Banner deployed, they attacked the pagans. What a ferocious struggle, when the lances were lowered! The Poitevins were in good form: the wine they'd drunk made them stronger and more agile. Over the course of multiple assaults, Urien showed his prowess, littering the ground with dead and wounded, just like his brother Guy, who was fierce as a lion. The pagans

recoiled, losing ground. The sultan no longer knew what to do: spurring his horses, he grabbed his blade of steel and with it struck a Poitevin, who couldn't escape death: the sultan stuck the iron and wood of his lance into his body. But Urien, seeing this, seemed to become mad with rage. Taking his sword in both hands, he struck the sultan with it so powerfully that he cut him in two to the teeth. The sultan fell stone dead. There was terror in the ranks of the pagans. Urien accomplished so many feats that the pagans, Turks and Syrians, fled him like the fox before the hounds. They ran for their ships. But Urien, anxious to destroy them, massacred them like dogs. This was how Urien and Guy killed all the pagans. Urien set up his camp and established himself on the site of his victory. But soon the Cypriotes came in their king's name and asked him, as a sign of friendship, to come into the city to see the king, who, because of his wounds, could only walk and talk with difficulty. At these words, Urien responded courteously that he would gladly come before the king. Followed by his brother and the whole army, he mounted his horse, nobly equipped. The Cypriotes did not miss the chance to examine Urien, his great height, his strange and monstrous face. And each showed by sign and by speech that he had never seen such a man: "Judging by his appearance, he must have the power to conquer the entire world, for no one would dare measure himself against him. Who then could resist him? Who, in the name of God? Not even a giant! What a wonder this man is, I swear!" They dismounted before the great room, climbed the steps, and found the king stretched out, his nose and mouth enflamed by the poison. Everyone felt pity for him. Urien greeted him and the king immediately returned his greeting, saying to him:

- You have served me nobly, with unparalleled courtesy! Who are you? What is your name?

- Noble king, know that my name is Urien of Lusignan. I do not fear to make my name known; I will hide it from no one in the world!

-By my faith, said the king, your arrival fills me with joy, if you accomplish my wish. Dear friend, I feel death approaching. No doctor can do anything for me, as the poison in my veins will never let me heal and will soon be my end. But I pray you to grant me a gift: you will lose nothing, you will, to the contrary, find honor and profit in it!

Urien replied without that he would willingly grant him this gift reservation. The king humbly said:

-Here is a good speech. I will die more tranquilly!

He then called together his beautiful daughter Hermine and all his barons. They assembled quickly. He declared:

-Listen to me, my barons! Do not expect to see me live much longer, for I will die soon. I want to leave Cypress to my daughter, to her my noble realm, which I have protected - at sword-point - from pagans with all my strength. I will not heal, and she is my legitimate heir.

The barons agreed with all of his words: they also paid homage to Hermine and took their fiefs from her. The king spoke again:

- Listen to me, my barons: a woman will be unable to protect your land from the Saracens, our neighbors. A woman cannot walk the hard road of war. But I have seen the power and the valor of Urien of Lusignan, who, by his sole prowess, defeated the sultan of Damas and massacred his troops. As I recall, he was willing to grant me a gift. I will ask it of him, and pray him. I beg you: do not refuse me!

The barons gently interceded with Urien, who ceded to them humbly: they could report to the king that he would do all that was asked of him. The king, overjoyed, then said:

- Listen, Urien, and forgive me! I ask no gift of you, I do not ask for any of your possessions, but wish to give you mine: my realm and my inheritance, with my daughter for your wife, for she is my sole heir. Take her, I beg you!

The barons rejoiced greatly at this speech, as they prized Urien for his great valor.

Urien listened to the king, reflected, and replied:

—I thank you, my lord, for doing me such an honor. Were death to grant you a reprieve, I would not accept this gift. But because it is thus, my lord, because such is your desire, I accept.

What more can be said? The vows were celebrated. The mass was held in the chamber of the dying king, who breathed his last at the moment of the elevation of the Host. God received him with His grace in Paradise, and pardoned all his sins, for he was truly a good Catholic. Joy turned quickly to grief. The bride's heart was torn by distress.

They hastened to inter the king and give him noble funeral services. This was proper, for a king must have a very noble funeral. The noble king who had just died was mourned too much for the people to organize jousts and tourneys, but the wedding was nevertheless celebrated with honor and dignity. The organizers did not incur the least reproach, so successful was the feast, having all the pomp due a king. The magnificent wedding drew knights, ladies, damsels, squires, young girls, and the bourgeois from several villages, who all danced that day to honor the feast. The people rejoiced to learn their lord's renown. Then the bride was brought to her bed. Urien went straight to bed with her, naked in his bed. That night, Griffon was conceived; you'll hear me speak of him later. He would conquer great lands in pagan countries. He liberated the passage of Colchide, which could not be crossed directly. He overcame many marvelous adventures there, more than twenty a month. An isle was there, admirably beautiful, where Medea permitted Jason to take the golden fleece. He succeeded thanks to Medea's wisdom and cleverness. But the story is too long to tell the marvels of the isle in this book. There are a good thousand such, well-known or secret. Were I to speak of this isle, I'd have to stop my tale. I will leave this isle, then, to return to Griffon who became prince of Morée at sword-point, conquered the port of Jaffa and multiplied his conquests such that, in his prowess, he assailed the valiant city of Tripoli. He planted his pennant and his banner there and conquered it. Not a day did he cease crossing lands and seas for honor and glory.

Enough of him! Let us return to the wise king Urien, crowned lord of Cypress! The king of Armenia was, on my soul, the uncle of his wife. The late king of Cypress was the king of Armenia's brother. This noble king was virtuous, but he could not live forever. Death, which takes the weak and the strong, took him, to his people's great distress: many died of grief, so well had he governed his country during his reign. He had a daughter, the most graceful and the most beautiful ever seen: she was his sole heir. The Armenians held council and decided to send a messenger to Cypress to ask the king to send them his noble brother Guy: he would have their damsel, the beautiful Florie, for his wife. They held to this decision. The messengers arrived in Cypress and acquitted themselves well in their mission to the king, who received them with pleasure and organized feasts in their honor. When Urien heard their talk of the beautiful and gracious Florie, he took counsel with his barons, who all agreed to say to him to send his brother to Armenia right away. Guy, so ordered, bowed to Urien's command. He took to the sea, nobly equipped with a numerous following, and debarked in Armenia, where the beautiful Florie lived. Once on land, he went on his way. The lords came to meet him, crowned him solemnly and brought him, overjoyed by his arrival. All the States celebrated him. He quickly married Florie and became king of all the land. So the two realms found themselves in exactly the same situation as before: two brothers reigned, for Urien and Guy also had the same mother and father. These two kings had a noble reign and in their time gave great aid (just as their descendants, of whom I've heard, did) to the inhabitants of Rhodes, to whose aid they came during their troubles. The two brothers had children and lived long enough to see them grow

up. The children accomplished good feats in their time and defeated many pagans. After the death of their fathers, who were brothers, they governed their lands well and rid them of their enemies. But let us return to their father Raymondin and Mélusine, their mother, worthy of all honors! At this good news of their sons, who had conquered two grand realms, they recited the fifteen psalms in praise to God, the King of Glory, who had given their sons victory over their enemies and had granted them both the honor of kingship and the love of their subjects.

To thank God, and for the salvation of her soul, the noble lady Mélusine decided straight away to build at Lusignan a beautiful church consecrated to Our Lady. It is very beautiful - I have often seen it.. Mélusine built it and gave it a rich endowment. She founded many other churches wherever she pleased throughout Poitou, spreading her gifts everywhere.

Then she married, says the story, her son Eudes to the daughter of the noble count of the Marche.

Renaud, who had but one eye, became tall, strong and fierce. He and Antoine left Lusignan right after dinner one day with troops placed under Antoine's orders, who was the elder. En route for Bohemia, they approached Luxembourg, a city of great renown, before which they saw numerous banners. The king of Alsace besieged it and would have taken it were it not for the arrival of the two brothers. For nothing in the world would they renounce the combat, as they knew well why the king made war: it was for a young girl, pretty and graceful, who was in the town. The courtly young lady was the daughter of the Duke of Luxembourg and an orphan: the king tried to take her for wife by force and didn't plan to leave the noble town before having the girl. But here came the two brothers with a great army. They sent their herald to defy the king, who rejoiced in advance of the battle, for he was proud and warlike. The two brothers rode at a lively speed and saw from afar the fortress, the banners which floated on the wind, and the mass of men at arms equipped with knives and guisarmes. They got into battle order and, without delay, fell upon their enemies. When the armies met, the cry of "Lusignan!" could be heard. The warriors met with a great crash, making the earth tremble. The shock's strength was frightening. The Alsaciens attacked the Poitevins and the Poitevins clubbed the Alsaciens, multiplying the dead and the wounded. They threw again their cry;

-Lusignan! Alsaciens, pitiful wretches, you'll die here, unable to escape!

The Poitevins accumulated feats of arms, depriving many bodies of their souls.

As for the two brothers, I am incapable of rendering justice to their exploits.

Men fell on both sides, but the Poitevins held over the Alsaciens. Antoine easily seized the king with his own hands. He wanted to kill him, but the king surrendered and offered him his sword. Antoine, at this sight, received his sword. The Alsaciens fled, chased by the Poitevins. And Renaud fought with all his might, killing and massacring on all sides. The Alsaciens were all killed or made prisoner. Renaud, like his brother Antoine, was full of wisdom and courtesy. How terrible, if he had become a monk! The brothers sent an ambassador into the town, to the beauty to whose aid they had just come: six knights delivered the king of Alsace to the gracious young girl. The knights went without waiting further to deliver the king to the beauty: she could make of him what she willed. Then the noble young girl, full of grace and beauty, said to her counselors:

- From whence come these noble lords who have done me such a grand/ great honor?

- Lady, said an old knight, you have a chance to make their acquaintance. These are the sons of Lusignan, they are named thus after their battle cry. One is named Antoine and the other Renaud.

- I give thanks to God, said the beauty, for having sent me their help: they have rendered me a great service. All that I possess is theirs. I will act according to their counsels and rely on them for all my decisions, as they are so strong!

She brought her counsel together and ordered that the two brothers be brought in all haste, and that all the army (or at least the most high barons) come lodge in the town.

Her men promised to obey. They proceeded to the two brothers, whom they found in the camp of the king of Alsace, set up for a siege. The camp was full of riches, but they hadn't deigned to touch them, giving all that they had won to the men at arms, to the great and the small. But then came the envoys from Luxembourg who, before all, delivered wisely their message to the two valorous brothers on the behalf of their lady and mistress.

The brothers welcomed them politely, like well educated men. On hearing the message, they responded quickly that they would come willingly to lodge in the town with five hundred of their knights. They left with the army the marshals of the stables and sent their quarter-masters to the town to prepare lodging. You should have heard the sound of instruments at their entrance to Luxembourg! At all the intersections, people hastened to the sweet sound of the music. The nobles came to the meeting with the two brothers: two of the greatest lords accompanied them to the chateau. the people assembled around the beauty, who was named Chrétienne, and who escorted a numerous following of noble ladies and maidens, the ones married, the others not. They welcomed the brothers with nobility and discretion, as is proper. The repast was ready; they washed their hands before sitting. It was good to see them: the king of Alsace at the head of the table, then Antoine, brother of Renaud, then three great lords of the country; Renaud was seated in the middle. This was a magnificent feast, the richest ever seen, as much for the dishes as for the wines: the Poitevins were regaled. After the repast, hands were washed, the table was cleared, grace was said. The king of Alsace declared then to the courtly brothers:

- I am your prisoner, as you have captured me today. I pray of you, decide my ransom!

- Dear lord, responded Antoine, you are not our prisoner. We have made an act of courtesy before your villainy toward this noble maiden - it is for her to decide your lot.

We have delivered you into her hands to do with you as she judges good; it could not be otherwise. It is upon her, without a doubt, which depends your liberty or your death.

At these words, the king, who dreaded the lady, worried greatly, remembering the fashion in which he had treated her. But the lady spoke quickly thereafter, without waiting for the least advice, yet with wisdom and courtesy:

- Lords, I thank you for the service you have done me. But on my faith, I will not decide the fate of the king of Alsace: he is yours, I leave him to you. Even if I were a thousand times richer, if I had a hogshead of silver, I could not compensate you for that which you have done for me today, by your noble chivalry. His life or his death hangs on you - I will do nothing more, and I will be eternally grateful.

Antoine and Renaud, hearing this speech, responded plainly:

-Because this is your will, we acquit him of everything, provided he repairs the damage he has caused you, that he kneel before you and ask pardon for the crime he has committed, and that he swear on his faith, leaving you hostages, that he will never again do you the least harm!

The beauty understood them fully:

-If he will do as you have told him, I agree: it is my desire because it is yours!

The king was very happy: he had been afraid of being put to death. he begged the

pardon of the beauty in the terms cited by Antoine and the beauty agreed to pardon him, according to the will of the two brothers. When the king took the oath, he spoke in a loud voice:

—Barons, I would be happy to be able to have as my neighbor a knight of your valor, the both of you: this situation has only advantages. See the noble and sweet Chrétienne, the gracious duchess, who reigns over a huge land and great riches. Antoine, listen to me, I beg of you. You have rendered her a great service and it is just that I, myself, I thank you. I am coming around to my point. Barons, I have considered it carefully – marry Chrétienne to Antoine! She could not find a better husband. He is a valiant knight.

— The king speaks well! said the barons of Luxembourg.

They all agreed to his proposition. The wedding was celebrated immediately, and lasted eight full days. There were this time jousts, tourneys, and the king played nobly.

Eight days later, at the end of the feast, everyone prepared himself to take leave and depart. But then arrived a messenger from the king of Bohemia, who brought a letter to the king of Alsace. The door was opened for him. The king broke the seal, read the letter, and began to sigh and to cry. The two brothers asked him the cause of his tears. He replied:

— I won't try to hide it: I am in a terrible situation. The Saracens have laid siege to Prague and to my brother the king of Bohemia, and this is the object of my sadness and my torment. He is besieged in the city of Prague. In the name of God, have pity on him and agree to go to his aid: otherwise, he will die!

Antoine, at these words, said forcefully to the king:

—Lord, do not distress yourself, your brother will be saved. Renaud my brother will bring a great number of good knights, who will help your brother and kill a great number of Saracens.

— Thank you! the king said to him. I will make you a promise: Renaud will have for his wife my brother's daughter, for she could not be better married. He will have her, God help me, and he will be king of Bohemia after my brother, who has no other heir but his daughter.

Antoine learned this news with pleasure. He said resolutely to the king:

— Leave then immediately! Go quickly, noble king, reassemble your army! Bring me all your men and return in fifteen days! You will find my men ready for war, quite near here. I will lead them myself, with my brother Renaud.

The king thanked them warmly and left rapidly to amass a great number of troops in his own land. When he had assembled them, he returned as quickly as possible to Luxembourg. He returned to Luxembourg without staying long in his country, and was well escorted by many troops and noble barons. A messenger came to Antoine, sent by the king of Alsace, who came with a noble retinue. He said with all the strength of his voice to the duke Antoine:

— Lord, God keep you! The king of Alsace and his men are ready for the voyage to Bohemia. He is there in the field with a noble company.

— Welcome to him! said the duke.

He immediately called Renaud, who arrived straight away. Antoine said to him: Brother, go quickly and rejoin the king of Alsace in the field! Lodge the great and small! The tents are deployed on all the length of the field. You know how to handle it: install them comfortably, then bring the king here!

Renaud obeyed the orders, he fulfilled his mission well. Once the Alsaciens were well lodged, the king took leave of them and left them. He went to the duke in Luxembourg and found him in the city. They went to table and feasted, but I will leave aside the dinner. Antoine had gathered his men earlier; they were nearby. They were soon made war-ready. It was a noble company that went to the aid of the king of Bohemia: about thirty thousand men joined the duke in arms. The two armies assembled, wearing badges of honor. What a fine retinue on both the side of the duke and that of the king!

Their assembly shook the earth. But before their departure, Chrétienne called Antoine and said to him:

-I beg you, my lord, honor me by wearing the unaltered arms of Luxembourg.

-Dear friend, Antoine replied, that is impossible, but I can add the shadow of a lion to my own arms. Those are the arms I want, for I was born with a lion's paw on my cheek, to general astonishment. Thus I respond to your wish.

- Thank you, she said to him. I accept, because you want it so. For if you take away the blue, at the same time you wear your own arms, you do mine, which are very old.

Antoine thus adopted these arms, a union of his wife's and his own. He took leave of her. The army struck camp and marched with great noise toward Bohemia, making everyone in their path flee them. They crossed Bavaria and Germany and approached Bohemia. But on now to the felonious pagans making war on Bohemia. So, as the story goes, the powerful king of Crackow made war on Bohemia with a grand army of Slavs, for he was lord of their land. He harassed the Bohemians and one day overtly attacked Prague: he tried to plant his banner in the city. Knowing his intention, King Frederic of Bohemia armed himself fully and took his helm. He had the gate opened and went out from the town with a great number of his noble warriors. They threw themselves against the Saracens, whom they killed and massacred in great number.

But there were so many Slavs that they pushed all the way to the city. But the good duke of Luxembourg settled the dispute well! The king of Bohemia fought the Saracens on all sides. His men recoiled, but the king did not. He defended himself such as he could, striking and killing the Slavs - he clove one in two with his sword and knocked another off his horse. The good knight defended himself like the boar at bay. But a dart from an arbalest struck him so cruelly that he fell stone dead. His soul left his body. God watch over it! He was a valorous warrior, the best from here to Rome! Then, we know, the cries of grief were raised. The Bohemians present cried, grief-stricken. They tried to flee, but the Saracens followed them so closely that they were caught. Sword in hand, the pagans massacred a great number of them, surrounded by cries of distress. The survivors took refuge in the city and reported the king's death to his radiantly beautiful daughter, Eglantine. The noble girl trembled before the pagans. The citizens of Prague shut themselves in the town, trembling before the Saracens. The Saracens, joyous from the death of the king, lit a great fire on which they piled a great pyre. They burned the king before his men, at the city gates. The besieged, in their grief, cried and gnashed their teeth, but could do nothing to stop it. But then Antoine, Renaud, and the noble king of Alsace arrived at Prague and assailed the pagans. It was a noble sight: the helmets shone in the sun with all their brightness. They advanced with all speed, while the overwhelmed Praguois were harassed by the pagans and saw their number diminishing. The terrified city defended itself feebly. Eglantine, in her distress, wished she were dead:

- Alas, she said. My father is dead. I am but an orphan without mother or father.

What will become of you, Eglantine? I see now my nation in ruin. Poor unhappy one, what will you become? what can you do? Before your very eyes, the Saracens (God damn them!) devastate and pillage your country! I know not what to do or say - I can do nothing against them. Must I forswear God and embrace the Saracen's religion?

Eglantine lamented her fate while the Saracens attacked the town, trying to take it by storm. But even he assured of success may fail. While the pagans harassed the Bohemians, a messenger entered Prague secretly and in haste. He shouted:

- Courage! The town will be saved! Hold your ground; help will arrive soon! The king of Alsace comes, bringing Antoine and Renaud to your aid. Fear death no more! The noble duke Antoine and his brother the valiant Renaud bring numerous

Poitevins nourished with good wines. The pagans will be quickly defeated and cannot hold before them. With them comes the king of Alsace, to Bohemia's aid! At these words, the barons gave thanks to God. They regained their courage and defended themselves bitterly. The Saracens, seeing them change their conduct this quickly, soon understood that they had received reinforcements or good news. They saw a messenger arrive, who shouted to them:

— Lords, retreat! Make haste — return to your camp and leave this place!

Christians have come to the aid of the besieged. These are redoubtable men of arms whose numbers cover the fields: they come upon us at full speed!

The pagans rapidly fled, abandoning the assault and regaining their camp. They sounded the trumpets and disposed their troops in battalions. Then Antoine's army, on the other side of the field, advanced in battle order. When the two armies met, the Saracens were filled with fear and the Christians leaped upon them. Many shields were pierced. The Christians crushed the Saracens, who were on the defensive. What a terrible assault! All that could be seen was the smashing and piercing of helms. Renaud fought the Saracens two at a time with his prodigious blows. And Antoine, on his side, pushed them back, inspiring terror throughout. He struck one pagan so well that his helm could not protect him — his sword penetrated it, cleaving him in two to the teeth. He fell to the ground, mouth open. The Christians yelled from surprise and shock. They shouted:

— Lusignan! Lead on, lord barons, as for the pagans, we'll get them yet!

The king of Crackow, disheartened to see his men so hurt, tried to go to their defense. Holding his shield tightly against him, he violently brandished his sword and struck a Christian, knocking him, dead, off his horse. Then he shouted his rally cry:

—Crackow! Christians, you will all die! You cannot escape me, you will all die by my hand!

But Renaud, furious, spurred his charger, took up his steel blade, and struck the king with such force and such violence that he clove him to the teeth. The king fell true.

Struck by Renaud, the king fell dead, sowing panic among his men. The Saracens immediately fled. Seeing their king dead, they assumed themselves defeated and took to rapid flight. But the Poitevins chased them, struck them, crushed them, and left them in pieces like meat at the butcher's. Antoine, the noble warrior, killed many pagans; in that battle he clove all his opponents in two. As for the king of Alsace, he conducted himself nobly as well. All the pagans were killed and fell dead on the spot. When the king of Alsace saw the king of Crackow, cold and dead, as were so many of pagans, he ordered his men to assemble. They obeyed. They piled the pagans in stacks, then set fire to them from all sides: the pagans were burnt and reduced to cinders. The king did this to take vengeance, as the king of Crackow had burned his brother's body. Antoine and Renaud installed themselves in the tents they found already set up. The Poitevins lodged in the camp taken from the Saracens. The king of Alsace left the army to enter the town with a hundred of his most valiant and most agile knights. Eglantine went to meet him, graceful in all her actions. She greeted with sweetness the king who was her uncle; the king held her against him and kissed her.

— My niece, said the king, I swear your father's death is avenged. Don't torment yourself anymore: you have witnessed the vengeance! The king of Crackow killed him, but don't waste your regrets: I burned him and his men. Take courage, you must keep your head! The pagans did this country wrong, but they received their due. You have nothing more to fear. They imagined themselves conquering the land, but they failed.

Don't take this defeated air! There is no shame to be had: the victory is yours, and it's a great honor for you!

— Alas, she said, my lord, my uncle and my dear, dear friend, how can I keep

from crying at the thought of my father?

– Was he not also my brother? said the king. But the pain must fade: pray that God will be merciful! We will have the funeral tomorrow and pray to God for him. As it was said, so was it done. The next day, a thousand pounds of candles were used to illuminate the church for the funeral. Antoine and Renaud conducted themselves perfectly throughout the ceremony. The Bohemians contemplated these clever companions, these two brothers, these two warriors. They couldn't stop looking at their lofty figures and their elegance. But many were shocked by the lion's paw they saw high on Antoine's cheek, the brother of Renaud, for it stood out clearly, surprising everyone, and the figure of the knight amazed the people, who had seen no one like him. The inhabitants of the town also said that Renaud was a smart man, well cut to conquer a great realm or an empire. They regretted that he had only one eye, but lauded all the rest of his person. Why lengthen my narrative here? The funeral were celebrated with nobility and honor, be sure of it. Then the king took counsel with the nobles of Bohemia, who formed a good company, and told them:

– Barons, hear me! You must decide who will govern your land and replace the king you have lost.

– It's true, they replied, but the decision is yours. You are responsible for this choice, for if Eglantine dies, the country falls to you: you, then, must settle the question.

Choose quickly the man who will marry Eglantine and rule the country!

–For my part, replied the king, I will decide who will marry my niece, but I ask you to give me advice on this point.

– Lord, we are at your command! We will follow your will and accept no other knight than the one you give us: we look to you.

– Very well, leave me to do it, in the name of God! said the noble king. You will have for your king a good man, an honorable man, gentle and courteous. He is a proven knight and fearless, the only one I would give you. His brothers, in truth, have among them two kings and a duke of great power. His brother and he have come from afar to help you in your distress; they delivered your city and your country from pagans.

He immediately called Renaud:

– I would speak with you, the king said strongly. Advance, Renaud, come closer, my dear friend! I promised to make you king of this land, and I would never lie to you. I wish to realize this promise, for a king must not lie. I give you my niece Eglantine, as well as the realm, for your happiness. Agree to take her for your wife and to defend the realm, for I make you master of the woman and the land!

Antoine responded right away:

– Lord king, I thank you for your great courtesy. Renaud will marry Eglantine and defend the country; he will govern the land well, for he is a valiant man of war!

And the barons, hearing this, gave much thanks to God, and to their lady; for they saw that Renaud was large, strong, and a perfect ruler. The king then had his niece, the beautiful Eglantine, adorned as befit a queen. And Renaud himself was dressed like a king. The marriage was held before the noble assembly of barons. The celebration was magnificent and lasted a good fifteen days.

Sumptuous gifts were distributed, the most handsome ever seen: clothes, swift horses, and beautiful jewels such as only kings can give. Superb jousts were held before the nobles and gracious ladies of the land. There were more than a thousand there, not counting those of the town. Renaud won the jousts.

The Bohemians, proud of their lord, said with one voice:

– Long live our new king! We have chosen well: blessed be He who brought him to us!

The wedding celebration ended fifteen days later. The ladies and maidens, each

more beautiful than the others, took their leave, as did the duke Antoine, who took the road to Luxembourg with his noble following. And the king Renaud stayed in Bohemia, greatly honored in the land for his noble conduct: everyone covered him with praises.

Renaud carried great wars to Frise, and left there for the conquest of Nordalbingie, then Denmark. He held power throughout his reign and led an exemplary life: it was said that there was no man of his valor from there to Rome.

But I'll leave him now to return to Duke Antoine, who returned from Bohemia to Luxembourg with the wise and courteous king of Alsace. There, they took leave of each other to go their separate ways. The king of Alsace's path took him straight back to his own land, and Antoine rejoined his new wife, who loved him with all her heart and showed it well; he was more worthy of this love than any other man. His wife gave him two children: the older, named Bertrand, was an excellent knight; the younger, named Lohier, liberated all the passes from the Ardenne to the great forests, and there he erected strong fortresses, the first of them Yvoy. He had constructed the noble bridge of Mézières on the Meuse and conquered many other towns by his prowess, for he was a noble warrior. Antoine raised a terrible war against the powerful count of Fribourg, vanquished him, and traversed Austria, where his men, once poor, became rich: he subdued everyone with his power and conquered many regions. His elder son Bertrand had hardly waited to grow up before he took for his wife the king of Alsace's daughter. He was a good knight full of dash and daring, much more than I know how to describe. At the death of the king of Alsace, he succeeded him with complete approval, for he had married the daughter of the king, the lady of the country. Bertrand had a glorious reign and governed his land well. Antoine and Renaud were so powerful during their lives that they subdued all their enemies.

The disappearance of Mélusine

Enough said of them! I'll return to Mélusine and continue my story with Raymondin and the way he governed his lands. He was an excellent lord; he conquered many countries at sword-point. He carried his banner into Brittany and conquered the whole nation. All its barons, before his bravery, swore homage to him. But Geoffrey the Great Tooth grew, strong and proud, quick and vigorous. He made war in Guérandais to prove his worth: he triumphed there over the giant Guédon, vanquishing him in combat.

This giant ravaged the country; everyone strongly feared him and took refuge from him all the way to La Rochelle, so much did they fear him. He took tributes from one end of the country to the other. But Geoffrey, called The Great Tooth, when he heard this swore that he would go to meet the giant and that he would vanquish him, with the aid of the gentle King of Glory, who gives victory to whomsoever He wishes. His father Raymondin, desolate, imagined the monstrous height of the giant with terror and trembled for his son. But Geoffrey the Great Tooth took up his arms and left straight away with nine companions.

Let us return to Mélusine, the gentle lady, courteous and charitable, who in the meantime has had two children, according to my sources. One was named Raymond, the other Thierry. As for Fromont he had become a man of great valor, a wise man who often frequented the abbey of Maillezais and took great pleasure in it: he often went to pray to God. He was so religious that he decided to become a monk in the abbey. So he left Maillezais to rejoin his father and present him with his request: he wished to take up the habit of the monk of Maillezais.

Raymondin, staggered, was amazed by his son Fromont's words.

— Why, he said, Lord God! do you want to become a monk? Look at your brother Antoine and all your other well-loved brothers, who are such noble knights! Become a monk?! It's not possible! Never, in the name of God, will you be a

priest! I'll make you enter another order: I will make a knight of you like your brothers!

But Fromont replied to his father:

— I'll never be a knight, nor will I bear arms: I want to pray to God for you, for my mother, and for all my brothers. Let me become a monk in the abbey of Maillezais, I beg you: it is my dearest desire! I love that place and I want to spend my life there: don't refuse me, dear father, this depends entirely on you! Raymondin saw well that he must grant his request. So a messenger was sent to Mélusine, who was then occupied by building the noble fortress of Niort, with all its matching towers. The messenger recounted Raymondin's words to her: Fromont wanted to become a monk and priest at Maillezais; Raymondin sent him to her with all haste so that she could decide Fromont's lot and say if she would accept that he wear the tonsure and become a monk cloistered at the fine monastery of Maillezais. Mélusine replied:

—Go, and tell him for my part that he acts according to my pleasure: I submit myself to his will, and his decision will be mine!

The messenger returned to Raymondin right away, and found him in the morning, dressing. He relayed her message, which filled the count with joy. Raymondin, once warmly dressed, summoned his son Fromont:

— Fromont, he said, listen to me: I asked your mother if she truly supports your decision to become a monk. She returned the decision to me. So then, Fromontin, because it is your wish, you will take up the habit of the monk. But the monks of Maillezais, whom you wish to rejoin, are coarse. Choose another monastery! Why not Marmoutier? It is a splendid place! Or, if you wish, the Bourg-Dieu, since you want to be a monk. But if you want to be a canon, you will be canon of Poitiers. And your position will be three times better, if you decide to be a canon, for you will have Tours and Touraine, with the great church Saint-Martin. I will settle it all and sign all the legal documents myself, if you wish, for Notre-Dame of Chartres or Notre-Dame of Paris.

Have no fear, I know the pope well, and nothing is impossible for me! Then, you will be a bishop and will hardly have to wait before you become the bishop of Paris, Beauvais or Arras. Tell me, Fromont, would you like to be a canon?

— No, said Fromont to his father, I want to be a monk at Maillezais, I assure you.

This is the place I've chosen and in my life I desire no other blessing!

— Then, in the name of God, Raymondin said to him, because you wish it, you'll go there and pray to God for us.

— I will not fail, replied Fromont, with God's aid.

Why delay my tale? He took the habit of a monk under the eyes of all, over the course of a great celebration: the nobility came in great number to honor his father Raymondin and Mélusine his mother. All the monks, joyous, welcomed him as best they could, but misfortune would come on them for this — they all perished by the hand of Geoffrey the Great Tooth, who was filled with sadness and rage at this news and went without rest to Maillezais and, in his madness, burned the monks, abbot, and abbey. He burned a hundred monks in the abbey, one Tuesday, the day of Mars, the god of battles.

They were all burned beyond hope of rescue. Then he went, without delay, back to the place from which he'd come. You'll learn all about it, don't worry, you just have to listen to me! But we'll set this aside for the moment and return to Mélusine, who was at Vouvant airing her clothes. She had just arrived, in haste, following Raymondin, who was happy to be there. Then came two messengers bringing letters from the powerful duke Antoine and from Renaud, the rich king. They gave these letters to Raymondin, who took them and broke the seals. He read the letters carefully, his heart full of joy.

Quickly, he called Mélusine, who arrived without delay.

—Read these letters!

—Thank you, Raymondin, replied Mélusine. Things are going well for us. I know

all this news: it is all well and good. I give thanks to Our Lord, who has heaped our sons with honor. Among our dear sons, we have three kings and a duke, I know it well. And further more (God be praised for it!) we have a son close to here, a monk in an abbey, who prays to God for us every day. He stays at Maillezais and prays to God to come to our aid. He will pray so that God will never forget us! Our five sons are well provided for and very wise. There are four left who are currently in this house: God grant that they too attain great destinies! They will not fail to do so with the aid of God and Saint Mary! The news carried by the letters was soon repeated all over, to everyone's great pleasure. Fifteen days passed in great rejoicing, in feasting with friends.

It happened, one Saturday, that Raymondin saw Mélusine leaving, as he had many other times. He'd never tried to learn where she went or what she did, for he thought nothing of it. But it just so happened that his brother, who had owned the land of Forez since the death of their father, arrived at Vouvant that day. The weather was calm, without wind; it was a beautiful, clear day.

Raymondin, seeing his brother arrive, received him with dignity; but no good would come of it. The feast was celebrated with nobility and pomp, as a great number of nobles and ladies were in attendance. The count of Forez said:

— Raymondin, dear brother, if you love me, I beg you, have your wife come!

— Listen, dear brother, replied Raymondin, you'll see her tomorrow.

They took their places for the meal (the celebration was superb) and, right after dinner, got up from the table. The count of Forez, then, took his brother by the hand and said to him:

— Raymondin, dear brother, in good faith, I think you're the victim of an enchantment. That's what public rumor says, and I don't know how you can endure this shame: you must put an end to it. It is said everywhere, I tell you, that you don't have the courage to ask your wife where she goes or what she does: it's a real dishonor for you!

And what do you know about what she does? They say (God save me!!) that she violates all morality and that, this day, she gives herself to another and cuckolds you. Others say, and you should know, that this day she stays with the fairies. Brother, you'd better try to learn where she goes on Saturdays. I speak directly, as my brother: act before the eyes of all, I am sure that she dishonors you!

Raymondin, astonished, shook with shame and anger, speechless. He quickly got his sword. He knew well in which room his wife had gone and went there; at that time he had never even approached the room. He saw before him a door of iron. He thought for a while, but saying to himself that his wife was a criminal and betraying him, he drew his sword from its sheath and put the point against the door. Driving it in with force, he pierced the iron door. Alas! He acted badly this day! Because of this he would lose both joy and honor. He pressed his eye against the hole, regarding the interior, impatient to know the secret within. But he learned too soon, and took nothing from it but shame. He looked in and discovered Mélusine in the bath: he saw her, to the waist, white as snow on the branch, well formed and graceful, her face cool and smooth. Certainly, there never was a more beautiful woman. But her body ended in a serpent's tail, huge and horrible, scaled in silver and blue. She splashed it in the water. At this sight, Raymondin, who had never seen her bathe in this form, crossed himself, filled with fear. He begged God's aid; he was so afraid he could hardly speak. But in order to fill the hole, he cut a small piece of cloth, which he pressed into the hole with wax; this sealed the hole hermetically and kept anyone from seeing the interior of the room. Then he left and rejoined his brother, full of grief and anger. The count saw plainly the sadness that held his brother and imagined that he'd found his wife dishonored. He said to him:

—Brother, I can see your wife has lost her way and that she cuckolds you, as every one says.

But Raymondin spoke with a loud voice:

—You lie about her with your knave's muzzle! Cursed is the hour you entered my house! Out! Speak no more of the lady: she is pure, irreproachable! There is no other woman of her worth. You've made me commit an act that will turn against me. Leave quickly, rogue! On my faith, I can barely keep myself from killing you! Leave, then! Go!

It's my misfortune you came and I listened to you! Never set foot here again! He was in such a rage that people marveled to hear him speak to his brother this way. The count left, stupefied, and returned to his lands, regretting the day and the hour he had spoken so. He saw well that he would never regain his brother's esteem and love.

He was sadder than anyone had ever been because he was chastised so by Raymondin, and he had good reason: when Geoffrey the Great Tooth learned of the affair, he hastened to his lands, which he put to fire and the sword. He inflicted a shameful death on the count of Forez, then gave the land he'd conquered to one of his brothers, whom he made count of Forez. But enough said of Geoffrey the Great Tooth. Let us return to Raymondin, who was overwhelmed by his grief. He cried, wailed, and lamented, constantly changing color, inconsolable in his grief:

—Alas, alas! There is surely nothing in the world more miserable than me! Alas! Mélusine, today, by my fault, I have lost you! I tremble from it, I am sick with chagrin.

Alas! must I lose you, my friend, my heart, my happiness, my love, my life? It is you, sad Fortune, who has made me lose my joy, she who made me what I am! What can I do?

Throw myself down a well? What can I do, God, dear Lord? An end to laughter and tenderness from the beauty I love so! She was my consolation and my joy, my happiness and my delight!

He disrobed and threw himself on his bed, but could not sleep; he sighed and cried without rest:

—Ha, God! said he, what can I do and what will I become, Mélusine, if I lose you?

I will live in the desert as a recluse or a hermit, in a forgotten and uninhabited place. Ha, Mélusine! Noble lady, my heart, my love, my happiness, must I lose you for such a misfortune?

He tore his hair, struck his chest. He couldn't stop lamenting Mélusine. He turned over and over in his bed, incapable of rest, first on his back, then on his chest. Then Mélusine came into the chamber, disrobed, and ran quickly to the bed to lie down close to Raymondin. She took him in her arms, held him against her and found his neck freezing cold. His neck? No, by God! but all his body, for he had uncovered himself, so much had he tossed and turned so much: he was in a horrible state. Mélusine whispered to him:

—My husband, what's wrong, alas? Do you feel some illness? Some grief? You are so pale! Tell me, I beg you! Alas! am I not then your love? You mustn't hide anything from me. I know how to heal you, don't trouble yourself so! Tell me if you are sick — unburden your heart now and you will soon be healed!

Raymondin, at these words, was quite happy: he thought she knew nothing of what he'd done. She knew quite well, but held her tongue, for he had revealed nothing and had repented sincerely, a hundred times more than I could recount.

—I was very hot, said he, as if I had a fever. But having burned, now I am cold.

—You will soon be well, she replied, don't worry!

She held him against her and kissed him, filled him with ease. They lived thus for a long time yet, leading a happy life.

But let us once again take up the adventures of Geoffrey the Great Tooth!

Geoffrey galloped toward Guérandais, demanding where he could find the giant: he

wanted to fight him. He quickly discovered the crag where the proud giant Guédon lived, he of prodigious height and strength. Geoffrey leapt from his horse, armed himself without further ado, and remounted without fear of the giant. He took a steel club and fixed it to his saddle. Then he grabbed his blade, which had cost him dear, and his lance of sharp iron. What courage! Heaven help him! He commended his men to God. They all bemoaned their master, convinced he'd never return. Geoffrey told them:

—Be quiet then, and don't be afraid! You may be sure, I guarantee, that with the aid of God the Father and his Glorious Mother, I'll vanquish the giant!

He left them with those good-byes and went on alone, reached the crag, and climbed to the castle perched on its summit. He soon came to the draw-bridge and called out in a powerful voice:

—Where are you, traitor, where are you? I will kill you for having made war on my country so long! I will not leave here without killing or vanquishing you! The giant was in his keep above, in the gallery. He heard the voice of the noble warrior: in two shakes of a lamb's tale, he put his head (the size of a bull's head) through the loop-hole. He saw Geoffrey the Great Tooth and thought nothing of him: the hero was well hewn, such as the giant had never seen. But too bad for him! Guédon swore by his gods: he held himself dishonored to see but a single man come to make war on him, to find him in his fortress. He armed himself and descended immediately; but it was for his own misfortune. He took a scythe of well-beaten steel, with nothing gentle about it! Then he took three grand flails of iron and attached three heavy hammers to his belt. He then lowered the draw-bridge to go out. The giant was big and strong: when he stood up straight, he measured fifteen feet. Geoffrey, approaching him, marveled at his height. But he was not afraid of him, not the least bit afraid. To the contrary, he proudly threw his defiance and went quickly toward him.

— Who are you? Guédon said, tell me!

— I am named Geoffrey the Great Tooth, I will not hide my name! Defend yourself, I want your head!

— Unfortunate, said Guédon, what are you trying to do? I'll kill you with a single blow! Run away, little child. I feel sorry for you, seeing you so young and so valiant.

Geoffrey, go away, I tell you in friendship!

— You are mad! Geoffrey told him. Save your pity for your own life, as it's sure to end soon, under the blade of my sword! Defend yourself, for you will die! You will not escape me!

But the giant took no notice of his words. Geoffrey threw himself against the giant with all the speed of his horse. God help him! He gave the giant a blow of such violence in the center of his chest that, he bowled him over, dizzy, by the force of his courage. The giant got up again:

—You gave me there a good present - it's only fair I return the favor!

He leapt to his feet, furious to have been knocked to the ground by a single blow from a single knight. He took up his blade of steel. When Geoffrey charged again, which he did without delay, Guédon raised his steel blade in his left hand and sliced off the hocks of Geoffrey's horse, which fell to the ground. But Geoffrey immediately leapt from his war horse and drew his sword. He rushed the giant, struck his left arm, like a good knight, and made him drop his scythe. He would no longer have need of it, for Geoffrey continued to wield his sword and wounded him grievously on his hip. But Guédon wished him dead: he approached him, with his flail, which he struck on his helm:

Geoffrey, dizzy and bewildered, nearly fell to the earth. So he returned his sword to its sheath and went to his horse to get his club, with which he gave the giant a great blow, staggering him and making him drop his flail. Guédon seized one of his hammers, throwing it at Geoffrey with all his force, so brutally that even as he got his club it flew from his hands. But Geoffrey

didn't allow himself to be up upon. The giant leapt to take the club, but Geoffrey drew his sword and gave him such a blow that he sliced through the middle of the giant's arm - revenge. Arm and club fell to the field; the giant was crazed by pain. Maddened by losing an arm, he lifted his foot to kick Geoffrey, but missed. Geoffrey dodged him and struck him so strongly he cut his leg in two. The giant fell, imploring his gods to come to his aid. But Geoffrey struck him on the of nape the neck such a blow that no helm could resist. He split his helm in two and clove the giant's skull straight to his teeth. Then, slicing with his sword, he cut off Guédon's head. Then he took his Saracen horn, which he blew two or three times. His men, at this sound, rode toward him and found him in the field where he vanquished the giant. They were astonished by its size and said to Geoffrey:

- It would take immeasurable, unbridled pride to attack this man! How could you vanquish this demon? This is an accomplishment, my lord!

- My lords, replied Geoffrey, wrong or right, it was necessary, as I could not retreat: I had to defend myself, and that's what I did, God be blessed! As you see, I bested him.

They entered the castle, which was immense and superb. Geoffrey's victory was learned in the region. What more can I say? Everyone was happy and relieved to know that Geoffrey had fought the giant and stretched him out stone dead. They gave him the lordship of the land he had delivered from war. A wise and courtly messenger left for Vouvant to tell Raymondin that Geoffrey had fought and killed the fierce giant.

Raymondin burst with joy. Mélusine graciously welcomed the messenger without hesitation and gave him a magnificent present. And Raymondin, wanting to write, took paper and wax, and dictated a letter to his secretary and affixed his seal to it. He informed Geoffrey, who was in Guérandais, that Fromont had become a monk at the abbey of Maillezais, a place of devotion where he wished to spend his life praying to God for his friends. Alas! he was quite wrong to send that letter, which would bring upon him misfortune and cause him to lose Mélusine, whom he loved with a loyal heart!

Let us leave there the gentle and courtly Raymondin and Mélusine his wife, the most noble of women, and return to Geoffrey the Great Tooth. He was in Guérandais, feasted by all the land for the slaying of the giant: everyone was overjoyed. Then a messenger from Northumberland came in haste. He asked for Geoffrey the Great Tooth, who was quickly pointed out to him, and delivered his letter.

- Lord, he said, in the name of God, listen to me! There has come to Northumberland the largest man ever seen. He is a frightening giant, terribly cruel and dangerous. He makes war on the whole country, devastating and destroying all the land.

The lords of the land beg you, by charity, to come to their aid, for they have faith only in you. Hurry so you might arrive before the giant has destroyed everything! They give themselves up to you and recognize you as their lord. Simply open this letter, you will find all this enclosed. They have found in their spells that you will kill the giant.

Geoffrey broke the seal, read the letter from end to end and said:

- All this is true, messenger, you haven't lied. I swear to you on the Holy Cross and on my name of Geoffrey the Great Tooth: neither for land, nor for riches, do I wish to leave this place now. But I will help your land as soon as I can, for I pity its people. For the love of the Christian faith and for the honor of victory, I will make war on the giant: I will come soon.

Geoffrey quickly made preparations. But then the messenger from his father came, and offered him Raymondin's letter. Geoffrey read it and saw that his brother had become a monk: he would rather have seen him hung. He read it again, his heart full of grief and shame despite his joy to learn that his father and his mother Mélusine were in good health, news which rejoiced him greatly. But

his brother's entry into the order filled him with sadness. Spite overcame his reason. He grew blood-red from anger, sweaty and foaming like a boar. All those who looked at him trembled with fear. He began to yell:

– Those flatterers, those lying monks! By the Holy Trinity, those rogues have ensorcelled my brother Fromont! Damn them for having pushed him to become a monk!

They've made him a tonsured monk, but they'll repent it! But I tarry too long! I'll see them before they die: I'll go there now, I will make them all burn in the same fire!

He said to the messenger from Northumberland:

– Friend, wait for me here and don't worry! I will return soon and I will go with you to kill the giant, I swear it!

The other dared not contradict him and replied:

– Very well, my lord, it suffices that you wish it so: I will wait here and will not budge until your return.

– Well spoken! Geoffrey replied.

Then, he spoke to his men:

– Forward, to your horses! I'll fly over hill and dale to Maillezais!

Geoffrey set out, the savage, cruel, bold warrior. He traveled so quickly that on Tuesday he reached the abbey of Maillezais he so despised. The monks were together in meeting and the abbot was reading an epistle by one of the monks. It was then Geoffrey came in. As soon as the monks knew, they all went to meet him, the small as well as the great; all the monastery welcomed him, rejoicing in his visit. But Geoffrey, enraged and angry, challenged the tonsured abbot. He said to the lord abbot:

– Abbot, why have you pushed my brother to become a monk here and abandon the knighthood to take religious orders? You were wrong to do this, believe me, for you have thus provoked your death! You will die miserably for this, you and your monastery!

He scowled and ground his teeth: all those present were frightened by the sight of him. The monks cried and trembled in fear. The lord abbot replied:

– Lord, the decision came from him, not from me, and I believe him to be sincere.

It's his devotion which pushed him to enter our ranks, that's the truth. Here's Fromont: ask him yourself, I beg you!

– Brother, said Fromont, in truth, I swear to you, no one made me become a monk. I am a monk, I will remain so; I will pray to God here for you. I asked for counsel only from God, to whom I've given myself. My father and Mélusine, my mother, approved my decision: they agreed that I pass my life here as a monk and that I pray to God, dear brother, for them and for you, to get us all to Paradise.

Geoffrey listened to him, nearly mad with rage, inflamed with grief, anger, and a prodigious furor. He left, slamming all the doors behind him and trapping the monks in the abbey. Then he had straw and logs brought and piled them up, to the general astonishment. He took fire and lit the pyre. Afterwards, the smoke obscured everything.

Then when the fire had taken, he attacked the abbey. The fire caught the church, catching all the monks in the trap: not a single one escaped. Geoffrey, this day, burnt the abbey and a hundred monks in grief and shame, not one less. At the same time, he burnt and destroyed the greater part of the abbey, not leaving a single monk: all were burnt in shame and grief. When he realized what he'd done, he cried:

– Alas, unfortunate, what have you done? Why have you ruined this fine monastery?

He couldn't stop crying for his brother, the abbot, and all the monastery. The madman! He couldn't get them back, not for anything in the world. He groaned, he ravaged himself, he sighed and uttered lamentations of remorse. He walked away,

mounted his horse, rushing off by hill and by dale. He was in pain and torment for his brother, who he'd burned with so many good monks.

— God, dear Lord, he said, what will become of my soul? When will become of me? No descendant of Adam has so deserved damnation! I am bad, disloyal, a rascal, more sinful than Judas. Never will I see the face of God the Father, I know it. Death, come to me! take me!

Geoffrey tormented himself like this, but by the speed of his riding, he soon arrived in Guérandais, dispirited by the crime he'd committed. He found the messenger he'd left there, who was overjoyed to see him. Geoffrey, the messenger, and ten men left for Northumberland without delay, without taking leave of anyone. He wanted to do it quickly and soon arrived in the port, cheered by all, with the messenger, who guided his men. The sails filled, the anchor was raised; the sailors took to sea, but not without making the sign of the cross upon departure. The wind was favorable, so they made good speed and were soon far away.

Leaving Geoffrey, let's follow the noble knight Raymondin, who was in Vouvant, where he liked to stay with his wife Mélusine. It was in Vouvant that the two would soon know sadness and distress. They were seated at the table when a messenger arrived who greeted them humbly, pale with fear because of the message he had to deliver.

Raymondin said to him:

— Welcome, courteous messenger!

He asked him his news and where he came from. Alas! the messenger carried one piece of news, but was sorry to say it, for it was bad news. This news would make Raymondin lose the company of the wise Mélusine forever this time. It would be the last meal he'd eat with his wife, noble lady beyond reproach. The messenger spoke:

— Lord, hear me! I must speak, whatever it cost me: one of your children is dead.

—Which? said Raymond.

—Lord, it is Fromont.

—Tell me how he died! Is he already buried? God have mercy on his soul! Did he have a solemn funeral at Notre-Dame de Lusignan?

The messenger cried:

— My dear lord, I swear to you, he will never have a burial!

He then recounted before all how Geoffrey, in his dementia, had dishonored, burned, and reduced to cinders the abbey of Maillezais with Fromont, the monks, and the abbot: not a single one of them escaped. He closed the doors to keep them from fleeing and burned them together in his anger at seeing Fromont become a monk. At these words, Raymond, plunged into sorrow, made the sign of the cross. He questioned the messenger again and exhorted him to tell the truth.

— That is a terrible cruelty. Is it really true? Take care not to lie!

—Is it true, lord? I can confirm it: it is true, God help me! I saw it with my own eyes!

At these words, Raymondin changed color: his grief was infinite. He mounted his horse without delay and galloped straight to Maillezais. He found the town in a panic, blaming Geoffrey. He saw the extent of the damages — the abbey was burnt and deserted.

Looking about, he saw that the monks were all burned, he saw the frightening event.

Then he solemnly swore, by God who died on the cross, that he would put Geoffrey to death for this crime, a cruel death. If he could only get him, he would inflict a shameful end upon him! Then he remounted his horse in unspeakable anger and sorrow. He stayed at Maillezais no longer, but galloped back to the towers of the noble castle of Vouvant; his horse went like the wind. He went

into the castle, dismounted and immediately shut himself in a room. He began his lamentation:

— Ha! he said, unfeeling Fortune! You have not been my friend! You hate me more than any other man! Alas! why are you so relentless? You were very hostile before, when you made me the killer of the noble count of Poitiers, Aymeri the good knight.

When I killed him by moonlight, it was your fault, lady Fortune! Alas, it was a trial without equal from here to Rome! Then, for laughs, you made me take this fairy for a wife, this damned serpent. Don't I have reason to cry? She gave me ten wonderful children, but one of them is dead, to my distress, he who became a monk in an abbey to live a more holy life. His brother killed him! I'm sure none of this woman's children will come to any good. Their very roots are tainted. And by the tear of Vendôme, I believe that she's but a phantom. Haven't I seen her bathing? I was nearby, by the hole in the door. From her head to her waist, she was a woman, beautiful and graceful; but below, she was a serpent. Serpent? Yes, it's the truth, with a tail scaled in silver and blue, which splashed the water. I was horrified. All men would flee to see her in that state: it was an appalling sight. May God protect me from the Devil's traps and keep me in the catholic faith!

At this moment, Mélusine opened the door without trouble, for she had the key. With her, entering the chamber, were knights, ladies and maidens, squires and servants.

All came into the room. Raymondin, despairing, and pale, saw his wife coming. Then an immense grief threatened him, him and she whom he loved; then came the hard moment of their separation, as you shall hear. Mélusine, right away, said to her husband:

— Don't torment yourself about something you can't change! My love, praise God in all his works, for He can do what He will. It's madness to bemoan an ill you can't repair! You must renounce this grief. Geoffrey has sinned against God in destroying the abbey of Maillezais. But he can yet make his peace with God by repenting and doing penance, for God is merciful. If he knows contrition and makes a sincere confession, I am sure God will have pity on him. God doesn't want the death of a sinner; he prefers to let him live so he can repent and rediscover the path of righteousness.

The lady spoke with wisdom, but Raymondin was furious and grief-stricken. He lost his reason and said a thing he could never repent enough, from that time until his death. He fixed her with a cruel and proud look and, after several seconds of reflection, his madness overcame him and made him loudly proclaim these harsh words for everyone to hear:

— Ha, serpent, your lineage will come to no good! Here is a wonderful beginning: your son Geoffrey the Great Tooth burned a hundred monks, including your son Fromont, whom I loved so, and then left! It's your Geoffrey who killed them all. But they didn't know the cold of the grave, they were all quite hot! I went there, I saw it all: your son Geoffrey burned them all!

Alas! the unfortunate, what madness to have said this! He made a terrible mistake and would lose Mélusine and never see her again. Hearing this word, Mélusine could no longer hold herself up: she fell, fainting, her heart cut with grief, and stayed on the ground a good half-hour, unconscious. The barons lifted her gently, taking care not to hurt her. A knight approached quickly, wetting her face with fresh water fifteen or twenty times. She finally regained her senses and spoke tenderly to Raymondin with these pitiable words:

— Alas! Alas! Raymondin, what misfortune to have met you! What evil to have seen your beauty and your graceful allure! What evil to have seen, at the fountain, the grace of your person, which claimed my love! How bad to have loved you to this sad day! What evil to have seen your noble stature, the gracefulness of your movements!

What misfortune to have lived the hour and the moment of our first meeting! Your

treason, your falseness, your pernicious words, your cruelty and your unrestrained tongue have plunged me into eternal pain from which I can never escape, which I will endure without pause until the final hour, when it pleases Our Lord to come to judge the living and the dead. Never again will you see my face, perfidious liar, perfidious perjurer, filled with vice and reproaches, perfidious lover, perfidious liar, perfidious traitor, perfidious knight! You have kept badly the oath you made me! You will pay dearly for it! I accepted your first failure, when you saw me in my bath, because you told no one. The demon didn't know. But as soon as you revealed the secret, I knew it, and he would bring you evil if I stayed with you. But you'll soon understand the treachery of your perjury. Had you kept faith with me, I would have stayed with you until death like a mortal woman, held to the laws of nature. I could have brought you aid to the end of my days. Then the Lord King would have separated my soul from my body, and I would have been wrapped in a shroud and solemnly buried. Alas! you have just plunged me into pain, grief, and torment until Judgement Day! You have done yourself an evil. From on high, you've fallen quite low. Know that evil awaits you, that you will no longer know prosperity! Your station will decline without end, and after your death your land will be divided, I know it. Never again will it be in the hands of a single lord. Many of your descendents will know misfortune and will never again conquer foreign lands. Some among them will lose their land, and war will force them from their lands, which they will never again regain. Watch yourself, my friend, I beg you! I will no longer be by your side, and this breaks my heart, but I cannot stay longer.

She took the three highest barons aside and gave them this wise advise:

– Listen, Raymondin, have your son Horrible put to death! You must do this. He was put on earth with three eyes. If he lives, the country of Poitou will always be at war, and no longer will bread or wine be found here, for Horrible will devastate the whole land and nothing more will grow here. He will destroy all the sites I've built. And he will provoke the ruin of his brothers and all his line. Kill him quickly, I beg you! As for Geoffrey who, in his rage, burned the monks and plunged you into grief, know that God wanted him to punish the monastery, for their actions violated justice and reason. God punished them to set an example. God wanted to see them all burned, put to death and massacred. There were many scoundrels among them, treacherous monks and sinners who didn't respect the Rule of their order. If your son died with them, don't despair so! You know the saying: "For one sinner, a hundred die." Geoffrey burned a hundred, that was the number, not counting the abbot, who was the master of them all and who could well have been the cause of their evil. If Geoffrey destroyed everything, he will rebuild it: he will build a better monastery than the one he destroyed, and he will restore the abbey.

He will place numerous monks there, certainly more than had ever been there, holy men who will pray for the family that constructed the church. It will be more beautiful than before, and Geoffrey will do much good as he grows older. But I want to tell you one more thing before leaving, my husband, such that even those born a hundred years from now will remember this event. I will be seen flying around the castle of Lusignan three days before it changes masters. No one will recognize me in the air, but I will also show myself on land, at least at the fountain. Know that it will be thus, Raymondin, as long as the castle stands, for I baptized it with my own name and built it such as it is: I can well call it my child. I want to say before everyone: I am called Mélusine, so I named it Lusignan. I will go there three days before it changes lords, I will repeat it: I will appear without fail. I lose all joy and happiness at the very idea of leaving you, but it cannot be otherwise. Raymondin, when our love began, we found nothing but pleasure, joy, delight and tenderness, as all lovers do. Alas! it's the opposite now: our delights are now sorrow and sadness our joy,

our strength is now weakness, our pleasure has become torment, our good fortune bad luck, our happiness misery, our certainties are replaced by doubt, and our noble liberty is transformed to servitude. All this because of perverse Fortune, who raises one and turns over the other. She overthrows it? God, I was wrong! It's by your failure alone, Raymondin. For having said too much, you will lose the one you love. But I can stay no longer my love, I must go. May God pardon you all the crimes you've committed against me, for because of you I will undergo torment until Judgement Day. I am, thanks to you, thrown into sadness for knowing joy. Alas! unhappy am I to be thrown again into the sadness I'd once escaped!

Mélusine showed such grief that at hearing her sighs and moans, any human being would cry. Raymondin wrung his hands, he suffered, close to dying; suffering and chagrin silenced him. He approached her, took her in his arms, covered her eyes and face with kisses. The two lovers endured a torment so cruel, a grief so poignant that they both fell to the ground. They remained unconscious for a long time without the least breath.

The barons thought them dead, presented with this long faint. And when they returned to themselves and found their breath once more, they took up their sighs again, trembling, crying, and moaning; they wrung their fists. Seeing this indescribable grief, everyone present cried. Mélusine, overwhelmed, got up with difficulty. Raymondin begged her on his knees to forgive him, in her goodness, the crime grief made him commit. But the lady replied:

– It's impossible; the King of Heaven will not consent. But I pray you, my love, remember your lover! Forget Fromont, and watch over your son Raymond! Watch over him, you will do well: he will be the count of Forez soon after I leave. Watch over Thierry as well: he is still nursing, but he will distinguish himself later. He will govern all the land from Parthenay to La Rochelle and will be a good knight; all his descendants will be valorous knights as well – proud, bold, and full of courage, their lineage will survive for a long time. My love, know that Thierry will be proud and bold! My sweet love, pray for me, for I, I will think of you for the rest of your days: I will bring you aid and comfort in all your troubles. Accept this curse: you will never again see Mélusine in human form, Mélusine your sweet lover, who has been so long at your side!

Then she leapt through the window, feet together, looking out beyond the flowering orchards. But she didn't wish to leave before saying good bye to the barons (of whom I've spoken to you), to the ladies and the maidens, to the squires and the servants.

She said good bye to them all and everyone cried, moved by pity. Then she said: – Good bye, Raymondin, I loved you with a perfect love; I'll never see you again.

Good bye my heart and my love, good bye all my joy, good bye all the pleasures of this world, good bye the best, the most handsome, good bye noble knight, the best, the gentlest, good bye my gracious husband, good bye my sweet love, my husband, good bye, good bye, good bye, my gentle lord! Good bye to joy, to friendship, good bye to a life full of sweetness, good bye to happiness, tenderness, goodbye to all! Goodbye Lusignan, good castle that I built! Goodbye to all that charms a lady's life: music, feasts, praise, honors! Goodbye dear friend of my heart: may God aid and protect you!

At these words, she flew into the sky. She left the window after these words and sailed off in front of all the barons. To their general astonishment, she transformed into a giant serpent; the fairy became a serpent with a tail scaled in silver and azure. While Raymond despaired, she made three tours of the fortress, letting out at each tower a frightening cry, strange, sad, and pitiable. I write only the truth, I certainly wouldn't want to lie! Then she left at top speed, carried by the wind, sailing into the sky. After she disappeared, Raymondin finally spoke, crying:

– Alas! what can I do? Never will I know joy again!

He tormented himself, despairing, tearing his hair, cursing the hour of his birth, maddened by grief. He shouted before his barons:

– Goodbye my beautiful blond, goodbye all my happiness, my good, my certainty! Goodbye my sweet lover, goodbye my joy and my riches, goodbye all my delights, goodbye tenderness, goodbye pleasure! Goodbye precious lady, goodbye the beauty so dear to me, goodbye my woman, my wife, goodbye my gracious lady, sweetest flower, goodbye my meritorious lady, goodbye sweet throat, my rose, my violet, goodbye tree and bough of love! Goodbye my noble lady! Goodbye my glory, goodbye my joy, goodbye the beauty I love so! All my good days have gone: I will never see you again!

Raymondin cried, despairing the loss of his wife, who flew into the sky to his great distress.

– Alas! what can I do? No man has known such grief as I, so no one will grieve me. It's good if I suffer so, for it is my fault. I've made my own misfortune: I dug the hole into which I've fallen. I'm miserable – I'm the saddest of all those who have known sadness!

But everyone pressed around him, comforted him gently and exhorted him to recover and endure his grief humbly. They cited noble examples to lessen his grief. One wise baron said:

– You must execute Mélusine's orders for your son Horrible: she counseled us to put him to death to avoid the destruction of the land.

– Lords, said Raymondin, do not wait, I beg you, to follow her directions! Kill him! no matter how: act as you like!

Raymondin did not stay much longer. Overwhelmed by the grief and sadness heaped upon him, he went quickly to a far-off room, where he shut himself in to lament in solitude. But let's leave him and return to the barons of the country, full of knowledge wisdom. They all agreed to rid themselves of Horrible: they shut him in a cave. Then they stacked wet hay against the entrance and set it ablaze. The cave soon filled with smoke and Horrible suffocated, stifled by the smoke. Following Mélusine's directions, they placed his body on a pyre and gave him a noble funeral. They buried him in a church and commended his soul to God, then left. But now we must return to Raymondin, whose misery was immense. He trembled pitiably, his grief indescribable, his tears and his sighs. He repeated:

– My sweet love, I failed you, I betrayed you, and on the counsel of a scoundrel!

It is my cousin who pushed me to this act. It's his fault that I'm perfidious and perjurous, sinful and criminal! Misfortune has pursued me since the beginning of my life.

I killed my lord in the forest: that is the greatest evil of all. Then I violated the promise I made to the woman I love, to the beauty who piled good acts and honors upon me, who protected me, who gave me happiness, who, after God, gave me life. Evil Fortune, it's jealousy which made you lead me to this cruel shore where I lost all my happiness, where I lost all my pleasures, where I lost all my riches, where I lost the complete joy Mélusine gave me. I love her as much as I do myself, and she, by my faith, loves me with a perfect love. She showed me her love during our life together: I shake with pity to remember it, and she well merits my pity for all the rest of my life. How can it be that I do not die? I would rather end my days than endure such pain! To the end of my days, my pain will be without end; my sadness will be infinite to the end of my life! I can no longer raise myself in this world, nor can I produce anything which isn't doomed to fail.

Mélusine (God protect her!) told me this as she left. I want nothing but to die as soon as possible. This thought rends my heart and melts it in tears as if it were wax! It was thus that Raymondin grieved and cried for Mélusine the fairy. But she went before many nights, in secret and without a word, to Thierry's room. She often took her sons Thierry and Raymonnet in her arms to warm them at the fire and nurse them before putting them to bed again. The nurses often saw

her, but never dared get up or say a word. They spoke of it to their lord Raymondin who, full of joy, said to himself that he would see Mélusine again. But he was quite wrong, for all the treasures of the world couldn't help him find her. Thierry developed at marvelous speed. He grew more in one month than another child in three - it was because his mother took care of him and often nourished him with her milk in his father's room. Nothing equals the value of a mother's milk, as I've already said.

Mélior and the Castle of the Sparrow Hawk

There is a castle in Armenia (in Great Armenia, as the story goes). It belongs to the world of fairies and is called the Castle of the Sparrow Hawk. Whoever keeps vigil there three nights, without sleeping, may ask a boon: he will receive all that he asks on the condition he not ask for the lady who lives in the castle. But if he sleeps, however little, he stays there with the mistress of the place, whose praises are sung: she is named Mélior and she is the daughter of the fairy Présine. There was at this time a king in Armenia, a good knight, tall and well-formed, in the full ardor of his youth and full of valor. He said he would go keep vigil at the powerful Castle of the Sparrow Hawk: he had just heard stories of the challenge and how one must keep vigil to obtain the gift. He said that he knew well how to keep vigil and that he would ask a boon. That was what he had to do, but at the end he must have repented it with all his heart. He prepared for the voyage right away. He left his home without making a scene, saying he was going to keep vigil at the castle and obtain the precious gift. And if he saw the beautiful lady, he wanted no other gift but her. But that thought was madness: he would have the lady neither for spouse nor friend. Why delay myself any longer? The knight mounted his chariot and traveled so quickly that he arrived at the Castle of the Sparrow Hawk on the night of Saint-Jean ; but it was for his own misfortune. He didn't forget to have his pavilion pitched in the field. Then the noble and gracious knight armed himself and left his men. He came to the castle door, holding in his hand a bird with which he planned to feed the sparrow hawk. He then saw emerging from the castle a man of great build clothed all in white. His face was bloodless and he was clothed all in white. From his face it was clear that he was very old. He asked the king what he wanted. The king replied that he came to submit to the custom of that noble place. The man in white responded:

- Come, in God's name! I will quickly lead you where you will find the challenge.

He went before, the king followed him. They both climbed the stairs leading to the great hall. And the king marveled at the splendors he saw, which he approved of and appreciated. He saw the sparrow hawk on its perch, a huge bird both pretty and graceful.

The noble person who accompanied him then said:

- King, listen to me! You must keep vigil over this bird for three days and three nights without ever sleeping. If you fail, you will stay here forever. But if you keep vigil the set time without falling asleep, know that you will obtain at once whatever you demand. I speak, of course, of terrestrial goods and not celestial ones, with a single exception: the lady herself. She you may not have for all the gold in the world!

The king said that he was certain to keep vigil without falling asleep and that he would take care to feed the sparrow hawk. He then began his vigil, saying that he would think of the boon he was going to ask after the three nights. But very badly inspired, he was going to ask a gift that would cost him dearly! After these words, the noble retired.

The king remained alone, completely absorbed in contemplation of the splendors that he saw. He kept watch a day and a night in joy and happiness, without

falling asleep, remaining awake and attentive and carefully feeding the sparrow hawk the best he could.

Seeing around him wines and dishes in abundance, he fed himself as he desired. The next day, he kept vigil all day and all night without rest. In the morning, he fed the bird with pleasure and joy. Behind the bird, a door opened: he went through it right away. He discovered splendor: he had never seen such riches. There were a crowd of birds painted in vermilion and the whole room was painted and covered in fine gold. Portraits of knights in armor hung on all the walls. Above the portraits were the names of the knights.

And the inscription read:

— In such a year, this knight watched here, but could not keep himself from sleeping. He must stay here to serve and honor us, and will not leave before the Day of Judgement.

At three other places in the room, a blazon could be seen mounted above an inscription; the inscription said:

— In this castle, in such a year, this knight came and kept vigil over our sparrow hawk without falling asleep, according to the test. He left with the boon he gained through his wisdom and diligence.

The room was covered from floor to ceiling with paintings revealing the countries and foreign regions from which came the valiant knights who had not let themselves go to sleep, but had the strength to keep the vigil. Their gifts were also shown. The king had dreamed for so long of the splendors of the fortress that he had nearly fallen asleep. But he succeeded, remaining continually awake. He began to say to himself that he could dream there too long. He quickly left the chamber and watched bravely throughout the night. In the morning, he saw the lady appear, dressed in green: her robe was of a living green, according to the season, for the adventure took place in the heart of the summer.

The king, pleased by her arrival, greeted her courteously. The lady graciously told him:

— You have passed the test most bravely. Pronounce then the gift of your choice: I will not refuse you! With the exception of a single gift, as you've already been told, demand whatever you want!

— Thank you, gentle and noble lady, replied the king. Certainly, gentle heart, I want nothing but you.

At these words, annoyed, she quickly refused the gift and said:

— Poor sot, you will not have this gift! Ask something else of me: you can't have me for anything in the world!

But he replied:

— I want no other gift by you for recompense. I will not ask another boon, I swear it, if I do not get this one!

The lady, furious, said:

— Know that if you are obstinate, you will lose me, like your gift, and you will be the object of a curse you will not see to its end; your heirs will be lose your realm.

—Whether it be wisdom or folly, replied the king, I want to have your love. You owe me a gift, and I want nothing else!

— Poor sot, you will have nothing! You have all you had. The only gift you'll take is the misfortune that will follow you. Your ancestor, in his folly, lost his lady, his love, by his madness, his immeasurable pride, for having given himself over to his passion: it is Mélusine, who he married, putting the ring on her finger. She made him the greatest of lords. King Guy, from whom you are descended, was my nephew, do you understand?

We are three sisters, without lying, and our mistake was shutting our father Hélinas in the mountain and imprisoning him there for betraying the promise he made our mother Présine. He should at no time have seen her in childbirth. But he refused to obey. He saw her, as I told you. That is why he lost us, her and

his three daughters. But when we shut him in the mountain, joining our forces, our mother was furious with us. She put me here, with her fairy powers, to guard the sparrow hawk, never to leave. But she gave me this castle: this is the destiny she set on me. As for Mélusine, my sister, who was a pretty young girl, she assigned this destiny to her: for ever, during her stay in this world, she would be a serpent on Saturdays; I tell you the truth. But Raymondin betrayed his oath to her and lost her by his mistake. He must not have seen her on Saturday in this form. He saw her nevertheless, in his folly, and so lost her company, though she made him the most powerful man ever seen. This mistake provoked his fall and that of his line. After that day, far from growing, the Lusignans have known only misfortune, as can still be seen today. Palestine, my oldest sister, is shut in Canigou, a high mountain in Aragon.

She cannot leave this mountain before the end of the world: she guards there the treasure of King Hélinas our father. So did our mother ordain. No man can ever win the treasure if he is not of the line of Lusignan. You know now from whom you are descended. You are my nephew - do you understand? - and must not seek me for your wife. As you will not renounce your request, evils will pile upon you and you will know misfortune, as will your line, be sure of it! For those who succeed you and govern your realm will end up losing the realm and its lands to war. And the last of your descendants will carry the name: "King of the Animals." This is what will become of you, believe me, you will see it all by the end, for I speak not a single false word. Without your blameful thought, your folly and your immeasurable pride you would have been blessed instead of cursed.

Leave this place, for you will receive a punishment you'd feel all too well! The king listened, tried to seize her, but she disappeared and fled his sight: he got nothing but shame and torment. He was grabbed by the sleeves, struck on his sides, hips, legs, arms, and his head: he was treated badly. He didn't see who bit and struck him, but he felt the blows on his spine, he was beaten black. - Alas! he said, pity, in the name of God! Let me leave, or I will die!

So he was thrown out. The king fled without stopping. He was so well covered in blows that no part of his body had escaped. He left in haste and found his men in the field. They asked him for news, for they knew nothing of the adventure: how he had done, if he had kept vigil in the castle before the graceful sparrow hawk without falling asleep. The king replied without circumlocution: - Yes, to my misfortune!

He had them leave right away, as rapidly as possible. They were immediately at the sea, so quickly did they ride. The king set sail with his men in a barge, without waiting, then disarmed. They had favorable weather on the sea and put out all their sails, so they were soon at port. The king debarked at Courc, in Armenia. He counted on having a long reign, but his luck didn't stop declining. Many times, he cursed the day he fell in love with Mélior. It was by his mistake, he knew, that his country was depopulated, that he saw it ravaged. And when he left this world, the king who succeeded him had a reign twice as bad. And so it went until the ninth descendant of the kings of Armenia lost their land and their goods and knew nothing but misfortune. I saw the king who was chased from Armenia arrive in France. He came to France to die. Sheltered for a long time by the King of France, he died in Paris, and was buried, I believe, with many people in attendance, in the monastery of the Célestins. I will leave his story there; I will add only that his followers were clothed entirely in white, where as in France, black is normal. I say nothing that is not true. I'm not lying: it's a well known fact which a hundred people clearly saw, as they attended the burial. And many people were astonished, for they had never seen anything like it. Why this costume? I have no idea.

But after the Castle of the Sparrow Hawk, I wish now to tell the story of Palestine, the most beautiful of ladies.

Palestine and Mount Canigou

Here is the story of Palestine, the sweet, courteous young girl who is shut in Mount Canigou, in the country of Aragon, where, following her mother's commandment, she guards her father's treasure. And he who takes the treasure will also gain the Promised Land. But no one could conquer it, if he did not come from the line of Lusignan. I will tell you quickly of Palestine, for the chronicle passes over her briefly: I will tell you more of her, if I find more, but I say what I find without inventing anything.

Returning then to Palestine: Présine set her destiny as staying in the mountain of which I told you, which was infested with cruel serpents. The mountain could not be climbed without finding many challenges. Many knights went there in all seasons, but none ever returned - according to my books, all those who went to the mountain died and disappeared. There were many strong, vigorous and agile knights who tried to gain the treasure. But none of them succeeded. They went there to their own misfortune, for not a single one returned. A knight came from England, dressed in the clothes of war, a good knight, proud and valiant; never had he failed to fulfill his duties. He was gentle and well learned, for he was raised since infancy with knights of valor in the court of the good king Arthur. He had all merits, for he came from the line of Tristan, the best knight in the world, and he was about thirty years old. (I tell you only the truth.) He heard of the great treasure and declared that he would go to Mount Canigou and, by his efforts, take the treasure. Then he would go to the Promised Land and conquer the country at sword-point.

He was a good and bold knight. He set off one Tuesday for Aragon, accompanied by a single young page. He rode so well, in a word, that he arrived in Aragon. He asked about the mountain, which was pointed out to him. But living there was a monster with prodigious cruelty and ferocity. It was the worst danger anyone could confront. He had a huge paunch-like a barrel and never left his pit. This monster's size was amazing. He had but one eye: he was a fantastic beast, without a nose, with a single eye in the middle of his forehead, whose circumference measured a good three feet. His breath left through this eye, and when this damnable demon slept, the whole mountain shook with his snores.

His pit, know this, was before the home of Palestine, who guarded the treasure of her father Hélinas according to her mother's order. In this pit, there was an iron door, which opened on a hole where the treasure was kept. No one had ever opened the door, for this monster kept guard. No man could enter this door if he were not of the famous line of which I've told you: Présine had decided this, when she set her daughters' destinies. The pit was sloped, and many men had perished there. Below, there were numerous grottoes and holes filled with dangerous serpents and other horrible traps by which the erstwhile hero must pass. None of the men who decided to go had been seen again. There was but a small, narrow path, which had to be climbed for three leagues without the least pause, for no place to sit could be found on either side without sitting in serpents. There were an infinite number of these, for this place was uninhabitable because of the fear inspired by this devil, this monster of which I've told you. This is what my books say.

Let us return to the knight mounted on his war-horse. He rode alone, accompanied by his only page. The good knight arrived near Canigou. On his way, he found a man who guided him to the mountain and left him half a league away, telling him: - I will not follow you further, lord. Here is the mountain. I don't want to lose or gain any more. Go on then, noble knight!

He pointed out the path by which he must mount, and from which he would not return: no man has ever returned, and more than twenty have attempted the adventure.

The good man, without further delay, turned around and went away. The knight continued to advance and rode to the mountain. Once there, he dismounted and entrusted his horse to the young man, giving him the order to wait for him and not to get off his horse until he returned. But the page waited to no avail. He could let the horse graze as well as it might, his master would not return. The knight left, making the sign of the cross and entrusting himself to God. He took the trail: he had never taken one so difficult. Well armed, he held in his hand his steel sword. He climbed the mountain by the straight and narrow trail. A large serpent threw itself on the knight, thinking to swallow him whole. It advanced, its maw open wide. But the valiant knight brandished his well set blade and attacked the serpent: falling on it, he cut off its head with a single blow. The serpent fell, dead: it was easily ten feet long. When he saw the serpent was dead, the knight returned to his climb. But right away, a bear attacked. Drawing his sword from its sheath, the proud, fearless warrior threw himself on the bear without stopping his climb. The bear gripped his shield and trapped his shoulder; it tore and broke his coat of mail, knocked his shield to the ground. The knight knew well how to use his sword: he struck the bear in the groin, and sliced off more than a foot of flesh. He no longer feared being bitten: he cut the bear from muzzle to eyes. It was a very old bear, with gray fur! But this didn't stop it from raising a large paw, thinking to seize the knight. He, rapid and light, leapt to the side to dodge the ferocious, cruel bear. With a blow from behind, he cut off a paw with his sword. The bear, furious, stood on its rear paws and, drawing near the knight, caught him with its other paw and ripped off all his armor. The two fell together. The bear could not bite him, the knight tried to get free. He sunk a well-sharpened knife into the animal's throat, inflicting a terrible wound on it. The bear let go its hold, and soon the knight achieved dominance by cutting off its other paw with a sword-blow. The beast let out a terrible cry and the knight, without pity, struck it in the chest, burying his sword to its hilt. The bear fell to the ground, dead. The good knight of England wiped his sword and continued his climb. He ravaged the serpents and massacred all the beasts he encountered. Despite his suffering, he managed to cut a path to the mountaintop and arrived at the pit: there was the monster that guarded the iron door behind which the treasure was kept by the power of the fairies. He thought he could win this treasure: what folly! He came there to his misfortune. He descended into the pit with all his speed and the monster saw him with its three-foot eye. As soon as it saw him, the monster with the enormous hunger, inflamed by its prodigious anger, completely enraged, advanced on the good knight, who saw it coming. Whatever it might cost him, he had to confront it. He drew his good sword and dealt the monster a great blow. But the blow had no effect, for nothing could hurt the monster: not iron, nor, wood, nor steel. The monster took the sword in its teeth and cut it in two: it was impossible to pull the sword from it. It was nevertheless well made, of good strong steel. But what good is such steel? The monster, maw open, made a single mouthful of the knight, engulfing him in a single go. I am not lying: it swallowed the knight whole, as if it were eating a baked pie. That was the knight's sad end. This was a great loss: he was full of boldness and had accomplished many exploits. But he would do no more, this good knight from England who thought to take the treasure. Thus he perished, devoured by the monster, this honorable hero. What grief and what a great loss! He was so valiant! So the knight died, deprived of any aid. Never had anyone been so high as he on the mountain, this is a title of honor which must be remembered and guarded against forgetting. For no man, as the story goes, ever mounted as high on the fairy mountain as this good knight. His page waited at the foot of the mountain for two days, then returned to England. He told the story to everyone, and the story was put to writing to preserve its memory. And the page knew the story from a diviner who was formerly a student of Merlin and lived in the region. Everyone went to him. He told the truth about

all events. And he knew perfectly, as if he were there, all that had passed on the mountain. This diviner was born in Spain and studied at Toledo, as the text holds, more than twenty years before. He told the truth to all who came to him, on anything he was asked. That is why the page, who was wise and proper, went to find him. He knew from him the truth of the adventure that I've just told you. A knight of Hungary, who was of noble heritage, came to take the treasure. But he would never near it. He went to the mountain, which he climbed for ten or twenty steps. But he was quickly devoured by the serpents before getting higher. There were many others, who were all devoured. No man could get the treasure unless he belonged to the line of Hélinas, the king of Albania, and to his own house. What a pity the English knight, so proud, so quick, wasn't from his line! He was, nevertheless, high born, for he was descended from Tristan, as the story goes. If he had belonged to the Hélinas' lineage, he could have taken the treasure, for his chivalry equaled, or nearly did, that of the nine valiant knights.

It was about this time that a messenger visited Geoffrey the Great Tooth, who led a joyous life in his castle of Lusignan: the world will not soon see his equal. With noble ladies and maidens, graceful and beautiful, he amused himself in an orchard. Then the messenger came. He went to Geoffrey and greeted him. Geoffrey wished him welcome, as the messenger was gracious and knew how to speak well. The hero asked him for news before the ladies and maidens, and the other told him all I have just told you. He recounted the whole adventure: the location of the ferocious monster who had massacred so many noble, gracious, strong and valiant knights, and how this monster guarded the treasure of Hélinas, a king so rich that no equal treasure had ever been seen. Geoffrey marveled at the story of this monster and say that he planned to go there to kill the monster and win the treasure. He ordered his men to prepare quickly, called his brother Thierry and told him to govern the land until his return. Geoffrey, the bold warrior, had always refused to marry and give his oath to a woman. He entrusted the land to his brother, telling him that whatever might come of it, he would leave right away to win this rich treasure. But as soon as he set off, he fell ill, for he was already old, much older than any of you. He was confined to his bed, and the strong, impetuous knight who had accomplished so many exploits could never again leave his bed. Alas! he would have won the treasure, if he had lived longer, and the Promised Land, that holy country. But Death, who takes the strong as he does the weak, went to war against Geoffrey the Great Tooth. Death made a mortal war against him and Geoffrey got the worst of it, for no man has any strength or power against Death. Death does with everyone as it will, with the weak and the strong. No one can fight against death, be he duke, prince, count or king.

Death's dart struck Geoffrey in the heart. This was a great misfortune: he could have done so much good in Poitou, before the end of the year! He had already prepared the construction and consecration of churches and set their income. Alas, unfortunate! They remained plans and were never constructed. It is a pity and a great sorrow. If only Our Lord had let him live! Geoffrey was in his bed, sick, and sensed he was sorely struck. He could neither drink nor eat and quickly called the priest. The priest came, he confessed and had mass performed for him. Then he dictated his will: he settled his will as best he could, and his legacy was distributed before his death, in his presence, all of it, forgetting not even a link of mail. Then he gave his soul to God. May God grant him mercy, by His grace, and pardon his mistakes, for he did much good since he let himself be guided by reason, and he would have continued, assuredly, if he had lived longer! So he's dead, what more can I say? May God forgive him! Thierry was a good knight. Geoffrey gave him as his inheritance all the land he ruled and that belonged to him. Thierry ruled and governed it with nobility all his life, as well as the land of Parthenay of which I spoke earlier. He governed

his lands valiantly and was a powerful lord. But later, through marriages, part of the inheritance was dispersed, given away left and right. What no longer belonged to Lusignan belonged to another. Nonetheless - God be blessed! - Thierry's line still holds the lordship of Parthenay and are powerful lords. Didn't Mélusine, the house's progenitor, say that the line of Parthenay would last a long time? God grant that it may last without end, for it has many good, noble and gracious knights and some of the best warriors. I want to say a word about them before finishing this book. They were always good warriors. Whether duke, count or king, they have never betrayed their word. It suffices to see the good knight who had me begin this book, the good lord of Parthenay, whose whole life was dedicated to honor. But while I was writing this book, when I'd composed a good portion of it, the good honorable knight died. Nothing can be done against Death, it takes both the strong and the weak. No man can escape Death, be he king, duke, count or pope.

Everyone must pass through its hands. Such is the tribute imposed on humans: everyone must cross this threshold and take this path, however far away it might be. Alas! It is much too rapid; it arrives so quickly that no one can see the time coming, neither the day nor the hour. When it comes on a creature, it flies faster than an arrow and strikes men silently. My heart sighs just to think of it, as do the hearts of all men. Everyone fears its hand. Death strikes great blows everyone has good reason to fear. If someone thinks of it often, he leaves off all his pleasures to think of saving his soul, men and women both.

And if he thinks much of it, he guards himself against doing evil, just as I'm certain my lord of Parthenay did: Guillaume Larchevêque, worthy of the name of a bishop. For he was a good man who carried himself nobly to his last day, and was a magnificent example for all. He died the Tuesday before Pentecost, in 1401, the good, wise knight who helped many paupers. He could not defend himself against death and gave his soul to God on the seventeenth day of May. He lies in the ground of Parthenay, in the church of the Holy Cross. The courtly knight lies in a noble sepulchre there. He was given a solemn and honorable funeral, for a great lord must be honored after death as in life. The day of his death was precisely that on which the head of the glorious king Saint Louis, prince of the French, who is now among the saints in Paradise, was taken to Paris. I don't mean to say that my noble lord died the precise day in the same year of the Incarnation when the head of the glorious body was transported: Saint Louis was already dead a long time. But it is the very day that the Holy Church celebrates the feast each year. This honorable knight died in the month of May. Let the servant follow his lord!

May he merit the grace to serve him above, in Heaven, in Paradise! But I will leave him now to speak of his noble son Jean, lord of Parthenay, who then did his duty. He nobly held the funeral for his father (May God exonerate him!). There were mourners in abundance, as there should be, and his son showed great grief. But the evils which cannot be repaired must be endured. It is not at all wise, as I see it, to let oneself go too far in sorrow, to abandon oneself too much to grief. He is crazy who torments himself over a misfortune against which shouts and tears are useless. To show such grief too long is acting neither well nor wisely. But let us return to our topic: the new heir, Jean, lord of Parthenay and Mathefelon, of whom I've just told you. His heart is neither hard nor cruel, but courtly and benevolent. It is easily seen on his gentle and gracious face, which shows no arrogance. He is gentler than a young girl and resembles the lady from whom he is descended. No one has seen a more gentle lady than she: humble, courteous, likable, full of pity and charity, she did much good for the poor. She had a noble and upright heart, like those of the house of Dreux. Everyone of this house pitied those in need; they lifted up more than one, whom they took from rags to riches. And it is their nobility and uprightness, their pitying heart which pushes them to the aid of the poor. The lord Jean loves to spread himself in good deeds. He will do much good, I'm sure

of it - he has already begun. This is fitting for members of a royal line, and he belongs to this line, without a doubt, for the lords of Dreux came at one time from the house of France. He is the cousin of the king of France and this relation does him honor, for there is no one more noble than the king of France on the face of the earth. The lord of Parthenay is his cousin by his mother. And by his father, he is related to the kings of Cypress and Armenia and the noble line of the fairy Mélusine, whose story I have just told. And he belongs as well to the line of the noble king of Navarre: both are of the same line - they are descended from Mélusine. There are still today, in Navarre, proud and sharp knights, and many highly regarded ladies who are of the same lineage and proclaim high and loud that they are descendants of the noble line of Lusignan, which is famous everywhere and extends into Ireland and many other countries, as I have told you.

Never has there been (nor will there soon be) a story as marvelous as that of the sons of Lusignan. Do not think that I lie! In truth, it would be thought an unbelievable dream without the evidence of the chronicle. But the chronicle tells us the story in the same terms as my book. God give joy and honor to the lord of Mathefelon, who is lord of the house of Parthenay, for the good of the house! This noble and gracious knight, more than worthy of respect, has well shown, the good man, the excellence of his nature, in refusing to abandon this book his father (God keep his soul!) had begun. He is quite worthy of praise, for (God save me!) you will find few of his equals today. No one could hate him, and I pray to God keep it perfect, after this good beginning. Only those overwhelmed with sins could wish him ill. He loves all the world, and when he sees a good man, he refuses him nothing. I've heard his praises sung so often that I could easily call him Alexander. I would say more yet, by my faith, if I were not afraid of being called a flatterer, for he is still living. It is not right, as I see it, to praise men while they live: their works say enough. But for the departed, one can well recall their actions, for they do no more. They must be spoken of, their high deeds recounted. This is what will be done for my lord after his death, if it please God. Many yet speak of his valor and his glory, of his actions and conduct, that I take for the most noble there are. And he can well be taken for noble, for he is of high birth: I have found among his ancestors kings, dukes, and marquises. His is a man of high origin and very noble lineage. And he has taken for his wife a lady of infinite grace: humble, courteous and well learned, who dreams only of doing good and of whom only good is spoken, I believe. They are well suited for each other and love each other immensely. God keep them in happiness! The lady is of Périgord, daughter of the count who just died, and she can pride herself on it, for it is a noble line, famous and so ancient that it is known as far back as Charlemagne. When Charlemagne conquered this land and this county, with all the lands of Guyenne, he gave the noble and ancient county to one of his relatives and this was a good gift. It was a close relative, I believe, a half-cousin, who governed the county well, from what I am told. And since then the noble county has never left the family by woman or by marriage.

The inheritance has luckily always gone to a male heir of the house of Périgord. This is the noble house from which Brunissent came, the gracious lady wiser than a hundred others, gentle and well educated, a model of wisdom, honor, courtesy and politeness for other ladies. She doesn't lack a single lady-like quality: they are all found in this renowned lady, she is so gentle, courteous, and wise. Her marriage to my lord is a happy one, and I pray God soon gives them a line that will never end, for the lord and the loyal lady are of the line of France. What misfortune if the line ends and they have no heir to maintain the noble line of Mélusine, the house of Parthenay, whose origins I have told you at length!

I have now said all that I have found in my notes. I will say more if I find more in my sources. But I find nor more, neither written, nor in the memories of those to whom I speak, nothing more than that which I've told you. And having no more to add, I can now rest.

Now is come the moment to throw the anchor, to lower the ropes and the sail. Thank God! I am at port. I crossed the pit and I crossed the floods throughout my voyage.

Praised be the Trinity, who allowed me to finish this account! Thanks be to Him for letting me come to the end of this book, or this romance. And if someone asks me:

– Your romance, what is it called?

– It is called, lord, the Romance of Parthenay, or the Romance of Lusignan, as you will: name it as it pleases you!

Coudrette will now be quiet, but after having made his speech, which he wants now, in all justice, to put in the form of a litany for all the noble line of Parthenay. And when it is finished and composed in the fashion of a layman, an often-used form, then the work will be finished, and Coudrette can be silent.

Oh glorious Trinity,
Divinity too great for the human mind,
Three people who make but one,
And a single God!
Sovereign majesty,
You who make the winter and the summer,
All that is, is yours,
By your prudence!
You know all the heart feels,
You see all that happens,
You know the secrets of the heart,
It is the truth.
You are owed all obedience,
You must be, with diligence,
Served and defended
With love.
I humbly ask you:
Please have pity
and pardon
the heroes of my work,
And aid them in adversity,
the heirs of Parthenay!

Glorious Virgin maiden,
Mother, daughter and servant of God,
You who nursed
The Son of God at your breast,
And without having known the sins of the flesh,
Carried Him in your womb!
You who intercedes with God,
You who aided Théophile,
Help this lineage,
So noble and good,
That of Parthenay, close to La Rochelle!
This would be justice!

Saint Michael, angel and archangel,
Do not turn your gaze away,

I implore you!
Take them from the swamps of sin,
And lead them to the barns
And the granaries of Heaven!
Is it not your office
To guide the just,
Whether they be clothed in linen or wool?
I beg you not to forget
To come to them in aid.

Saint John, you who point,
It is my firm belief,
The precious Lamb of God!
You, glorious Patriarchs,
Do not forget them,
And do not forget me either:
May it please you, for them and for me,
To make our peace with the Sovereign King!

Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint Andrew,
Apostles, friends of God,
By courtesy,
Do not forget this line
From which is come nobility
Which is known in many a land!
For in many places
They have conquered many a noble fief
By their noble chivalry.

Saint Stephen and Saint Vincent,
Saint Laurent, and you, Saint Clement,
And Saint Denis,
Who are friends of God,
You have surrendered your bodies
To the worst torments!
And you, all martyrs,
Who reign forever
In Paradise
For your good deeds and good words,
Let us be admitted,
In the end, to Heaven,
Where reign the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit,
Forever!

Saint Sylvester, Saint Augustin,
Saint Martin, Saint Maur, Saint Séverin,
Saint Nicholas,
And all confessors,
I beg you, do not forget
Those of whom I have spoken, nor me, Alas!
But pull us from the lakes
Of the felonious Enemy
Who comes in morning and noon,
And more often yet,
To push us into the abyss!
Let us taste Heaven,

After this world!

Saint Mary Magdalene,
I implore you with all my voice,
With a pure and loyal heart!
Saint Agnes, Saint Catherine,
Agree to take the trouble
To pray God that He bring us
Above, in divine joy!

Friends of God, saints,
I humbly beg you, hands clasped,
That you see
That our sins are erased
And that we may approach God,
That we feel not the torments of Hell,
But that we may be sheltered
And lodged with you,
In Heaven, where there are no troubles!

Gentle God, Sweet Father so charitable,
Protect us from the lakes of the devil
And, in a word,
Guard us always such
That you never turn your back on us!
Be to us
Full of love and pity,
So that we may know forever
The joy and the true rest of Heaven!

Gentle God, who judges all,
I beg You with a loyal heart:
Make us walk the true path,
That of welcome,
Make us regret and lament our sins,
So that we receive in leaving,
After our final day,
Eternal welcome! Amen.

[below are endnotes which have lost their markers]

The realm of Armenia neighboring Cypress is Little Armenia. It only existed from 1063 to 1375.

Psalms 120-134/119-133, sung by pilgrims to Jerusalem

In 1199, Hughes 9 of Lusignan became count of the Marche. In 1308, Philippe le Bel annexed the county

of the Marche and Lusignan to the crown at the death of Guys, the last lord of Lusignan

The guisarme is a type of pole-arm, not unlike a glaive or pike.

This reference prefigures the later troubles with Fromont.

The colors of Lusignan.

Geoffrey the Great Tooth is repeated linked to the boar that caused Count Aymeri's death. His Great

Tooth gives him an obvious physical resemblance to the boar.

The abbey of the Holy Trinity of Vendôme had the Holy Tear of Christ from the tomb of Lazarus.

Coudrette alludes to Léon 6 of Lusignan, the last king of Little Armenia, whose death is evoked at the end

of the novel.

In medieval literature and iconography, Fortune is traditionally represented by a blind woman spinning a wheel on which all people are placed.

This is commonly held to be Montierneuf, in Poitiers.

The count of Forez is elsewhere presented as Raymondin's brother.

Apollo and Termagant were, in the chansons de geste, the principal gods of the Saracens, as was

Mohammed, with whom Jupiter was frequently associated. Margot is also a Saracen god

In the version by Jean d'Arras, Mélusine is the eldest daughter.

In Le Roman de Renart, Renart often repents solely for his own gain.

Montserrat is in Catalogne, and had a Benedictine monastery founded there in 1030. Many pilgrim-hermits went there.

A son of Hugues 10 of Lusignan (dead c.1249) who married a female heir of Pembroke

Cabrera is a noble family of the court of Barcelona, and is linked to counts of the Marche by the counts

of Urgel

Around 1210, Gervais wrote in the Otia Imperialia, the story of the lady of the Castle of the Sparrow

Hawk, who was named Mélusine. The Voyages de Mandeville (c. 1360) told the story of a king of Armenia

who underwent the same test.

Around 1400, when this was written, one traveled by horse or litter. The word also means a vehicle with

wheels and might refer to the wagon in which the body of Grimaut (the giant) was transported. But here,

perhaps, it refers to chariots of the warriors of antiquity.

A night traditionally associated with fairy appearances

White is color of fairy.

In English folklore, fairies are most often clothed in green, but in France & Germany, they're in white.

Léon 6 of Lusignan, chased from Lesser Armenia in 1375, died in Paris 29 November 1393

Toledo was a cultural and religious center renowned for its translators, who brought back many lost texts

from the Greek golden age. The enchanters of the chansons de geste all studied there.

Parthenay died 1401, the head was taken same day 1306.

Jeanne de Mathefelon.

Jeanne de Mathefelon came from the house of Dreux, which began with Robert de Dreux, son of Louis 6

the Fat

By the counts of Urgel

Richard de Clare, count of Pembroke, was, in 1176, conqueror of Ireland

She took from devil the deal giving him Théophile's soul