

trious institutions, though our modern adepts pretend to trace its origin up to the sons of King David. However that may be, we repeat that Freemasonry was a serious and strong institution. It protected the weak, and honoured the strong, and flourished because it was wise and just.

The place into which Eric and his sister were introduced was a broad and long hall, forming the whole basement of the house. All around the apartment might be read sentences framed in circles of oak leaves. Here and there hung masonic trophies. Upon a raised platform stood an iron tripod, surmounted by a level which balanced itself from the arch.

The fête which had gathered the Freemasons of Paris together was intended for the solemn reception of a new adept. When the candidate entered, Eric and Eve were both struck with the same thought; they had seen that man somewhere before. He was a young man of slender but nervous form; his long, pale face had a singular expression of intelligence—his black eyes shone like two carbuncles, under the deeply arched eyebrows. He walked with a light, quick step towards the tripod, where he seated himself. On being asked his name, he replied, "Jean Cudor."

The sound of his voice was sufficient at once to restore him to the memory of our two travellers. Eric pressed tightly the arm of Eve.

Either that man lied at that moment, or he had lied two hours before, under the walls of the Abbey St. Martin, for he had then said to Amaury Montruel, Lord of Anet, and friend of the King, "My name is Mahmoud el Reis."

CHAPTER IV.

The Chevalier Dieudonné, the "Destiny" of Mila's prophecy, on leaving our two travellers, whom he had so generously taken under his protection, ascended, as we have already said, one of the narrow and unpaved alleys which opened to the left of the rue St. Honoré and led towards St. Eustache. In that narrow alley there would certainly be found at least one Ezekiel, and one Trefouilloux, if not many more. But these good people seldom attacked well-armed and well-mounted knights. Hunger weakened them and made them timid; it was only one or two centuries later, that increased security made provisions more plentiful in the Court of Miracles. After a few minutes ride the Chevalier Dieudonné, and his handsome page, Albret, stopped before a massive sculptured door, which served as an entrance to a building as large as the Louvre, where the king lived.

This building, isolated and surrounded by high trees, occupied nearly the same spot as the present market *des Prouvires*. It was called the Hotel de Nesle, and belonged to Jean II, Lord of Nesle, and Chatelaine of Bruges. Eudes III, Duke of Bourgogne, one of the most powerful vassals of the King of France, was also at this moment residing there, as the guest of its master. Eudes de Bourgogne was not what one could properly call a rebel; he fought for the king during war, but during peace he gave him that unceasing opposition, which renders the comparison of the great vassals of the middle age to the great bourgeois of our own times perfectly intelligible. The comparison is, perhaps, not very flattering to the great vassals of the Middle Ages; but we must say what we think. The Duc de Bourgogne kept up an intercourse with Pope Innocent III, pretended to rule Phillip Augustus, as if that prince had been the monarch only of a dozen people. Bourgogne had also an understanding with Beaudoin of Flanders, and John Sans Terre also counted a little upon Eudes de Bourgogne.

That the reader may be better enabled to follow our tale, it is indispensable that we relate in a few words the circumstances in which France and her king found themselves at this juncture.

Phillip Augustus was not a prince free from defects, nor can we pretend to conceal that he was the prime cause of all the embarrassments which marked his long and brilliant reign. Phillip Augustus was at the period we are speaking of about thirty-five or thirty-six years of age, and had occupied the throne since his fifteenth year. He was the sixth king in descent from Hugh Capet. The opening of his reign was stormy

but glorious. He subjugated Burgundy and Flanders, and annihilated the pretensions of King Henry of England, father of Richard Cœur de Lion and John.

History accuses Henry of having abused the confidence of the Young Alice of France, sister of Phillip Augustus, who had been confided to his care by king Louis, as the affianced wife of Henry's eldest son, Henry of the Short Cloak. If the accusation is true, Phillip must be reproached with never having punished that infamous outrage. Richard Cœur de Lion would not accept that part of the heritage of his brother, which enjoined his marriage with Alice. This, however, did not prevent Phillip Augustus, at that time quite young, from forming an intimate friendship with Richard, his vassal—a friendship attended with strange vicissitudes—but qualified by historians as chivalrous.

Phillip Augustus and Richard Cœur de Lion went together to the Crusades. In that land of adventures the king of England completely eclipsed the king of France. He was more handsome, more brilliant, and more dazzling—stronger if not braver; and they say that Phillip Augustus was therefore jealous of his friend and vassal, and to such a degree as to cause him a dangerous illness. It is certain that Richard, skilful in the use of arms and daring to folly, excited universal admiration. He was the hero of the Crusades. Romancers adopted him for their own, though the Crusades had no result.

Indeed that was the fate of all Richard's undertakings. Phillip returned to France. Richard, who wished also to recover his estates, was made prisoner on reaching Austria; and here happened an event which we would fain efface from the history of Phillip Augustus. Nothing could justify the king of France in becoming a traitor. He did so, however; and his negotiations with John Sans Terre to share the spoils of his Royal prisoner, are well known.

It is said, also, that when the celebrated Troubadour, Blondel, replied with this guitar to the song which he heard Richard, his king, singing from his dark tower, and when "*Une fièvre brûlante*" had succeeded in sending to sleep his gaolers, and delivering his master, Phillip wrote to John, "Take care, the devil is unchained!"

But we should distrust all that is found in the dictionaries; the special mission of these dictionaries being to mystify those for whose use they are fabricated. But, in fact, John did take care. He betrayed Phillip as he had betrayed Richard, and opened up an interminable war between the two rivals.

Phillip, in his early youth, had married Isabella d'Artois, niece of the Count of Flanders, who descended in a direct line from Charlemagne. After a long widowhood, wishing to raise up enemies against England, he demanded, about the year 1187, the hand of the princess Ingeburge or Angelburge of Denmark. Ingeburge was adorably beautiful, and much in advance of her times, in the qualities of her mind. But her brother, Canute, was averse to arming against England, which so vexed Phillip, that he conceived an insurmountable aversion for Ingeburge; and during his marriage ceremony he was observed to tremble and pale, as if he had been under the influence of witchcraft.

Some time after he repudiated Ingeburge who adored him, to marry the famous Agnes de Meranie, daughter of an adventurer from the Tyrol, who had assumed the title of Duke. This divorce, followed by a second marriage, the legality of which was more than doubtful, was the source of all the fracas which embarrassed the grand reign of Phillip. Ingeburge protested—retired into a convent, and the Pope issued his thunders.

As to La belle Agnes, she conducted herself like a woman who desired to give future ages an idea that she had played the chief rôle in a tragedy. She performed the part of Queen Berenice, she intrigued, she flattered, and amazed the world with her tale of love.

Incomplete as are the details left us by contemporary writers, it is impossible to hesitate a moment in estimating the character of these two women, Ingeburge and Agnes. They were both

beautiful; but Ingeburge was as superior to her rival as the sun is superior to the stars. It is true, that poor Queen Ingeburge had her unlovable name against her. But Phillip Augustus had adorned the daughter of the Bohemian Berthoud—whose proper name was Marie—with the name of Agnes; could he not have done as much for Ingeburge? Besides the frightful name "Ingeburge" was due to French pronunciation. In the days when she was a happy young girl, the princess of Denmark was called Angelberge, and those who loved her called her Angel—nothing could be sweeter or more charming than that.

After the affair of the divorce, and the contested marriage, the reign of Phillip Augustus became lost in inextricable difficulties. Useless battles, seiges and entangled negotiations. Skillful diplomatist as he was, Phillip expended years in vain efforts to free himself from this state of things. Agnes de Meranie was, however, the veritable scourge of France.

One day, in the midst of one of those exhausting struggles that Phillip had to sustain against the seditions with which Europe constantly beset his throne, they brought him word that Richard Cœur de Lion was dead. The arrow of a soldier had passed through his breast at the siege of Chaluz. Phillip spoke not a word, but retired to his chamber, remaining there twelve hours with his head between his hands, and refusing all nourishment. During this long meditation was he thinking of the ardent friendship which had united his youth to that of Richard? Was he recalling the strange proofs of friendship and devotion that he had received from the son of Henry Plantagenet—fond caresses followed by mad attacks? Or was he thinking that the future was relieved from a terrible obstacle?

After the death of Richard, Phillip missed that spur which was constantly urging him on to audacious enterprises. We cannot say that he was lulled to sleep in the arms of Agnes—for their romance of love was at best but a rhyme in verses of six feet—but he plunged into his war with the Holy See as into an agreeable pastime, till the death of young Duke Arthur de Bretagne, assassinated by John Sans Terre, aroused him.

Arthur was the husband of Marie of France, daughter of Phillip Augustus and Isabel. Phillip was, however, now thoroughly roused; and see what his awakening revealed to him.

John Sans Terre was master of Anjou, Aquitaine, and Little Bretagne, while Beaudoin of Flanders had extended his domination over nearly the whole of the northern part of his kingdom. Othon IV., King of the Romans, and nephew of John Plantagenet, was pressing on the eastern frontier; while the Pope threatened the south. Canute, King of Denmark, was said to be arming a powerful fleet to avenge the gross outrage inflicted on his sister, Ingeburge.

It was certainly not Berthoud of Istria *soi-disant* Duc de Meranie, who could aid his royal son-in-law in this difficult crisis. The internal condition of Phillip's kingdom was not much more favourable. The finances—impaired by the continual wars—by the armaments destined for the Crusades—and by the great architectural undertakings that Phillip had begun—threatened ruin. Nor was Paris tranquil; the quarrels between the students and the bourgeois had just begun, and blood was flowing in the streets.

Lastly, a strange and mysterious rumour, full of terrible menace, began to spread itself; it was told with bated breath at Paris, and through the whole kingdom, that the princes leagued against Phillip would not only attack him in the field, but that within the military league, another league had been formed to assassinate him, and into this league they said that besides John Sans Terre, Beaudoin, Othon, and Canute VI., Saladin himself had entered.

They pronounced the name of the Old Man of the Mountain—a name as dreaded as that of Satan himself. Who had put the poignard of that terrible Ishmaelite, successor of Hassan-Ben-Sebbah? Who was it that had spread the hatred of Phillip's name into the gorges of the mountains of Liban? Was it Saladin? Was it Beaudoin, then master of Constantinople? Was it