

came, as we have said, the story of the beauty and misfortunes of this Burgundian maiden, a scion like himself of the royal line of Germany, but an heir to sorrow and exposed to peril. Clovis was young, unmarried, and ardent of heart. He craved the love of this famed maiden, if she should be as beautiful as report said, but wisely wished to satisfy himself in this regard before making a formal demand for her hand. He could not himself see her. Royal etiquette forbade that. Nor did he care to rouse Gondebaud's suspicions by sending an envoy. He therefore adopted more secret measures, and sent a Roman, named Aurelian, bidding him to seek Geneva in the guise of a beggar, and to use all his wit to gain sight of and speech with the fair Clotilde.

Clothed in rags, and bearing his wallet on his back, like a wandering mendicant, Aurelian set out on his mission, travelling on foot to Geneva. Clovis had entrusted him with his ring, as proof of his mission, in case he should deem the maiden worthy to be the bride of his king. Geneva was duly reached, and the seeming pilgrim, learning where the princess dwelt, and her habits of Christian charity towards strangers, sought her dwelling and begged for alms and shelter. Clotilde received him with all kindness, bade him welcome, and, in pursuance of the custom of the times, washed his feet.

Aurelian, who had quickly made up his mind as to the beauty, grace, and wit of the royal maiden, and her fitness to become a king's bride, bent towards her as she was thus humbly employed, and in a low voice said,—