

yet in the end wickedness triumphed, and honesty—such honesty as that age admitted of—died a violent and frightful death. With this preliminary we may proceed with our tale.

Fredegonde was the daughter of poor peasants, who dwelt in the vicinity of Montdidier in Picardy. But so striking and notable was her beauty that at an early age she was made, under circumstances of which we are not informed, one of the ladies in waiting on Queen Andovera, the first wife of King Chilperic. The poor queen was destined to suffer from the artfulness of her maid. The beauty of Fredegonde quickly attracted the attention of the king, and her skilful and unscrupulous arts soon made her a power in the court. The queen was in her way; but no long time passed before, on the pretext of a spiritual relationship with her husband which rendered the marriage illegal, the hapless Andovera was repudiated and banished to a convent.

But Chilperic was not yet ready to marry a peasant. He chose for his second wife Galsuinthe, daughter of the king of the Visigoths. This marriage lasted a still shorter time than the other. Galsuinthe was found strangled in her bed; and now, no longer able to restrain his passion for the beautiful and artful maid of honor, Chilperic married Fredegonde, and raised the peasant maiden to the throne for which she had so deeply and darkly wrought.

The marriage of Galsuinthe had been preceded by that of her younger sister, Brunehild, who became the wife of Sigebert, brother of Chilperic and king of Austrasia. The murder of Galsuinthe was