

marry her. Triple crime." "Insolent creature! how dare you judge your master? Obey me or I will crush you." "I cannot obey you. I have no option, only the consolation of knowing that I shall gain heaven by dying in the discharge of my duty?... Then, you will gain it pretty soon."

The foregoing conversation, ominous harbinger of a dreadful tragedy, took place on the twenty-fourth of December, of the year 1076, at midnight, in the interior portico of the chapel of the castle of La Porte, near Sandillon, between the Lord of the manor and his chaplain. Hervé, Lord of La Porte, Bruel, Marais and Prateaux, was a type — happily rare even in those iron days of the XI century — a partly civilized barbarian, more feared than loved, a feudal in the worst sense of the word, a renowned hunter, drunkard and adventurer, an illiterate, brutal man who tyrannized over his subjects and was the terror of the neighbouring countries, the oppressor of his serfs, the scourge of his fellowmen, the scandal of the clergy who had several times already vainly threatened him with the wrath of the King. The ferocious-looking wolf emblazoned on his coat of arms was a meet type of this barbarian, surnamed the bluebeard of Sologne.

Tired of his wife, who, though good and pious, was neither young nor pretty, he continually abused and ill-treated her until finally she could bear it no longer and taking her child fled for protection to her father's home. Thus left to himself the Lord of the manor indulged in such extravagant excesses as soon brought ruin in their wake. To escape this dreaded foe and to replenish his coffers he had forcibly taken despite her tears and protests beautiful Deborah, daughter of old Moses, the Jewish nabob, and was trying to compel his chaplain to marry them before the third mass. The chaplain was young and slight but beneath his frail appearance throbbed an apostle's heart, a noble, dauntless soul that indignantly refused and recoiled before his master's command. The latter threatened and stormed, his anger increasing to frenzy by this unexpected opposition and the too many glasses of burning Cyprus wine under which he laboured. In fear and silence, anticipating some sad ending to their master's passionate outburst, the servants and slaves