

A Ladder of Swords

"I have visited at your manor, Monsieur of Rozel. I have seen the state in which you live, your retainers, your men-at-arms, your farming-folk, and your sailor-men. I know how your Queen receives you; how your honor is as stable as your fief."

He drew himself up again proudly. He could understand this speech.

"Your horses and your hounds I have seen," she added, "your men-servants and your maid-servants, your fields of corn, your orchards, and your ladder. I have sometimes broken the commandment and coveted them and envied you."

"Break the commandment again for the last time," he cried, delighted and boisterous. "Let us not waste words, lady. Let's kiss and have it over."

Her eyes flashed. "I coveted them and envied you; but, then, I am but a vain girl at times, and vanity is easier to me than humbleness."

"Blood of man, but I cannot understand so various a creature!" he broke in, again puzzled.