FROISSART

MARY DARMESTETER

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Froissart in his Study.

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BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

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In rendering the passages quoted from Froissart's Chronicles into English, the translator has followed, wherever it has been found possible, Lord Berners' version of 1523.

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FROISSART.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

VERY little is known of the youth of Froissart. He was born at Valenciennes, but considerable disagreement exists, even among scholars, as to the exact date of his birth.

Froissart, nevertheless, alludes to the subject more than once. "On the thirtieth night of November 1373, I was thirty-five years old, a little more, a little less," he tells us in one of his poems, the *Joli Buisson de Jeunesse;* from which we might conclude that he was born in 1338. But in the third book of the *Chronicles* we read: "Know that in the year of grace 1390, I was fifty-seven years of age;" which is as much as to say that he was born in 1333. A little further on, in the fourth book, he relates to us a long history that he heard "in the year of grace 1361, being at Berkhampstead, beyond London, and as then I was of the age of twenty-four years." This takes us back to the year 1337, the date which is, in fact, generally adopted by his biographers. But Froissart goes on to speak in detail of this memorable visit to Berkhampstead. It was at the

moment of the Christmas festivities; the King, the Queen, and all the Court were come from London to bid farewell to the Prince of Wales, recently married, and about to start for Bordeaux with his wife. "They were come thither to take leave," Froissart tells us. Now, we know that the Prince and Princess of Wales did not leave England until a little after Christmas, in 1363; it is clear, therefore, that Froissart, writing of these matters in his old age, mistakes the date by a year. It must have been in December 1362 that he was twenty-four years old, and this slight correction suffices to set the first and last of the three dates given, in agreement. We may decide, then, that it was in the depth of the winter of the year 1338 that Froissart was born at Valenciennes.

Froissart was a native of Hainault, which at that time formed an independent principality, comprising within itself the Belgian Hainault of to-day and the south-east portion of the modern French department of the Nord. The first French writer of his day, Froissart was, nevertheless, a true son of his province; throughout his life he retained his native accent and provincial orthography, and his many journeys notwithstanding, he remained always faithful to his little Hainault—Hainault the free, the cultured, the "chevalereux." Nor, in truth, could better soil have been found for the growth and nurture of an historian. The Wallon princes were themselves men of letters. In the Château of Beaumont were preserved, as a most precious deposit, the *Livres* of Messire Baudouin d'Avesnes; at Liège, the bellicose canon, Messire Jean-le-Bel, author and *grand seigneur* to boot, was in the

act of revising his *Vraie et Notable Histoire;* and, also at Liège, in the same winter that gave birth to Froissart, that stupendous chronicler, Jean d'Outremeuse, first saw the light.

Nothing is known of the family of Froissart. Certain scholiasts, on the strength of an imperfectly understood ballad, have hazarded the opinion that his father was an heraldic painter; and when the romance of *Méliador* is given to the world, the abundant details to be found there on the work of a "painter-craftsman," may seem, perhaps, to give colour to a myth that has its symbolical charm. *Le Joli Buisson de Jeunesse*, however, would lead us to suppose that it was to some solid family of well-to-do burgesses, money-changers or cloth-merchants, that the delightful story-teller belonged; and this is all that can be said on the subject. In all the immense mass of writing left by Froissart, not a word concerning father or mother, brother or sister, relation or guardian, is to be found. So blank is the record indeed, in this direction, that an ingenious biographer supposes him left an orphan in early childhood, insinuates that he may have been of illegitimate and unrecognised birth, and suggests some churlish guardian as his sole protector; since, immediately on attaining his majority, we find Froissart quitting his native country without a word of regret. All this, however, is mere matter of fancy and hypothesis. Better were it to resign ourselves frankly to knowing nothing at all; and such resignation is the easier, that, against the surrounding obscurity, the little personality of the child stands out very brightly revealed. Never has the idyll of childhood,

that idyll which moves and inspires the least sympathetic soul, been touched with a happier grace than by Froissart. He shows us to the life the little fellow, not over studious apparently, with imperfect Latin lessons that often bring him acquainted with the rod, tiring quickly too of chess or dice, or any other rational and sedentary amusement, but not without his favourite games nevertheless; he makes us out a list, indeed, of no fewer than fifty-two. How many charming pastimes lost since those days for the children of France! A good half of these games are no longer known—petals, as it were, fallen for ever from that poor rose of gaiety, blooming freshly then in the nation's youth. Who can now tell us what was the game of the Baron Enguerrand, or that other game of *Pince Mérine*, which was played

"When the moonlight was serene,"

and which was held to be a pastime fit for the children of royalty? Young Froissart played not less well at games that are still popular; at prisoner's base, at chasing butterflies, or at the delicate and difficult sport of compelling a feather to fly against the wind. At other times, simply bestriding his schoolboy stick, it forthwith became a gallant courser, Grisel by name, all ready to carry him to the wars. In later years, when the child was grown into a man, it was after much the same peaceful fashion that he was destined to see most of the battles of his time.

At the age of twelve, Froissart was sent to school to learn Latin. But the child neglected his "Catonnet" and his Catechism. Then, as always, he preferred the

realities of life to mere abstractions; and how was the Latin grammar to be studied, when there, close by, on the same benches, were to be seen the most charming little girls, "*qui de mon temps étaient jeunettes*," as he tells us? He liked to make them little presents of pins—

> "Ou d'une pomme, ou d'une poire
> Ou d'un seul anelet de verre.
> Et lors devisai à part moi :
> Quand donc viendra le temps pour moi
> Que par amours pourrai aimer?"

He was by no means so good a neighbour to the brothers of his little friends, for he dearly loved to exchange blows with boys of his own age.

> "I was beaten, and I beat others,"

he tells us with a just pride; and then, returning home, he would be beaten again for his shirt in rags and his coat in tatters. All this, however, probably happened but seldom; for even then, one may suppose, what the good Froissart really liked best, was to contemplate as an observer the disputes and quarrels of others.

CHAPTER II.

JOURNEY TO ENGLAND.

OUR little fellow, so anxious to find favour in the eyes of his pretty school-companions, was soon to fall more seriously in love. "I was not yet weary," he tells us, "of playing those games that amuse children who have not reached their twelfth year, when Love, by his mighty power, drew me with longing to every kind of diversion. Above all, I loved in summer-time to walk in large gardens full of violets and peonies and roses; nothing pleased me so much as to see these beautiful flowers. And, when the weather changed at the approach of winter, I forgot to be dull, in reading long romances that treated of love."

One sentiment only, the poet tells us, filled his adolescent heart from his fourteenth to his twenty-fourth year. It is a love-history that he has related at length in one of the most charming poems of the fourteenth century: *L'Espinette Amoureuse.* One must be careful, however, not to take these confidences too seriously. Almost always, in poems of love, the sentiment is so true, and the recorded facts so fictitious, that the most ingenious reader may find himself deceived. Little details, drawn from

the life, are scattered throughout a purely imaginative story—details which, dear to the writer's heart, survive through his pen in the verses of the poem as dried flowers survive between the leaves of a book. In this little romance, the mere facts of the story seem to be arranged to suit the poet's fancy; but it is with an ingenuous accent, touched with true emotion, that he describes the learned young lady who set his fifteen-year-old heart beating. One day they meet at a party—a garden-party of five centuries ago; she walks with him a little apart, she bends to gather five violets, she gives him three, the other two she keeps herself. Another day she begs the youthful Froissart to lend her a romance; and while the poor boy says "Yes!" with flaming eyes, he asks himself where one is to be procured, since in those days romances were a luxury for the rich. At last he finds at home an old copy of the *Bailli d'Amour;* she reads it, confides to him her impressions and lends him in exchange the romance *Cléomadès.* All this is related with a lightness of touch and a sincerity of accent that have a true charm. Then one day the young girl marries, and Froissart is like to die of grief, until, a few weeks later, he turns his mighty despair into a "new ballad."

This lover of twenty-three was a clerk, and wore the tonsure, a thing frequently seen in those days, when many a barber-hairdresser found his account in the general desire to be placed under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In the registers of the Châtelet, we meet on every page the names of lawyers, merchants, simple labourers even, who, as clerks, placed themselves under the

protection of the Bishop. In every grade of society the married clerks formed, as it were, a new class ; it was one of the most striking signs of the relaxation of ecclesiastical discipline, brought about by the misfortunes of the papacy. "The life of religion," says M. Jusserand in his admirable study upon Piers Plowman, "had not yet the precise limits to which we are now accustomed. Many men of letters, precentors, sacristans, or mere secretaries, received the minor orders, and went no further." And, as for their lay brethren, so for these tonsured heads, two sources of honour were open; arms and love. Petrarch had no scruple in proclaiming his passion for a married woman. The brave Jean-le-Bel, canon of Liège though he was, loved, sword in hand, to follow the god of battles ; and the twin sons, born to him in his old age, brought no blush to the sunburnt brow of the canon-knight. Froissart, a simple clerk, found nothing in his order that should compel him to submit to austere rules ; nor, indeed, is there any question here of monkish discipline or of ascetic, black-robed seminarist. Rather, it is as a youthful and elegant University man that we have to imagine this handsome lover of twenty-three, as, with a dozen unpublished poems at the bottom of his trunk, he starts on his way to seek his fortune at the English Court.

We know so little of the youth of Froissart, that it is impossible to say how this young *bourgeois* found the leisure and the means necessary for visiting foreign countries. Perhaps some Mecœnas (and there were many such in these little lettered courts of Hainault), may have made himself responsible for the young poet's expenses. Perhaps

that old canon of Liège, Jean-le-Bel, whose chronicles end the same year in which those of Froissart were begun, may have designated the young Valenciennois as capable of continuing his work. At seventy years of age, very rich, and very liberal, Jean-le-Bel may have wished to assure himself of a successor. All this, however, is pure conjecture; all that can be affirmed with certainty is, that in 1361, the year in which Jean-le-Bel ceased to write, the young Jean Froissart left Valenciennes for London, whither he went to present to Queen Philippa of Hainault a manuscript of his own on the battle of Poitiers.

That manuscript was, without doubt, the germ of the Chronicles. It is lost for us. Perhaps it still lies hidden in some dusty corner of the Record Office of London, or among the imperfectly-catalogued archives of some old English country-house. We shall meet in the course of these pages with so many extraordinary discoveries, made during the last few years, that there is nothing extravagant in the hope that the first book of Froissart may one day be recovered. For the moment, we know only what he himself tells us about it. "Always to my power I have justly enquired for the truth of the deeds of wars and adventures that have fallen, and especially sith the great battle of Poitiers, whereas the noble King John of France was taken prisoner; as before that time I was but of a young age or understanding. Howbeit, I took on me, as soon as I came from school, to rhyme and to recite (*à rimer et à dittier*) the above wars, and bare the same compiled into England, as I had written it." This book, "compiled" in part, as he tells us elsewhere, from the *Vraies Chroniques*

of Messire Jean-le-Bel, was probably a species of *chante-fable*, half in verse and half in prose—at once "rimé" and "dittié" as the poet explains. Some years later, we find Froissart composing for the Duke of Brabant another narrative of this description, which we still possess under the title of *La Prison Amoureuse.*

Queen Philippa, for whom the young poet destined this chronicle of her son's and her husband's glory, was, like himself, a native of Valenciennes; she liked to protect and to encourage her compatriots, and had made the court of England an asylum for Wallon men of letters. Froissart, no doubt, had often heard of her kindnesses, for she was much talked of in the good and "frisk" town of Valenciennes; as, in our time, the younger days of the Princess of Wales or the Empress of Russia are doubtless still spoken of in Copenhagen. Many an old man, many a gossiping matron, would still remember how the youthful Edward of England had come with his weeping mother, a fugitive like himself, to implore aid and succour from the Count of Hainault. When he went away, little Madame Philippa wept over his departure with all the childish despair of her twelve years. "She was more conversant with him than any of her sisters, and the young Edward set more his love and company on Philippa than on the others." The little girl of twelve was not far from fifty in 1361; but the gracious little idyll was not the less remembered for that. It was Froissart himself who, many years later, was to narrate the charming scene when the two cousins bade each other farewell. . . . When the Queen of

England took leave on her departure for her own kingdom, she embraced in turn all the daughters of the Count of Hainault, and the Prince of Wales followed her example. When it came to the turn of Philippa, the little girl burst into tears. "They asked her why she wept. 'Because,' she said, 'my fair cousin of England is about to leave me, and I had grown so used to him.' Then all the knights who were there present began to laugh." Perhaps these great personages already foresaw what the little Philippa had no means of guessing—that brilliant *cortège* which, in the following year, was to escort to her kingdom beyond the seas the child-wife of young Edward III. of England. The Hainuyers were proud of this marriage, proud above all of the virtue and beauty of their daughter. "Tall and upright was she, wise, gay, humble, pious, liberal, and courteous, decked and adorned in her time with all noble virtues, beloved of God and of mankind. . . . For since the time of Queen Guinevere, wife of King Arthur and Queen of England, no such good Queen had been known. . . . And so long as she lived, the kingdom of England had favour, prosperity, honour, and every sort of good fortune, neither did famine nor dearth remain in the land during her reign, and so you will find it recorded in history." In these terms it was, that Froissart in his extreme old age was to speak of her.

In recalling to mind all that he had heard of this Queen, whom he himself was at last about to see, young Froissart may also perhaps have remembered that marvellous page of the *Vraies Chroniques* where Messire Jean-le-Bel relates the story of the clemency

of Philippa, and her intercession in favour of the burgesses of Calais. Froissart admired this episode so greatly that he inserted it, without changing a line, in his Chronicles, where twenty generations in succession, in perfect good faith, have esteemed it the pearl of his whole work.

QUEEN ISABELLA ON HER JOURNEY TO ENGLAND.

CHAPTER III.

FROISSART AT THE COURT OF LONDON.

It was at the most active moment of that large expansion of the national life which took place in England during the fourteenth century, that Froissart found himself in London. Twenty years earlier, England was still a provincial France — a somewhat clumsy and ridiculous France, where strong beer was drunk instead of sparkling and non-intoxicating wine, where imperfect grammar was heard, and a foreign accent, and the people had fair hair that was not at all in the taste of Paris. The French language was read and was taught; it was the language of the law courts; it was commonly spoken even, much as it was in Russia some sixty years ago. A chronicler of the reign of Edward III. laments this effacement of the native tongue. "Our children," he says, "when they go to school, are compelled to leave the use of their own language, a thing which is known in no other country. The children of the nobility speak French from the cradle, and call their playthings by foreign names. The country squireens, who wish also to be looked on as noble, learn the French language with great difficulty, in order to be held in more esteem."

Romances were written in French, serious books in Latin; English was merely a patois without elegance. In the course of the fourteenth century, however, a great change had shown itself; the national language had penetrated to the schools, to the courts of justice, to parliament: dating from the year 1362, the assizes were held in English, "because the French tongue was ill understood by the people." Wycliffe and Langland addressed the common folk in their mother tongue; Geoffrey Chaucer, a page in the suite of Edward III., was beginning to construct a splendid and powerful language out of the formless dialect of the poor. If children were still instructed in French, it was chiefly with a view to military operations, as the French in our day are instructed in German; for already in 1337 the Parliament of Westminster had ordained that the French language should be taught to every child, gentle or simple, "par quoy ils en fuissent plus ables en leurs gherres."

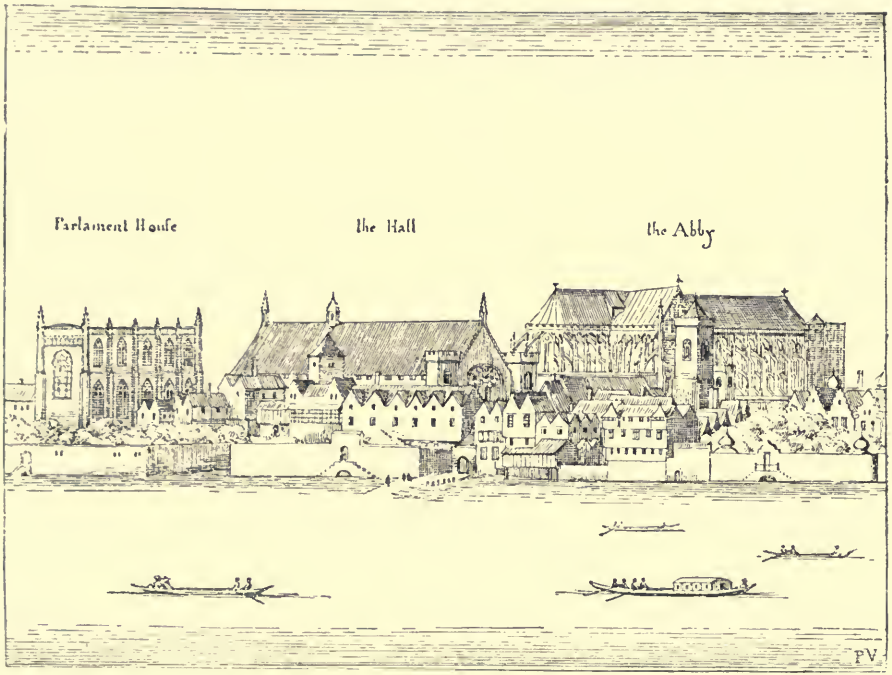
Of all this renascence Froissart, one may be sure, observed little or nothing. He was in no sense a man of letters; he hardly mentions Geoffrey Chaucer, his junior by some months, in attendance like himself at the Court, and whom he must have met at the house of Sir Richard Stury more than once; and then it is as diplomatist, and not as poet, that Froissart speaks of him. Poetry and the niceties of language are mere trifles to a young clerk enamoured of chivalry. For him, there is but one true glory—the glory that flowers on the field of battle; his very humble mission is to teach warriors to become more worthy ("à mieux valoir") by instructing them in the traditions of

chivalry and in its examples. What really excited his interest in London were those old and valiant captains, who, during the last thirty years, had carried on the wars in France; what chiefly struck him at the Court of Edward III. was the large magnificence, the rich and "étoffée" furnishing of the palaces, overflowing with the spoils of sacked towns and captured camps. London was full of princes, and nobles, and kings. The King and Queen held their court at Westminster, at Windsor, or at Eltham; in London or at Berkhampstead, the Prince and Princess of Wales "kept high and noble state." The most splendid figures of chivalry challenged admiration and comparison—the old lion, Edward III., with his noble Queen; the Black Prince, "the best knight in the entire world," and at his side the Fair Maid of Kent, "the fairest lady in all the kingdom of England," Froissart tells us, "and the most amorous." The Prince had lately married her for love, without his father's knowledge, fascinated by the fine audacious air of this young widow, who was already the mother of several children. Later on, the Knight of la Tour Landry was to describe the glittering and eccentric taste, the somewhat flaunting toilettes of this beautiful and worldly woman—"toilettes copied," he says, "from the dresses of the *bonnes amies* of the brigands of Languedoc." In the palace of the Prince, as in the King's palace, there was a continual coming and going of heroes, and the conquerors of Crécy and of Poitiers asked nothing better than to tell the history of their exploits over again.

With all this varied world, Froissart came into immediate contact; for Queen Philippa, always so friendly

towards the Hainuyers, had not contented herself with receiving his book "liement et doucement," "sweetly and courteously," as he tells us; she had given the young poet the post of secretary, encouraging him to pursue his historical work. "Wherever I went," he says, "I made enquiry of the ancient knights and squires, who had taken part in feats of arms, and could speak of them rightly; and also of ancient heralds, to verify and justify all these matters . . . . and for love of the noble lady to whom I belonged, lords, kings, dukes, counts, ladies, and knights of whatever nation they might be, loved me, listened, and saw with a good will, and profited me greatly."

This, assuredly, was the most brilliant, the most striking moment of Froissart's life, the hour among all other hours, that could never be forgotten. "In a whole day could not be recounted all the noble dinners, suppers, feasts, and rejoicings, the gifts, the presents, the jewels that were made, given, and presented!" At these feasts and entertainments they were not only the splendours of England that were revealed to the Hainuyer; he found there also the unhappy chivalry of France. At least sixty great personages were then present, as prisoners or hostages, in the city of London. Four dukes of the blood-royal surrounded the prisoner-king, not to mention half-a-dozen counts, more than a score of barons, a whole crowd of mere squires and knights, and thirty-six burgesses of condition, sent as hostages by the great towns of the north and centre of France. All this motley throng of people was "massed and housed in the



VIEW OF OLD WESTMINSTER.

city of London"; each one brought his own household with him, and held great state in his exile. Philip of Orleans had sixteen servants for himself alone, for the prison-house of these great lords was wide. When they quitted their splendid habitations, it was to go to Court, where Edward III. was ever ready to give them entertainment, "asking news of them, and letting them come and go, ride and take their pastime, hawk and hunt throughout the kingdom of England." Froissart marvels at the amenity of English manners. These gentlemen beyond the sea, he finds, have an absolute reliance on the word of honour, often allowing their prisoners to depart on the faith of a simple promise to bring back their ransom in three months, in a year, or at any other fixed period. "Such has never been the habit or the courtesy of the Germans," Froissart tells us. "I do not know what they will do from now henceforward, but until now they have shown neither mercy nor pity to Christian men-at-arms, be they nobles or gentlemen. But, when they take them, they put them in irons or in prison . . . . . and all for the sake of a better ransom." Practices so base as these were unknown in France as in England, where, indeed, any French knight would feel himself more in sympathy with an English brother in chivalry than with a man of the people of his own nationality. Filled then, though it was, with foreign prisoners at the time of Froissart's visit, the city of London presented no dreary aspect of exile and misery, but had the appearance rather of some considerable town of to-day, on the occasion of a great international congress.

For Froissart himself, the London of 1362 was a place of

absolute delight ; it made the glory of his young years, as the memory of it was to haunt his old age with longing. That splendid and honourable Court, that King, the dread of three kingdoms, that noble Queen in whose service he composed his "beaux dittiés et traités amoureux," and those knights who knew how to talk "rightly" of the wars, all inspired him with a boundless admiration, an enthusiasm proper to his twenty years. The first redaction of the first book of the Chronicles reflects this overflowing Anglo-mania ; never has Englishman so sounded the praise of English arms. And yet, hard by there, in the Savoy palace, was lodged a young knight, one of the sons of the Count of Blois, destined in the future to modify profoundly the opinions of the chronicler. For the moment, however, England is in the ascendant. Who would then have believed that the brilliancy of this all-powerful Court would ever be tarnished? Who could have foretold that that noble Queen, that formidable King, that chivalric Prince, would, before many years were passed, have vanished like smoke, leaving alone and in poverty the sad historiographer of the years of their glory?

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CHRONICLES.

FOR nearly five years Froissart continued as "ditteur" in the service of Queen Philippa of England; but these years were not spent tranquilly in his turret at Westminster. The Queen encouraged the young clerk in his project of writing out at length the history of the wars of France and England, so that, to the end of time, the courage and the courtesy of the heroes of so many knightly adventures might be held in memory. For the history of the first years of the war he had no choice but to draw upon and select from the *Chroniques* of Messire Jean-le-Bel; not however, without completing, verifying, and arranging them. There were still living in Great Britain many of the old knights who had witnessed the accession of Edward III., the first campaigns against the Scotch, and the declaration of war with France. Froissart was untiring in searching them out, in interrogating them, and in taking down in writing the histories he gathered from their lips. He travelled from town to town, from castle to castle, "at the charges of the Queen." The good Madame Philippa sent him as far even as Scotland, with sealed letters, testifying that the young man was one of her secretaries and of her

household ; so that everywhere Froissart found himself received "kindly and courteously" (*tout doucement et liement*). The Scottish King, David Bruce, carried him in his company throughout the provinces of his kingdom, an excursion that lasted nearly three months. Nothing that was picturesque on this journey, nothing that was striking, either of scene or of character, escaped the young Wallon ; and everything seen and everything noted, together with the precious historical gleanings carefully gathered up, found their place on the tablets that he loved to fill every evening after supper in his room at castle or inn. All these details sparkle with the just and delicate observation which the chronicler was to preserve to the end of his life, always fresh, as with the dewdrops of an eternal youth. In after years he loved to recall the time when—

> " Froissars d'Escosse revenoit
> Sur un cheval qui gris estoit,
> Un blanc levrier menant en laisse."

He travelled slowly, stopping wherever the things of the present or the relics of the past struck his imagination, always on the alert ; and it was in this way that he paused for some time before the Castle of Berkeley, that gloomy fortress where Edward II. had found his prison and his death. Froissart made the acquaintance of the young Lord Despencer, grandson of the unfortunate favourite of the late King ; whilst from a "very ancient knight" he learnt at Berkeley itself all that tragic history with which the Chronicles open. He might have read it already in the pages of Messire Jean-le-Bel ; but here, upon the spot, among the

few survivors of the drama, it was after a very different fashion, with a thrill as it were of actual experience, that he could place his finger on the very heart of history. The strong resentment and tenacious memory of the disinherited lord allowed nothing to be forgotten ; more than forty times, as the Queen's young clerk was riding with him from town to town and castle to castle, Despencer, in the bitterness of his heart, called him to his side.

"Froissart, do you see yonder great town with the tall tower?"

"Monseigneur, yes. Why do you speak of it?"

"I speak of it because it ought to be mine! But there was a wicked queen in this country who took everything from us."

And what a picture Froissart draws of this "wicked queen," eternally imprisoned in her castle for a crime that a son could neither punish nor forgive ; with what clearness he sets before us this "very fair lady, sweet-tongued and feminine," who played so cruel and so audacious a part in the sombre prologue of the Hundred Years' War.

In thus collecting precious documents and setting down a mass of delicate observations to serve in the splendid *rifacimento* of the *Vraies Chroniques* of Messire Jean-le-Bel, Froissart was to spend several years. He may probably have been already occupied in the revision of the early chapters, when, in the middle of the year 1366, he was called upon to quit the past for the present—history already accomplished for history in the course of accomplishment. War broke out in Castille, where the

French were supporting Henry of Transtamare, whilst Peter the Cruel applied for help to the Black Prince, in exchange for certain moneys and various castles in Spain. The expedition was decided on with the sanction of Edward III. Was it Queen Philippa who sent her *clerc et intime* to accompany her son and chronicle his exploits; or was Froissart, when he left England in the spring of 1366, still uncertain as to the precise aim of his journey? Be that as it may, he in any case travelled under the protection of his benefactress, for, on the 6th March, the date of his journey to Brussels, the treasurer of Duke Wenceslas of Brabant notes down in his accounts the gift of certain gold pieces made by his master, *uni Fritsardo, qui est cum Regina Angliæ.* Towards the new year it is at Bordeaux that we find our chronicler describing to us the English Court of the Black Prince, its splendour and his pride; a splendour maintained by the ransoms of Poitiers; a tyrannical pride, humiliating to the gentlemen of Gascony, and possibly the primary cause of the reversion of Aquitaine to France.

The 6th of January 1367, towards ten o'clock in the morning, Froissart was seated at table in the palace of the Prince of Wales when the Maréchal d'Aquitaine entered abruptly, and said :—

"Froissart, write and put in memory that as now my lady princess is brought abed with a fair son on this twelfth day, that is the day of the three kings. And he is son of a king; for his father is King of Galicia, he which don Pedro hath given him, and he goes

THE RECEPTION OF THE BLACK PRINCE AT BORDEAUX.

to conquer the said realm . . . . and thus the child also shall be king."

The good marshal said nothing of the crown of England, for three vigorous lives stood between the new-born child and that inheritance. Nevertheless, before long, it was he who was to wear that heavy and fatal crown; and the young historiographer who recorded in writing the birth of the child was to weep over the terrible end of the last of the Plantagenets, Richard II.

CHAPTER V.

DEATH OF QUEEN PHILIPPA.

TOWARDS the middle of February 1367, the Prince of Wales left Aquitaine at the head of his army. He took Froissart with him as one of the members of his suite; but they had advanced no further than the town of Dax when the Prince changed his mind, and, for some reason that Froissart does not reveal to us, sent the poet back to England with a message to the Queen. Had he that mistrust of war correspondents so commonly felt by military men? Or was Froissart charged with a confidential mission not less important than that which he found himself obliged to quit so abruptly? If for the moment the change was a matter of disappointment to the *ditteur* on the eve of his first campaign, he doubtless found consolation in the opportunity it gave him to see his benefactress once more. It was to be for the last time.

Froissart made only a brief stay in London. A marriage had been arranged between the Duke of Clarence, son of the King of England, and Yolande Visconti, daughter of the thrice-rich tyrant of Milan. In the spring of the year 1368, the royal bridegroom left England, taking with

him as his suite four hundred and fifty-seven persons, and nearly thirteen hundred horses. In this train was Froissart, with Edward, Lord Despencer. On all that concerns this sumptuous progress the chronicler is, unfortunately, strangely silent. He who so greatly loves to expatiate on the fêtes of princes, tells us nothing of Paris, where such magnificent entertainments were given to the son of Edward III., nor of Milan, nor of the bride, nor of the little French Princess Isabelle, with her young life so early stranded in that splendid den of brigands. All this journey, in truth, was, as it were, tainted for him with mournful memories. Scarcely three months after these brilliant wedding festivities, the bridegroom died at Asti near Milan, "strangely enough," Froissart tells us. The history of the Visconti was too well known for the word poison not to be pronounced; and the impetuous Despencer, in revenge for the death of his friend, made war on the Visconti, "and harried them and overthrew them to their undoing" (*les haria et les rua jus*), until Monseigneur of Savoy made peace between them.

Froissart, abandoning this field of battle, passed by Bologna and Ferrara, and continued his journey as far as Rome. Of all this he tells us nothing, except that he travelled with a certain ease, and in the style of a man of distinction—

"En arroi de suffisant homme,"

mounted on a mare, and with a pack-horse for the baggage. His imagination, fresh, quick and lively, but never profound, received from the spectacle of forsaken Rome

no such poetic impression of fatality as that which Petrarch has quickened with the breath of life for all succeeding generations. Those Christian temples, abandoned by the Popes, and falling in ruins around the dismantled altars of the antique gods; those immense relics of a superhuman race, baths and theatres constructed for pagan delights, and useless henceforward in a narrow and shrunken world; those kings from beyond the sea, wandering like phantoms among the ruins—Peter of Cyprus, John Palœologus—what indeed could all these have to say to the sprightly poet of gentle knights and "frisk" ladies, to the chronicler of the fêtes and tournaments of Eltham or of Valenciennes?

It was there, in that alien and sinister land, that land which had so "strangely" carried off his young master, that the "clerk and intimate friend" of Queen Philippa was to receive the greatest blow of his life. "It was," he tells us, "a heavy case and a common, howbeit it was right piteous for the king, his children, and all his realm; for the good Queen of England, that so many good deeds had done in her time, and so many knights succoured, and ladies and damosels comforted, and had so largely departed of her goods to her people, and naturally loved always the nation of Hainault, the country whereas she was born, she fell sick in the Castle of Windsor. . . . and anon she yielded up the spirit, the which I believe surely the holy angels received with great joy up to heaven, for in all her life she did neither in thought nor deed thing whereby to lose her soul."

Queen Philippa died on the 15th August 1369. Many

times does Froissart recur to the greatness of his loss. "She made me and created me,"

"Elle me fit et créa,"

he tells us.

"J'en suis bien tenu de prier
Et de ses largesses écrier."

And again:

"She was the most gracious queen, the most liberal and the most courteous that reigned in all her time." "Dead is that kind lady, and buried. . . . Alas! what news for all her friends!"

"Morte est-elle et ensevelie
La bonne dame
Qui, en tout honneur, sans blâme
Usa sa vie. . . .
Las! quelle nouvelle
Pour tous ses amis!"

To Froissart himself, it meant ruin; in losing the Queen of England, he lost everything. After five years of the royal life of courts, himself the protégé of princes, and with a name already almost famous, he suddenly found himself cast down, without bread, or the means of gaining bread. Froissart did not yet sign himself "priest"; he was only "a certain Froissart, *ditteur*," and the "dit" was merely a rough draft, formless and unfinished. How was he now to complete it? He had no longer any protector. Clarence was dead at Asti, Philip at Windsor; the Prince of Wales was preoccupied with his Spanish affairs, more preoccupied still with his failing health, undermined

already by sword strokes, and sunstrokes, and the strokes of love. At the Court of England all was in strong reaction against Queen Philippa and her little court of Hainuyers; Edward III. was falling into the ignoble and mercenary hands of Alice Perrers; Edward Despencer was dead. Sadly Froissart began to journey back to his own country, without too well knowing what he should do when he arrived there. And yet, on her native soil of Hainault, the spirit of Queen Philippa was still powerful to aid; dead and buried, she would yet know how to protect to the end the young writer whom she had "created." By her brother-in-law, Robert of Namur; by her sister-in-law, Jeanne of Brabant; by her cousin, Guy de Blois, and her nephew, the Duke Aubert, she would be able to send him in due season help and succour and support.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RETURN TO VALENCIENNES.

THERE was, however, a difficult time to be lived through first. We hardly know what became of our chronicler in the early months after his return to Hainault. M. Paulin Paris tells us, without a shadow of hesitation, that Froissart became a fashioner of breeches (*hauts-de-chausses*); the Baron Kervyn, less unmerciful, represents him as making no mean living in his business as stockbroker. Both support their theory by the fact that Froissart caused his name to be inscribed in the corporation of the *couletiers*, one of the four great guilds of Valenciennes. Like the Republics of Italy, the great towns of the north found matter for pride in their commerce; and, as M. Paulin Paris reminds us, the name of Dante is inscribed in the register of the Apothecaries of Florence. The fact, however, ought perhaps to have set him on guard against his own conclusions, since it would certainly be an error to suppose the great Florentine to have been an apothecary —as scholars of the future would undoubtedly err in supposing Lord Salisbury to be a fishmonger, or the Prince of Wales a tailor, because they happen to belong severally to the ancient and powerful guilds of the

Merchant-Tailors and the Fishmongers of London. One might then believe that it was after this altogether honorary fashion that Froissart belonged to the corporation of the *couletiers,* were it not for a passage in his *Joli Buisson de Jeunesse*—a passage which, however conclusive against any hypothesis of works of manual labour executed by our author, seems to establish clearly that Froissart, although his delicate clerk's fingers never handled a tailor's shears, was, nevertheless, at one time engaged in commerce. "I took up trading" (*Je me suis mis dans la marchandise*) he tells us in so many words. But he says nothing about *hauts-de-chausses.*

"What I repent of," he adds, "is that I then took up to my cost a thing of which I was ashamed. It was a great fall, for science is worth more than money. I know," Froissart continues, "that this is not the opinion of most people, who do not understand that favours received are ennobling. There are those even, who count to me for shame precisely that which has made me what I am, and what I am worth. Ahi! ahi! how could I do this thing? And yet I thought to do well in changing my business, and against my will I set myself to trading, for which I am as much cut out as to take part in a battle. . . . Alas! my science has quite lost her head in this world of bailiffs, of receivers, of rich and powerful men of business, who have built great houses for themselves, where they sleep and take their repose, and amass immense fortunes for their children and their heirs. Hardly do the nobles venture to ask of them that of which they are in want, for these traders prosper in their affairs. Never is merchant or

couletier sent away with a denial, and the third part of the fortune of the nobles passes into their hands. Very little remains then for nobles to make gifts to poets."

It is probable that this poem, written in 1373, when Froissart was already curé of Lestinnes, and provided with a small income that set him at his ease, refers to the days of trial that followed his return to Valenciennes in 1369. One seems to see that he felt not a little crestfallen in returning to his country, after so long an absence, without either fortune or protector. No doubt his former friends —perhaps his relations—merchants or *couletiers*, well-to-do burgesses of Valenciennes, and living with a certain splendour in their great houses, treated the poor poet a little too condescendingly. They found matter for jesting possibly in his histories of kings and queens, as contrasted with his empty pockets; it would not occur to them that "favours ennoble." The sort of position filled so contentedly by the former clerk and "familier" of Queen Philippa would be displeasing to their proud Flemish independence. The historiographer of the Palace of Westminster would be for them simply a dismissed servant, an actor without an engagement, "a certain Froissart, *ditteur*, who belongs to the Queen of England."

> "Ainçois me comptoient pour honte
> Ce qui m'a fait et dont je vail."

Doubtless they thought they were doing a good work in making a cloth-merchant out of an impecunious poet; and the poet himself, impressionable like all poets, brought again under the influence of his native environ-

ment, utterly discouraged by the loss of his royal mistress and the sudden downfall of his hopes, very sensible, too, to the prestige given by wealth, probably made no objection. Then, as gradually he began to awaken to life once more, the profound want of harmony between his temperament and the situation in which he found himself, must have made itself felt. Certainly, he can have been but an indifferent cloth-merchant, with his head in the clouds, his eyes full of dreams, and tales of chivalry for ever on his lips. As poverty, too, ceased to press him so closely, his admiration for the rather vulgar luxury of a citizen interior in Valenciennes must by degrees have lessened. One can imagine how his friends must have wearied him, how exasperating he must have found their ideas; he, in whom everything aspired towards a vanished world. The world of chivalry, the poetic, the noble, the royal world of his youth, had it disappeared for ever? Was he to grow old at Valenciennes; never be anything more than a prosperous draper, with "the gift of Nature" for ever lost to him? Then Froissart's thoughts turned to his patrons of former times; to the royal House of England, to the Sire de Coucy, Gautier de Manny, the King of Scotland, "the great Lord Espensier," the good Louis of Bourbon, the Dauphin of Auvergne, the three sons of Blois, the Duke Aubert, the Count of Savoy, the King of Cyprus, the Duke Wenceslas of Brabant. A crowd of princes, knights, and nobles take his memory by storm, as it were, and fill his verses with the heroic clash of their names. They had loved and protected

the young writer of former days; what would they say to this cloth-merchant in the throes of poetry? Suddenly a complete change takes place in the mind of the poet; with his whole soul he returns to those beloved dreams of other years. The Ideal, so thoughtlessly renounced, appears to him again in all its august beauty; and he feels shame, not at being a penniless rhymer, living at the expense of his rich relations, but of being a cloth-merchant, inscribed in the great book of the *couletiers*. For a handful of silver he has sold his dream; in dread of his little world he has abjured his ideal. Doubtless for him also, at that moment, the cock of repentance must have crowed—

"... Ahi, ahi.
Et comment le poois-jou faire? ...
J'ai repris à mon dépens
Ce de quoi je me hontioie.
Dont grandement m'abestioie;
Moult me repens,"

and the painful tears of remorse—almost the tears of a St Peter—may have dimmed for an instant with their cruel moisture the quick and brilliant eyes of the poet.

CHAPTER VII.

FROISSART FINISHES THE FIRST BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES.

WITH Wenceslas of Brabant, "Prince Consort" of the Duchess of Brabant, Froissart was already acquainted; for it was Wenceslas who had come to his aid when, as "homme souffisant" and protégé of the Queen of England, he had gone to the Court of Aquitaine. In 1370 we find the poet at Brussels, forming part of the household of the Duke; and, in the month of June, the Duchess paid, it is recorded, the sum of sixteen francs "*uni Frissardo, de uno novo libro gallico.*" One would like to think that this "new French book" was the first book of the Chronicles of which, about this time, Froissart was finishing the first redaction; but it was the poet in Froissart that the charming Prince Wenceslas and his good Duchess more especially loved. They could never have enough of pastorals, of ballads, of rhymed romances; and the Duke liked to collaborate in these fancies of an hour. It was not under the auspices of gay patrons such as these that Froissart was to finish the serious business of his history.

It was perhaps at Brussels, in 1370, that Froissart first met Robert of Namur. This nephew of Queen Philippa,

BATTLE OF CRESSY.

this champion of the English, was a brave and chivalrous gentleman, a crusader in Prussia, a crusader in Palestine, and as brilliant in a tournament as he was formidable in front of a besieged castle. A man like this was capable of understanding the great value of those roughly-drafted chapters, those brilliantly sketched notes which Froissart kept in his portfolio. It was he, without doubt, who furnished the chronicler with documents for his history of the siege of Calais in 1346, as well as for the expedition of Tournehem in 1369; for these exploits could not be spoken of without speaking also of Messire Robert of Namur. In talking over sieges and battles with this valiant captain of Edward III., the glorious past must have lived again for Froissart. All those enthusiasms to which Messire Robert was moved by his devotion to chivalry and his strong predilection for England, were shared by the chronicler; Froissart had once more found a patron; and in the prologue to the oldest manuscripts that are preserved to us of the first book of the Chronicles we read: "This book has been enterprised at the instance and request of a dear lord and master of mine, Robert of Namur, Lord of Beaufort, to whom entirely I owe love and obeisance. And God grant me to do that thing that may be to his pleasure."

The book was calculated to please everyone—on the side of the English. The vigour, the picturesqueness of its narratives are unrivalled, and there is nothing surprising in the immense success of this first work of Froissart's youth. Whilst of the third redaction one manuscript only remains to us, and only two of the second,

we still possess from thirty to forty manuscripts of the original redaction of the first book of the Chronicles. These manuscripts do not all end at the same point. Some bring the history to a close at the siege of Bourdeilles in 1369; others at the taking of Roche-sur-Yon; others again at the surrender of La Rochelle in 1372. The author, pursued by orders, brought each copy down to the date of delivery, and the Chronicle became almost a running review of events. The success was complete, the glory immediate; a certain Froissart, *ditteur*, was at last become a writer of celebrity.

Little time, however, was given him to rest upon his laurels; the wars began again, and the Chronicle must be resumed. It was, alas! between Froissart's patrons that the war broke out. On the 22nd April 1371, at the battle of Bastweiler, Duke Wenceslas was captured by the troops of the Duke of Juliers. Wenceslas attributed this unexpected reverse to the ill-will of Robert of Namur, who, on that day, commanded the reserves of the army of Brabant; and it was, in fact, the delay of the troops of Namur that turned the chances of the battle to the advantage of the enemy. In a *pastourelle*, composed about this time, Froissart expresses the astonishment he feels at the unforeseen defeat of a battalion of excellent troopers, commanded by so famous a captain as the "damoisel de Namur"—a courteous expression of surprise, not without a double meaning sufficiently unfriendly to Messire Robert. The handsome Wenceslas, meanwhile, had to pass a long year in prison, and Froissart did his best to console him, by composing an appropriate *chante-fable*—

La Prison Amoureuse—in which, by means of a transparent allegory, he condemns the part played at Bastweiler by his former patron. Froissart, it is evident, has espoused the quarrel of Duke Wenceslas. We can understand, then, why the name of Robert of Namur has disappeared from the revised manuscripts of the Prologue to the Chronicles, and why, in the *Joli Buisson de Jeunesse*, the poet, in the long and Homeric list of his lords and patrons, omits all mention of him for whom he had compiled the first book of his great work.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PATRONS.

THE memory of Queen Philippa of England still hovered over her native country; and thanks to her it was, and to that memory, that Froissart had been able to present himself at the Court of Brabant. The Duchess Jeanne, a good and amiable princess, ever ready to help others, and throughout her life a devoted protectress to the chronicler, was sister-in-law to Queen Philippa, whose brother, William IV. of Hainault, had been the Duchess Jeanne's first husband. She had never had any children, and after the death of William IV. the crown of Hainault passed to his nephew, William of Bavaria, son of the elder sister of Philippa. When Froissart returned to his own country, Count William, a desperate, raving madman, had already been confined for fifteen years within the walls of his castle of le Quesnoy. "Tall, young, strong, dark, and lively," he was to live there, in all, nearly thirty years, "and most of the time both hands and feet had to be tied," Jean-le-Bel tells us. It is not known whether his wife, a Lancastrian princess, was among Froissart's protectors; but his younger brother, Duke Aubert of Bavaria, was one of the first, as he was also the last, of the chronicler's patrons.

"Le duc Aubert premièrement
M'a à toute heure liement
Recueilli,"

writes Froissart in 1373. Regent of Holland, Regent of Zealand, Regent of Hainault, Aubert spent most of his time in the north, far from the lugubrious Quesnoy, where his brother for ever wrestled with phantoms. The eldest son of Aubert, young William of Ostrevant, was Governor of Hainault, and for this youthful knight Froissart seems to have had a genuine affection.

The Duke and Duchess of Brabant and Duke Aubert of Bavaria were not alone in their patronage of the chronicler. Immediately on his return to his native country, towards the end of the year 1369, Froissart had gone to the castle of Beaumont to pay homage to Messire Guy de Châtillon, third son of the Count of Blois, and styled indifferently Guy de Châtillon or Guy de Blois. It was in London, in 1362, that Froissart had first met this young man, who was at once cousin to Queen Philippa of England, to Duke Aubert, and to the Duke of Juliers, grandson of the illustrious Jean de Beaumont, and distantly related to Duke Wenceslas of Luxemburg. The old Château of Beaumont in Hainault, in which were still preserved the valuable Chronicles of the Seigneur de Beaumont, was the favourite residence of Messire Guy; but he was able to be there but little, a great love of martial adventure calling him elsewhere. Messire Guy was *preux* by right of birth as well as by temperament; on his mother's side he belonged to the house of Hainault; his father was of the quasi-

royal race of the Châtillon, and through the Châtillon again, Guy found himself nephew of that Charles de Blois, Duke of Brittany, who, later on, was to be enrolled among the saints of the Church. Messire Guy was young, brave, and of noble birth; he had fought at Poitiers; he had known both fortune and misfortune; he could not fail to interest our chronicler. One cause only for reproach could be found against him in the past; a prisoner in London, after Poitiers, he had, in order to procure his ransom, sold his inheritance, the *comté* of Blois. The fault was grave, for on this question of the sale of an inheritance, the Middle Ages had ideas that were biblical in their inflexible severity: it was held inadmissible to pay such a price for a mess of pottage, even though the pottage should be served in a dish of gold.

In 1372 the eldest of the Châtillon died in early manhood, and Guy, the youngest, received as his share of the inheritance the lordship of Chimay, the lordship of Beaumont, and several other rich estates in Hainault, Holland, and Zealand. Enriched by this fortune, Messire Guy could henceforward abandon himself to all those liberal impulses dictated by a generous heart and a lavish disposition. As it happened, it was at the moment that Froissart was giving to the world the first chapters of the Chronicles that Messire Guy returned from the campaign of Guyenne to take possession of his inheritance. He was betrothed to the niece of Robert of Namur: in the suite of this prince he once more met with Froissart, happy and celebrated, and lost no time in becoming a warm admirer of the chronicler's talent. On the 19th September

The Battle of Poictiers.

1373 Froissart was established in the cure of Lestinnes-les-Monts, the presentation to which belonged to Messire Guy, who must have exercised his rights in favour of the chronicler almost immediately after his own return to Hainault. Froissart, who in the first manuscripts of the Chronicles does not yet take the title of priest, will henceforward sign himself "sire Jean Froissart, curé de Lestinnes-les-Monts." The *Buisson de Jeunesse* bears witness to his gratitude to his benefactor, when, after naming the three lords of Blois, he describes in particular his intimacy with Guy, and his obligations to him—

"Mes seigneurs de Blois
Loys, Jehan et Gui ; des trois
Moult accointé à un temps fui ;
Et especialment de Gui
Et encor le suis tous les jours
Car près de lui gît mon séjour ;
C'est le bon sire de Beaumont
Qui m'ammoneste et me semont,
. . . Car, vrai, le vois-je souvent."

The young lord of Beaumont—younger than Froissart by some years—hot, fiery, passionate, quick to admonish and to reprove, must, in fact, have delivered more than one lecture to the curé of Lestinnes on the subject of his glaring predilection for the English ; for, on this subject, he would certainly be of the same mind as the Duke of Anjou, who, in the year 1381, caused fifty-six folios of the Chronicles of Froissart, destined for England, to be seized and confiscated. The father and grandfather of Messire Guy had fought for France at Crécy ; the young

man himself had broken more than one sword both at Poitiers and in Guyenne; and the ransom that cost him Soissons had left a long and bitter rancour in his heart. When Froissart went to Beaumont to drink the good wine and eat the grand dinners of the castle, he found himself in a society that was essentially French. Up to that time, it was on the testimony of those who had fought for the English cause that he had almost exclusively relied. At Beaumont, the French knights in their turn were to relate to him the story of the battles of Crécy and Poitiers. Thus, whilst distance and change of fortune began to dim his memories of England, the poet's ear was filled day by day with praises of the conquered country. Already, indeed, France, with its marvellous powers of revival, was beginning to rise from its ashes, whilst England, so lately triumphant, was wrapping itself in a mist of sadness and mourning. The wind had changed—and Froissart, since the days of his childhood, had forgotten the art of making a feather fly against the wind.

It is to Guy de Blois that we owe the last three books of the history. "Count Guy of Blois," Froissart tells us, "made me make the noble history." It was doubtless to please his new patron that Froissart, whilst continuing his work as a whole, set himself also to remodel the commencement; in 1376 we find him already harnessed, as it were, to a second redaction of the first book. It is interesting to see what that splendid panegyric of England becomes in the hands of the curé of Lestinnes. The point of view has changed altogether. The first

version, written for one of the most valiant captains of Edward III., was inspired throughout by the histories heard from the English knights; this one, dedicated to a Frenchman taken prisoner at Poitiers, faithfully reflects the account given by the French combatants, whom the author had met at Beaumont or at Brussels. Fascinated by the desire to set down a fresh aspect of the truth, Froissart was also, it is clear, no less urged by the instinctive wish to make himself agreeable to his neighbour.

The second redaction of the first book of the Chronicles has never had, nor deserves to have, the reputation of the original version. There remain to us two copies only, dating from the fifteenth century, transcribed probably from a manuscript made for Guy de Châtillon. Messire Guy was lord of Chimay; the two copies which exist came both from the castle of Chimay, and bear the arms of a Count of Chimay of the fifteenth century. This little fact proves to us how restricted was the demand for the second redaction, an altogether inferior work, though it contains some gems, such as the *saynète* of the game of chess between the enamoured king, Edward III., and the Countess of Salisbury. Too often, indeed, in this work, done at a moment when he was still but little of a Frenchman at heart, Froissart allows us to perceive the weariness he felt in accomplishing a task done to order.

The book, well written and good in tone, might please its patron; but it is not surprising that the public continued to read the first redaction. Froissart's spirit always reflected with so much faithfulness his immediate

environment that it was impossible for him to recover the splendid impulse of his first effort, written in the midst of courts and camps. Here we no longer find that brilliant colouring, vivid as the tints of some illuminated missal; all is in neutral grey, decent, discreet, peaceable, a little tame. The work resembles those long days of tranquil comfort that flowed peacefully onwards in the presbytery of Lestinnes.

CHAPTER IX.

WENCESLAS, DUKE OF BRABANT.

We have already seen that among Froissart's neighbours at Lestinnes he numbered not only the Lord of Beaumont, but the Duke and Duchess of Brabant, who owned a castle in the adjacent country. It is certain that in this brilliant court, wholly dominated by the French spirit, Froissart would find nothing to counteract the influence of Guy de Blois; for was not Wenceslas the son of that blind and good King of Bohemia, who came to die for France at Crécy? It was, however, not as chronicler but as poet that Froissart found especial favour with Wenceslas.

"The Duke Wenceslas," Froissart tells us, "was liberal, sweet, courteous, amiable, and noble in arms, and was likely to have achieved many things had he lived long. . . . In his time he did much good. The schism that was in the Church greatly displeased him, and that he showed me oftentimes, for I was privy of his acquaintance. Now, in that in my days I travelled a great part of the world, two hundred great princes I knew, but none more humble, nor debonair, nor treatable than they were (that was this noble prince one, and the other, my good master

the Lord Guy of Blois, who commanded me to make this history); these were the two princes in my day who for humility, largesse, and bounty, without any malice, were the most to be praised; for they lived liberally of their own, without oppressing their people, or raising up of any evil customs in their lands."

The years spent by Froissart at Lestinnes between his two noble patrons were undoubtedly the happiest of his life. Money anxieties no longer pressed upon him; he lived at ease and in comfort in his presbytery on the revenue brought to him by his benefice, and by the liberal gifts of the two lords. Whilst Count Guy commands the writing of the Chronicles, Froissart, in collaboration with the brilliant Wenceslas, is composing that long romance in verse—*Méliador*—so much admired by the *beau monde* of the period. All this was well paid for; sometimes in money, sometimes in measures of corn. Froissart lived at his ease. During the ten years of his residence at Lestinnes, he spent, he tells us, more than 500 livres at the wine taverns; and when he had had enough of tavern society, he had only to saddle his horse, and go and dine at Beaumont, or else at the castle of the Duke of Brabant, if the Duke happened to be residing there. More than once, too, the curé of Lestinnes visited that magnificent Court of Brussels, where fête endlessly succeeded fête, and each so splendid that Maître Eustache Deschamps himself—Maître Eustache, so furious with Flanders, its heavy rains, its mud, its restless and insolent people, its eternal mustard-sauce—forgets all his grievances in his regret for the beautiful

capital of Brabant—"Brussels, where the baths are so charming." For that matter however, without quitting his own village, the good chronicler could provide himself with suitable society. He constantly saw the provost of Binche; and a certain Henri Froissart, who bought a house at Lestinnes in 1379, was, one may imagine, a relation of the curé become the great man of the family.

Taking them, then, as a whole, the ten years that followed Froissart's installation in his first cure were the most equable, the most peaceful of his life. They were also the least brilliant for his reputation. The verses that he wrote for Duke Wenceslas, the prose that he re-wrote for the Count of Blois, have no longer the grandeur and the poetry of his first redaction of the Chronicles, as they have not yet the movement, the marvellous picturesqueness and truth to nature, that his work was to show some years later. His residence at Lestinnes was a season of repose between his wandering youth and his active old age.

On the 7th December 1383 died Wenceslas, Duke of Luxemburg and Duke of Brabant by his marriage. Hardly five months previously, he had paid Froissart more than twelve livres for a manuscript—that romance of *Méliador*, of which he composed the lyric portion, whilst the curé of Lestinnes carried on the narrative he had not yet read. His death not only brought to Froissart the loss of a generous patron, but that of the protector for whom amongst all his protectors since the death of the Queen of England he felt the most affectionate devotion. And, indeed, the songs in *Méliador*, recently brought to

light again by M. Longnon, seem to emanate from a good and loyal soul, tender and chrivalrous. Froissart says nothing of the cruel death that put an end to a life wholly passed in making war and in making verses. With a reticence more touching than any outburst of grief, he tells us simply: "It pleased God to end the days of the Duke of Brabant. . . . He died in the flower of his youth, for the which I, who have written and chronicled this history, too greatly pity him in that he had not longer life, as much as eighty years or more. . . ." It pleased God to end the days of the Duke of Brabant—Cornel van Zantfliet, who loved him less, finds courage to tell us the truth: Duke Wenceslas died of leprosy.

Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove, so warm a friend of Froissart in general, nevertheless regrets that no mention of this hideous end is to be found in the Chronicles. On the contrary, with an abrupt and touching change of theme, the curé of Lestinnes is lavish in his praises of the Wenceslas of former days, "so noble, gentle, gay, wise, quick at arms, liberal, affable, courteous, and amiable." I own that, for my part, I find in all this a most poignant proof of the affection felt by Froissart for the Duke of Brabant, that poor mirror of chivalry suddenly shattered after so tragic a fashion. To Cornel van Zantfliet it may be left to moralise on the picture presented by Duke Wenceslas, still young, and only the other day still so handsome, allowing the nobles, the citizens, the country people, to penetrate to his chamber, and contemplate his body ravaged by leprosy. How

could Froissart have described to us that repulsive form, that broken voice, and those words of farewell: "May this spectacle teach you humility, since God has permitted that my body, once so robust and fair, should be stricken thus to lower my pride"? The familiar friend of the handsome Duke Wenceslas would surely feel his hand tremble too much to write such words as these.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHAPLAIN OF THE COUNT OF BLOIS.

SOME months before the death of Duke Wenceslas, the good sire de Beaumont lost the last of his brothers. Guy de Blois succeeded in consequence to the entire inheritance of the Châtillon; the estates in Holland and in Zealand, the estates in Hainault and in Picardy, as well as the rich county of Blois, with its appertaining castles and manors. Count of Blois and Count of Dunois, Messire Guy could no longer hide himself in a corner of Hainault. His castle on the Loire claimed him; and at the moment of setting out, he attached to his person the curé of Lestinnes, offering him one of the canonries of Chimay in exchange for his cure. It was promotion for the chronicler; and, moreover, as private chaplain to the Count of Blois, the canon of Chimay would find himself once more in the active current of his time; he escaped from the plebeian tranquillity that would henceforth reign in the parish of Lestinnes, deprived of the society of the sire de Beaumont and of the Duke of Brabant. In 1384 he decided to follow his patron to the banks of the Loire; but, some months later, he returned to Hainault with Messire Guy, who was fighting in

Flanders for the King of France. We have no knowledge as to whether Froissart spent the summer in the castle of Beaumont, where the Countess was living, and from whence, seriously ill and in high fever, Guy de Blois had himself carried in a litter to the field of battle; or whether, as might be inferred from the length of his descriptions, the chronicler followed his valiant lord to the siege of Beaubourg. When the brief campaign was over, the Count of Blois went to repose himself in the Blésois; but Froissart remained nearly a year in the north, to complete his notes on the troubles in Flanders.

From this winter of 1385, passed at Valenciennes, may be dated a more intimate connection with Duke Aubert of Bavaria. Through a happy chance, the castle of le Quesnoy, so often abandoned to its gloomy fate, was animated this winter with unaccustomed life. Duke Aubert quitted his favourite residence at The Hague, in order to inhabit le Quesnoy, together with the Duchess, his two younger daughters, and his son, a youth of twenty, about to marry Margaret of Burgundy. Le Quesnoy is only some fifteen miles from Valenciennes, and Froissart, one may be sure, assisted at the festivities of the ducal family. The marriage had been arranged by his good patroness, the Duchess of Brabant. An inveterate matchmaker, she prided herself on having brought about the union of the daughter of her nephew, Duke Aubert, with the son of her niece, the Duchess of Burgundy, whilst, moreover, the hand of the sister of the bridegroom was, at the same time, granted in marriage to the brother of the bride.

A half-nephew of Duke Aubert had come from Bavaria

to assist at this double marriage. One day, in talking over family affairs, he spoke of a niece of his, a young girl, thirteen years of age, not without charm, pretty, indeed, rather than otherwise. The old Duchess seemed to wake up: "Supposing we marry her to the King of France?" she said; and, in this way, an old woman's caprice brought into France Isabeau of Bavaria. Froissart was still at Valenciennes when the young girl arrived at le Quesnoy. She was a fresh little German, too simple and homebred to please the taste of France. Her aunt, the Duchess, dressed her in the fashion, taught her a few words of French, and initiated her in the ways of the world—even as Esther went through the discipline of the perfumed baths before she was brought into the presence of the king. When all was duly prepared, the young girl was taken on a pilgrimage to Amiens, where, as though by chance, she met the youthful king, Charles VI. The stratagem succeeded; the marriage took place a few days later, and Duke Aubert became uncle to the King of France.

Festivities hardly less splendid recalled Froissart to France towards the spring of the year 1386. Life was indeed carried on with great splendour at Blois, "as Count Guy well knew how to do." The only son of the Count and Countess, a child scarcely nine years of age, had just been married to the daughter of the Duke of Berry, uncle to the king. This almost royal alliance flattered the pride of the Châtillon; no trouble had been spared to bring it about, and the marriage contract secured to the bride of the weakly child a more than princely dowry on the revenues of Blois. It was imprudent, perhaps; but little

thought was given to that in the midst of the fêtes and "minstrellings" (*ménestrandies*) that welcomed to the banks of the Loire the young cousin of the King of France.

The castle of Blois was one of the finest in the kingdom. Somewhat against its master's will, it rapidly became a patriotic centre, where the Duke of Burgundy and the Duke of Berry prepared the reconciliation of the Duke of Brittany with France. These intrigues might please the Countess, an ambitious woman, fond of power, and enchanted to play a part in politics; but Count Guy saw with no goodwill the welcome prepared at Blois for Montfort, for the Englishman, the hereditary enemy of all his race. For some time past a slow malady had been undermining the powers of Guy de Blois; too weak, with his enfeebled health, openly to oppose the wishes of his wife and the two royal dukes, he saw with terror the hour approaching when he would be compelled to receive the execrated usurper under his own roof. At the last moment he flung himself upon his horse and rode without stopping to take refuge in his old fortress of Château-Renaud, at the other end of the Blésois. "For Count Guy made no great account of the coming of the Duke of Brittany," the chronicler tells us. A singular master of the house, truly!

In the midst of these fêtes and "reveaux" at Blois, the canon of Chimay finished his second book. But in going over it for the last time, he perceived that the work was not satisfactory; the events in Flanders had absorbed the attention of the chronicler; too

little had been said of the wars in the south. What did he know of the great feats of arms that were taking place in Toulousain, in Castille, and in Portugal? How was he to write at Blois of what was going on in Gascony? How was he "to know the truth of deeds done in far countries"? Froissart found one answer only to this question that haunted him; he must make the journey to Gascony, and on the spot inquire of living witnesses concerning the great deeds recently accomplished there. This solution had in it nothing that was displeasing to the adventurous chronicler: "As yet, I thank God, I have understanding and remembrance of all things past, and my wit quick and sharp enough to conceive all things showed unto me touching my principal matter, and my body as yet able to endure and to suffer pain." Why then moulder in a turret of Blois, when yonder, among the mountains of the south, history throbs and moves, all ardent and alive?

Froissart had no difficulty in obtaining from Count Guy permission to take a journey that would be of such essential service to the Chronicle, dear to the patron as to the writer. At the Court of Orthez, in Béarn, knights of all nations were to be met with, for the sovereign of the little states of Foix and Béarn had, alone in Europe at that moment, preserved an absolute impartiality in the midst of the wars between French and English, between the partisans of Pedro the Cruel, and the partisans of the Transtamare. At his hospitable table the knights of the Duke of Anjou drank with

the Gascon captains in the pay of England; the soldiers of the two Spanish pretenders kept company together, without fighting together; nay, at the Christmas festivities, two Clementine bishops even had been seen dining peaceably side by side with Their Urbanist Eminences. It was the spot of all others for gaining information in abundance about all sorts of countries and people of every degree; and thither the canon of Chimay resolved to direct his steps. In the autumn then, of the year 1388, he quitted the castle of Blois, furnished with letters of recommendation from his lord and master, to the high and mighty Prince Gaston Phœbus, Count of Foix, and sovereign Viscount of Béarn; to whom also the historian took as a present four fine hounds—Tristan, Hector, Roland, and Brun.

CHAPTER XI.

THE JOURNEY TO BEARN.

AMONG all the episodes in that Odyssey of chivalry, known as Froissart's Chronicles, there is none more vivid, more marvellously picturesque, or touched by a surer hand into clearer relief, than this episode of the journey to Béarn. His fifty years notwithstanding, our canon, with his four hounds in leash and a new romance in his bag, sets out, his head in the air and with a light heart, in quest of adventure. His journey makes him young again; gay and confident, he goes on his way, certain of bringing to a successful termination the great work of his life. The somewhat heavy historian of the second book has given place to the artist full of life and spirit, ready to seek his inspiration on the high road, in inns, and from chance companions.

He pauses however at Pamiers, partly in the hope of falling in with some company on his journey, partly because the "country was delectable," but chiefly in the desire to get information that may be useful to him. On the third day, good fortune sends in his way one of the best friends of the Count of Foix, Messire Espaing de Lyon, "a valiant and an expert man of arms . . .

about the age of fifty years." Sir Espaing was a true Gascon, who, having said his morning orisons, liked to spend the remainder of the day in "conversing (*à jangler*) and in demanding of tidings." So indefatigable a talker was the very companion for our chronicler; Messire Espaing had seen everything, had heard everything, and desired nothing better than the occasion to relate everything he knew. During the eight days spent on the road between Pamiers and Orthez, not a stronghold, not a shattered end of wall, but suggests to him some appropriate history. Froissart pauses for a moment to look well at one fortress or the other, and that is all the criticism he brings to bear upon the history told in connection with it; for this past master in the art of reporting knows nothing of the science of the Ecole des Chartes. He repeats for the souls of the dead "a Paternoster, an Ave Maria, a De Profundis and Fidelium" (for, after all, one is a canon); and in the evening, at the inn, "as soon," he tells us, "as we were descended at our lodging, whether it were in the evening or in the morning, I wrote over all the words of Messire Espaing de Lyon, the better thereby to have them in remembrance, for writing is the best remembrance that may be." This was not perhaps, a very rigorous system for preserving the exact truth; but these histories, set down still warm, so to speak, from the lips that uttered them, have preserved a quite incomparable life and colour and brilliancy. . . . "Have you in your chronicle the *scrimmish* of such a squire?" asks Messire Espaing; and the brave history unfolds itself in ample detail until the hour for supper or for

bed arrives, and "the knight ceased of his talking." "But I remembered well where we left," says Froissart, "against the next day. . . . " When everything has been told, he turns to his interlocutor, and thanks him with a charming naïveté, full of sincere emotion. "'Ah, Saint Mary, sir,' quoth I to the knight, 'how your words be to me right agreeable; for it hath done me great pleasure all that ever ye have showed me, which shall not be lost, for it shall be put in remembrance and chronicled in the history I have enterprised, if God will send me grace to return to the county of Hainault and the city of Valenciennes whereas I was born.'"

In approaching Orthez, Froissart tries to learn as much as possible concerning the lord of the place, Gaston Phœbus, the celebrated Count of Foix. Messire Espaing allows it to be understood that he is a strange and much-dreaded knight, and in speaking of him takes a mysterious tone, full of reticences and secret meanings, that only inflame Froissart's curiosity the more. He is a lord much given to imagining (*c'est un siegneur moult imaginatif*), always ready to suspect evil and to punish it; sometimes even he punishes what is not evil but good. Thus, one of his near cousins, a young and valiant knight, having refused to betray his master for the benefit of the Count of Foix, the Count killed him with his own hand. "Ah, Saint Mary," cries the canon of Chimay, all scared, "was not this a great cruelty?" "Whatever it was," quoth the knight, "thus it was; for an he be angry, there is no pardon."

At other times, Messire Espaing has gayer histories

to relate, and Froissart faithfully records them all; since no detail can be held worthless that touches so great a lord. It is thus we learn, among other things, that the Count of Foix "loved no great fire on his hearth; howbeit he had wood enough thereabout." But one day, walking in his galleries "when there was a great frost, and very cold, he saw the fire so little, he said to the knights and squires about him: 'Sirs, this is but a small fire and the day so cold.'" Hardly had he spoken, when one of the lords of his court descends the twenty-four steps of the staircase, seizes in his arms an ass that was entering, laden with wood, returns to the gallery with his burthen, and casts it down upon the hearth, the ass's heels in the air! Froissart accepts this fable with the credulity of a child; and, indeed, who should be believed if not an eye-witness of the fact?

But although listening willingly to stories of this description, it is the history of the Count of Foix's domestic troubles that Froissart is, above all, anxious to hear. Messire Espaing tells just enough to excite the liveliest curiosity in the chronicler.

"Was ever the Count married?"

"Yea, truly, and is yet, but his wife is in Navarre, for the king there is her brother."

"Has he any children?"

"Yes, two sons that are bastards."

"Has he never had a legitimate child?"

"Yes, he had a fair son, who had the father's heart, and all the country loved him."

"Sir, what became of that son, an it may be known?"

Messire Espaing replies by a mournful silence only, and Froissart feels that some terrible history lies behind this disappearance of the Count's son. But what is it? He asks in vain; there is no answer. Within sight of the roofs of Morlaas he entreats Sir Espaing, for the love of God, to tell him the truth.

"Then the knight studied a little, and said: 'Sir, the manner of his death is too piteous; I will not speak thereof.'"

GASTON PHŒBUS COUNT DE FOIX.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COURT AT ORTHEZ.

On the 25th November, at sunset, the travellers arrived at Orthez. Messire Espaing alighted at his own house, and Sir John Froissart at the inn of the Moon, where he lodged at the expense of the Count of Foix, by whom, it would appear, his arrival was expected. During the evening, a messenger came to the inn to fetch the chronicler and conduct him to the castle, for the Count "was the lord of all the world that most desired to speak with strangers, and to hear tidings." It was already dark night, but it was the habit of the Count to rise at sunset and go to bed towards morning, and Froissart found him walking in his galleries. He was a man about fifty-nine years of age, we are told by Froissart, who flatters him a little in describing him—"I say I have in my time seen many knights, kings, princes and other, but I never saw none like him of personage, nor of so fair form, nor so well made. His visage fair, sanguine and smiling, his eyes clear and amorous, whereas he list to set his regard." His voice was wonderfully sweet, his carriage noble. He never wore a hat, and had beautiful dishevelled hair; his long hands were singularly white and well cared for. This handsome

prince gave cordial welcome to Froissart, telling him in good French how great was the esteem that he felt for an historian of such fame. "And said to me how the history that I had begun should hereafter be more praised than any other; and the reason, he said, why, was this, fair master; how that fifty year past there had been more marvellous deeds of arms done in the world than in three hundred years before that."

At the court of the Visconti or of the Este in Italy, Froissart must have met sundry other handsome tyrants, illustrious and lettered, subtle and formidable, cast in the same mould as Gaston Phœbus, Count of Foix; but probably they found no such courteous words to bestow on the stranger-secretary, for Froissart makes no profession of love for them; he shrinks, indeed, from the abyss of cruelty and egotism he discerns behind their courtly manners. But for his host at Orthez he has an absolute enthusiasm; he is never weary of singing his praises. "In everything he was so perfect that he cannot be praised too much; he loved that ought to be loved, and hated that ought to be hated." This great lord led a royal and decadent existence. By sheer force of will, he turned night into day, not only for himself, but for all the court of Orthez, and for all parts of the town that depended on the castle. The Count held his audience, at the earliest, towards five o'clock in the afternoon; but a better moment still was towards one in the morning, for it was then that he conversed most willingly with those about him. Apart from those days, recurring with some frequency, that he passed in hunting, the Count never

rose until a good hour after *none* (three in the afternoon). How much of the sentiment of caste, of the consciousness of his own superiority, was implied in all this, it would be difficult for us to conceive. Doubtless the Count never perceived that he was deranging the normal life of an entire town to suit his own good pleasure.

On leaving his chamber then, about five o'clock, and entering the galleries of his castle, he found his court already assembled. This was the moment for the presentation of any stranger of note; and there were many such, for visitors came from afar to see this magnificent and hospitable court, the one oasis of peace in the midst of the wars and schisms of the end of the century. A little later on, the couriers were introduced, and it was noted, not without wonder, that before their arrival the Count was already acquainted with the news that they were bringing. These various receptions over, the Count rose, passed between the double line of lords, of stranger knights, of clerks and townspeople, and entered thehall, where he made in general a light repast of fowl; for the Count of Foix was a true Gascon; he loved talking better than eating, and had no need of wine as a stimulant. His repast ended, he returned to the galleries, a sort of covered loggia, constructed without the keep, above the great Hall, and forming an important part of the palaces of the fourteenth century; those of Orthez, especially wide and well-lighted, might compare favourably with the fine galleries still to be seen at Pierrefonds. It was there that the Count liked to walk to and fro, talking with those about him "very sweetly and lovingly," and pausing from

time to time in the embrasure of the large windows that looked out upon the courtyard of the keep. At eight o'clock in the evening he asked for wine, and retired again to his room until midnight. During these hours of respite, the courtiers could at last attend a little to their own affairs; they would go off briskly to the town, talking and "janglant" together.

Froissart, among others, would return to the hotel of the Moon, where he supped in company with the knights. Thanks to Messire Espaing de Lyon, he was acquainted more or less with every one. The Bastard of Mauléon, who was also lodging at the sign of the Moon, related to him the wars of Gascony; the English and Spaniards talked to him of Castille and Navarre; the knights of the province made a circle round the fire—"abiding for midnight that the Count should go to supper"—chatting among themselves of arms and news. "Sir John," they would demand, "have ye in your history anything of this matter that I speak of?" Or: "Sir John, are ye well informed of my life?" They asked nothing better, these brave and clamorous knights, than to be allowed to talk; and Froissart asked nothing better than to listen to and record their histories. When throats grew dry, wine was called for. One evening "it was brought and we drank. Then the Bascot[1] of Mauléon said to me: 'I have had yet other adventures, which I have not showed.'" In the midst of the narrative, the great bell of the castle sounded high and strong to summon all the people of Orthez who were

[1] Bastard.

bidden to the supper of the Count of Foix. "Then two squires made them ready, and lighted up torches, and so we went up to the castle; and so did all other knights and squires that were lodged in the town."

It was in the heart of winter. The *bise* blew harshly; the icy roads seemed more frozen than ever after the comfort and warmth of the big hall of the inn. But what of that? It was the common fate of courtiers in the fourteenth century, when the great lords chose to keep late hours, and there was not space in their castles to accommodate all the court. In vain the poets rebel against the doubtful beds of the taverns, and the nocturnal dangers of the roads. In vain does Eustache Deschamps execrate the nightly walk—

"L'aller de nuit, qui trop me fait dolent."

Rheumatisms must be conquered, since it was not possible for every one to lodge at the castle. But, at least, at other courts, the unlucky courtier, compelled to go out at the hour of midnight, could return to his own home; whereas, at Orthez, the night's business was but just begun. Froissart is not silent on the inconveniences of this custom, the wind and the rain and the midnight drenchings—

"Six semaines devant Noël,[1]
Et quatre après, de mon hostel
A mie nuit je me partois
Et droit au chastel m'en allois.
Quel temps qu'il faisoit, pluie ou vent,
Aller m'y convenoit! Souvent

[1] The spelling of the original has been retained.

Estois, je vous dis, mouillé ;
Mais j'estois bien accueillé
Du comte ; il me faisoit des ris.
Adonc j'estois tout guéris.
Et ossi, d'entrée première,
En la salle avoit tel lumière
(Ou en sa chambre) à son souper
Que on y véoit ossi cler
Que nulle clarté peut estre.
C'estoit un paradis terrestre,
Et je l'y comparois souvent."

Arrived at the castle, the guests collected without the Count's chamber to await the moment of his appearance, a moment sometimes delayed until a full hour after midnight. When the door was at length opened, twelve varlets ranged themselves before him, bearing twelve lighted torches, which shone with a great light, comparable with that of day. They went slowly towards the great hall, where many tables stood dressed for supper, and where at the upper table the Count, seated alone, eat but little and drank hardly at all. None dared speak to him, unless called upon to do so in answer to a question. Often, to pass the time, the Count demanded music, and Froissart remarks on the harmony of the choirs of Orthez and the excellence of the organs. Did they perchance sing the *Chanson des Montagnes*, which a tradition of the country of Béarn refers to Gaston Phœbus, Count of Foix ?

The Count remained seated at table, without eating, for about two hours, whilst his clerks sung to him *rondeaux* and *virelais*. He greatly liked these entertainments, "and in all minstrelsies (*ménestrandies*) found great diversion." Thus it was become a sort of habit at the court of Foix to

interrupt the long ceremonious repasts, where so little was eaten, with scenes of comedy, acrobatic feats, the rhymes of some wandering minstrel, and above all, by masked ballets. The Count saw with ever-renewed pleasure these "strange *entremets*," as Froissart calls them, these *intermezzi* of songs and dances, which were carried at Orthez to a rare perfection. So much so, that when, some years later, it was proposed to introduce these ballets at the court of Charles VI. of France, Messire Yvain de Foix, one of the bastards of Gaston de Foix, was appealed to for help. And he it was who, so disastrously for himself and for France, organised that fatal Dance of the Satyrs, in which the King lost his recovered reason, and had almost lost his life.

They arranged matters better at Foix; for although these games took place almost every day, nothing is said of accidents. Songs, dances, disguises, succeeded each other until the end of supper; then the Count, rising, went back into the galleries, where he would hold lively converse for some time with his courtiers. Afterwards, towards the early hours of the morning, there was reading aloud. Froissart expatiates with delight on these *séances*, of which, it is true, he himself was the hero. "While I read," he tells us, "there was none durst speak any word, because the Count would I should be well understanded." The reading was, in fact, in the highest degree interesting to the reader, since it was a work of his own that he gave in the midst of the general attention, a romance in verse that he had brought as an offering to the Count of Foix; but we can feel nothing but pity for the unhappy courtiers, condemned,

during entire weeks, to listen, towards three o'clock in the morning, to an interminable romance of the Knights of the Round Table! The Count, however, was not chary in his praises:

> "Il me dit: 'Cest un beau métier,
> Beau maitre, de faire tel choses!'"

Then to the author, hoarse but beaming, he would pass the cup at which he had just moistened his own lips. This marked the close of the evening. The courtiers, falling with sleep, rallied their scattered wits, and vied with each other in encomiums, which Gaston Phœbus knew how to reward with a few amiable words. Often he conversed a little with Froissart, "not in Gascon, but in good and fair French." Finally, rising, he once more passed round the wine, and dismissed his exhausted court.

CHAPTER XIII.

MÉLIADOR.

THIS romance that Froissart read each night at the court of Gaston Phœbus, everyone, in the course of a year or two, will be able to read for himself, should he feel so disposed. Lost since the year 1440, the book of *Méliador*, so famous in its day, seemed to have disappeared without hope of recovery, when, about two years ago, the learned M. Longnon, of the Institut, whilst examining at the Archives Nationales certain judicial registers bound in old parchment, discovered in these bindings fragments of *Méliador*. It was an event in the world of the romancists. These registers had been written towards 1650, in a large town situated in the north of Burgundy, Cloux-en-Auxois. Who should say whether other bookbinders of northern Burgundy might not have helped themselves from the same source? With this idea, M. Longnon had the foresight to draw up a table of the proper names that he had found in the recovered parchments—a little index that might some day serve as a useful indication to the fortunate amateur, who should find himself the possessor of bindings done in the neighbourhood of Semur-en-Auxois towards the middle of the seventeenth century.

But it was for M. Longnon himself that Fate reserved

the reward of his labours. One November afternoon in 1893, whilst working in the Bibliothèque Nationale, M. Longnon was engaged in looking through the catalogue of manuscripts. His joy may be imagined on reading there:

Roman de Camel et de Hermondine (in-folio).

Camel and Hermondine, it must be explained, were names both of which had appeared in the fragments discovered on the registers of Cloux-en-Auxois. M. Longnon caused the enormous volume to be brought to him. The title, the first leaf and the last, alone were wanting. It was the romance of *Méliador* almost in its entirety.

To recover a famous poem lost for more than four centuries, must be an absolutely unmixed pleasure. To read it, above all to copy it, when it numbers 30,600 lines, must be a more doubtful joy. But, in the interests of science, the true *savant* will spare himself no trouble. M. Longnon at once undertook this formidable transcript; and being generous as he is erudite, and aware that the author of these pages was occupied with a book upon Froissart, he brought to her, as fast as he progressed, the fruit of his labours. At the moment at which these lines appear, there is assuredly no one in the world but he and I myself, who have read the romance of *Méliador;* as we are, without doubt, in the last four hundred years at least, the only readers it has had. Nor can we ever have had many competitors; for *Méliador* is one of the longest poems in the world; longer than the entire *Iliad*, as long as the *Æneid*, twice as long as the *Divina Commedia*. It almost reaches the dimen-

sions of the endless and unended *Faëry Queen* of Spenser. The world has no longer the leisure for romances of this calibre.

Hermondine, only daughter and heiress of the King of Scotland, lives in Northumberland, at the castle of Montgriès, with her cousin Florée, who acts as her duenna, the fathers of the two princesses being absent at the wars in Scotland. One day that these damosels are looking out from a window of the keep, they see a knight who has brought a stag to bay in the trenches of the castle. It is their neighbour, Sir Camel de Camois, with whom they are not yet acquainted. Enchanted with a diversion that breaks the dulness of a heavy July afternoon, the young girls hasten to welcome their unexpected guest. Camel remains to dinner at the castle. He converses with his charming hostess, but he has no eyes but for the Princess Hermondine, pretty as a dream, and roguish and gay in all the grace of her thirteen years. Camel, who is at once ambitious and passionate, falls madly in love with this charming young girl, who holds in her child's hand, like a ball to toss in sport, the powerful kingdom of Scotland. In the weeks that follow, he returns frequently to the castle; he returns too frequently, and Florée counsels her young cousin to show more reserve with so forward a lover. "What!" cries Hermondine, "it is for me that he comes? Why, I have never even thought of love."

> "Ne point je ne pense à tel chose ;
> J'auroie aussi chier une rose
> Que l'amour de nul chevalier !"

Meanwhile the father of Florée returns from Scotland with an escort to take the Princess Hermondine back to the kingdom of the victorious monarch. Florée is half-consoled for a departure which, in effect, leaves Sir Camel rejected. But here she reckons without her host. Camel made furious by his disappointment, besieges the castle of Montgriès, and takes the father of Florée prisoner. "I will give him back to you," he says to the despairing young girl, "when you bring me back from Scotland Hermondine for my bride."

Florée sets out, and at the Court of Stirling finds her cousin besieged by suitors, and most unhappy. In vain she entreats her father to leave her a little longer to the enjoyment of the pleasures of childhood. Driven to extremity by his importunity, and counselled by Florée, who is sharp as a needle, the Princess utters a vow that she will marry none but the bravest and most valiant knight:—

> "Li plus preux et li plus vaillans
> Et li plus plains de chevalerie."

During five years, the suitors for her hand are to lead the life of knights errant; at the end of that time, a tournament at the Court of King Arthur will give the Princess to the bravest among them. These hard conditions are accepted with a facility that excites some wonder, even in a romance of chivalry. The old King bemoans himself, it is true; but what can he oppose to a vow? And he is at any rate set free from the crowd of suitors, importunate as those of Penelope. Camel for his part, is radiant; is not all this mere artifice on the part

of his beloved, who knows well that he is the most valiant of all? To the north, to the south, to the east, to the west, the heralds set out from Stirling, proclaiming to all the world of chivalry the *Quest* of the Princess Hermondine.

All this idyll is merely the prologue to one of the most crowded, the most prolix, the most unreal of the romances of chivalry. All through the immensity of the pages that follow, there is a clash and a resonance of the blazoned shields, the fine sonorous names of the knights of Hermondine. They come from every clime, from Carthage, from Italy, from Norway, and Savoy, and Normandy, and Cornwall; they traverse all the Celtic regions of Great Britain, fighting always for the love of the distant Hermondine. There is Fermagus of the white targe, and Gobard with six besants azure on a field or; there are Agaians, Aganor, and Aghamanor; there are Gondrés and the amiable Gratien; Bégos the Great, and Clarins, Dagorices, Hermonisès, Feugis, and Tarardon, Aratalès, and Dromédon—

> "Lucanor et Solidamas,
> Albanor, Los et Almanas,"

and Feughin, and Savare, and Pésagus, and Saigremor. The clashing of their swords, the shock of their lances are no less heroic than their names; on every page we find fields of tournament strewn with dead, damosels delivered from peril, tyrants overthrown, and victims avenged! It is a romance to turn the head of Don Quixote himself.

Among all these heroes, the youngest, the handsomest, and. above all, the bravest, is Méliador, clothed in azure armour with a golden sun. He is the son and heir of Duke Patrick of Cornwall; but, as befits a knight-errant, he conceals his name, his rank, and his position, whilst he rides day and night through the Druidical forests of Cornwall and Wales, the desolate shores of the Isle of Man, the marshes of the Border, the mountains of Scotland, and that savage kingdom of Ireland, separated by a mere narrow river from the coast of Bangor, according to the fantastic geography of the poet. He falls like a thunderbolt upon his rivals in the Quest, and when he is not handling his lance he sings "fair amorous psalms"—

"De belles amoureuses psaumes,"

to the glory of his lady, being well versed in the mysteries of rondeau and of virelai.

Nevertheless, this fair one that he adores—

"Oncques il ne la vit."

Here we have the veritable chivalric love, the love of Rudel for the Lady of Tripoli, the love of Rambaud of Orange for the Countess of Urgel, of King Peter of Aragon for the fair Alazais of Boissazon. All his companions of the Quest are in the same case. They risk their life and their fame every day for a little girl, thirteen years of age, who, away in Scotland, hardly gives them a thought, and whose character, whose mind, whose features even, are unknown to them.

But their hearts form her image—

"Mais leurs cœurs du tout l'imagine."

This phantom love, which draws its breath in the air of the period, this unreal, idealising, absolutely disinterested and almost objectless emotion, is more than love; it is that sentiment which in the heart of the mere human lover most nearly approaches religious ecstasy. And, in fact, the only one of Hermondine's lovers who does not content himself with this intangible adoration, is precisely Camel de Camois, the sorry knight, capable of persecuting a damosel. He, the miscreant, has seen the Princess of Scotland at her cousin's house, and knows her; and when Méliador challenges him for the love of Hermondine, the rude knight replies with a taunt: "You are wrong, boy!"

"Je vous diroi raison pourquoi :
Pour ce que la belle Hermondine
Ay aymé tous jours d'amour fine
Et vous l'amés par ouï dire.
On en doit bien truffer et rire !"

The sword of the Azure Knight silences for ever this impious lover, and Méliador is hailed with acclamations as he "by whom Outrecuidance (presumption) has been done to death."

Camel dead, and Florée delivered, Méliador resumes his life of adventure. He flies to the succour of a damsel threatened by a bear on the border of a fountain. He conquers in single combat three brothers who are carrying on an unjust war against the châtelaine of Chepstow. He

suffers shipwreck on the coast of the Isle of Man which is

"Otant
A dire et expondre en rommant
L'Isle de l'Homme."

And in this place, so wild that Méliador imagines it to be peopled by the ancient Hebrews, he all at once hears—and with what joy!—the soft Breton speech. He arranges with some fishermen to take him back into Cornwall for the tournament of Tarbonne; but they land him at Aberdeen in Scotland, and the Azure Knight finds himself separated by a few leagues only from his beloved and invisible lady. What lover of chivalry could resist? He resolves to see her. Like the lord of Coucy, he put on the dress of a pedlar, and thus disguised, penetrates into the castle of his fair one. But when he sees his lady, Méliador is ashamed of his pack; nothing that it contains is fine enough to offer to this wonder of the world. He draws from his finger a ring that Florée has given him, and on which she had had these words engraved: "He am I who bears the golden sun, and by whom Outrecuidance is dead."

"Cils sui qui le soleil d'or porte,
Par qui Outrecuidance est morte . . ."

When, some weeks later, Florée visits the castle, her astonishment on seeing the ring of Méliador on Hermondine's finger may be imagined. The two princesses begin to suspect who this fine pedlar of jewelry was, and in the hope of seeing, or of seeing again, the conqueror of Camel de Camois, Hermondine persuades her father to

announce a great tournament at the Court of Stirling. The scene is charmingly graceful and simple—

". . . Elle va agenoiller
Devant li, car li rois séoit ;
Li rois l'embrasse, qui le voit,
Par le brach, et li dist : 'Ma fille !'
Et elle, qui fust très gentille,
Sans lever, se tint toute ferme . . .
Disant : 'Monseigneur, voelliés moy
Acorder que j'aie un tournoy.
Ossi bien en puis un avoir
Que la fille de Cornuaille,
Et ma cousine ossi, sans faille,
La demoiselle de la Garde,
Tout ensi ychi on me garde
C'on fait un oiselet en mue.
Ne on ne s'esbat ne se jue (joue)
Devant moy. Je n'ay point de joie !
Ne pensez vous pas qu'il m'anoie,
Chi, toute seule, entre mes gens ?
Certes, oïl ! car je me sens
Plus pesans et plus rudes assez.
Il y a jà trois ans passés
Que je n'ay véu chevaliers."

Have we not here the eternal spirit of childhood ? And is it not thus that in every age young girls of fifteen have talked when they wish to persuade an indulgent old father to give them some pleasure . . .

But whilst Méliador is wandering in Scotland, the great tournament takes place at the Court of Cornwall. At Tarbonne much anxiety is felt at the prolonged absence of Prince Méliador ; and it is in the hope of bringing him back among the crowd of knights errant, that Duke

Patrick proclaims the tournament in honour of his daughter Phénonée. In the absence of Méliador, Froissart arranges that the prize shall be given to his second young hero, Aghamanor, the Red Knight. When the Duke's daughter witnesses the exploits of Aghamanor, she feels her heart stir within her. A strange disquietude seizes her; she blushes, she trembles, she feels she knows not how; and to herself she says: "If the mere sight of the Red Knight troubles me thus, it is that I love him; and if I love him—he must be my brother Méliador." This logic reassures her; she has no need to see his features, to hear his voice, to know his name; she loves him—it is Méliador! Froissart does not leave her long to pine in doubt. Disguised as a painter workman, Aghamanor penetrates into the manor of Phénonée, and brings her a picture representing the tournament of Tarbonne. The princess's heart gives her no warning that this skilful artisan is he for whom she languishes; she receives him with an amiable indifference, and sends him to dine with the servants. Méliador, although son of a king, had entertained himself greatly at Stirling, when put to a similar trial, and had won the goodwill of all the lower table. But Aghamanor—more susceptible, more of an artist than the British hero—is less good-humoured; he feels humiliated at being thus misunderstood—

> "Comment? à une camberiére
> Je seroie recommandés?
> Je cuidois bien estre telz
> Que Phénonée . . . par la main
> M'ewist menés pour nous esbatre."

When the waiting-woman brings him forty marks for his work, it is worse still. The irascible knight rises abruptly and rushes from the manor, leaving the poor girl confounded, with the money in her hand.

But love is stronger than pride. A few days later he returns to the manor with a portrait of the Red Knight kneeling before his lady. Phénonée is astonished at the resemblance between Aghamanor and the painter, and little by little, with no great reluctance, Aghamanor confesses, yes, it is indeed he who is the Red Knight. When the young girl, however, full of joy, demands his name, Aghamanor remembers himself:—

> "Je n'ose me nommer, ma dame,
> Car je suis chevaliers de queste!"

A Knight of Quest, it must be understood, in a romance of the Round Table, somewhat resembled a competitor of to-day for the prize of eloquence in the (French) Academy Until the prize was awarded, it was forbidden him to unmask for fear of disturbing the impartiality of the judges; each one must remain concealed by the anonymity of the coat-of-arms he bore. Honour, therefore, forbade Aghamanor to reveal his name or his rank even, to her whom he loved. The fair Phénonée, dying of love for her knight, compares herself to Narcissus, enamoured of a shadow—

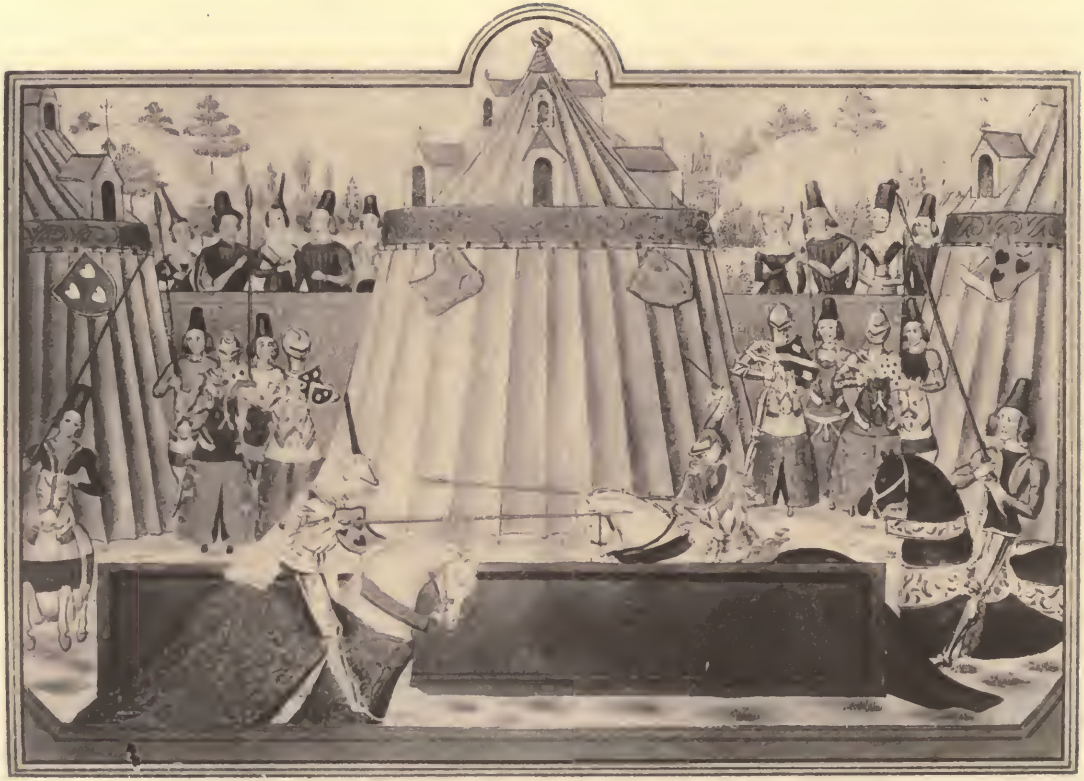
> "Ou à Héro qui en la mer
> Mourut pour l'enfant Leander."

She feels that love gives her rights over the object of

her adoration; she rebels at the silence of Aghamanor. How believe in a love that refuses even to share a secret? In taking leave of her lover she recovers a fragment of pride.

"I promise you nothing," she says. "They tell me that the Azure Knight will be first at the tournament; I give my hand to him who shall be second." But she adds: "Should it be you, Messire, I will not complain."

Whilst Aghamanor and Phénonée fall in love with each other, the Knight Saigremor rides by moor and by forest, lance in hand, his targe about his neck. One day, on entering a beechwood, weary with his long ride, he hangs his arms on a tree, throws off his helmet, leaves his horse to graze, and lies down in the shade on the thick grass. But let the knight who yields himself to sloth, beware! A white stag suddenly springs from the bush, and frightens Saigremor's horse, which starts away at a gallop. Saigremor runs after the horse, and the stag after the knight, until at last, after long hours, Saigremor finds himself lost in a distant thicket, without horse and without arms, without sword or lance, with nothing but this diabolical, this enchanted stag, which keeps close at his heels, and looks at him with big strange eyes that seem to say: "Mount me!" . . . . Saigremor mounts, and the stag goes like the wind through the thickets of the forest, swims across the chill water of the lakes, until at length . . . . [here there is a gap in the manuscript] Saigremor finds himself stretched upon the grass in a beautiful garden, close where three fair ladies are walking, holding each other by the fingers.



Tournament held at St Inglevere near Calais where three French Knights defend the lists
for thirty days against all comers from England and elsewhere.

They wear white robes, long and ample—

"A repris et à longues manches."

They are lady-fairies—

"Garnies de révérences :
Nymphes et pucelles
De Diane, et ses demoiselles."

Froissart contemplates them complacently for a moment, then tells us: "I will relate to you what happened to Saigremor in their company, so soon as I shall have ended the history of the Quest." But alas! the concluding pages of *Méliador* are lost: and for five hundred years has the Knight Saigremor remained suspended in the enchanted air of fairyland, far from the Court of King Arthur, and from Sébille, his lady-love.

Meanwhile, the five years of the Quest are ended, and a great tournament, to be held at the Court of Carlyon, will decide the fate of the prize. Froissart makes use of the occasion to show us all the mechanism of a tournament, the great event of the world of fashion of that epoch. We see the experts choosing a fitting site, a round and quite smooth meadow, neither too near the town nor too far removed from it. We hear the orders given for the necessary works; obstacles to be removed, the ground to be levelled, the ladies' tribunes to be constructed—

"En manières d'un escafaut,
. . . proprement carpentés,
Longs et larges comme un hostés" (hôtel).

When the day of the festival arrives, these tribunes

will be adorned with a crowd of fair ladies, dressed in the latest fashion and in their finest attire. See how they bend over the barrier to follow with their eyes the colours of him on whose success their heart is set! See the variegated scarfs flash with rainbow hues as they pass against the deep green of the course! Listen to the clamours of the crowd, yelling out the name of the victor! It was a scene that, in more respects than one, might be compared with the race-course of Longchamp on the day of the Grand Prix; or rather—since here there are wounded and dead "quickly buried"—to a bull-fight in the arena of Nîmes, or of Arles, or of Madrid.

It will surprise no one to learn that the Azure Knight carries off the prize of the tournament, with the hand of the Scottish King's daughter, whilst Aghamanor, the second in valour, weds Phénonée. Each one of the knights, indeed, finds awaiting him in the tribunes a charming bride. And thus to wedding chimes and in a cloud of bridal veils, closes this immense romance, truly worthy of the Middle Ages, "enormous and delicate."

CHAPTER XIV.

STORIES OF BÉARN.

SUCH was the romance read out by Froissart night after night in presence of the court of Gaston Phœbus. From time to time the Count would interrupt the reading to discuss some question arising from its subject; at other times a thrill of more intense interest would pass round the great hall of Orthez. For there were pages in *Méliador* which must have appealed strangely to a Béarnais audience; moments when the romance must have appeared almost a *roman à clef*. The hero himself, that invincible prince with a golden sun on his shield, does he not resemble him who had taken the sun for his blazon and the name of the sun for his name? And the story of the combat between Savare and Feughin—near relations who love each other tenderly, yet one of whom wounds the other with a death-stroke—might it not recall to those who listened the melancholy history of the Count's son? And Camel de Camois, so brave throughout the day, but haunted every night by a phantom that he combats until dawn, is it not a veritable copy of Messire Pierre de Foix, the Count's natural brother?—

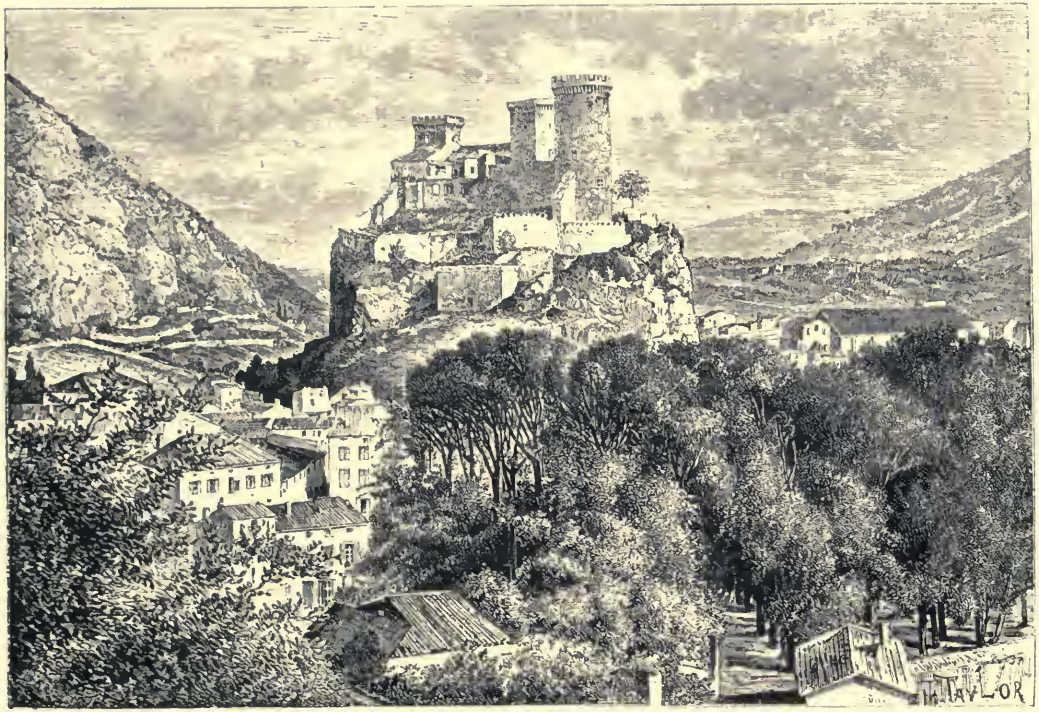
For this is what the poet says :

> " Si osoit il bien chevauchier,
> La nuit par forests et par landes,
> Et entrer en pas perilleus,
> Mais point il n'osoit dormir seuls."

One can imagine the murmurs that ran round the hall. Is not this Messire Pierre to the life ? And the next day the canon of Chimay would be told the story with which every inhabitant of Orthez was familiar.

This poor Messire Pierre had been " sick through a fantasy," ever since he killed in the forests of Biscay a strange, an enormous bear—a beast as mysterious as the stag of Saigremor in the romance. Each night since this adventure, the knight rising, would fight with a shadow, drawing his sword and cleaving the air with his blows, until the knights sleeping with him in his chamber would be forced to awaken him, in order to take away his arms. Then he would throw himself on his bed and weep. The worst was, that everyone feared the poor wretch in his affliction ; his wife even, and his children had abandoned him, seized with a mysterious dread, as the Countess of Foix had abandoned her husband.

" Then," says Froissart, " I who mused on the great marvel, said : ' Sir, I believe it well that it is as ye have said. Sir, we find in the old writing that anciently the gods and goddesses at their pleasure would change and transform men into beasts and into fowls. And it might be so, that this bear was before some knight chasing in the forest of Biscay, and, peradventure, displeased in that time



THE CASTLE OF FOIX.

god or goddess, whereby he was transformed into a bear, as anciently Actæon was changed into an hart.'"

Yes, Sir John Froissart, the story is undoubtedly a strange one; but what seems stranger still, perhaps, to us, is to find you, canon of Chimay though you be, believing in the power of "these gods and goddesses of old writing"; and that the first historian of the fourteenth century, should enshrine a fairy tale, like a precious gem, between the admirable account of the war in Portugal and the French expedition against England. But, strange as it may be in the historian, your readers at least, good Froissart, have no reason to complain. . . .

Messire Pierre was not the only one of his family to feel the influence of the invisible world. Froissart's profound admiration for Gaston Phœbus is mingled with a vague disquietude; this great lord was too much above other men. "No man," Froissart tells us, "knew exactly what was in the mind of the Count of Foix." He was wise and subtle beyond the subtlety of princes. But how explain that he knew of things that were happening in Germany, in Turkey, in England, long before news of them could reach him, at the very hour indeed in which they were taking place? Sometimes, when those about him were agitating themselves over some trifle, he had a fashion of looking at them and speaking to them "coldly and vaguely," as though to show he was not of their race. Could this Prince, "right perfect in all things, sage and perceiving," could he be a necromancer and wizard, even such as the sinister Giovanni Galeasso, Duke of Milan?

Froissart listens, with an increasing anxiety, to the stories current concerning the omniscience of his host of Orthez. A squire one day relates to him that a battalion of Béarnais knights, having been taken prisoner in an ambush in Portugal, the Count of Foix grew sad of cheer, fell sick with grief, and told all who would listen to him that the country of Béarn had never before had such loss in a single day. "Then is he a diviner," cries Froissart, "or else he hath a messenger that flieth through the night on the wind."

The squire began to laugh, and to assure the amazed canon that this sort of thing was by no means rare in Béarn. He himself knew a lord with one of these familiar demons, who flew indeed on the winds all through the night, collecting news for his master in all the kingdoms of the earth.

"'And do you believe,' quoth I, 'that the Count of Foix is served with such a messenger?'

"'Surely,' quoth the squire, 'it is the imagination of many that he hath such a messenger. And the spirit speaketh as good Gascon as I.'"

Then Froissart takes out his tablets and writes down the wondrous tale at length; nor ever remembers, good canon of Chimay, that in Orthez everyone knows how "to speak Gascon."

In this small world, haunted by a mystery, Froissart during ten weeks carried from one to another his curiosity and his questionings as chronicler. "I longed sore to ask and to know how Gaston, the Count's son, had died."

At last, although Messire Espaing de Lyon still refused to speak of it, Sir John found "an ancient squire and a notable," who consented to relate to him the lugubrious history.

Gaston, son of the Count of Foix, was a boy of sixteen, light, *naïf*, easily taken in. On the occasion of a visit he paid his mother, who, in fear of her formidable husband, had taken refuge with her brother, the King of Navarre, this latter gave his nephew a small purse filled with powder; it was a magic powder, he assured him, which, should the boy succeed in getting his father to taste it, would do away in a moment with all the differences existing between the Count and Countess. Only, in order that the charm might work, it must be performed with the greatest secrecy.

This explanation satisfied poor Gaston. Some few days after his return to Orthez, he quarrels with his brother Yvain over a game of tennis. Yvain takes refuge with his indulgent father. "Why should he beat me?" and in the midst of his weeping: "He were more worthy to be beaten than I, with his purse full of powder that he beareth day and night." The Count of Foix remains pensive; he was a man "*moult imaginatif*," as we know, haughty too, sceptical, prompt to suspect evil, prompt to punish it, and haunted by that obsession of all tyrants: —the fear of poison. He watches his son, and some few evenings later, at dinner in the great hall, he sees the lad surreptitiously sprinkle with powder the plate destined for the chief of the family. He raises his head, looks his son in the eyes, and throws the morsel from his plate to the

dog crouching at his feet; the dog swells and dies. "Ah, Gaston, *fals traditor*," cries the father, "for thee, and to increase thine heritage that should come to thee, I have had war and hatred of the French King, of the King of England, of the King of Spain, of the King of Navarre, and of the King of Aragon. And now thou wouldst murder me." Had it not been for the intervention of the knights in the hall, the Count of Foix would have slain his son on the spot, with his own hand. The young man was led away to the dark and humid dungeon that lies under the great tower of Orthez, and Gaston Phœbus relieved his anger by putting to death, with prolonged and refined tortures, fifteen of the handsomest and youngest squires of Béarn, friends and companions of the Prince.

In this way, ten days were got through. The States of Foix, meanwhile, demanded the restoration to liberty of the heir to the country, and the father's heart began to soften. Who could say? If Gaston were sent to travel in France and Spain, removed from bad influences, "he might somewhat forget his evil will, and be of more knowledge." During all this time, the little Prince, so gracious and so delicate, was lying in his dungeon with no change of clothes or possibility of seeing the light. On the tenth day his servitor, entering the vault with a torch in his hand, perceived the young man pale with the pallor of death, and noticed carefully ranged by the wall, all the meals that had been brought to him in his prison. Perhaps Gaston dreaded for himself some such powder as he had brought from Navarre; perhaps he had heard of the cruel death of his dearest friends; or perhaps

he refused to survive the suspicions, at once so unjust and so terribly justified, of the father he had so nearly poisoned. The servitor lost no time in conjectures ; he went straight to the Count of Foix, and said to him : "Sir, for God's sake have mercy on your son Gaston, for he is near famished in prison."

The Count of Foix was at his toilette. Without speaking a word he rose and went towards the tower where his son was confined, continuing meanwhile to pare his nails mechanically with a small, long-shaped knife he held between his fingers. He opened the door of the dungeon, and saw his son lying there, feeble with fasting. "Ah, traitor, why dost thou not eat?" he said ; and with the words struck at his son with the right hand—that which still held the little knife—and went out as abruptly as he had entered.

An instant later, the servitor returned, his face white as linen.

"'Sir, Gaston, your son, is dead.'

"'Dead!' quoth the Count.

"'Yes, truly, sir,' quoth he."

The little knife, forgotten in the father's hand, had severed one of the arteries of the throat, and the boy, weakened by a too prolonged fast, had been unable to bear the loss of blood. The Count shaved his head, clothed himself and all his house in black, and gave his son a magnificent funeral. And, perhaps, in reflecting that all the fruits of his reign would go to a cousin whom he detested, he wept ; if not for his son, at least for his lost heir.

Thus the Count of Foix, "so perfect in all things," was the murderer of his child. This in no way diminishes Froissart's admiration for him. Was he not one of the most valiant knights of his time—independent moreover, of the vulgar morality of clerics and *bourgeois*, as though he had been one of the "gods and goddesses of which the old writing speaks?" The accident to Gaston was assuredly a thing much to be regretted, and one may be permitted to wish that the Count had not put to death "right horribly," fifteen youths belonging to the noblest families of Béarn. But this irate sovereign was not the less a wise and subtle statesman, a warrior formidable beyond all other warriors, a liberal and courteous knight, and one helpful to every lady or damosel who might be in need of his sword.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DUCHESS OF BERRY.

SOME years previous to Froissart's visit, a very great lady had come to Orthez to entrust her child to the care of the sovereign of Béarn. The Countess of Boulogne had made an unhappy marriage with a mean and worthless man, "who wished to sell his inheritance, the better to follow his pleasures." No crime in the fourteenth century was held in greater discredit; it was looked upon as cheating at cards, or neglecting to pay a debt of honour would be regarded in our day; the man who contemplated selling his inheritance was held to be for ever disgraced. The Countess of Boulogne then, was fully within her rights in removing her daughter from the care of so despicable a father, and bringing her to the court of the Count of Foix. Gaston Phœbus undertook the care of the little girl, and looked after her interests so well that he made of her one of the richest heiresses in France.

In 1389 she was a child of twelve, a little Princess Hermondine, inhabiting the most cheerful, the best lighted of the towers of Orthez, that which looked out upon the great bridge and the market-place. The Count of Foix,

having brought her up, wished to marry her, and to marry her well; one must fulfil one's duty to the end! When Froissart first saw the young girl, there was already question of betrothing her to a very great personage, Duke Jean of Berry, uncle to the King of France, a very rich, learned and powerful prince, a great lover of pictures and romances, and one of the great "collectors" of the period. Froissart was already acquainted with him; his daughter had married the son of the Count of Blois. He accordingly wrote a ballad for the wedding of the "Shepherd of Berry" and the "Shepherdess of Boulogne." It was a charming picture, with one defect only; the shepherdess was twelve years old, and the shepherd, a short, thick little man (he was one of the ugliest men in France), was nearly fifty—"sixty," Froissart tells us; but with the canon of Chimay, one must practise the art of verifying dates.

A graver obstacle than that of years threatened to separate the betrothed couple. The Count of Foix expected the expenses of his guardianship to be paid; "he demanded to have a good sum of florins." The Duke of Berry found the total, fixed at 30,000 golden florins, an exorbitant figure; but the Count of Foix held firm, "although," Froissart tells us, "he did not wish to appear to sell the lady."

Towards the month of May 1389, the affair was arranged; decidedly the Duke of Berry cared more for his twelve-year-old bride than for his 30,000 florins. The marriage took place at Orthez, and the little Duchess was sent to find her husband in Auvergne.

It was a marriage that turned out not badly. Under a common exterior the Duke of Berry concealed the delicate and enquiring spirit of a dilettante; and his little wife was to be the pearl of his collections. Rapacious and disorderly in his affairs, harsh in pursuing his own advantage, cruel towards his enemies, the Duke of Berry could yet be generous in private life; his "Comptes," still preserved in the Archives, permit us to divine in a thousand details, under the somewhat grotesque mask shown us by history, an amiable master, an attentive husband. As for the young Duchess, she remains one of the most gracious figures of the close of the fourteenth century; and it will be seen, a little later on, how her prompt courage was one day to save the life of the King of France.

In the month of May 1389, the canon of Chimay left the court of Gaston Phœbus with the young Duchess's escort; the opportunity of returning to France with this noble retinue was one too good for Froissart to neglect. Nevertheless, it was with regret that he left Orthez. The Count of Foix, if he had not touched the heart of the great chronicler, had captivated his imagination, and Froissart shows an infatuation for his host that often rises to enthusiasm. On his departure the Count of Foix, who had already defrayed all his expenses, made him a present of eighty florins of Aragon — a very pretty souvenir. He also gave him back the manuscript of *Méliador*. Was this gift one of pure generosity? Froissart, in any case, shows no suspicion to the contrary.

Froissart was never to see his benefactor again. In 1392 he formed the project of returning to Béarn; but toward the end of the summer of that same year bad news arrived that caused him to change his plans. The Count of Foix, as we know, was supremely fond of hunting. In his kennels he had no fewer than sixteen hundred dogs, among which must not be forgotten the four hounds that Froissart brought from the banks of the Loire. One warm day in April the Count had gone to hunt the bear on the road to Pampeluna. Towards sunset he alighted with the lords of his suite to dine at a little village inn, situated at two leagues from Orthez. All had been arranged in the best way possible to do honour to the sovereign. "He went into his chamber the which was strewn with green herbs, and the walls set full of green boughs to make the chamber more fresh, for the air without was marvellously hot as in the month of May . . . and so sat down in a chair, and talked and devised with Messire Espaing de Lyon." They talked of the chase and of the dogs, and of which had run the best, and of the bear that had been killed, awaiting only the arrival of Messire Yvain to go to dinner. At last the young man appeared; the squires hastened to set the table, and the Count demanded water to wash his hands. It was brought to him as usual in a tall silver jar; the Count held out his hands over a basin, and the fresh water was poured out. "As soon as the cold water fell on his fingers, which were fine, long, and straight, he waxed pale in the face, his heart and his feet failed him, and so fell down, and in the falling said, 'Ah, I am but dead. God have

The sudden death of Count Gaston de Foix.

mercy on me!'" It was the last prayer of Gaston Phœbus, Count of Foix.

The knights, confounded, tried every remedy that despair could suggest to them; nothing availed, the Count was dead. Whilst Messire Yvain "was weeping and lamenting and wringing his hands," the knights took him on one side and said: "Sir Yvain, ye have now lost your father; we know that he loved you entirely; leave your sorrow, and leap on your horse and ride to Orthez. Take you possession of the castle and the garrison, and of your father's treasure that is within it, or ever the death of your father be known abroad." The young man did as they advised, and during some weeks succeeded, in fact, in holding the castle, with the complicity, more or less declared, of the town that had given him birth. During all this time, the Count of Foix lay in his leaden coffin, placed above ground in front of the high altar of Orthez, receiving honour and respect from all. And his children and his people wept his loss, lamenting and recalling his noble life, his valour, his prudence, his prosperity, and his great wisdom in governing. "While this gentle lord lived, there was neither French nor English that durst displease us. Now our neighbours will make us war. Ah, thou land of Béarn, destitute and without comfort of any noble heritor, what will become of thee? Thou shalt never have again such another as was this noble and gentle Count of Foix."

The Viscount of Chastellux, however, was by no means resigned to seeing so fine an inheritance slip through

his fingers. He was French ; and the council of the King of France—notwithstanding some inclination to juggle over the little principality, in default of direct heirs, to the profit of the crown—insisted that the law should be respected, and invested the Viscount in his inheritance with homage to the King of France. As for Messire Yvain, turned out of possession, 2,000 florins were granted him out of his father's estate, and the young man left the country for ever.

Nineteen months later, Messire Yvain was endeavouring to introduce into the Court of France—where, as life and soul of all the entertainments, he was greatly liked—the taste for those "étranges entremêts" which had caused so much diversion at the court of Gaston Phœbus. It was on the occasion of the marriage of the Dame de Hainseville, the 28th January, 1393. Messire Yvain and five young knights, of whom the King was one, disguised themselves as satyrs or savages, covered with long flaxen tow, the colour of hair, from head to foot. They entered the hall, dancing grotesquely, the five knights fastened together, the King a few steps in front, leading the dance. "They were so disguised that no man nor woman knew them." With a thoughtlessness he must have eternally regretted, the young Duke of Orleans, desirous of seeing them more closely, seized a torch and approached the dancers. Immediately the flax caught fire, blazed up, and heated the pitch that fastened the tow to the linen garment beneath. The dance changed into grotesque and horrible contortions, accompanied by cries of anguish; the six satyrs were

The Wûsque of Charles VI.

being burnt alive. One of them, remembering that the buttery was close to the grand reception hall, threw himself into a vessel of water standing there, and so escaped death. How the life of the King of France was saved by that young Duchess of Berry brought up by Gaston Phœbus is well known; she covered him entirely with the great court mantle she was wearing. It was not ill-done for a young girl of sixteen, and on that day she did honour to her guardian and the education he had given her. She could not, alas! do as much for the comrade of her childhood, Messire Yvain de Foix; he died of his burns, "in great misery and pain." The Count de Joigny and Aimery de Poitiers expired also in great agony. Henri de Guizac was already dead, "burned to death on the spot."

"Ah, Count Gaston de Foix," cries Froissart, "if this had fortuned in thy life-days, thou shouldst have had great displeasure, and it had been hard to have peased thee, for thou lovedst him entirely." Perhaps the justice of God demanded that the martyrdom of the one much-loved son should expiate the murder of the other.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROISSART AT AVIGNON.

On her way to Riom, where she was to meet her husband, the Duchess of Berry, with her suite, passed by Avignon. It was in the city of the Pope, towards the end of May, that Froissart bought, for the sum of a hundred livres, the "expectation" of the canonry of Lille. "With money one obtains benefices," he tells us in the *Dit du Florin;* but for his hundred livres he received nothing but the shadow and the title. For many years yet Froissart was to sign himself Canon of Chimay and "Canon of Lille *en herbe*."

At Avignon Froissart experienced a mishap, to which we owe one of the most engaging poems of the fourteenth century. In returning from the money-changer's, he placed in some untrustworthy purse all the good golden francs for which he had exchanged his Aragon florins. The little purse had never contained so much gold before—a poor little country curé's purse, much more accustomed to hold heavy copper pennies; it allowed the treasure confided to its care to escape. Froissart lost his money; and we are the gainers by the charming ditty with which he thanked the great lords who came to his help in this misadventure.

The *Dit du Florin* gives us some piquant information

THE PALACE OF THE POPES AT AVIGNON.

concerning Froissart's character where it touched the practical side of life. He shows himself heedless and extravagant, like the great child that he was. "There is nobody," he cries, "from Douay to Valenciennes, who knows how to get rid of his money so well as I do. One might almost think that money has taken a dislike to me, for no sooner do I get any than it runs out of my hands. An excellent courier, indeed, my money would make, only it never comes back to me! People wonder to see me always with empty pockets; but what would you have? I manage to spend a livre quicker than another person spends a sou. And yet I heap up no corn in my barns, I build no churches, I command for my use neither clocks, nor ships, nor galleys, nor manors! Nor do I spend my revenues in furnishing fine rooms, nor in building princely galleries. I buy neither silk, nor flax, nor village bakeries, nor mills. And yet my money disappears of itself, flies, takes itself off afar! And if I bewail its absence, I am of opinion it cares not at all."

> "Depuis vingt-cinq ans— sans la cure
> De Lestinnes, qui est grant'ville,
> En ai je bien eu deux mille
> De francs : que sont-ils devenus ?"

At this moment the poet hears the sound of a slender silvery voice. It is the single florin left in his purse that addresses him—a poor little florin all worn and broken, which for many months has lain at the bottom of his purse and which remains faithful to him still.

"Do not abandon yourself too much to despair," says the florin, "for you have had many things for your money

Your Chronicles alone have cost you, at least, 7000 livres, and that money, at any rate you have spent worthily."

"Car faite en avez mainte histoire
Dont il sera encor memoire
De vous dans les temps à venir :
Et ferez les gens souvenir
De vos sens et de vos doctrines."

And then continues the florin maliciously—

"Les taverniers de Lestinnes
En ont bien eu cinq cent francs ! "

"Do not forget, either, your travelling expenses. Have you not visited Scotland, England, Wales? Have you not been to Rome—

'En arroi de souffisant homme
Avec haquenée et roncin ? '

"As to the country of France, you have traversed it in every direction, always at great expense, always well mounted, in grand style, with fine mantles and good food. Impossible to have lived better! I have seen you so joyous, so jolly, so amorous, that, by Saint Giles! I am of opinion that for your 2000 francs you have had the value of twice as much."

Then, consoled for his loss, the poet sets to work to spend just as much money as before.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RETURN FROM BÉARN.

FROISSART accompanied the Duchess as far as Riom, was present at the fêtes given in her honour, and from thence made his way by Paris and Valenciennes to rejoin his master and lord in Holland. In Paris he met the French son-in-law of King Edward III., Enguerrand de Coucy, whom he had often seen in England. Sir Enguerrand invited our canon to pass a few days with him at Crèvecœur. Froissart talked to him of Béarn, of Avignon, of that astonishing marriage of the Duke of Berry, concerning which Charles VI. and his brother had jests to make not a few. The lord of Coucy spoke to him in return of England, of his nephew, the young King Richard II., of the conference at Boulogne between the French and English delegates, and of the truce which was said to be imminent. It was then that Sir John Froissart felt rising in his heart for the land of his youth, a nostalgia that was destined to grow ever stronger and stronger. He could not however think, even, of travelling in England whilst that country was at war with France. What would Guy de Blois say if he were to

see his chaplain in the enemy's camp? It was necessary to wait for peace to be concluded.

After three days at Crèvecœur, and a fortnight at Valenciennes, Froissart decided to rejoin his patron at Schoonhoven; but there cruel disappointments were awaiting him. The noble Guy de Blois, the fearless crusader, was become little better than a carpet knight. Indolence, self-indulgence, and senseless expenditure had taken possession of him and of his court. "This Count of Blois, and Marie de Namur, his wife, by great drinking and much eating of sweet and delicate meats, were overgrown with fatness." "Messire Guy is of those," Eustace Deschamps tells us in one of his poems, "who have neither pity nor mercy upon meat, and are for ever storming the wine-flagon." The Count could no longer mount his horse, he was carried to the hunt in a litter; and Froissart seeing him thus grotesquely borne about by his servants, doubtless recalled that passage in the treatise on hunting by the Count of Foix, in which it is demonstrated that hunters are necessarily virtuous, since they eat little and work much: "And never have I seen—so God keep me—a man of breeding, who would not work because he was rich; for that comes from a base heart." Guy de Blois could neither work any more nor go to the wars; he was grown too obese, having led too luxurious a life. In this state of inaction, a state not natural to him, his shallow and excitable temper broke out in abrupt storms of passion. Nor does Froissart tell us everything; for we learn from a document published by the Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove, that, in a fit of fury, the Count killed with

his own hand one of the chiefs of the Brabantine army.

This degenerate prince, formerly so brilliant and valorous, indolent now, and weary of endless days no longer diversified by the noble pastimes of war and tournament, gave way to a prodigality that was positively insane. His purse, filled with the accumulated wealth of all the Châtillon, was a veritable cask of the Danaides, whence money for ever flowed, and flowed to mere waste. At his side sat Marie de Namur, the clumsy Walloon, her heart restless and dissatisfied in her huge person. In the stagnant life of the little sleepy court, she gained great ascendancy over the mind of her husband. Froissart had no great liking for the Countess of Blois, but he doubtless preferred her to the man, who, with the exception of herself, alone had some influence over the Count. The valet Sohier, son of a weaver of Malines, an underbred and ignorant fellow who could neither read nor write, had become a great power at the court of Blois. Froissart did not love Marmosets. "And everywhere one finds them!" he tells us. "The Duke of Berry hath his Take Thiébaut as the Count of Blois hath his Sohier. I have seen no great lord but that he had his Marmoset . . . except the Count of Foix, for he never had none such, for he was naturally sage . . . I say not that such lords as are ruled by such Marmosets be fools, but rather more than fools, for they be sore blinded, and yet they have two eyes."

Froissart must have quitted without regret the spectacle of this sadly-changed court. Towards the end of the

summer he went back to Valenciennes "to refresh" himself and to repose. It was there that he wrote his third book, during the last months of the year 1389. But the rumour of august festivities and adventurous expeditions reached him even in his tranquil habitation; and he worked with a will so as to be able the sooner to go and gather other documents through new adventures, and further pursue his three intellectual joys: "To see the marvels of this world, to hear and to know new things, to write and to chronicle fresh histories."

He was soon to find his opportunity. In writing out the various reports collected at Orthez on the wars of Castille and of Portugal, Froissart became conscious of their insufficiency. "I devised in mine imagination how I could not be sufficiently instructed by the hearing of them that sustained the opinion of the King of Castille, but that in likewise I ought to hear the Portugals, as well as the Gascons and Spaniards that I heard in the house of the Count of Foix." Having learned that at Bruges there was "a great settlement of Portugals," Froissart made his way thither, in the hope of meeting some knight or squire who had been through the war. On arriving at Bruges, it was suggested that he should continue his journey as far as Meddelbrughe in Zealand, where dom Joam Fernand Pacheco, councillor of the King of Portugal, was awaiting a favourable wind for his *caravelle*. Froissart needed no persuasion; he set off once more, reached Meddelbrughe, found dom Joam, and remained with him for a whole week. Day after day in the poor apartment of the Zealand inn, the great man,

with emphatic and well-balanced phrases, related the history of all the events that had taken place in Portugal since the death of King Ferdinand. The chronicler, meanwhile, pen in hand, "took great pleasure to hear him and to write his words." A strange thing to note, this same Froissart, who only the other day had been setting down this and that fantastic history of enchanted bears in Gascony, gives now an account of the Portuguese war, which in its judgment, accuracy, and precision remains the admiration of everyone who interests himself in the history of the Peninsula. Dom Joam Pacheco, we feel, is reflected in all this narrative, as the squire of the Count of Foix is reflected in the *on dit* of Orthez. For what, after all, are the Chronicles of Froissart but a vast mirror, across which pass the shadows, knightly or plebeian, extravagant or wise, with whom the canon of Chimay conversed on his passage through a world of infinite variety? His Chronicles are not always history; but they never fail to be a gallery of historical portraits.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SALE OF BLOIS.

"At the request of the high and mighty Prince, Guy de Châtillon, Count of Blois . . . . . I, John Froissart . . . have again stirred myself, and enter into my smithy to work at the forging of this high and noble matter to which in past time I gave heed. Consider now, you who read . . . Now I have come to know and to collect so many facts of which I treat and discourse in so many parts. And to inform you of the truth, I began young, at the age of twenty years; and these deeds and adventures and my own life began the world together: and I have always taken more pleasure in them than in aught else; and, verily, God has given me so much grace, that I have been well received by all parties, and in the palaces of kings, and especially in the palace of King Edward of England and the noble Queen his wife . . . by whom in my youth I was brought up; and served her with fair *dittiés* and amorous treatises; and for love of the service of the noble and valiant lady to whom I belonged, all other lords, kings, dukes, earls, barons and knights of whatever nation, loved me and heard and saw me willingly. Also, in the pay of that good lady, and at her charges, and at the charges of the noble lords, I, in my time, have visited the greater part of

Christendom, . . . and everywhere that I went I made enquiry of ancient knights and squires, who had been in great feats of arms, and knew how to speak fitly of them, and also of certain heralds to verify and justify these matters. Thus have I collected this high and noble history, and the gentle Count of Blois named above greatly concerned himself therewith; the which, as long as I live, by the help of God, I shall continue; for the more I follow and labour it, the more it pleaseth me. For as the noble knight or squire loving the feats of arms doth persevere in the same, and be thereby expert and made perfect, so in labouring of this noble matter, I delight and take pleasure."

After this fashion begins the fourth and last book of the Chronicles, dedicated, like the preceding ones, to Guy, Count of Blois. But before writing it Froissart had quitted the castle of Blois; it was at Valenciennes that he passed the autumn of the year 1389. Many changes were come about in the castle of le Quesnoy. Count William the Insane had expired at last, after thirty years of madness and melancholy seclusion; his brother Aubert who succeeded him had definitively retired to his palace at the Hague, and young William of Ostrevant, in his turn Governor of Hainault, ruled from le Quesnoy the native country of Froissart.

Froissart had more particularly attached himself to this young Prince the previous year during a ten days' visit that Count William had made the Count of Blois, in company with his father-in-law, the Duke of Burgundy. His influence upon Froissart soon becomes visible; the

political leaning of the historian towards the side of Burgundy shows itself very unmistakably from the commencement of the fourth book of the Chronicles. One sees there, little by little, the dawning of that fatal ascendancy of the houses of Bavaria and Burgundy which, thirty years later, was to menace the very life of France. Froissart had always been strongly influenced by his environment, and at le Quesnoy he became more than Burgundian. The cruel and resentful prejudice that he exhibits against the unhappy Valentina Visconti, and his hatred and disparagement of Duke Giovanni Galeasso of Milan, doubtless reflect the rancour of Duke Aubert, whose family were triply allied with the children of Barnabo Visconti, deposed and put to death by the father of the Duchess of Orleans. The insinuations and reproaches of which the chronicler is prodigal in respect of the young brother of Charles VI. recall, to one who knows how to read between the lines, the contests of Duke Aubert and his son with the brother of the king, concerning certain lands in Hainault. And Froissart, alas! takes to heart the interests of the house of Bavaria in a degree that renders him unjust and ungrateful towards his master and lord, the Count of Blois.

Whilst the star of the house of Bavaria was waxing in splendour from day to day, the glory of the Châtillon was waning miserably to extinction. Towards the end of June 1391 a great misfortune struck the very heart of the Count of Blois. His only legitimate child, Louis, the young husband of the Princess of Berry

(daughter to Duke Jean), died in a few days of a malignant fever. The boy would have inherited all the riches of the Châtillon, the county of Blois, the county of Dunois, the lordships of Chimay, Avesnes, Beaumont, Louvion, Argies, Landrecies, with Goude and Schoonhoven and other estates in Holland and Zealand. Even without the county of Soissons, sold by Guy de Blois to the Sire de Coucy, to procure money for his ransom, it was an inheritance to set a poor relation dreaming.

And, in fact, a whole swarm of cousins, poor and rich, had an eye on this enormous property. Immediately on the death of Louis, the Count of Blois saw himself surrounded by greedy heirs. The Duke of Burgundy, Duke Aubert, the Duke of Juliers, the Duke of Lancaster were there, side by side with the unfortunate Jean de Blois, *dit* of Brittainy, the Sire de Conflans in Champagne, and other less illustrious claimants. They all made their calculations, and disputed over the estate among themselves, whilst the actual proprietor, the Count of Blois, looked on with empty pockets. The dowry alone of the young widow was formidable; it was charged entirely on the county of Blois, and amounted to 6000 gold francs a year. This was a great deal in a century in which a Viscount of Rouen lived on an income of 350 francs, and a Regnault d'Aurignac, the greatest provision merchant of his time, made a boast of 30,000 francs of capital. Briefly, the Count of Blois saw none too clearly how he was to pay the money, and he well knew that his daughter-in-law's

father, Jean de Berry, would exact it to the last halfpenny.

Guy de Blois had always lived from hand to mouth. Rich or poor, always prodigal, always generous, he had thrown away money by handfuls, according to the whim of the moment. It is not for us to blame him, since it is to him we owe the Chronicles of Froissart, for which during twenty years, "il fit grands coûtages." Now that, old and melancholy, the Count and Countess of Blois were gone to hide their broken life in their old fortress of Château-Renaud, the money questions were taking a new importance, and ignoble cares came to insult the majesty of their grief. This is the painful history as related to us by Froissart.

Some eight leagues distant from Château-Renaud, the King was at Tours with his brother, the young Duke of Touraine, who had recently married the thrice-rich Valentina Visconti. The fortunate bridegroom had more money than he knew what to do with. He was not yet Duke of Orleans; and feeling himself straitened in his narrow duchy of Torraine, coveted the fair county of Blois, whose boundaries touched his own, and which belonged to a man ill, devoured by debts, and just bereaved of his only son.

Froissart gives us to understand it was Enguerrand de Coucy who suggested to the young prince the idea of buying the inheritance of Guy de Châtillon. Messire Enguerrand was at Tours with the King and his brother; he accompanied them to Château-Renaud, and when the young Duke cast his eyes on this Naboth's vineyard,

"Why do you not buy it?" we can imagine Messire Enguerrand to have said; "Guy de Châtillon has no obsolete prejudices concerning the sale of an inheritance. He sold his county of Soissons, and to-day he is as much in need of money as he was twenty years ago." "The Sieur de Coucy was greatly to blame in this affair," Froissart tells us expressly.

The Count of Blois, however, was not easy to persuade. At the first word he lost his temper. "Or I make any such bargain to sell mine inheritance, or to disinherit mine heirs, to my shame and rebuke (such at least are the words that Froissart puts into his mouth), I shall rather sell or lay to pledge all the plate I have." In like manner, at the present day in England, where the right of primogeniture still exists, there is no expedient to which recourse is not had before touching the property to which the direct heir succeeds; to live like a rat in a corner of the castle is preferred to risking the integrity of the inheritance. In the fourteenth century, sentiment on this point was clear and precise; even failing a direct heir, the rights of succession remained inviolable. The inheritance of Blois, as a matter of mere seignorial right and conscience, morally belonged to John of Brittainy, cousin to Guy de Châtillon.

But the young King of France, the Prince his brother, and Messire Enguerrand de Coucy were not to be swayed by considerations such as these. For many reasons it was desirable that the county of Blois, situated between Touraine and Orleans, both appanages of the Crown, should also belong to a prince of the blood royal. The young

Prince, whose mind was already turned to the Duchy of Orleans, who had already entered into negotiations with Messire Enguerrand for the purchase of the county of Soissons, who was about to buy Coucy and Dreux and Angoulême and Luxembourg, was proposing to make for himself, along with a principality in Italy, a great territorial position in France. He never ceased laying siege to the old and unhappy spendthrift; he did not disdain to buy over the all-powerful valet Sohier, nor to use flattery towards the Countess of Blois. At length the affair was arranged in consideration of a sum of 200,000 francs for the county of Blois, 60,000 francs to indemnify the Duke of Berry, and a second sum of 200,000 francs for the estates of Hainault, of Zealand, and of Holland.

The estates of Hainault! There, undoubtedly, lay the point of pain, the obscure cause of the anger and the reproaches of Froissart—he who had reconciled himself easily enough to the sale of the county of Soissons. He speaks only of the county of Blois; but it is of Hainault that he is thinking; he pities John of Brittainy only, but his thoughts are with Duke Aubert and William of Ostrevant. What, the inheritance of Jean de Beaumont, the cradle of so many Wallon heroes, to pass into the hands of strangers! In consequence of the opposition offered by Duke Aubert, the sale of the lands dependent on the county of Hainault never took place; but Froissart, nevertheless, is incapable of calming his hot indignation. In his narrative of the sale of Blois, he shows neither moderation nor justice towards his former master. With what bitterness he stigmatises the foolish and vulgar

Duchess, persuaded to an act that dishonours her husband, through fear of becoming "a poor woman, stripped of everything," whilst the sale of the inheritance leaves her "a rich lady and puissant of gold and silver and jewels." With what contempt he displays to us the sordid soul of the valet Sohier, that "Marmouset parvenu," thinking of nothing but his gains. And the Count of Blois himself, what is to be said of him who, "as though young, ignorant and ill-advised," allows himself to be led by his wife and his valet, and makes this poor bargain of his inheritance and his honour?

In all this there is clearly a spirit of rancour and ill-will. The researches of our learned friend Count Albert de Circourt have lately brought to light the true circumstances of the sale of Blois. The acts still exist, in the *cartulaire* of Blois, under the number KK. 896, in the national Archives. They overthrow altogether the story told by Froissart. These acts are signed by the Count and Countess of Blois on the 13th October 1391, and the young prince only arrives at Tours on the 10th November! On the 10th November the temptation, on the 13th October the sin. What becomes of that rôle of eager tempter assigned to the young brother of the King; what of those early and secret rides from Tours to Château-Renaud, that consent wrested from an aged knight, sick in body and soul? Froissart shows himself no better acquainted with the part played by Sohier, who received 500 francs only—a slender enough commission for an honest broker on a total of 260,000 francs. Several of the knights and chamberlains of the Count

of Blois received as much; and a few months previously the Duke of Touraine had granted to the three chamberlains of the Count de Longueville a commission of 3000 francs upon a purchase that did not exceed 50,000 francs. Sohier, then, was not so richly rewarded as to justify a cry of treason in respect of his conduct.

Possibly, in thus blackening the parts played by Sohier and the Countess of Blois, Froissart hoped to diminish the responsibility of his ancient master. But his narrative swarms with errors less easily explained. The Duke of Burgundy, whom the chronicler shows us befooled by his nephews, and furious at their success, lent himself with the best will in the world to the business, which was accomplished by the agency of his servants. The "poor bargain" itself was, upon the whole, an excellent affair. The Count of Blois retained possession of his county during his life, as well as a right upon the subsidies; and, in all honesty, Guy de Châtillon might ask himself whether he were not acting in the interests of his cousin, become his heir, in leaving him as inheritance, instead of a county burthened with debt beyond the possibility of payment, a round sum of 200,000 francs.

In any case, the misunderstanding was profound between the houses of Bavaria and Châtillon. Froissart took part with his sovereign as against his master. He made, perhaps, a sort of duty of his ingratitude, for he had a lofty idea of the submission due to Cæsar, and he does not hesitate to declare that it is in this sense that the commandment—

"De tout ton cœur, de t'ame toute,
Ton seigneur ainme et si le doutte,"

should be interpreted, everyone being bound in honour to love and serve the lord of his own land. Honour then it was that commanded Froissart to leave his old master, become a little mad and overwhelmed with debts, and honour that compelled him to follow the more brilliant destinies of his sovereign, the Count of Hainault. The nobles of Hainault formed, as it were, one large family; and among so many cousins quarrels were not unfrequent. As these lords were, for the most part, more or less the patrons of our chronicler, he also had his share in their estrangements and reconciliations. It is probable that he saw no harm in thus passing from Robert of Namur to Wenceslas of Luxembourg, from Wenceslas to Guy de Blois, from Count Guy to Duke Aubert. He did not desert the noble family; he remained always faithful to the house of Queen Philippa. It was these lords, they or their fathers, who had peopled his childish dreams; and it was in gazing on them from afar that the little schoolboy of Valenciennes had been seized with that passion for chivalry which was to influence and direct all his life and all his work.

The books of the Chronicles, which had cost the Count of Blois so many fair florins, were to contain the notice of his death. It was in 1397 that Guy de Châtillon died at Avesnes, in Hainault. After the sale of Blois, he had sold also his historic castle of Beaumont, and ended his days in such destitution that the Countess was compelled to renounce the succession. Following the melancholy Flemish

custom, she laid her household keys on the coffin of her husband; and, confronted by this heartrending spectacle, Froissart loses his severity for a moment; he recalls the days of his youth. "The Count of Blois," he says, "gave diligent heed in his time that I, Sir John Froissart, should write and ordain this history. And much did it cost him in money; for so high and great a work could be done only at cost and great charges. God keep his soul! He was my lord and my master, and an honourable lord, and of great esteem. And no need was there for him to make the poor treaties and bargains that he made, and to sell his inheritance. But he lightly gave credence to those who desired neither good, nor honour, nor profit to him. . . . . Consider what great damage a lord or any other may do to his heirs by giving credence to evil counsel!" In spite of all, the lands of Hainault, of Holland and of Zealand, returned to their legitimate sovereign; and this it is, perhaps, that chiefly interests Froissart in the death of his former master. As for the old knight, they forgot to bury him in the splendid mausoleum that he had caused to be constructed during his lifetime; a Franciscan convent at Valenciennes afforded him the last hospitality. God keep his soul!

Proclamation of the renewal of the truce between the Kings of France and England, after the King of France's recovery.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RETURN TO ENGLAND.

TOWARDS the close of 1393 the Congress of Amiens, many hindrances notwithstanding, succeeded in concluding the truce so long projected between France and England. Froissart was present at the Congress; it was there, possibly, that he presented the Duke of Orleans, whom he detested, with a copy of *Méliador*. But a matter of greater interest to him must have been his meeting with two of the three surviving sons of his benefactress, Queen Philippa. Froissart has left us full-length portraits of these two royal dukes: John of Lancaster, subtle, ambiguous, a younger son without importance to begin with, but risen now to more than princely dignity, with pretensions to the throne itself; Thomas of Gloucester, the idol of the English people, a big bull-dog of a man, brutal and brave, hating to loosen hold on his prey. We see him pass, swearing and storming, through the last chapters of the Chronicles. In vain he cries with all his force against the cessation of war with so rich a country as France; no one any longer pays heed to a crabbed old man, and the truce is concluded in spite of him.

Ever since the meeting with the Sire de Coucy, in 1389,

Froissart had been awaiting the end of the war with impatience. More than once he speaks of how he had "great affection to go and see the realm of England. . . . . Therefore I desired to see the country, thinking thereby I should live much the longer; for I had not been there twenty-seven years before." Might one not almost believe that Froissart had forgotten the second redaction of the Chronicles, and that for these twenty-seven years past he had sat weeping by the waters of the rivers of Babylon?

And yet, at Lestinnes, at Chimay, at Blois, and even at Tarbes, who more French in his sympathies than the "chaplain" of Count Guy? Doubtless, the tearing asunder of old bonds in his rupture with Guy de Châtillon had given new value to those shining years of his youth, before his return to his own country. The old chronicler goes back to his first love. Nothing attached him any longer to France; nothing held him back any longer from England. His new masters were neither French nor English. The house of Hainault-Bavaria, holding its county of Hainault from France, its counties of Holland and Zealand from the Empire, knew how to bargain away its sympathies, and loved to play a double game. Nobody knew exactly what were the opinions of Duke Aubert, who paraded an English order of knighthood, and married his children to cousins of the King of France. Nor had Froissart now to reckon with the prejudices of Guy de Blois; there was nothing to detain him any longer; he decided to start on his journey.

"Many reasons moved me," he tells us. "One was, because in my youth I had been brought up in the Court

of the noble King Edward of England and of the noble Queen Philippa his wife, and among their children and the barons of England." (It is *en grand seigneur*, indeed, that the little secretary of former days speaks to us now!) "Therefore I desired to see the country; though I found not those lords that I left alive there, yet, at least, I should see their heirs, the which should do me much good to see, and also to justify the histories and matters that I had written of them. And, or I took my journey, I spake with my dear lords, Duke Aubert of Bavaria, Count of Hainault, and my Lord William his son, and with my right honourable Lady Jane, Duchess of Brabant and of Luxembourg." Froissart, in like manner, demanded letters of credit from Enguerrand de Coucy, and the Sire de Commignies; but, and the thing is significant, he asked nothing from Guy de Blois. Provided with recommendations to the King of England, as well as to the royal Dukes, Froissart started in the month of June 1394.

He took with him a manuscript bound in velvet, with silver-gilt clasps, containing "all the matters of amours and moralities that in four-and-twenty years before I had —by the help of God and of Love—made and compiled." It was a gift for the young King, so unhappy in love, who still wept his young wife, "and could not forget her, forasmuch as they had been married in their youth together." This King Froissart had seen twenty-seven years previously, when the child was christened in the cathedral church of Bordeaux.

To revisit the scene of a past happiness is, of all enter-

prises, the most hazardous. On the 12th July Froissart once more set foot on English soil. "And when I came to Dover, I found no man of my knowledge, it was so long sith I had been in England, and the houses were all newly changed, and young children were become men and women who knew me not, nor I them." Two days later, Froissart went on to Canterbury, where he saw the tomb of the Black Prince, and the empty coat of mail, which hangs above it still. The same day it was announced that the King was expected, and Froissart determined to await him; but when, the day following, the King arrived with his company of young lords and damosels, the poor canon of Chimay was "all abashed." Not one of the three uncles of the King, sedate persons whom he had known in his youth, were present. He saw none but young people and young ladies, all fresh and new. "And I was among them, and they seemed to me all new folks, I knew no person; the time was sore changed in England in twenty-eight years." Froissart asks news of his former friends, and the answer rings like the toll of a passing bell; dead, dead, dead! What happiness—when pronouncing at length the name of Sir Richard Stury, a great friend of the Despencers, with whom Froissart had often associated at their house, at the King's Court, and again, more recently, at the Court of Wenceslas in Brussels—what joy to learn that Sir Richard at least is still in this world, a courtier still, and member of the King's Council! "But he was not there"; and Froissart falls back on Sir Thomas Percy, who advised him to follow the royal *cortège*, and await a better moment for presenting his book.

Froissart then followed the Court from Leeds, in Kent, to Rochester; from Rochester to Eltham. And walking in the galleries of Eltham one Tuesday after dinner—thinking, no doubt, of many vanished things—the good canon fell in with an old knight, who looked at him, and whom he at once recognised: it was Sir Richard Stury! "He knew me anon, and yet in twenty-four years he had not seen me before; and the last time was in Colleberghe in Brussels, in the house of Count Wenceslas of Brabant." Long did the two old friends walk up and down together, talking of the past, and of matters of the present day. Sir Richard Stury instructs Froissart concerning the intrigues and jealousies that surround King Richard. Already mistrust is felt of the weak Edmund, Duke of York; of the too great popularity of young Henry of Lancester; and above all, of the violent and imperious character of Thomas, Earl of Gloucester, which urged the people onward to war and revolt.

Handsome and high-spirited, the young King attracted Froissart; his great fault, pride, the fault that was to be his ruin, did not ill become a prince who felt himself alone among enemies. Froissart's affection had always followed this son of the Black Prince, the grandson of his benefactress, whom he had known from the moment of his birth. Now at last he was to see him in person. Sir Richard Stury spoke to the King of the chronicler and of his book; the happy canon was summoned; he entered the royal chamber, holding his manuscript in his hand. Let us leave the chronicler's pen, delicate

as the brush of the illuminator, to depict for us this little scene.

"The King took the book, and when he opened it, it pleased him greatly, for it was fair enlumined and written, and covered with crimson velvet, with ten buttons of silver and gold, and roses of gold in the midst, with two great clasps, gilt, richly wrought. When the King demanded me whereof it treated, I made answer: 'Love!' Whereof the King was glad, and looked in it and read it in many places, for he could read and speak French very well. And he caused it to be taken by a knight to bear it into his secret chamber, and made me always better and better cheer."

CHAPTER XX.

AFFAIRS IN ENGLAND.

A PITY, indeed, that this handsome young King should so little resemble his grandfather, the great hero of the English arms, or his grandmother, the Queen who excelled all others in goodness. King Richard loved peace; and if he exacted the war-subsidies to the last penny, it was to spend them all on the splendours of his Court. King Richard cared nothing for his people; surrounded by his favourites, he neglected the affairs of state. There was no longer any justice in the land—"If the peasants complain of the injuries done to them, their lord being absent, they are not heard; there is none to do them right." Commerce was in danger. Troops of brigands, certain of impunity, began to show themselves upon the highroads, and the merchants no longer ventured to go from town to town, "a thing out of all custom and usage in England, where every one has learned to live in peace."

There was much, there was everything, to draw Froissart towards this King—haughty and gracious, autocratic and proud; but his admiration was not unmixed. No one, it is certain, can accuse the canon of Chimay of too great a weakness for the lower orders. He can never

express with sufficient warmth his horror of subjects who revolt against their lord; he finds, indeed, to designate them, epithets that are not a little gross. Established order is for him a thing divinely instituted; to try to disturb it a mere work of impiety. Nevertheless, Froissart was a native of Hainault; and something there was in his character of those turbulent Flemish, whom he condemns, but who were his near neighbours, and his brothers. He cannot support the spectacle of a tyrant, for tyranny, no less than revolution, seems to him a form of revolt brought about by pride against the will of God.

Richard of Bordeaux, lettered and amiable though he might be, was nevertheless a tyrant, and very ill-placed on the throne of a country so free as England. The people murmur when he wastes their subsidies on fine clothes for his favourites. "There was never before any King of England who spent so much on his house as he did, by 100,000 florins every year." The people tremble when the Duke of Gloucester disappears, assassinated; when the Earl of Arundel disappears, assassinated; when young Henry of Derby, the heir of the Lancasters, is banished from the kingdom. The King sees nothing, hears nothing, surrounded by his minions, "who were in such great favour, that none durst speak against them." He slept protected by a guard of 2000 archers, after the fashion of the tyrants of Lombardy, a fashion never used before by the kings of free England. Froissart loves this haughty and ill-advised King, "ce roi angoissieux de cœur," but he nevertheless sees — he cannot avoid seeing and hearing — the general disapprobation. With a heavy heart he

finds himself contemplating the end of a great race, and recalls, as one of the common folk in their superstition might recall, an ancient prophecy by Merlin, a page of *Brut*, which had been interpreted as promising the Crown of England to the house of Lancaster. The King was doing all in his power to realise that prophecy. A sudden and secret death struck down all who dared to blame his conduct. Disregarding the impatience of his subjects, he insisted on marrying a French princess; the national treasure was being wasted in insane extravagances; he profited by no lesson. It was too soon after the reign of Edward III. Poor canon of Chimay! He had come to England, with his old child's heart still young and swelling with hope; he goes back, saddened to death, seeing written everywhere—"Ichabod, the glory has departed."

On leaving England, Froissart returned to Hainault, to Chimay, or le Quesnoy, or possibly to Valenciennes. "When I shall come into Hainault, which country I am of," he says to the English squire, Henry Cristède, "know that I shall be examined of many things"; and he speaks of the curiosity felt by Duke Aubert of Bavaria, as well as by his son William, concerning the English expedition to Ireland. These are now his "dear lords"; and we hear nothing of the old Guy de Châtillon, dying slowly in his castle of Avesnes.

Under the protection of his new patrons, Froissart sets to work to finish the fourth book of the Chronicles. Living far retired from the current of great events, he describes the insignificant war conducted in Friesland by the

Count of Hainault and his son; he speaks of the bad news that constantly comes from across the straits, of the exile of Henry of Lancaster, of the welcome given to the young Prince at the Court of France, of the invitation sent to him by his "brother and cousin" William of Ostrevant, "to come and divert himself in Hainault, and to remain there, which would give great pleasure to him and also to the Countess of Ostrevant, his wife." The invitation is not accepted; there is talk of marrying the young Prince to Marie de Berry, widow of Louis de Châtillon; and he has too many affairs on his hands to bury himself in a dull provincial life. But Richard II. interferes with a high hand, and breaks off the exile's marriage. In Hainault, as in France, people murmur against so much tyranny, till they learn at last that the tyrant is punished, that Henry of Lancaster has invaded England, that he has made the King prisoner, that the King has ceded to him his kingdom and his crown. Finally, the news comes of the mysterious assassination of King Richard II. The pen drops from Froissart's hand in horror. It is the "Finis" of the Chronicles.

The chronicler, and that is sad, hardly dares speak of this murder, which fills him with shuddering dismay, and a sort of religious terror. Kill the anointed of the Lord, the grandson of Philippa of Hainault! The priest and the man alike are in revolt against such a sacrilege. But how stigmatise as he deserves an usurper who is on the best terms with the Count of Ostrevant, a sacrilegious assassin, to whom Duke Aubert, immediately after the

The funeral of Richard II.

murder, addresses his affectionate congratulations? Since he must keep silence on so great a crime, the chronicler will at least never more write of anything in the world.

A few words added, as though in haste, relate the "subtraction of obedience" (*soustraction d'obédience*) pronounced against Benedict XIII. in 1398, and the deposition of the King of Germany, which took place in 1400. The end of the schism, the accession of a Duke of Bavaria to the Imperial throne, can extort from the weary pen of the Chronicler a few halting words only, brief and incomplete. The King is dead. The Chronicles, like the century, close with the assassination of Richard II.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE THIRD REDACTION OF THE "CHRONICLES."

FROISSART survived some years, at least, the unhappy Prince for whom he dared not weep. Certain phrases at the end of the Chronicles indicate that he also survived his patron, Duke Aubert, who died the 13th December 1404. Unfortunately, nothing is known of these latter years of the illustrious writer's life.

A few words said in passing on the state of the fortifications of le Quesnoy might lead one to suppose that Froissart in his old age frequented the castle of the last of his masters. Doubtless he may have held on his knee little Madame Jacobée of Hainault, whose touching history has been recorded by Robert Browning in the most charming of his dramatic pieces, *Colombe's Birthday*. On the other hand, it is possible that he may have ended his days at Chimay, of which place he was canon and treasurer. The learned Baron de Kervyn, so fertile in hypotheses, draws an attractive picture of the scene in which Froissart's extreme old age may have been passed.

"Monastic houses, situated behind the collegiate church and exempt from all taxation, were reserved for the

canons. They were reached by two flights of steps, a small garden lying in front of each. . . . From the windows could be seen a deep ravine, where smiling meadows lay spread beneath the shade of venerable oaks The freshness of the landscape added to the silence and the solemn calm of the retreat.

"Besides the dean and twelve canons, the chapter included a treasurer, who received all the offerings in wax made at funerals. . . . He enjoyed the rights of *basse justice*. . . . There was a mayor under Froissart."

All this may be; but there is nothing to assure us that the canon of Chimay, who loved the world so well, acquired rural tastes in his old age. Perhaps he may have preferred to the green valley of Chimay, with all its treasure of white wax, that house in Valenciennes where he had already worked so much at the Chronicles; perhaps he breathed his last in some turret of le Quesnoy. The same obscurity that enveloped his birth came to surround his latest years.

But in whatever spot he may have ended his days, it was in a state of honourable ease, occupied to the last with grave and noble thoughts. For although all trace of Froissart's private life is lost to us from the time of his return from England, a happy discovery, made by Baron Kervyn, acquaints us with the last occupations of Froissart's green old age. Being in Rome in January 1860, Baron Kervyn requested permission to examine a manuscript of the Chronicles, the existence of which had been matter of knowledge for many years; to his great astonishment, he found himself in presence of a new version, of which this

copy was the sole representative. The manuscript of the Vatican contains a last redaction of the first book of the Chronicles up to 1350. It belongs to the extreme old age of the chronicler; on this point the indefatigable science and critical acumen of the lamented M. Siméon Luce support the intuitive perception of Baron Kervyn. The essential aim of the third redaction seems to have been to efface from the first book of the Chronicles those passages, too numerous and too important, which Froissart had borrowed from his predecessor, Jean-le-Bel. At the beginning of his career Froissart had been well satisfied to continue the work of a writer so highly esteemed as the canon of Liège; he felt no reluctance to shine at times with a borrowed light. But, as the Chronicle grew, and became by degrees a thing of glorious and lasting fame, so the desire increased to call it wholly his own. Froissart's last effort then, was to disengage from the mind and hand of another the commencement of the great work of his life.

Old people love to talk of the past; but in relating their reminiscences they make a thousand allusions to the present. In this way the redaction of Rome gives us, scattered among its original matter, a number of piquant details upon the origin of the Hundred Years' War; upon the little war of Friesland of 1401; upon the fortifications of le Quesnoy in the beginning of the fifteenth century; and upon the mother of Edward III., that woman "so sweet-tongued and feminine." Here Froissart relates at greater length than elsewhere the enchantments of his youth, his journey to Scotland, his rides through England with young Despencer. The sunny hours of bygone years

came back in these narratives of his latest days. And yet these memories are not, perhaps, what is most precious in the manuscript of the Vatican.

Here for the first, as also for the last time, we feel in the chronicler something of the fibre of the historian. Never before had the quick and alert spirit of Froissart risen so high, nor shown itself of such serious capacity. He penetrates to the profound meaning of things; he traces effects to their origin. The nations of Europe whose picturesque diversity has afforded him so much entertainment, appear to him now as so many personalities, each one with its character and its destiny. How severe and masterly, for example, his portrait of the English to whom he cannot forgive the murder of their King; how weighty the charge, mingled with praises, brought against that strong and vigorous race, who cannot and who will not submit to the yoke of a tyrant. This is what he says :—

"The English suffer patiently for a time, but in the end they pay back cruelly. The lord who governs them rises each day and sleeps at night, at too great peril to himself; for never will they love him if he be not victorious, nor if he love not arms and to war against his neighbour, and especially against those who are stronger and richer than they themselves. . . . The English delight and comfort themselves in battles and in killing. Too covetous and envious are they of the goods of others, and cannot perfectly or naturally join themselves in love or in alliance with any strange nation. . . . And where the people wish to show their

power, the nobles cannot long stand against them. Nevertheless, they have for long been well agreed together, for the nobles ask nothing of the people but what is reasonable. Also it would not be endured that they should take, without payment, so much as an egg or a fowl. . . . . The gentlemen are noble and loyal, but the common people fell, dangerous, proud, and disloyal. The king cannot tax his people; no, the people would not suffer it. There are certain fixed ordinances and compacts, and by these the king is aided; and in times of war the compact is doubled. . . . . England is, of all countries in the world, the best protected. Otherwise the English could not and would not know how to live. It is altogether necessary that a king, who is their lord, should order himself by them, and incline himself greatly to their will. . . . . Those of London are the most powerful in all England . . . . and when the Londoners agree together, none dare resist. They can do more than all the remainder of England. . . . . They said, those of London, 'We have nothing to do with a slothful and sluggish king, too careful of his ease and his pleasures; we would sooner kill half-a-hundred, one after the other, than not have a king to our mind!' . . . . The nature of the English is such, that they always fear that they will be deceived. . . . . They are cruel and haughty. . . . . There is not, under heaven, a people so dangerous, nor so marvellous to hold, nor more varying, than are the English. As acquaintance they are fair, and are of a fair semblance; but no one who is wise should trust them too far."

What an admirable historical portrait! All the history of the haughty, democratic and free nation is contained in essence and in epitome in these few lines. And notwithstanding the lofty and severe objectivity of the picture, how plainly one discerns at the same time the stifled anger, the long-cherished rancour of the great artist who traces it. He has not forgiven those who assassinated the grandson of Queen Philippa. This charge against the English people, this denunciation of the murder of Richard II., which the protégé of Duke Aubert had not the right to pronounce, the historian of Edward III. finds means to thunder forth; and, unable to reach the illustrious criminal, he hurls his bolt at the entire race.

CHAPTER XXII.

"LES VRAYES CHRONIQUES" OF MESSIRE JEAN-LE-BEL.

WHEN, after the death of the unhappy Guy de Blois, his possessions were sold by auction, Duke Aubert of Bavaria purchased two volumes for the considerable sum of 26 livres. "Deux grands livres des Wieres de Franche et D'Angleterre." What were these books? Were they the Chronicles of Froissart or those of Jean-le-Bel?

The presence of Jean de Croy's coat-of-arms on the manuscripts of the second redaction made by Froissart would seem to indicate that the original manuscript was still in the Castle of Chimay when it came to Jean by right of inheritance; the book may probably have made part of the dowry of the Countess of Blois, who ended her days at Chimay. On the other hand, it is almost certain that Guy de Blois had in his possession at Beaumont a manuscript of the *Chroniques* of Jean-le-Bel; they had been written for his grandfather, Jean de Beaumont, of whom the canon of Liège was "moult ami et secret." This book, belonging to the contents of a castle already put up for sale, may have been included in the auction. It was then, probably, this

famous and much-coveted book that Duke Aubert bought at the sale of Guy de Blois.

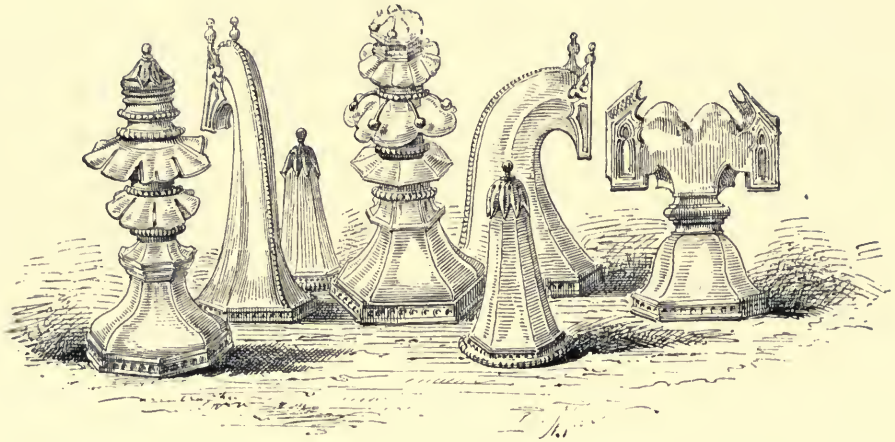
The *Chroniques* of Messire Jean-le-Bel was in its time a work of great celebrity. Jean de Hemricourt, Jean d'Outremeuse, and, above all, Froissart, have preserved for us the fame of its author; but the work itself had been lost for centuries when, in 1847, a Belgian scholar, M. Polain, discovered the first chapters incorporated in the immense Chronicle of Jean d'Outremeuse. Fourteen years later M. Paul Meyer, a young pupil of the École des Chartes, in which he now holds the post of director, found in the library of Châlons-sur-Marne a manuscript in folio, without the author's name, and catalogued under the title: "Histoire vraye et notable des nouvelles guerres et choses avenues depuis l'an 1326, jusqu'en l'an 1361 en France, en Angleterre," etc. M. Paulin Paris, to whom this treasure trove was announced, did not hesitate, on the information communicated to him, to recognise in it the work of Jean-le-Bel. It was a discovery of the highest importance.

At a first glance, the book might be taken for a first redaction of the first book of the Chronicles; it has to be read throughout to understand in what degree Froissart robbed his precursor. Many marvellous pages, some indeed of the finest in the Chronicles, have to be referred back to their original author. In the first book the sombre and magnificent description of the passage of the Tyne by the English; the story of the death of the King of Scotland, and how he charged the Douglas to bear his heart to the Holy Land, "seeing the body cannot go thither"; the touching episode of the ransom of the

burghers of Calais by the tears of the good Queen Philippa; all are due to the strong and tragic genius of Jean-le-Bel. In the first chapters of the Chronicles almost everything that seems impressed with a sombre and restrained emotion comes from the same source. All that Froissart does is to soften the abrupt temper of his rough predecessor, or to verify certain details of geography and history. When Jean-le-Bel remarks in relating the passage of the Tyne: "There were certain of the English drowned, *which mattered very little to us*," Froissart omits this not very evangelical reflection.

Nothing demonstrates better the essential difference between the spirit of the two chroniclers than their treatment of the episode of Edward III. and the Countess of Salisbury. The charming pages in which Froissart introduces this subject in his first manuscripts were taken entirely from Jean-le-Bel. In the third version, that of Rome, he passes over the incident in silence; but in the second redaction he adds a new and delightful page, stamped with the mark of his lively and world-tempered spirit. Arrived at the Countess's castle (he goes there to protect her against the assaults of the Scotch), King Edward requests his charming hostess to do him the favour to play with him at chess.

"At the commencement of the game, the King, who desired that something of his should remain with the lady, attacked her, laughing: 'Lady, what may it please you to put on the game?' And the lady replied: 'Sire, and you?' Then the King laid down a very beautiful ring that he wore on his finger, set with a large ruby. Then said the lady: 'Sire, sire, I have no ring so rich as yours,



MEDIÆVAL CHESSMEN.

'Lady,' quoth the King, 'such as it is, lay it down, and pay no heed to the difference.'

"Then the Countess, in order to do the King's will, drew from her finger a ring of gold which was of no great value. They played together at chess, the lady according to her ability the best she could, that the King might not deem her too simple and ignorant; and the King dissembling, for he did not play the best he could. And whilst they played, he so gazed at the lady that she was all abashed, and allowed a castle to be taken from her. And when the King saw that she had lost a castle or a knight, or whatever it might be, he also allowed something of his to be taken, to set the lady right again in her game."

Thus they played together, the fair lady and the amorous king, during some exquisite hours; the King, though he might lose the game, desiring at least to be happy in his love. The Countess gains the ring, but refuses out of courtesy to keep it; and the King, provoked, throws it to her waiting-maid. And so he takes leave: "Lady, you remain in your castle, and I go to pursue mine enemies!" But the fair face of the lady haunts the King in the midst of battlefields. He passes long hours in his tent: "Shall I be loyal? Shall I be happy?" and dares not make his choice.

What does Messire Jean-le-Bel give us in exchange for this engaging picture? Under his iron-mailed hand the whole thing assumes a tragic aspect. In a few words he sets before us the unconquerable passion of Edward III., and the unequal struggle between his conscience and the wishes that agitate him. Sombre and jealous, the King

sends the Earl of Salisbury into Brittany, as David sends the husband of Bathsheba to the front rank of the battle. What anguish and what baseness in the heart of the King, who cannot refrain from going to see the wife of his loyal servant, "to look whether she be not still fairer than before." Yes, she is more beautiful than ever! What torture to watch her thus coming and going to and fro, free in the midst of his men-at-arms. Then at night, in the darkness of the castle, "when all the people were asleep, and the noble lady was in her chamber," the haggard King rises, commanding his astounded chamberlains that on pain of death—by the cord—they should not disturb him in his work of Tarquin and of tyrant. And he enters by force the chamber where she whom he loves is sleeping—and goes away in the grey morning, remorse in his heart and shame on his dishonoured brow.

When the Earl of Salisbury returns from the wars, what misery for the wife who adores him! She tells him all her sad history, and he looks at her, overwhelmed with despair. "Of a surety, lady," he says, "what is done cannot be undone. I can no longer abide there, dishonoured, where I have had so great honour; I will go to some other land there to pass the remnant of my days. And you will remain here, like the virtuous lady I believe you to be, and the half of my land will be for you and for my child, your son, whom you will nourish and bring up. For I think, surely, you will never see me more. And the other half I shall have for my use, wherever I may be—for so long as I shall live. But I think it will not be for long.—And God grant that it may be soon, according to my desire."

Thus these noble lovers bid each other farewell, at night in their chamber, standing beside the dishonoured couch, "his mourning on one side, and that virtuous lady on the other." The brave Earl goes to commend his son to the King in a few terrible and ironical words, in which there still live for us the anger and the grief of an honourable man; then takes the road to Spain, and, since he has no longer any King, gets himself killed for his God before Algesiras. As to the Countess, she did not long survive him. "For no virtuous lady could live long in such distress."

This gloomy history is, possibly, only a legend without authority. Froissart contradicts it; and Jean-le-Bel, as we know, did not love the English. "Jean-le-Bel," says Froissart, "speaks of this amour with less discretion than I should use." (Do we not hear the very accent, as it were, of the secretary of Queen Philippa?) "And I declare that I am much acquainted with England . . . and I have never heard this story." So be it: and it is possible, indeed, that both Jean-le-Bel and Froissart occasionally drew on their imagination. But, at least, the differing quality of that imagination is shown us by the histories they drew from it.

The men are as different as their work. We know Froissart, his easy and amiable character, his lively, just, and observing mind, his exquisite and inexhaustible genius —inexhaustible as the chirp and chatter of birds in the early morning. Froissart will live to be read as Herodotus is still read; for both one and the other offer to a world grown old a clear cup in which still sparkle some drops from the fountain of Youth. In the heavy pewter goblet of Jean-le-Bel, the acrid wine has some nameless flavour

of blood; but it is a strengthening beverage, a beverage for rough soldiers and brave and hospitable lords. Canon though he was, Messire Jean-le-Bel had been also in his time a mighty captain before the Lord. He had more than once followed Jean de Beaumont to the field of battle; he had valiantly gone through the hard campaign in Scotland. At Liège he kept open house for all knights and prelates—he himself being as much one as the other. Tall and big, and "personable de riches étoffes," he always wore a knight's dress, ornamented with numerous jewels and precious stones. "On common days of the week he never went to church without sixteen or twenty persons who accompanied him. . . . On festivals (*as jours solempnes*) he had often as great a rout after him as after the bishop of Liège; for he would have fifty, or, at the least, forty followers." Thus in his Wallon dialect Jean de Hemricourt describes him to us. All these people dined at his table and dined gaily; Jean-le-Bel, expert in all sports, and in every art practised by a man of breeding, was also past master in every kind of pleasure and amusement. Jean de Hemricourt, who says nothing of his *Chroniques*, praises greatly his skill in making "lais, chanchons et vierlais." He inherited many rich possessions, and had many years in which to enjoy them; for he lived his somewhat ostentatious life to the age of eighty-four. In his old age he had two natural sons, to whom he bequeathed great wealth; the younger, hearty and joyous like his father, become in his turn canon of Liège, and composed a volume of *Rêveries touchant les Blasons*, which has not come down to us.

From this warlike canon Froissart borrows to his profit almost everything except—and the exception is curious—the descriptions of battles. No one has ever described battles like the peaceable Froissart; Jean-le-Bel, who knew so well how to handle the sword, is in this respect greatly his inferior. Compare the battle of Crécy, depicted though it was by the canon of Liège from the French, the tragic point of view, compare it with the picture drawn by Froissart on the authority of the English knights. As to the battle of Poitiers, somewhat meagrely described in the *Vrayes Chroniques* Froissart has made of it a panorama of ininimitable power and life. It is one of the masterpieces of history.

From the battle of Poitiers onwards, Froissart consults Jean-le-Bel no more. Too young hitherto in age and judgment, he sees henceforward with his own eyes; he takes his flight. From year to year, in retouching the first chapters of his work, he endeavours to eliminate the passages borrowed from his predecessor. In the redaction of Rome, little remains of the canon of Liège. None the less, it is the first redaction that established the glory of Froissart, it is the first redaction that survives; without it, indeed, how many imperishable possessions should we not have lost? Ask any reader to name the finest pages of the Chronicles. Nine times out of ten, he will mention the death of the King of Scotland, the redemption of the burgesses of Calais, the battle of Poitiers, the death of Aymérigot Marchès, and the journey to Béarn. But of these five masterpieces the first two are from the iron hand of Jean-le-Bel.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ESTIMATE OF THE CHRONICLES.

A CHRONICLE written down from day to day, compiled on journeys, on the high road or in inns, and on the authority of chance encounters, cannot pretend to the exactitude of a work of learning and research, composed in the leisure of the study. Sir John Froissart, canon of a provincial town, was not a man to trouble himself with diplomatic documents; he did not even, in recording what he heard, wait for his information to be complete. His work was in the nature of a journal, a series of sketches done on the spot, after nature or from hearsay.

Nevertheless, a hundred, nay, even fifty years ago, it would have been thought strange to throw any doubt on Froissart's authority as an historian. It was the publication in its complete form of the "Chronicle of Charles VI." that first shook his reputation for historical veracity. The Monk of Saint Denis, often better informed, always better balanced in judgment, is too frequently in disagreement with Froissart for our chronicler not to suffer by comparison. Since then the publication of the Chronicle of the four first Valois,

of the Chronicle of Jean-le-Bel, of different Belgian Chronicles, and, above all, the minute study of various archives, have laid a foundation only too broad and solid for a criticism of Froissart's narrative. The value of his strange geography and fantastic chronology is sufficiently appreciated now; and the days are distant when genuine scholars—a dom Plancher or an André du Chesne—displayed prodigies of ingenuity in order to reconcile incontestable documents with the statements of their infallible chronicler. Nothing is more instructive than to read certain chapters of Froissart—that of the "*aatine*" (wager) for example, or that of the journey in Languedoc—having at hand an itinerary composed in accordance with the accounts of the Duke of Burgundy and the accounts of Orleans. How, for example, give credence to that brief and unexpected dismissal of his uncle of Burgundy by the King, within sight of the gates of Avignon, when we know that at that very moment the Duke was at Arras? So much the worse for the truth; the eloquent passage remains, and the disgrace of the Duke of Burgundy has passed into history. Or, again, that wild wager between the King and his young brother to ride from Montpellier to Paris in four days. Our itinerary shows us irrefutably that the ride was merely from Mussy l'Évêque to the capital (a distance of scarcely twenty-two leagues). But what does it matter? The legend of the "*aatine*" has none the less remained one of the most popular of the life of Charles VI.

Let us admit that the Chronicles of Froissart abound in

similar fantasies, and that it is always worth while to check them by the documentary evidence of the archives, so abundant, and so easy of access in these days. It is not, therefore, to be supposed that the luminous testimony of the texts will always put the chronicler to confusion. On the contrary, it will increase our admiration for his excellent report of the wars of Spain and Portugal; it will prove him at least a little more exact than his contemporaries in his narrative of the war in Gascony and the campaigns in Scotland; and, apart from some few confused details, some incorrect dates, how much valuable information does he not give us in his account of French politics during the last decade of the fourteenth century.

It is an admission made a little against the inclination of the author of these lines, an inveterate Orleanist . . . . of five hundred years ago. For Froissart is invariably Burgundian, and his appreciation of current events is coloured throughout by party spirit. He has done incalculable harm to the reputation of Louis I., Duke of Orleans, and all that he says concerning that prince is both malicious and perfidious. Froissart, who always reflects in an extraordinary degree the opinion of those about him, gives only the odious and distorted picture that the Burgundian party, in the thick of the quarrel, made of the house of Orleans. The ambitious young Duke, almost guilty of fratricide, the Duchess a poisoner of children, the father-in-law a sorcerer —all are there! Such complete malevolence throws suspicion on everything that it dictates. And yet Froissart is not a party man; he has no definite theory upon the French policy, there is in him almost nothing that recalls

the temper of mind of a genuine statesman, like Philippe de Commines. If he is Burgundian, it is simply by reason of neighbourhood and geography. The Duke of Burgundy, husband of the heiress of Flanders, and father-in-law to the heirs of Hainault, belonged to the Netherlands no less than to France; there were a thousand ties between him and the protégé of Duke Aubert. William of Hainault, Count of Ostrevant, maintained the most intimate relations with his father-in-law of Burgundy, and it was probably through him that Froissart was kept so singularly well informed of all the projects of the court of Dijon. In any case, a minute study of the Chronicles of Froissart is indispensable to any one desiring a clear comprehension of the intrigues of the Duke of Burgundy and the motives by which he was actuated.

On that side, the Chronicles frequently touch the very core of the history of France. Let us take, for example, what in the fourteenth century was called "la voie de fait"—the project of putting an end to the schism, by replacing the antipope Clement VII. in the See of Rome through intervention of the French arms. This vast design, which came to nothing, and which would have changed the face of history for France as well as for the Church—this audacious project was at one moment equally dear to the Duke of Orleans and to the Duke of Burgundy. Froissart shows himself well informed in respect of this mysterious affair; he is acquainted with many details that were kept secret then, and have been brought to light in our time by M. Durrieu and M. Jarry. He suspects the intervention of the King of England, who, in fact, brought about the

miscarriage of this dangerous project. And, above all, he brings us acquainted with the temper of the court at that period—the chivalric ardour, the young enthusiasm with which preparations were made for an expedition, political indeed, in its aim, yet, before everything else, a religious war, a crusade. Concerning another affair, of a nature equally secret and delicate, the project of a marriage between the young brother of Charles VI. and the heiress of Hungary, Froissart is singularly well informed. It was probably through Philip of Burgundy, or, at least, through someone forming part of his council, that he gained knowledge of these mysteries.

But it is above all through his sketches of the men of his time—those portraits firm, terse, solid, and vigorously struck off as so many medals of the Renaissance—that the past lives again before our eyes. That variety, that inexhaustible vivacity, illuminate history as though with a light from within. What a typical picture of the cruel dishonest agent, domineering and unscrupulous, and yet after his fashion loyal to his master, he gives us in the unhappy Bétisac! What dignity, worthy of a Vandyck, in his portrait of Gaston Phœbus, Count of Foix! What shadow and what light in this sketch of the old English general, the brave and churlish Thomas, Duke of Gloucester.

"My uncle of Gloucester is too dangerous and strange," said King Richard, who in truth had reason to mistrust the terrible old soldier. Could Shakespeare himself have shown us better than our chronicler has done, this violent and choleric soul, this god Mars, as it were, grown old, and tormented by attacks of the gout?

"The nobles of France knew that the Duke of Gloucester was proud and hard in all matters of agreement, and showed him therefore all the signs of love and honour that they could. *He took indeed all the jewels that they gave him, but ever the root of bitterness remained in his heart.* Nor never for anything the French could do, could they soften him, for he remained always fell and cruel in his answers. . . . .

"He spoke and said: 'These vapours of Frenchmen be so full of pride and presumption that they can come to no good conclusion of any enterprise they take in hand! I cannot tell why we should have truce with them; for if the war were open, we should now make them better war than ever was made before; for as now all the flower of chivalry of France is either taken or slain (at Nicopolis). And I swear by God, if I may live two year in good health, the war shall be renewed! I will neither spare for truce, respite, nor assurance, for in time past the Frenchmen have kept no promise with us, but have falsely and craftily taken away the heritage of the Duchy of Aquitaine . . . . . which oftentimes I have showed to the council of France, when we met and communed together on the frontier of the marches of Calais; but always they flourished their intents with so sweet words that mine opinion was not regarded nor believed. Ah, if there were a good head king of England, that desired the war as well as I do, and would recover his heritage, he should find in England a hundred thousand archers and six thousand men of arms ready apparelled to serve him and to pass the sea. But it is not so! There is no such king in England as now that will

make war. He will not make war. He will not! He is too heavy: he careth for nothing but meat and drink. . . . This is no life for men of war that will desire to have honour by prowess of deeds of arms. . . . . It was not so in the days of good King Edward my father, and in my brother's days, the Prince of Wales. . . . . His people compare him with them, which shortly will lead to a rebellion within this realm. There was never so good time to make war in France as now, for he that calleth himself King of France is young, hot, and of great courage and enterprise; he would surely fight . . . . what end soever fell thereof. And the people of this country, who love nothing so well as to have battle with those richer than themselves, would fight boldly for so rich and great a spoil, such as in time past our people had in the days of good King Edward my father, and in my brother's days, the Prince of Wales. Still I remember me of the last journey I made into France . . . . .'"

And the old Duke goes off into interminable reminiscences of the good time when "the French, who are rich, were pillaged," and not the miserable Irish, "who are a poor and bad people, and have a very poor and uninhabitable country." Alas! the laurels are faded!

This then, is the real value that the Chronicles have for us. We do not deny Froissart such claims as he may have on that fine title of historian that he is so fond of bestowing on himself; but as an historian he is less sagacious than the Monk of Saint Denis, and less exact than the anonymous author of the Chronicles of the Quatre Valois. It is as a chronicler that he shines

without a rival; even when we know him to be in flagrant disagreement with the truth, we cannot but delight in his admirable and naïve inventions. And for once that we consult him on the wars of the Peninsula, or the "Voie de Fait," how often do we not read and read again the pages that contain the tirade of Thomas of Gloucester, the game of chess of the beautiful Countess of Salisbury, or that story of the women-fairies of Cephalonia, worthy of being enshrined in one of Shakespeare's comedies:—

The Count of Nevers and the lords of France, returning from Nicopolis, cast anchor in the haven of the Island of Cephalonia—"And there landed and found great numbers of ladies and damosels who had the seignory of that isle; they received the Frenchmen with great joy, and brought them to pass the time about the island, which is right fair and pleasant. And such as know the condition of that isle affirm that the fairies and the nymphs be much conversant there, and that some of the merchants of Venice and Genoa, and of other lands, such as have arrived there, and tarried a season to eschew the danger of the sea, have said that they have seen some of the fairies there, and have proved their words to be true. Right joyously the ladies received the Count of Nevers, and the lords of France . . . because they were noble knights and men of honour, for there not accustomed none other to be conversant among them, but merchants. This isle is not only inhabited by women; there be also men among them, but the women have the sovereignty and chief rule there; they are work-

women in silk work, and make cloths of silk, so subtle and so well that there is none other work like it; and the men of the island cannot make them, but they carry them out to sea, where they think to have most profit, and the women abide still in the isle. And this isle is of that condition that no man dare approach it to do there any evil, for whosoever doth are perished; and that hath been seen and proved. And therefore these ladies endure ever in peace and doubt no man; also they are marvellous sweet, gentle, amiable, and humble: and when they will, they speak with the fairies, and be in their company."

What purity as of dew lies on these few lines! A page like this, and many others fresh as this, lavishly scattered throughout Froissart's work, is restful as a fairy hand laid on the feverish pulse of our time. These are things that will never lose their value; rather their value increases, for it is in growing old that we perceive the beauty of the simple freshness of youth. This freshness, this soul, as it were, of a child captivated by the marvellous, Froissart possessed in perfection; and at the same time, the clearest vision, the keenest ear, the most just and discerning mind. His greatest fault—and the fault is one that stamps him a poet—is, that in contemplating the drama of life he did not perceive the truth, and the truth only; but that his Chronicles reflect the world as it is seen at twenty—more living, more beautiful, more ugly, more varied—half a reality, and half a dream.

THE END.