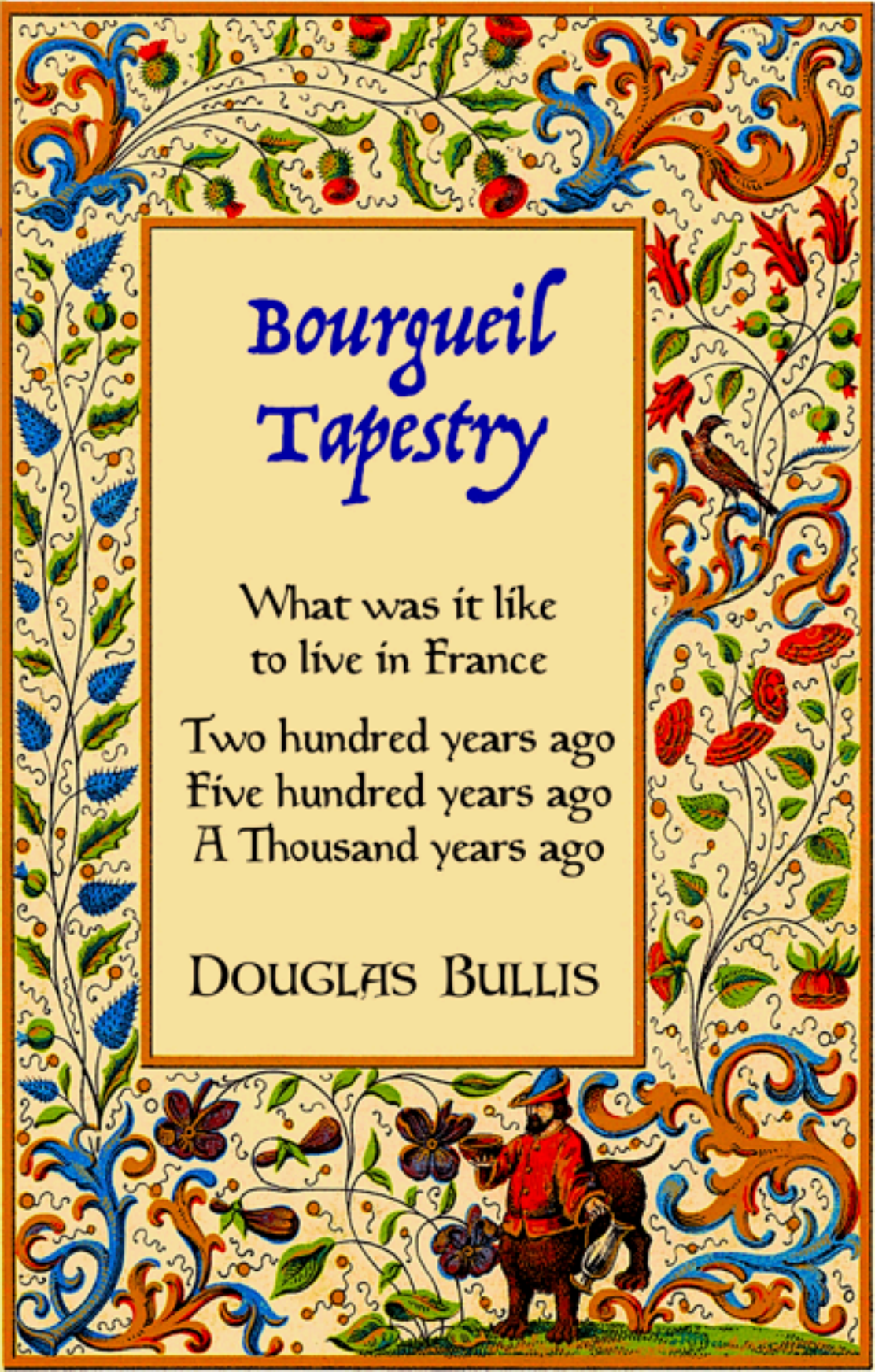
Bourgueil Tapestry

What was it like
to live in France

Two hundred years ago
Five hundred years ago
A Thousand years ago

DOUGLAS BULLIS



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This image introduces Part 1, Vision 4 of Hildegard von Bingen's final work, the *Liber Divinorum Operum* or *Book of Divine Works*. It is the first accurate depiction of the earth as a sphere whose centre of gravity is responsible for objects on the surface growing perpendicular to the horizon. She completed the first copy of the *Divinorum Operum* about 1173. Hildegard (lower left) sketched in wax tablets that were later transcribed and illuminated on vellum. See p.207 for links to the original sources of the images reproduced in this book.

Bourgueil Tapestry

The Bayeux Tapestry tells the story of a few weeks in the lives of ordinary soldiers and nobles in the year 1066.

Bourgueil Tapestry tells the stories of a single clan whose name originated in 1003 and was last recorded in 1905.

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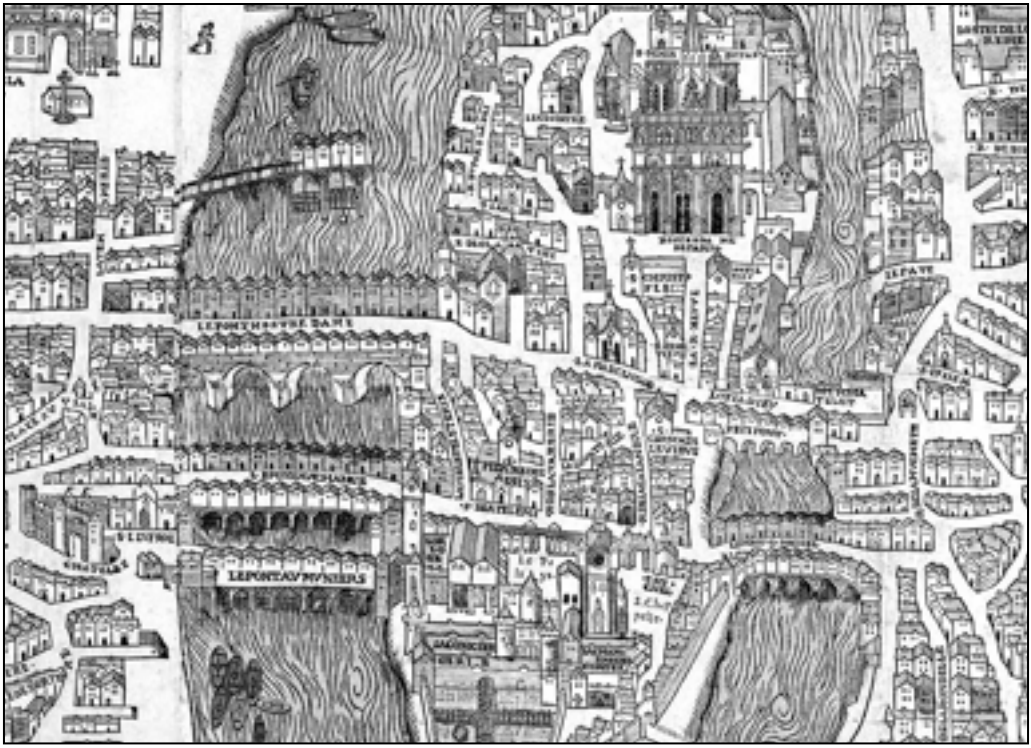


Paris, Ponts de l'ile de la Cité c.1550, detail from Civitates Orbis Terrarum, c,1572.

Introduction

These stories are a nine century Everyman's version of the Bayeux Tapestry. We re-create the quotidian lives of a French clan between 1003 and 1905. The choice of the locale of Bourgueil was an accident. It joins an honoured fraternity of accidents that go on to make history.

The famed 70 meter (230 feet) length of Bayeux text-and-image work now ensconced in its own museum portrays with accuracy and diversity the lives of soldiery and nobles during a few months surrounding the year 1066. We see how they felled trees and turned the wood into ships, transported and rode horses, cooked and ate skewers of meat, burned down the homes of the local peasantry, and of course, slaughtered each other in the pursuit of victory. The Bayeux Tapestry (which is technically an embroidery, since it is not woven) is an extended portrait of ordinary soldiers going about their daily duties.

But what about the rest of France and the other thousand years of its history? There are endless accounts of famous names, places, and buildings, but these are usually circumscribed by specific dates or events — not to mention a preoccupation with wealth and status. What about the everyday lives of ordinary people across those centuries? Where is their weaving in text and image?

We present a modest beginning here. *Bourgueil Tapestry* re-creates nine hundred years of ordinary lives using the portmanteau of a centuries-old French family name Lefief. The name likely originated not as a surname but as an identity of fealty common to numerous serfs in a given community. It would identify the class of landless peasants who owed fealty in produce and labor in exchange for a place to build a home and raise a family. The fief holder was usually a local lord but sometimes a monastery.

In the early centuries of the medieval era Lefief was a common identity if not a surname. The word would have designated a sizeable

proportion of any given populace. Yet by 2021 only 348 people, or 1 in 190,870, shared that surname in France. Why did such a common name become such an uncommon one? Did the people themselves change? Or did the world around them change and they adopted more precise surnames based on their *lieux d'origin*, skill set, or role in commerce?

Bourgueil Tapestry acquired its name because of a misstep. In 1975 this author inadvertently stepped on two faded studio portraits from 1905 that were lying on the ground at a flea market in Bourgueil, France. Feeling responsible for having broken them, he bought them for the grand sum of five centimes (about one pence).

The words, 'Lefief, Jacques, Marie-Claire, 1905' were in faded pencil on the back of the husband's picture. The Lefief's surname, humble dress, and ill-at-ease demeanor inspired this entire book. How did this couple live? What did they do day by day as they progressed through their years? What happened to all the Lefiefs who preceded them from the origins of the name to the day these pictures were taken? What happened to the couple afterwards? Did their surname survive them in the form of progeny?

These prompted larger questions: What part of the past is worth preserving and what may be forgotten? Which events in any given life are important to others and which are irrelevant to any but the person who experienced them? What duty do we have to commemorate our ancestors given how little of themselves they communicated to us?

And the toughest question of all: how do we avoid projecting the values of our world onto lives which were shaped by very different circumstances?

There was only one way to accomplish all these goals effectively: tell their stories with pictures. Written words are tinged with the views of their writers — just as this assemblage of words is tinged with the selectivity of the events researched and the author's travel diaries.

The structure employed here is straightforward: each chapter isolates a single day in the life of a single member of the Lefief clan, one day per century. Walk alongside them or watch them from afar as they go

through that day. What was their work? What did they eat? Where did they acquire the necessities of their lives? How did they have fun despite life's unpleasantries? How did they travel when there were no road signs — and all too often, no roads at all? What were their houses like? What was on the table when they sat down to eat? Where did they get their water? Where did they sleep? What did they wear on days it was hot? On nights when it was cold? Where did they go to the bathroom when there weren't any bathrooms? Who did they consult when they got sick?

We don't learn the answers to such questions using the traditional historical documents of parish ledgers of baptisms and marriages, municipal records of property ownership, bequests, or legal decisions.

Those documents record important events. This book is about life's unimportant events. Daily life isn't as orderly and logical as the official records present it. But daily life also isn't a meaningless meander of threads. The minutia of the things we do all day long — washing the dishes, reading the news, the conversations that occupy our attention — are important even when we don't think about them. The daily lives of people long ago were important to them in the same way.

Given the scantiness and semantic slanting of written sources, we emphasize pictorial images. It is astonishing how much daily life reality can be gleaned from a minute examination of Books of Hours, illuminated manuscripts, stained glass windows, woodcuts, guild manuals, engravings, paintings, sculpture, and eventually photographs.

The individual chapters ahead are a cinema whose image frames took several years to discover, record, and edit into a nine-century tale of daily life in countryside France. The word 'France' refers to only the last two centuries. Prior to Napoleon Bonaparte the geography enclosed in this story went by many names ruled by many lords. Very often the local language wasn't even French. We use 'France' as a convenient rubric throughout these chapters because everyday people living everyday lives are more concerned with getting through the day than where their tasks take place or the language they use to describe them.

The fact density of the text is so detailed that readers may wonder where pictures end and imagination begins. We provide two sources.

First, the 213 images that illustrate these chapters may cramp the pages, yet they represent only a few percent of the thousands that were considered. When it comes to street-level history, images are almost as abundant as words.

Which images made the cut and why were the rest set aside?

Images made for religious storytelling can be treasure troves when they originate in illuminated manuscripts, books of hours, stained glass windows, and stonework where the artisan was allowed a free hand, e.g. illuminated capitals and marginalia. Devotional imagery made solely to reinforce the beliefs of the believer is debased coinage to the historian.

The self-serving portraits of aristocrats were mostly rejected as egregious brand-building. (Why do people aspiring to perpetuity fail to see that gilding the lily kills the flower?)

On the other hand, the welcome mat was out for the Netherlandish an Flemish social realists of the Brueghel clan and Peeter Balthens, e.g., Pieter Breughel the Elder,'s *De Vlaamse spreekwoorden* (*Netherlandish Proverbs*). Unexpected treasuries of pictorial reality were guild manuals of medieval trades such as the *Tübinger Hausbuch* and *Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung*; and travel guides like the *Nuremberg Chronicle* and the Utrecht copy of Braun & Hogenberg's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*. The major resources are listed on the next page. More scholarly readers can access to the original images shown throughout this book will find them in the concluding section Notes on the Illustrations starting on p.207.

The author hopes this mix of scholarship and literary flair inspires others to do the same with other cultures and eras. Consider this book not a history book but a travel guide through the daily world of ordinary people doing ordinary things in much the same way as we go through our lives today. Now let us walk nine hundred years in the footsteps of a family named Lefief. They are escorting us.

Primary sources for the text

This book is structured as a sequence of illustrated short stories spanning 902 years. They required scholarly underpinnings that took several years to amass. To name but a few: Hildegard von Bingen's hand-drawn illustrations in her works *Scivias* and *Liber divinorum operum*; Aldobrandino of Siena's *Le Régime du Corps,* c. 1285; *Jacopo Filippo da Bergamo Foresti Supplementum chronicarum* from 1486; the c.1323-26 *Breviarium ad usum fratrum Predicatorum*, *dit Bréviaire de Belleville*; the *Isabelle of Castille Breviary* (BL MS 18851; *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (Condé Mus. MS 65); *Romance of Alexander in French verse*, Bodleian Library MS. Bodl. 264, 1338-44; *Hortus sanitatis*, Mainz 1491; the 15th century *Tubinger Hausbuch, Md 2, Iatromathematisches Kalenderbuch;* Hartmann Schedel's *Liber chronicarum* of 1493, the Italian Medieval Health Handbook: *Tacuinum Sanitatis*, Guillaume Guéroult's *Livre de la description des animaux* printed in Lyon in 1550, *Antoine du Pinet's Portraitz et descriptions des plusiers villes … tant l'Europe*, Lyon 1564; and Braun & Hogenberg's massive three-volume *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* published in several editions between 1572 and 1612.

Add to these the myriad background figures in a page-by-page examination of marginalia in the illustrated manuscripts of the time — many of which exist in single copies in a libraries we cannot readily visit but which are *reproduced in toto by the libraries concerned*. We thank them all.

Secondary sources

What about the non-pictorial detail that pervades this family saga? Hardly a paragraph goes by without some titbit of trivia that has the plausibility of observed event. How certain can we be that the details on these pages are observations of actual events?

Between 1975–1995 the author lived in secluded hamlets and remote byways of France, Spain, Morocco, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The era of a computer in every home did not exist. The Internet browser arrived only in 1991. The connectivity of today's cell phone could not even be imagined.

The details of traditional crafts such as cabinet making, turning wood on a lathe, fabricating a plow from tree limbs, weaving garments and carpets, making felt from raw wool, or cooking meals over a trivet of three stones differed but little from the *Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Nürnberg 1426–1549* and the *Tübinger Hausbuch*. As a case in point, note the juxtaposed images on page 23 from the 1471 *Hortis Sanitatis* and a photograph the author took in rural France in 1975.

Photocopies of notebook pages on which specific citations to individual examples occur may be requested from the author.

Building of the Tower of Babel; detail of a miniature from the Bedford Hours, c.1410-1430 by the Bedford Master. British Library Add MS 18850, f. 17v.

The Day He Threw Away His Name

On July 10, 1889 a young man clambered aboard a *chemin de fer* railway carriage in Port Boulet, France, on the banks of the Loire River near the famed chateaux of Chinon and Ussé. Its destination was Paris, with stops in Tours and Orleans. His name was Gérard Lefief.

Gérard was the last male bearer of his clan patronymic in that region. His parents Jacques and Marie-Claire were beyond childbearing years and his two sisters would lose their Lefief surname once they married.

Lefief was an inauspicious surname at best. No one knew when it first came to identify specific families, but the word implied they had originally been peasants living on a local lord's land and subject to the lord's demands for labor, produce, and soldiery. Peasants the Lefiefs began, and to Gérard, peasants they would always be. To him, his parent's two room house, work shed, chicken hutch, vegetable garden, rows of vines, and orchard of fruit trees had probably looked exactly the same at any given moment in the past five centuries.

Gérard had obsessed about the low status of his name ever since he discovered at the age of thirteen that he had a talent for drawing. No one in his family or village of Fougerolles had ever displayed such a talent before. His pencil sketches of his sisters were so life-like that his mother took one look and confiscated them to show the parish abbé. The abbé visited their house and sternly lectured Gérard on the evils of pictures. A face in a drawing revealed to the Devil the secret paths where his demons could enter their souls. Pictures were a path leading straight to hell. He must cease all such activity at once.

When Gérard replied, "Then why is the Virgin always so beautiful and Jesus always so handsome?" the abbé was so stupefied by such insolence he rose without a word and stomped out of the house.

Gérard's mother was so embarrassed she locked herself in her room and refused to make supper. The following Sunday Gérard did not attend mass with his family. During the sermon the abbé banished Gérard from the community of believers and forbade his presence on the parish church grounds unless he was on his knees begging forgiveness.

That was five years ago. To Gérard, drawing his sisters' faces put beauty into their souls instead of handing them to the Devil. A dozen or so pencil lines could reveal what a person could be instead of what they were. The reflection of his sister's face in the mirror was prettier than her face looking at it. He gave his parents wings that flew them to magical fields where gardens picked their own vegetables and cows milked themselves. He depicted the parishioners in the their pews as a conclave of cadavers. His dogs had faces that looked remarkably like their owners. One Sunday he learned that the abbé said it was permissible to kill animals for food because they had no souls. Gérard promptly drew angel wings onto pigs and chickens with haloes, then slipped the drawing under the altar linen late one night when the church was empty.

Over the years his drawings became more elaborate, more resplendent with imaginary beings. He satirized the local gossips as toads with lizard tongues There was no color in his figures because graphite pencils were all he had. Over time he taught himself how to draw with the flat side of the pencil as well as the tip, and to blend feathery scribbles into smooth surfaces with a wetted finger. He became equally adept at drawing spheres on a flat surface and muddy boots squashing fields of flowers.

Yet he burned every drawing as soon as he had finished it. As the abbé harangued on and on that awful afternoon, Gérard vowed to never again give anyone — not his sisters, not his parents, nor his teachers — any shred of evidence that would invite another visit from the abbé. He would never again subject himself to being humiliated in front of others. He kept his drawing pencils separate from his school pencils so no one would discover how many he actually used.

Gérard did not realize that his fear of humiliation deepened a fault line across the facade of his outward conformity — a craving for validity. It had taken a thousand years to make him the peasant that the name Lefief

imputed him to be. It took only five years for the fault line of his inherited inferiority to reach the fracture zone of his artist's self-identity.

Today was Gérard's eighteenth birthday. He was now a grown man free to make his own decisions. The fault line sheared.

He awoke before dawn to pack his rattan schoolbook valise with a change of clothes, an extra pair of shoes, and an envelope containing the eleven francs it had taken him three years to earn.

With the glow of first light turquoising the eastern sky, Gérard now walked toward the Port Boulet railway station. He told no one that he was leaving. No one in his family or village would ever know why he left, where he went, or whether he might return. He was unwilling to spend a single *sou* of his three years of savings to buy a ticket, so he planned to board the train from the opposite side of the platform out of view of the ticket-collector. When he saw the ticket collector enter the carriage ahead of his he would hide in his carriage's toilette for women. He presumed that would be the one door the ticket collector would not open if he was searching for *passagers clandestines*.

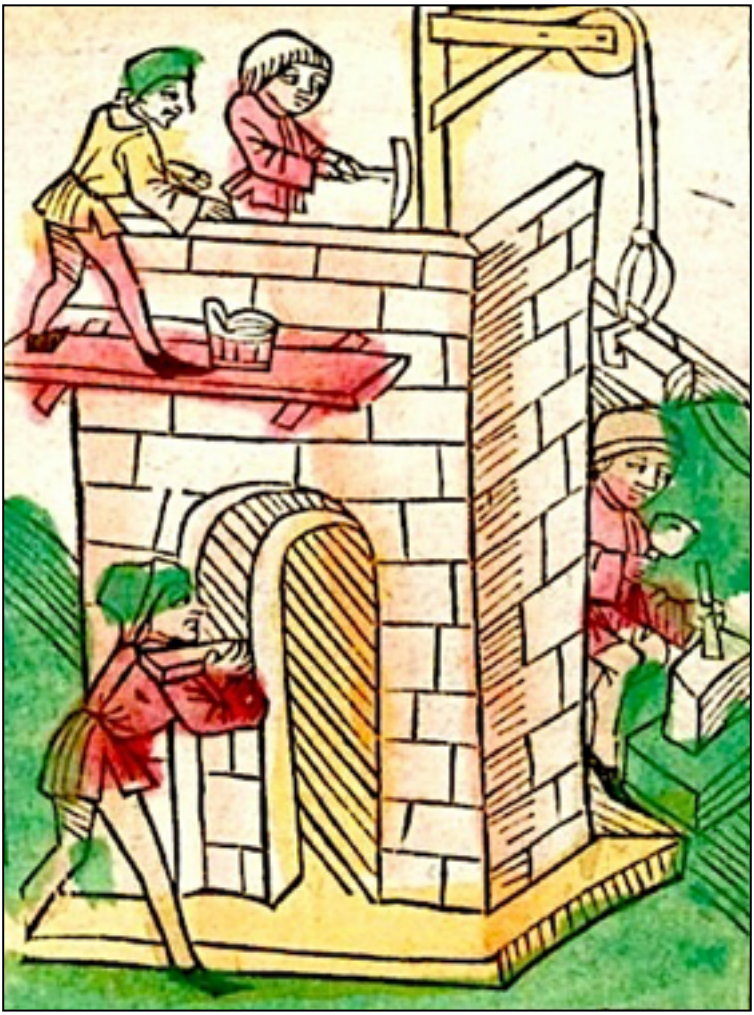
Hours later, as the train crossed the Seine, the majestic tower built by Gustave Eiffel loomed in the distance. Gérard removed a white object from his pocket, scribbled something on it, and hurled it into the Seine.

The white object was the starched collar he had worn every Sunday till the day he stopped going to church. The word he scribbled on it was "Lefief". Gérard watched impassively as his ancestry sank into the Seine.

He then returned to his seat to fetch the valise which contained all of his worldly goods. When he reached his seat, he froze in shock. The ticket-collector was sitting in his seat waiting for him! The collector held Gérard's valise firmly under his arm and sternly bade Gérard to follow him once the other passengers had disembarked.

Gérard was devastated. He had just thrown away his name; he now had no history. From the grim look on the ticket collector's face and firm grip on the valise, Gérard's future was suddenly in doubt. What would he say when the gendarmes demanded his name?

For the first time in all those years of rejection he asked, "What am I giving up? Who were those people in my past? How did they live?"



1003

After the Thousandth Year

The moods of the Mediterranean were the moods of things opposite: sun/soil, night/day, birth and death, the untangling of life's threads. The universe was of threads from which anything could be woven.

But sea peoples and northmen knew of mist and lost sun, the blendings of the sea at once giving and taking. They knew the heat that brings haze and the cold that brings rain, that the houses of neighbors become but distance—thin daubs, that the blue and grey land is made of illusions, that the vessel rounding the point in the brushed sun's glaze is indistinguishable between a husband's return and a pirate sliding landward to plunder. A knowledge of the sea says nothing is what it looks to be.

* * * * *

Water was sound's perfume — eddies, slow places, flow without rhythm, the susu susuru sibilance of water over smooth stones The spring was the beginning of what the sea would one day be. Flowing its own way, thief of good soil, its nestling was so soft that it alone could melt mountains. Wherever water was, they knew, the bones of the earth could be broken by its being.

The family came to the place where a local lord had granted them the use of a spring. They would live there for the rest of their lives, so they brought oxen, wagons, axes, knives, chickens, children, dogs. They made shacks for themselves, saving the hearts of the trees for the timbers of the church, keeping for themselves only the limbs, twigs, leaves. The children kept the fires going, the women foraged and cooked, and the men cut the



stone and carved it. When it was winter they threw the stones into the fires then cut them when they were warm.

Hence they used the spring's trickle well. First they flumed the flow to pool it behind a downstream dam. That drained the higher ground where they wanted to build. They netted the pond for fish until the first of the pigs grew fat. Then they used the water to break into remnants stones too big for oxen but not for fire. They dug a pit beneath a boulder as deep as they could spade. They built a fire in the pit, first limbs and then logs, fueling the heat until the bottom of the boulder was dull red and the top hissed


steam when water was flicked on. Then the coals were buried, the soil tamped hard, and they brought bucket after bucket of water from the spring and poured it over the stone's top until with no warning there would come a deep snap and a cloud of ashes and steam would hiss high. Then they cheered as the oxen took away the pieces for the foundation of their church.

For the millennium year of 1000 had come and gone and the world hadn't ended. Every sign in the books and the stars had said the end was nigh. But perhaps they hadn't been prepared. Perhaps they had learned only to avoid sin, not how to love God. So the water of life gave them the will to go on. Eyes that had closed last night to dread now opened to hope. From the tellers of the time there came these words:

> So on the threshold of the aforesaid Thousandth Year, some two or three years after it, it befell them all, especially in Italy and Gaul, that the fabric of the world should be rebuilt. Every nation rivaled the other which should worship in the seemliest house. It was as though the world had shaken off her old robes and was clothing herself everywhere in garments of white churches.

The priest told them the shape he wanted built, a shape he had learned from a forgotten conqueror they called *Roman*. They knew the direction they wanted the building to face: east, toward Jerusalem, so that every step toward the altar was a step closer to God.

But the rest had to be learned: how to harden crude iron into chisels by heating it to red-yellow then pounding it then quenching it sizzling in buckets of water. Doing this over and over again until the metal rang when it struck the stone. How to break slate loose from its layers by driving wooden stakes into slabs and then flooding them with water until the wood swelled and the slab split free. How to design the cuts of the pieces using fingers and water on an chalk-dusted table. How to hold lines up with circles so that the roof became like a barrel turned inside out, not clenched but thrust. How to arc stone across space by cutting it into shapes that would pinch themselves together so tightly that once the trestle was

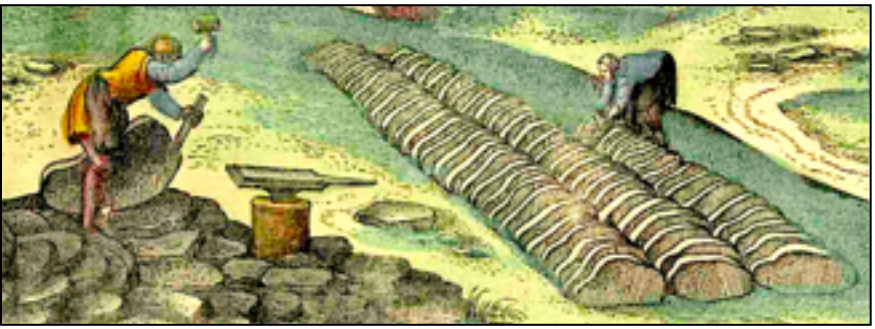
removed, even if the rest of the structure would someday fall the part that would remain was also the most delicate.

They began with oaks, and of those, only trees thicker around than the village's oldest ox, whose heartwood was so dense it could bear almost any load. They cut off the outer wood while the tree was still standing, then left it to weather a year. They used the soft layers for shingles and the bark and acorns to tan leather.

Then they cut the trees down and squared the limbs and trunks with adzes. Oxen dragged the pieces to a stream that had been dammed into a pond. The beams soaked there ten years, weighted beneath heavy stones, allowing the water to take its own time to carry away the sap. Then the beams were dragged out and levered onto trestles in sheds so air could reach them on all sides. There they dried another ten years.

The men who raised the beams took the same care. No beam was left unexposed to the air, so that be the day dry or wet there was a bare place where dampness could escape. Nails of bent iron would moulder away their strength but dovetails would not, so every roof timber reflected the geometry through which the carpenter preserved the way of his world.

Because the family had cleared the land around their church, the local lord allowed them to farm it under his protection in fief, in satisfaction of the words of the canons of the time, that no land or man should be without a lord. When the family was later confirmed in the church by the lord's bishop, the lord attended the observance but would not yield to them permission to adopt his name.



They therefore took unto themselves the name of the fief itself, to last as long as the family should live.

Thus the Lefiefs began.

1193

Gonbault's Son

September's quick storms wither into the first week of October. Then come the thick morning fogs and bright afternoons of Saint Martin's Summer. In the five weeks between autumn's first storm-broken twigs and the somber jaggedness of All Saints' Day, the harvest is embraced.

The time of the wheat and apples now long done, this is the time for the gifts of the earth not tended by a hand. They are gathered from the wildnesses that surrounded every hamlet and field. First the walnuts scattered on the ground in their decaying husks — nutmeats for feasts and dyestuff from the husks to darken winter's clothes. Wives drape broken branches across doorways to keep out flies. Children groan at the order to gather acorns, tedious work but food for the winter sows to keep their flesh pink. And to make sweet pies with acorn-flour crust filled with honey, cream, and wild berries.

Lords' falconers haunt the field edges and bogs, unhooding their birds and shooing them with yelps to flush pheasants, quail, partridge, ducks. Eel hunters poise along the swamp rims, cocking their spears and gripping tightly to the woven hemp twines that will retrieve the writhing, agonized

creatures. Mushrooms poke out of the wet leaves and damp stumps. In the forests sudden yells and furious barking announce that hunters are lunging pikes at a cornered boar, squealing and pawing with rage. Dogs lay whimpering in the blood of their tusk-torn bowels until their owners come to them, pat them and talk to them in low voices, then end them with a swift pierce.

The pale green leaves of stream-side poplars crinkle to yellow as next spring's young buds push from beneath until the leaves snap free into the wind. Though the sun glitters brightly on top of the water, beneath it is murky and dull as the summer's end drifts toward the sea. A leaf is caught, spun, dragged into an eddy to vanish forever. *Twrrt*s come from the stream-edge birds, *zzdz*s from the crickets. Wrens flit through the blackberry briars, cleaning the last ants from the thorns. October's wing shapes reveal the forms of their flight, from the tireless taut bulk of the upthrusting young duck to the

rapier-bent tension of the land gull's long glide. The soil, released at last from the management of the plough, crumbles into furrows filled with fallen seeds. Insect clouds, much diminished by the rains, tremble in the coppery sun of late day. Everywhere there are autumn smells — wet moss, pine, mud, stagnant water, souring manure, burning weeds, wild garlic, dill.

Then the mood of the weather changes, robbing the afternoon to pay for the morning, twisting the cold's grip deeper into the soil. As the summer was of flesh, October is of bone. Men gather in fire-lighted caves, elbow to elbow, breath steaming despite the roaring fire, as they taste the harvest's new wine, sniffing through its mustiness, then quaffing it deeply

from carved wooden mugs. The smell of the candles as they are snuffed out. The ache of the fall.

Slaughter. Short, grim knifework, spilling the year's blood as animals bellow and flare their eyes and struggle against the ropes binding their hooves. Quick knives, sure knives, splitting the bellies and scraping the hides and

cutting hazelwood spits to skewer the meats. The hides are compressed into thick, nauseating bundles, to be taken to the tannery.

Then comes the division. The village smith is given the head of the largest cow and pig. After his wife has boiled them down to the last sinew for soup, he will nail the skulls up alongside his dozens of others, an advertisement for his trade and how many seasons he has been there.

Women mince the sweetbreads and delicacies into sprouty, a hot pie seasoned with vegetable sprouts, nuts, and sorb berries. The sheep will be spared, for they have fat and thick fleece to keep them alive through the snowy months until the first crocus-spring in February.

Then comes a humble silence as the local *seigneur* arrives to claim his Lord's Haunch, the best piece of meat from each man's cows and pigs, and his *dîme*, a tenth of the chestnuts and smoked sausages, eels, leeks. The men fill his barrels with new wine as he sips a cup with them before going off on his horse. Next comes the *curé* with his two black kettles, one of them nine times the size of the other. When both are filled, the *curé* takes the smaller for himself and marks on his tally whose tithe is done. After his gleanings have been loaded onto a mule, the women present him with sausages of

boiled chicken mortared into a paste with fresh cress, then stuffed into scraped gut. One of the women gives him a basket of hard-boiled goose eggs for the traditional prelate's breakfast after the midnight Nativity mass in December.

With the division done, the duties are done. Backs are slapped, old women get kissed, children freed from their chores for the day. Everyone becomes giddy as they think ahead to the Nativity feast. Hence the bitterest work of the year, meat salting, passes swiftly amid the catch-tags of songs. The frost is an agony, but they have to work with bare fingers as they slice the meat thin and rub salt into its fibers. They warm themselves often with deep gulps of wine from half-warm barrels stacked next to the fires.

Rib beef is sliced into slivers and dried in the cold night air. Tripes and soft parts are half-cooked by boiling, then mixed with fat and blood to be stuffed into sheep-gut *andouilles* they will boil every morning through the rest of the winter. Bacons and hams are salted and trussed up in sacks, then punctured with tiny slits and soaked in barrels of brine before smoking. Plumes of smoke from hardwood fires streak the horizon as smoke-houses finish the last task of the year.

Then comes the tally. One harvest in six is a total ruin, two or more yield less than they might, two others will be so-so, and then there will be one, just one, with an ending like this.

Then comes January's cold, clenching like a snake around a rat.

Gonbault Lefief ventures out into the mist to set a snare for a crow. In the distance he glimpses a figure walking toward him through *Noyers*, the walnut-gathering grove. His eyes growing weak at the age of thirty-nine, Gonbault does not recognize the figure as his son, Josseret.

And Josseret does not recognize him. Barely twenty-three, he trudges with a limp, one foot severed of its toes by the scimitar of an Ayyubid Mussulman. His eyes, too, are weak, although he can see well enough to recognize the shapes of the old buildings, the trees he climbed as a child, the pasture now barren after the slaughter.

The backs of both of his hands and his cheeks are disfigured after a flood of seething oil leaked its way through the seams of the leather tent

covering a siege tower he and twenty other men were scaling in an attempt to assault a parapet at Arsuf.

Josseret was lucky. He had time enough to shield his eyes with his hands. The hot fumes merely weakened his sight and burnt him. Others were blinded, or suffocated when they inhaled the burning liquid. Of the twenty-odd youth between fifteen and twenty who began the Crusade from the church in the centre of this very hamlet, only Josseret has returned, in a body so exhausted it will carry him but scarce another year.

But the stories he will tell! Of steel so honed it can cut a falling cloth by the cloth's mere weight alone! Of immense domed roofs held up by the merest whisper of windowed walls! Of plates so lustrous and thin one can see the shadow of the hand holding it from behind. Of hayforks made so tiny they can fit between the fingers and move even the smallest morsel of meat to the mouth. Of lapis, of onyx, of ruby. Painted jars more splendid than jewels. Of spices that turn the muddy stink of raw meat into odors of flowers so delicate they must surely be the food of angels. Of sallow men who have no lust for women (O how Bériç the village priest will despise the guffaws *that* story will bring!). Of things with names Josseret will never forget — orange, lemon, sugar, syrup, sherbet, julep, elixir, jar, mattress, sofa, muslin, satin, fustian, bazaar, caravan, alembic, almanac, tariff, traffic, sloop, barge, cable, guitar, lute, tambourine, zenith.

And above all, the words he heard from a brothel woman as she disrobed for him:

From the moment you were brought into the world
A ladder was before you that you might escape.
First you were but a clod
Later a seed,
Then you became animal,
Now a man.

When you depart this realm,
leave aside your Son of God,
for he is but a son.
Instead be one of God,
For God alone is Great.

Gonbault, his son still a village and a field away, is intent on the crow he has just snared. He strangles the frantic bird with his bare hands, then hangs it on a cord to rot from the limb of a tree in the middle of his garden, the first scarecrow for next spring.

Hortus Sanitatis, 1471

Author photograph, 1975

1260

The Consecration

The inhabitants of Chartres have combined to aid in the building of their church by transporting the stones themselves. They have formed associations, some of guildsmen and others of merchants, and have admitted no one to their company unless they had been to confession, renounced their feuds, and forgiven their debtors. This done, they elect a chief under whose direction they take up the ropes to their wagons. Who has ever heard of such a thing? Princes, merchants, townsmen – all have bent their backs to the harnesses of wagons like animals. And while they drew them, so heavy from the quarries that often more than a thousand were attached to one wagon, they marched in such silence that not one murmur was heard. If one did not see them, one would not know they were there. When they halt on the road, nothing is heard but the sounds of salvation. The priests who preside over each wagon exhort every one to acceptance of fault and resolution to better their lives. One sees old people, young children, parents, grandfathers, calling upon God with words of glory and praise. When they reach the place of the church they arrange the wagons in a spiritual encampment. During the whole night they celebrate the watch with canticles and hymns. On each wagon they light candles and lamps, and there they place the sick among them and bring them the water of life and the precious relics of God for relief. Nothing like it has ever before been seen.

The Consecration was to be on the Feast of the Annunciation. Everyone knew that generations before even the half-century was decided. The day the virgin girl had taken into her womb the salvation of mankind. It could not be on any other day.

They knew about God the Father, they knew the face. They would all have to confront that face someday, they didn't want to confront it now. And they knew about God the Son—preacher, dreamer, lifter of men, who falls in love with the idea of love and cries at the end, 'Why have you forsaken me?'

The astonished girl had listened in disbelief as the angel addressed her, '*Ave, Maria. Ave Maria Stellis*. The Lord is within you'. She replied, 'How can that be? I am a virgin.'But then she felt the first stirrings and she knew.

Their great-great-grandfathers had sung those words, *Ave Maria Stellis*, in the long cold night as they prayed beneath the wagons that groaned with stone. In the yellow flickering light of the fires they did not feel their rope-torn hands or bleeding feet. They felt only hope. And they sang those words as they planed the earth flat and began to set stone upon stone until there was a foundation so thick they knew it would never crack.

The quarriers sang those words as they drove green wood wedges into the rock's






cracks and poured water over them until the wood swelled and the stone split free into slabs they then cubed and dressed with patterns of rough slits.

The stone cutters sang them as they inscribed their geometries of candle wax and chalk mark, then hewed the columns and piers, pediments, buttresses, plinths, their chisels singing with them as the stone fragments flew halfway across the shed.

The stone carvers sang those words, softly now, humming as lightly as their furrowing tools, shaping delicate faces, angels with trumpets, the flowing robes of patriarchs the stone sneers of gargoyles spitting water onto the parvis far far below.

The poorest of all sang them, too. Lustily, bellowing Mary's praises as they devoted to her their only God-given gift to this edifice to a woman: their feet. Their roisterous hymn rose high from the pillar top where they worked, walking inside the spokes of a circular cage, the rotating drum twice their height, their hands braced against its spindle as they walked and walked, the drum rotating around them as the rope coiled around it descended to the parvis and grasped the net holding a gigantic planed slab cut to the shape of the new pier next to their own, so massive a stone a dozen of them could stand atop it.

Then the song became a groan as they turned and trod the circle again in the other direction, until the drum had turned to take up the slack, lift, and pinion around until the new stone was levered into place and the chocks fixed and the net slipped out from the gap between the new piece and the pier on which it would now settle forever.

They cried those words as they knelt by the body with the blood flowing from its nose and the broken eyes and sunken ribs as the priest came running with the Host and Oil, running out of breath, running but still too late, running toward the body in the shadow of the pillar soaring so high above.

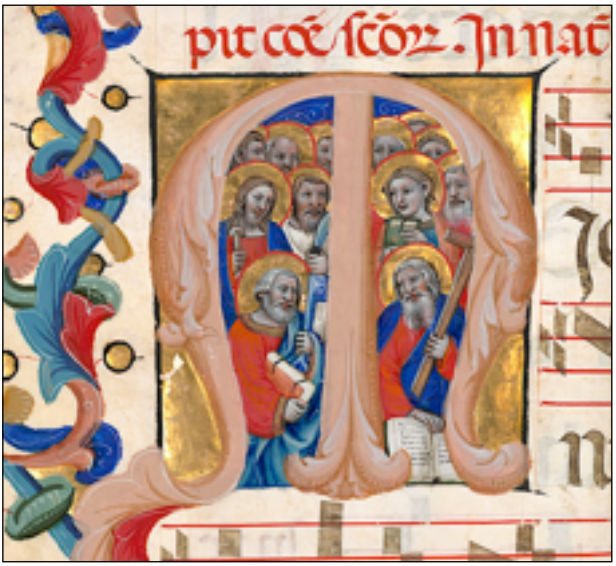
It was the dun earth that gave this paradise its hues. From places whose names they could hardly pronounce, the soils came. Boxes of malachite, sacks of lazuli, saddlebags of opal, agate, onyx, crystal. Sands from Turchestan that melted into deep green, cinnabar from Spain speckled with quicksilver, mysterious stones from Candia, that great rock fish rising from the sea, whose pounded dust makes glass yellow. Scrapings from Abyssinia and Cyprus and Syria, brought in lead boxes on donkeys, camels, ships, caravans, and on the backs of pilgrims returning from the Holy Land. Boxes carried up to the altar to be placed beneath the statue of the Virgin and given to Her church.

And when the lead seal was broken and the lid spread back, the note folded inside the reddish dust was in a strange script the pilgrim said was Syriac, which he translated brokenly for the glass makers:

> Take thyself a fine slab of porphyry stone and a small quantity of clear water, then take thyself up a small portion of this color, which goeth by the name of schwarzlot among the Rhenish who inform us thusly, and slowly begin to crush it in a thumbnail's measure of the water. The period of a quarter part of the day is the least you must work it, but know you that you may grind it for a week and the color will only become better. When this is finished to your satisfaction, take a thin wooden blade and gather the color nicely into a pot, but assure you that the pot is not of the stone that containeth the shells of old fishes, for that taints the color and makes it unseemly. With this preparation you may make flesh colors. Know you that first you must begin with a measure of lead white. Put it just as it is, without breaking it, into a pot of copper and place this over a fire until the lead white hath all turned to yellow. Then grind it and mix it with some of the color as you have prepared above. It will turn vermilion as you do, until the color is as that of flesh. If it be that you wish lighter faces, such as the child a-crib or women who have used powders, add a little more of the lead white, plus a little of green jasper. If it is that you wish faces more red, as from the wind or sun, add more of this vermilion. The colors that you see will be stronger somewhat after they have been heated. The longer the glass remains melted, the darker the colors will be. Yet be you careful not to take the heat away too quickly, for the glass will splinter along the lines of its bubbles. Know you that the mosaics of Constantinople use thus this earth.

But the glass makers did not sing as they stood at their stations. Around them were bins full of colored shards, cooled at last from the furnaces before which they had sweated as they peered past the waves of searing heat to the color pooling out of the lumpen earths beyond; and the boxes lined with long strips of tin they had melted and poured into finger-traced furrows along lengths of clean sand. Arrayed around them were the finished carved webs of the giant rose windows they now had to illumine with majesty.

Instead they spoke quietly. They were artisans, they knew their place. That place was found on the first page of nearly every illuminated manuscript, peering out from the lacework of the first letter.



They could paint themselves there, into the decoration and fantasy, the happy artificer amid the writhing shapes and curling fluidities that streamed out to every corner of their world, guided not by canon but by invention and delight.

Instead, they spoke of principles: Luminosity is majesty. The variety of colors must reveal the variety of God's works. The colors of the border must repeat those of the centre, but only in fragments so that they support, but do not rival, the theme. And one color alone must be the uniting radiance by which all others receive their due: that color is blue.

* * * * *

Then they knew the half-century in which it would happen. Then the decade. Then the year. Then the month. Then the day.

Now, on the eve of that day, the town that normally counted its population seven or eight thousand, not including the women, bastards, and children; nor the serfs who had not yet lived out the year and a day until they could call themselves free – today they learn who will with stand with them on the parvis of the cathedral. Patriarchs, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, abbots, chancellors of universities, doctors of theology, kings, princes, nobles, thousands of priests, and an unguessable number of ladies, pages, servants, horse tenders, trumpeters, esquires, knights, ambassadors, daughters, viscounts, clerks, physicians, blessed-medal stampers, candle-dippers, stable-sweepers, scullery boys, waiters, minstrels, jugglers, prostitutes, dung-collectors, cutpurses, beggars, cripples, lepers, thieves. Every one of them would be in the parvis on the Feast of the Annunciation.

Bread baker Josquin Lefief rises first, before the dawn that begins the Day of the Feast. Accustomed to the upside-down day of the baker, he yawns, coughs, touches a pine splinter to the embers and strides through the corridor in the yellow flickering of its light. He touches it to the shavings of the oven's fire pit — not the fire for baking yet, that must await the dawn. But the fire to be warm by, and to see.

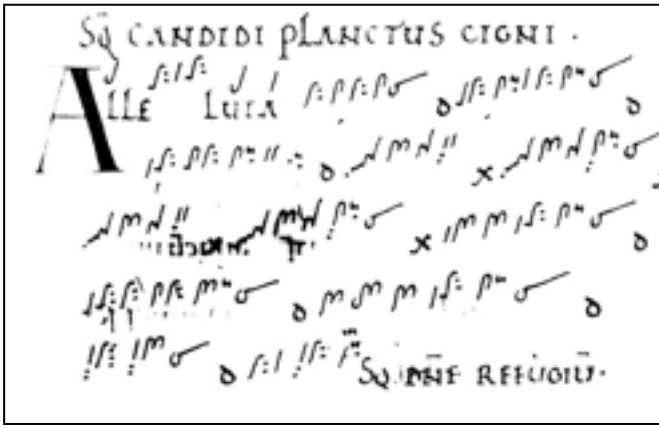
He awakens the apprentices, tells them to comb their hair with their fingers, then gives them fresh clean blue tunics his wife has sewn for this day alone. They drag sacks of flour into the room while the oldest – almost a journeyman now – fills buckets with water from the well. Before the work begins Josquin gives them each a mug of wine with bread and fresh cheese.

They begin. The apprentices pour the water slowly into the sifted flour while the journeyman blends it with his fingers until the mass congeals into a dough of damp streakinesses. Then he adds yeast and more water as they continue stirring until the ball holds his fist's dent and is ready.

Then bells. *Bells!* Bells from all over the town, a predawn polyphony rising to the moon, so tumultuous and strange it raises a set of dog howls as tone-matched as its peals.

Thin bells from far chapels, out on the edge of hearing, where the assembled peasants sleep next to the warmth of their animals, and where they now rise and cross themselves and sing *Ave Maria Stellis*.

Bells from the tent towns of the visiting monks, oilcloth abbeys complete with kitchens and cloisters vaulted with rope arched upon wood. And they, whose days perpetually begins before first light, rise as they always do, from their pallets, fully clothed in their habits, sliding into their slippers as they take up their candles and shuffle their way between the tent pegs and mud puddles to the gloomy chapel bordering the north side of their tents and begin to sing *Ave Maria Stellis*.

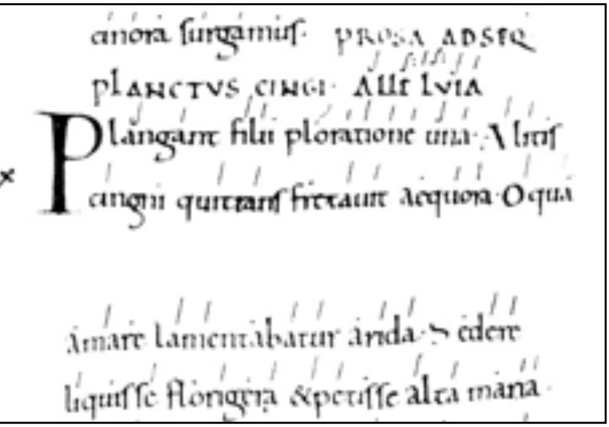


Bells from the townhouses, bold bongs to timid tinkles, awakening them to rooms scented with apple or pear-wood fires or to hovels crumbling with damp, yet in the middle of both there lies a bed of fresh straw in honor of Her, delivering her first child on just such a bed of straw. Kneeling on padded velvet cushions or plain wooden benches, before perspectiveless painted pictures or crude wooden carvings, all of them, all of them singing *Ave Maria, Ave Maria Stellis*.

Josquin and his apprentices now work steadily, silent except for *Ave*s, shaping hundreds of loaves. Some long, some flat, some round, some knotted into pretzels to be carried through the streets on a hooked stick.

Then come the whispers of the dawn, the dark passages of birds still too hungry to sing. Now they built the fire up, piling on scrap wood still sappy and clutching its bark. Building it hot, roaring, sending up its yellow heat into the dome until the stones on the oven floor sear from the fire-pit beneath and are ready. Then! Out with the ashes! Quick lads! Out with them! She's hot! It's time!

Apprentices fly as they spade out the coals while Josquin drops the stone plug in the top of the dome to trap the shimmering heat inside. In goes a basin of water to make the crust crisp. Then! Off with the oilcloths! Sprinkle flour onto the paddle! Quick! Out of the pans and onto the paddle! It's double the number and today is *TODAY*! Quick! Quick! *QUICK*!



He is a rhythm of his life's experience as he maneuvers the paddle. The journeyman turns the loaves three at a time onto the paddle as Josquin smoothes them with his thumb and forefinger, then darts out of the way as in comes an apprentice with a razor to cut angled slits across the top that will peel back as they bake.

Josquin slides the first loaves into the far corner of the oven where they slip lumpily from the paddle and immediately began to swell. Loaves-slits-paddle; loaves-slits-paddle, loaves,slits,paddle loavesslitspaddle. The rush becomes a blur and they suck in their breath when they hear the water in the basin sizzle and then steam. Every loaf must be in when the pan boils, so the oven door can be shut and the steam left to do its work so when the bread comes out it will cool so rapidly the loaves will crackle like fire and the hardest part of their day will suddenly be over. They cheer when the crust of the first one to be pulled out cools in the air and crazes into a thousand steaming flakes that smell like heaven itself. *Ave!* Josquin cries. AVE! shouts the journeyman. *AVE!* yell the apprentices.

Then they are done. Josquin selects the largest loaf near the front and — Yes! That's right! Listen to it! — It finishes its crackling and Josquin wipes his forehead and officially promotes the journeyman, who gives all of them a double thumbs-up and they laugh giddily and slap him on his back and then they sing *Ave Maria Stellis*.

* * * * *

The beggars and cripples are the first ones to the parvis. It is their day above all, for She had known suffering and She knew succor. Hence the beggars are acceded the privilege to enter before prelates and princes through the as-yet unopened cathedral doors. Thus they come.

Hunching along on wooden forearms strapped to their stumps. Scraping up the steps on cradles holding what is left of their legs. Legs bent from a bad birth or broken on justice's wheel or crushed among the screaming horses when their princes turned back from the front of their ranks and rode through their midst leaving them to face the galloping wall of swords and spearpoints and horses' flaring nostrils of a bellowing army at full charge. The last soldier to fall will now be the first to ascend.

Across the townscape of fresh whitewash and roofs, the finest clothes are lifted from cabinets and chests. Clothes now deeply scented with the *potpourri* in the backs of the drawers, the pot of fermenting verbena and lavender and rose, gathered just as the dew was ending so they would neither spoil nor become dry. Then packed in salt and left to ferment until the scent was perfect. Finally the mix was spooned into perforated clay jars and nudged to the far corners of the clothes drawers, leaving them to scent the garments made for this occasion alone.

Robes, capes, chemises, velvets. Fustians, brocatelles, frisadues, kerseys. Satins, silks, lockrams, damasks. Cloth wefted of gold and warped of silk, then dyed in the saffron's yellow, the bedstraw's

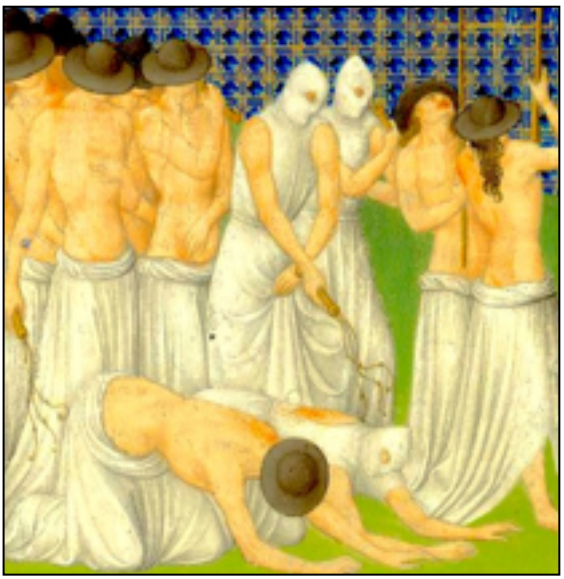
crimson, the woad's blue-white that colors a robe Her blue, the blue of the glass rose, the blue of the seas plied by the Ship of Jerusalem.

Clothes lifted from the neat folds into which they had only last night been pressed, now to be pressed again. Sprinkled, smoothed, scattered with jonquil, then smoothed with charcoal-heated irons, the scent rising so warmly it will still be there long after the last crease has worn thin. Gold figured in blue, satin edged with damask, red velvet

brilliant in its hue. Seashell sequins, black linens for widows, yellow tissue lined with lace, grey satin with peacock feathers, mantles with fur collars, ribbon wristlets. Even in the poorest house there is somewhere a ribbon of bright blue. Mary would understand these things. They would bring frowns from the Father or the Son, but it was Mary who gave birth to the child and knew the child's delight with the playful and the vivid and the bright and the free.

The streets are now alive with activity amid silence. By unspoken understanding no ordinary voice will be heard until the Consecration is complete. The voice may sing. It may hymn, cry, exult, exclaim. Nothing else. The dogs sense the hushed air and cock their ears anxiously. A boy rushes past, carrying a brazier of coals for his master's foot warmers and irons. He maneuvers past a floursack-shaped woman souring along in a husbandless scowl. The tumult of the eyes tumbles into the distance, the faces nearby sliding to far, and sees in them all an identity of One.

Then a raspy metallic sound brings them all to a halt. Rhythmic, a sound like a rusted hinge, over and over. A sound already frightening even before its source comes into view. And then it does: P*ENITENTS!*



Wearing white gowns with their torsos laid bare for the whips, they are linked onto a chain and walk on feet bloodied from spiked balls. Each whip has three lashes in remembrance of the whips that lashed Christ, each lash tipped with a spiked ball. Bells on their wrists chase away any devils. Some raise crucifixes, others venerate skulls.

Their conceit of grotesquery and death gazes through pain-fierce eyes upon the sweet adorations of the street. But the street gazes back without repentance — in fact the street's gaze is disgusted by this stain of the Son inflicted on the gleam of the Mother. The penitents' moans and clanking pass but the street does not revive until two dogs get into a growling match, bristle at each other, and when one of them yields by scrunching its shoulders and tucking its tail as it scurries away, it cannot comprehend why the entire street is throwing stones at it to drive it out of their sight.

The parvis is filling. Josquin Lefief and his wife have arrived with his boys. They guide a small wagon pulled by the journeyman, with a tiny brick oven built above the wheels. The glowing coals inside warm their loaves. Josquin moves it where he wants it on the last street corner before the parvis, then he and his wife set up a table with pots of mixed walnut butter and honey that she made the day before.

Around them the women of the town arrive in their new finery. They hold their skirts high in front of them while their daughters hold up their trains behind, picking their way daintily through the reeking streets of ox plops and mule deposits.

Not so far away in a tiny plaza, a gaudily painted wagon drawn by one beribboned horse has set itself up the night before. Inside the wagon lives a family of itinerant mummers, folk with dark skin who wear bright clothes and live in Gypsy ways but are not Gypsies. They appeared yester morn from out of the mist to set up their one-wagon theatre of puppets and mime, delighting the children and bringing frowns from adults, and will vanish tomorrow not be seen again for time out of mind.

Their wagon has a drop leaf on the back that descends to make a tiny stage with tiny curtains of tiny-patterned cloth that swish back and forth as they unfold high words and low deeds in faraway places that somehow seem near, ragged clowns loved only by children, preposterous

names and outrageous insults, impossibly pretty ladies and impossibly brave knights, all of whom seem to dress more like peasantry than gentry. As the stories spiral to a climax, the curtain will suddenly close just at the fatal blow and a disembodied voice will say from within, 'He who would know more must be free with his purse.'

Only on the Feast of the Annunciation would they dare remain in town for more than two days. Only with the Virgin could life's delicious *agathos* of unlogic be tasted.

The parvis is packed when the first trumpets are heard. The silence is immediate. Then again, far out into the alleys, a strident Annunciation blares across alleyways and rooftops. Then a faint unrhythm of drums, tambourines, bells. *Ave* whispers a shivering throat. *Ave!* murmurs a hundredfold. *AVE!* replies the thousandfold. The sky is on fire beyond the sun's glare. They swelter in its glare, feel the heat not as warmth but as the incandescence of the unimaginable about to become real.

A hermit among them whispers a prayer from his raspy throat. Trembling in his clothing of woven reeds and coarse raffia, sunken-eyed and flat chested, ragged, dirty, infested with ticks, and inexhaustibly holy, even he is awed.

Then banners! Giant panels of color, three men high and four men broad, held aloft by poles and furling thickly in the wind's heave. One red, one blue, one green, one yellow, embroidered floridly with a Man, a Lion, an Ox, an Eagle: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Beneath them bob thurifers, white-laced clerks from the cathedral chancery, each wafting at the crowd a bronze sphere filled to the top with smoldering resins and incense that erupts clouds of smoke and perfume. The thick musk wisps into the air and weaves into the crowd.

The banners advance ponderously, each pole grasped by four knights wearing mail and helmets but no swords. They cleave a slow path up to the closed door of the cathedral and fan out one by one along the steps

until the mass of the cathedral all but vanishes behind a facade of brocade. Then come princes, kings, nobles, ladies, walking outside without hats for perhaps the only time in their lives. This is the day even they must leave behind their guises and wait for the doors to open for them.

Then glints of copper rise from a far corner. Josquin climbs on top of his cart and helps up his boys. They link their arms around each other until they twine into a mass that cannot be swayed. They see the bright flashes again and this time the flashes rise like lances to blare a fanfare beyond alleluia or anthem, the sound of Annunciation.

Behind them come the first of the tributes, the this-world's things now given to the next. Each gift arrives with the legate that accompanies it—bishop, abbot, cardinal, ambassador. Then a shout, 'The gift of the Pope! The Rock of Saint Peter!' *Ave* roars the nearest hundred. *AVE!* returns a thousand. *AVE!* thunders the multitude.

They imagine the Pope himself smoothing down the coverlets and locking the gold casket. Inside it will be a tabernacle, they know. It could not be anything else. A tabernacle of jewels and gold and silver that today will be consecrated with simple water and oil and then opened for the first time. Inside will be a chalice of jewels and gold and silver, containing wafers of bread made in Bethlehem and a phial of wine from the vines of Calvary.

Yet they understand nothing of the truths underlying these baubles, the jewels and gold and silver, because they know nothing of their origin.

Jewels brought from the world's ends sewn into the ragged cloaks of pilgrims disguised as beggars, who, knowing the hazards of the desert and the sea, pray they will not die before kneeling again in the chapel where their pilgrimage began and where it may only be considered complete when their knees touch the stone floor. And many of them failing. Failing at the col of a pass, too cold to walk any more, cold so deep it does not come unto them as agony but as sleep. Vanishing without a trace at sea with only imaginings to say what might have been. Feeling a cold blaze of metal across the throat which turns instantly to sear as the pilgrim feels his coat torn off and his boots yanked away. The robbers do not suspect what is in the lining of the tattered coat until one of them felt the lump of stones and tries to conceal it but another sees him and they begin fighting over it while the pilgrim tries to scream NO! but hears only a bubbly siffle of a hiss that will never become a sound.

Of gold, too, does the parvis know nothing of its truth. Gold taken from spring-fed pools so high in the mountains that the edge of the water has ice into June but into which the slaves have to wade wearing only their loincloths, shivering as much from the slavemaster's whip as the water's sting. They push hollow reeds into the sediment, cap the ends with a palm, then pull the reed out to pour the trapped mud into baskets which children carry down to the fire pots, where the glitter will melt into puddles to be handed over to men even the slave masters bow to, away to places they cannot comprehend except to know that there, too, must live men whose eyes will never see hope.

Nor does the crowd know the meaning of silver. Hacked out of the earth's depths by sweating, cursing men. Men working in the reeking smoke of nut-oil lamps, prying loose the grey-tinged seams into baskets their children carry up long rope ladders over ascents too slippery to climb, all of them dreading the deep groan of the earth that trembles the air and turns its dank smell acrid until the lamps finally gutter and die as the men stand in the blackness screaming at the broken rope strands.

If the holy gifts had not been made of suffering just as Christ had suffered, they would not redeem as Christ did. And thus they come, the jeweled boxes, the carved nautilus shells made to look like ships with puffed sails, the painted books and silver candle holders, carved ivory crucifixes, vestments, chalices, reliquaries. The parvis fills with the bridal dowry of a Queen of Heaven about to be crowned. Chalices for chapels, purple vestments tinctured with the glands of shellfish, carved alabaster, stamped medallions from far princes, lengths of cloth embroidered with bird-quill thread, the finest thread of all. Sapphire, onyx, carbuncle, emerald. Alabaster, porphyry, marble, soapstone. Indigo, orchil, purpura, saffron. They all arrive before the great cathedral's doors, but the doors do not open for them.

Priests in white embroidered vestments file alongside the gifts, carrying baskets of gold coins which they fling into the crowd. The children there scramble on their hands and knees seeking the coins that fall past the outstretched hands as the voices in the cloth canyons above shout *AVE*! to the priests hymning *Ave Maria Stellis!* The legates who brought their dowers of gold and silver arrive at the steps and turn to face Her arrival. It is hot. They swelter as they raise their gifts for all to see. Then they hymn *Ave Maria Stellis*. Sprinklers of holy water walk amid the crowd, flicking their *uimpilon*s out over the faces, and those who feel the touch of a droplet cry *AVE!* as the flingers reply *Ave Maria Stellis!*

Then a column of red-robed women arrive amid the cry of a thousand *AVE*s. Members of the Sisterhood of Mercy, devout laywomen who serve Her with their own identities discarded, they are to victims struck with the plague the holiest of all humankind. Candle-bearing and caped, they followed no saint's school but walked in saints' ways, laboring in the rooms where the plague still rages. And when they see the dark buboes on their own skin they know there is nothing left for them, they sing hosannas to the Virgin and carry on until they, too, fall.

AVE! they shout as they file into place.

AVE! thunders the crowd. *Ave!* echoes the cathedral. *AVE!* roars back the multitude. *AVE!* returns the cathedral. Their chant rises into a rhythm of *AVE!* hurled to *AVE!* multiplied by *AVE!* and given to *AVE!* They pick up the pace to greet each echo until the entire facade of the cathedral trembles at the concussion:

AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE
AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE
AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE
AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE
AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE AVE

Yet still the doors do not open.

This is the volcano the cardinals enter as they arrive in their red robes, carrying Her throne on top of their shoulders. She is heaven jeweled by the earth. Her face is nearly hidden by the crush of their tribute. The air is thick with smoke but Her radiance gleams such a vision that their shouts redouble and then rise still higher. The guards cleave aside the crowds to allow Her bearers to pass. Women clasp their house icons and hold them up to her face as men yell themselves into a frenzy at her child-bride's lips. Children burst into tears and time melts into a stream of pure sound and pure color as their senses rise above ecstasy at the roar becoming ever louder.

The cardinals reach the bottommost step. They slowly lower Her throne, first in front and then in back, until they are on their knees as humility demands of them to be worthy of Her home.

She ascends so slowly that time loses all meaning, so radiantly that all sin is forgiven, so bathed in their joy that the moment vanishes into the titanic tremor of Faith, Spectacle, and Ecstasy as they unite into Her sea, a sea that rises far out under the human wind. Invisible at first beneath its tiny lappets of swept blue, calling its strengths from out of its depths, then going the wind's way. To swell towards land, becoming first visible above the horizon as a long, low rise. Lifting, growing, undulating inward into a colossus of surge so immense that it can only stumble, at first imperceptibly, upon the land's rise. Its sea hair blown back by the rush of its hurl, pushing forward so far out over itself that it breaks into a tumult of spume and curl which shreds up onto the land in streaks of bubbles that hiss to a halt, turn, and slowly glide back into the Oneness from which they once emerged and will one day return, leaving Eve's tainted traces behind as a slim streak upon the shores of *Maria Virginis Panagia*, the time thus come for Womankind's dominion.

Only now do the doors open.

1346

Victory

D'Airelle Lefief, King Philip's brothel-keeper for the crossbowmen's camp, is the first to know the battle has been lost. With no warning his camp is suddenly beswarmed with looters. He shouts to his women to ready themselves for rape. All of them know very well what to expect once there is nothing left to loot; they have endured lost battles before, and will endure them again. To them, rape followed battle as surely as the plow follows the ox.

King Philip of France should have waited a day. His men were exhausted after a full day's march through poor weather and muddy terrain. They would normally be granted two days of rest, not merely one. Instead, Philip ordered his weary army into battle on a single night's rest thinking his two thousand knights and four thousand Genoese crossbowmen would be invincible against King Edward of England's foot-soldier army. Had not Philip's spies told him that King Edward's soldiery was a motley commonlot of Welsh woodcutters pressed into service as archers? They were bitter to the depths of their hearts, so the songbirds warbled, outraged at leaving their fields just as harvest time neared. Whispers had also reached his ear that the Welshmen had been promised four days of looting instead of the customary three. Philip might have asked how the whisperers could possibly know such a thing, but he chose instead to give more credence to the tale that King Edward had promised pardon to hundreds of convicted felons if they won. This was hardly news to any king in need of a cutthroat infantry. Gladly would any felon trade gaol's lice soup and each other's behinds for the King's food and camp brothels. Who indeed would not trade prison tatters for a sword and license to do with it what he will?

Pshaw, the French King's silver-syllabled swallows averred in their boasts to him, this beer-bibbing lot of English ruffians will flee at the first whiff of a horse fart.

But much to Philip's dismay King Edward's army had pillaged its way all the way from the Cotentin near Barfleur in July to Poissy near Paris in August. Now, laden with booty, they were on their way north again toward

Calais and autumn's fair winds to England. When Philip's spies informed him that Edward had paused for food and fodder near Crécy-en-Ponthieu, he immediately ordered his men to march there and make ready for battle.

While he girded himself for battle with a pre-victory celebration feast with his knights, he sent ahead his camp scouts, cook wagons, armourers, fletchers, tent pitchers, fodder balers, brothel women, and provisioners to make ready for all his men.

By his own estimation, Philip's logic was good. His Genoese crossbowmen, albeit mercenaries, were so skilled that they could shoot two bolts in a minute. Had he not successfully relied in the past on numerical superiority and the best weapons his bullion could buy? No one thought to inform him quantity is not quality and bullion is not inventiveness.

If Philip's logic served him poorly, his spies made it disastrous. They knew little of the new English longbow made of yew, nor that the English longbowmen unstrung their bows at night so they wouldn't lose their suppleness. Nor was he told that Edward's longbowmen were issued three quivers of twenty-four arrows each before battle, which could sustain them for a full quarter of an hour shooting five arrows the minute. That the English longbowmen could shoot heavier arrows twice the distance of Genoese crossbow bolts turned out to be a most unpleasant revelation. Even worse was his discovery that Edward's gunpowder *ribauldequins* could shoot multiple arrows at once and his bombards could hurl iron balls as large as a man's fist that could fell an armored horse at two hundred paces.

D'Airelle Lefief cares nothing for such soldierly mythologies. All he knows is that the first looters to arrive among his tents are Edward's felons promised a pardon — and that felons loathe camp panders because panders bar felons from access to their women due to their reputation as bearers of the black pox, *la syphile*.

The felons knew where to find Philip's camp — Blanchetaque 'the ford marked by white stones' where weapons-laden armies could cross over a bed of small stones lain down stone by stone since time out of mind by farmers, couriers, and pilgrims who desired a shallow but sure-footed crossing for

their animals and wagons, each depositing at least one stone as their toll. On each bank rose two pyramids of stones dusted with white chalk. Philip had encamped his crossbowmen close to Blanchetaque's pyramids so they and the foot soldiers could be the first to cross the stream on their way to the battle ground early in the morning. Philip didn't pause to consider that those white pyramids also made the ford an easy find for his opponents.

Felons are cannier than kings. Loyal to no cause but the skin beneath their garments, looters know better than any caparisoned princeling when to fight and when to flee. Felons-at-arms would spot before anyone else which way the feckless wind of a battle blew. Amid the hiss of arrows and shrieks of the wounded earlier that afternoon, when Edward's convicts saw

Philip's crossbowmen mortally fall long before their bolts were within range of the English archers, they knew instantly what to do. They swiftly adorned themselves in Coward's Colors—smears of blood from their fallen compatriots. Feigning injury, they fell back, discarded their face protectors and chain mail, then raced to the camp on the French side of the white pyramids.

Haste and wits are the first two laws in the unwritten manual of looting. Rule Number Three is "Take only what you find for yourself, not from another looter." Of no grandly adorned ancestry are these rabble. Their vocabularies summed to perhaps a hundred words, of which twenty are the smut every soldier uses in lieu of any word with more letters. But at least they knew not to pick fights with each other, which is more than can be said for the French nobility that day.

The moment the felons arrive they commence the sack. The women and wine have to wait. They know they have but a quarter-hour before the

decimated Genoese arrive primed to kill to protect their own goods. The camp is turned to shambles as the looters shoulder anything they can grab, then race to a bramble-filled ditch to hide it and return for more. They are too frenzied to do anything but curse as they rifle the packs and kick over the cots.

The camp lies on a low slope — always the preferred location, not for its view but for the drainage if it rains. Now as the looters rip apart the tents to get at what is inside, they can see in the distance the approaching remains of the French army. Defeat-shocked princes and knights ride near the front, followed by disorganized contingents of archers, harquebusiers, pikemen, executioners, all looking back over their shoulders at Edward's army pursuing them just as fast as they themselves can flee.

Back in the camp, the minutes tick by as the looters grab everything they can, always distracted by yet another unopened sack or unexamined tent. But too late! The camp is suddenly overrun by a bellowing mass of English horsemen, waving their swords and shrieking 'Victory! Victory!' as they storm past the looters. They fling tents aside with their pikes, seeking not the mean and base spoils of this commonlot soldiery, but rather the tents on the hill with the flags of the nobles atop.

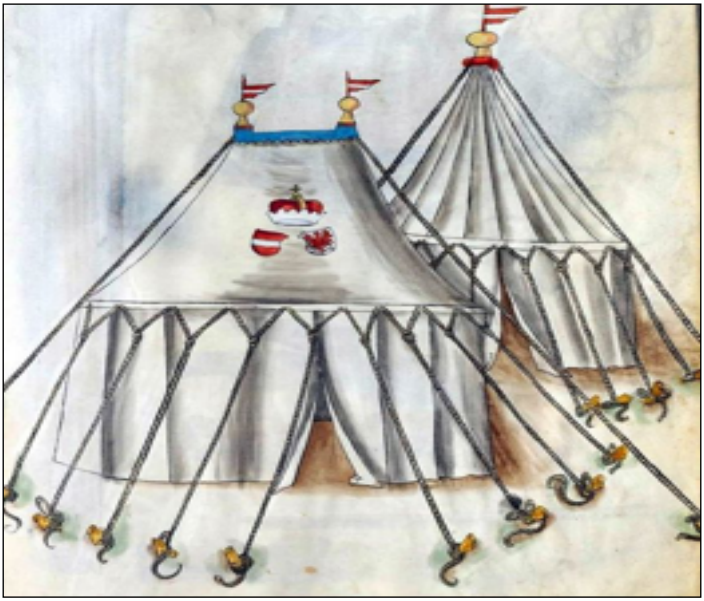
A few of the looters are trapped and now whine piteously for their lives. They may have fought under the same red and gold banner, but Edward's soldiers know very well how and why those looters arrived before them. The felons' screams turn to hisses as their throats are slashed and they drown in their own blood. Others are beheaded by broadswords or impaled on pikes. The cowards among them who plead for mercy are finished mercilessly, amid laughter, as their heads are hacked off and spitted on pikes, then raised high to witness the sack

By sack standards, this one is orderly. Boxes of loot are axed to pieces, saddlebags slashed open. Gold spills, rich cloth bursts out, jewels fall into the blood. Rough yells, running feet. Tents are trampled into the mud. Wine barrels are upended as men gulp until red rivulets stream down their beards. A hanged man is cut down amid roars of laughter — some offender of war's rough discipline now released by a victory that for him is a day too late.

His body is replaced by the neck of D'Airelle Lefief, whose pandery now serves him as poorly as it once served him well. Hands tied behind his back, he babbles that if they let him go he will tell them which woman guards his treasure. Alas, D'Airelle tells them this in French pander's patois, of which the looting rabble understands not a word.

Now they mock him as his eyes bulge when he feels the rope's iron clench. He sees the men below popping off his trouser buttons with their sword tips. His trousers fall off and his legs kick wildly for the firm ground just out of reach. His cries gags soundlessly as the looters mock him that his neck now knows how fat his belly is. At first he squirms, then his entire body convulses into wild arcs until an incandescence of agony in black ends his pleas for mercy.

In D'Airelle's former fiefdom, the camp of cushions on makeshift cots inside coarse grosgrain tents, the victory is greeted with the false screams of those who alone will prosper from the vanquished and the victorious: the prostitutes. D'Airelle had warned them, so they wear nothing beneath their



robes. They know how hapless men are if they have no enemy to fight; and how foolish they are that while one victor may take them, the rest must pay.

To a different camp, in a secluded vee where a small creek flows, victory comes differently. The wives of the French nobles are there, knowing that if their husbands have been killed they now stand little chance of ransom. In preparation for the inevitable they showcase their status with necklaces and rings. Their maids and cleaning women will be raped and thrown aside, but the ladies themselves, having now assembled in their finery, know they must be dignified as they are possessed, for they will be possessed by men of their own station, rape will be called served, it will be done with dignity, and it will not be mentioned if they are ransomed. If there is no ransom, they face an uncertain future as a concubine or mistress in a court filled with women who detest them.

When daylight finally dims, the camp still burns and the blood has crusted in pools. Only the wine remains. The victorious soldiers now drink it in full. Mouthful after mouthful, they drunken themselves as quickly as they can, counting their coins or flinging them down in the dice pits. Fires heaped high with wreckage crackle and smoke as the men stagger into the woods, heads reeling, to slip in the slime, vomit, bellowing, '*Crécy! Crécy! Victory! Victory*!'

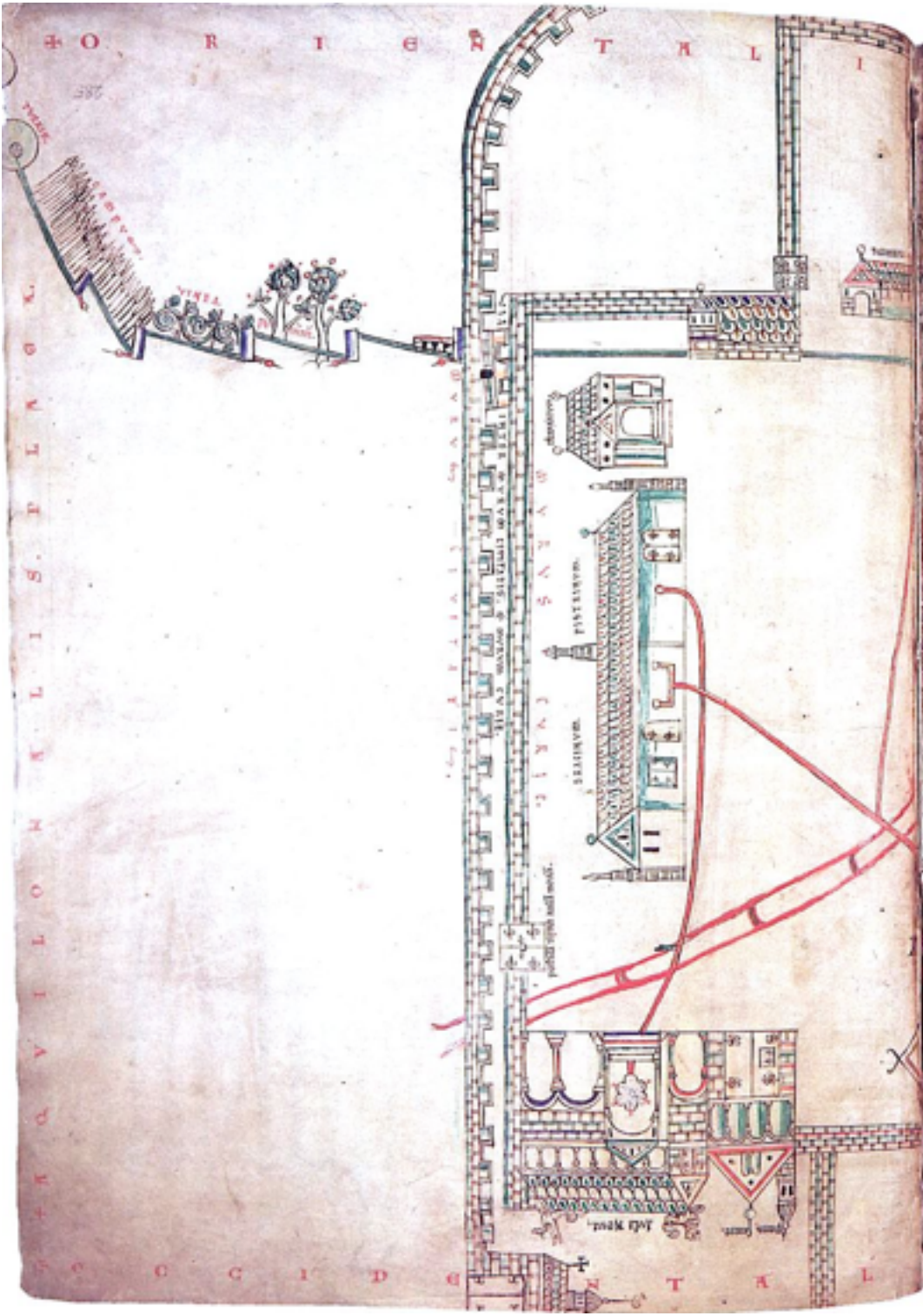
1399

The Abbey's Used Waters

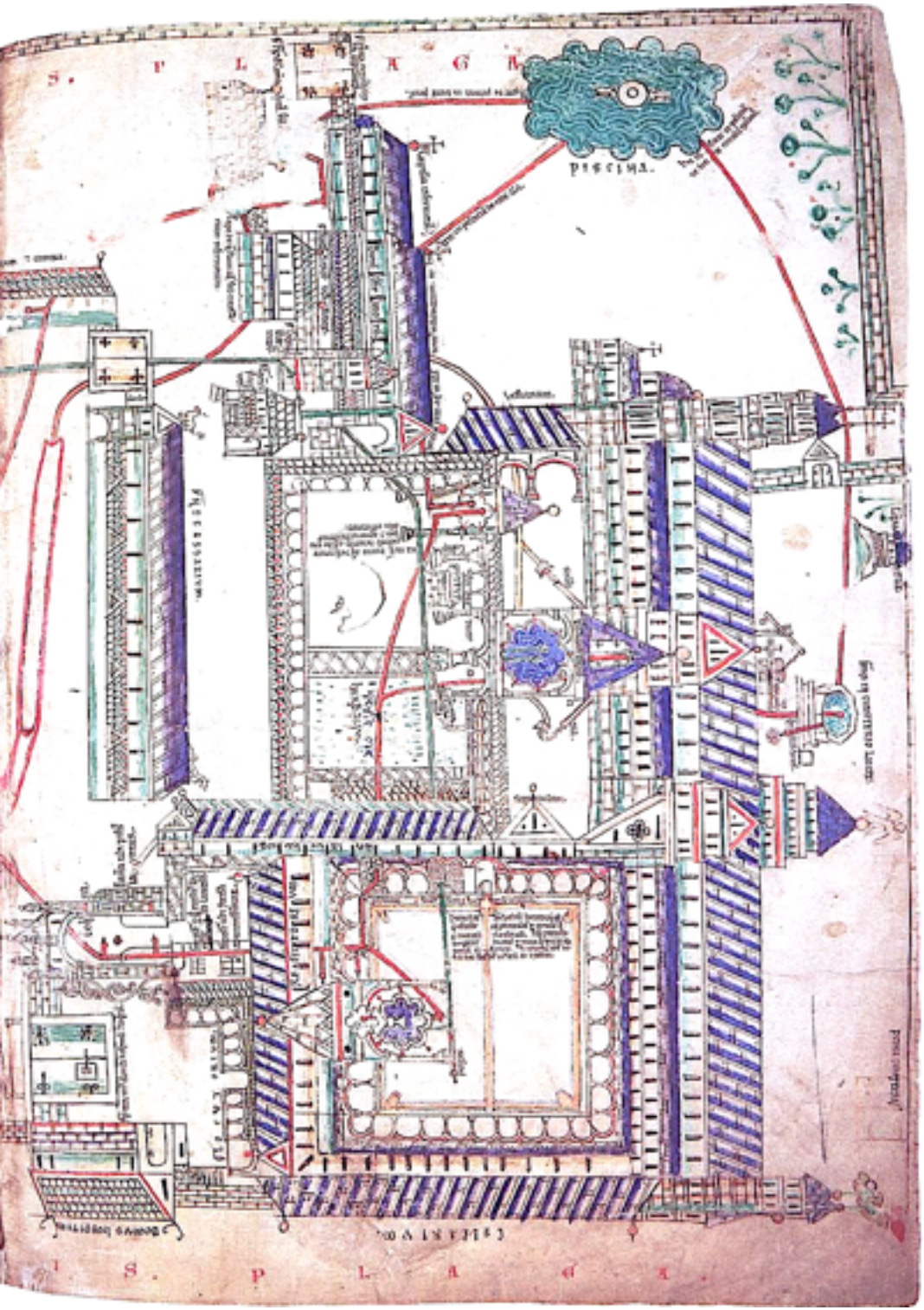
Passelewe Lefief, nicknamed The Delver, makes his daily survey of the abbey's waters. A man of few words but great oaths, he accepted reluctantly the post of Master of the Stream to which the abbot had appointed him. He was a proud man, a man who could count the names of his ancestors on both hands and one foot. But the abbot knew the will of God, and the abbot said God's will was that Passelewe should become the finest delver the abbey has ever known. Now as he makes his daily inspection of the waters, Passelewe reflects on how the abbey's form had been chosen to channel the stream's flow into the most uses possible.

The river arrives through a conduit under the abbey's north wall. When the water emerges, it is in the shadow of the abbey church. There a large sluice diverts part of it, which slides along a millrace to jet against the paddles of a huge wheel. There cone-shaped wooden gears change the millrace's horizontal flow into the vertical spin of a shaft, at the bottom of which is a stone larger around than the span of a man's arms. It turns against a fixed bottom stone, and between the stones' faces wheat and barley grains are cracked, crushed, and spun into flour.

The millrace continues only a pace before it strikes another paddle wheel. This one's



Eadwine psalter: Waterworks of the Priory and Christ Church Cathedral in Canterbury, c. 1174,



illumination on parchment, R.17.1, f.284v-285r. Image credit: Saint Louis University Library.

sifts the flour through the perforations, which leaves the husks and bran behind.

The sluice rejoins the river's main flow just above the formal gardens of the monks' *dorter*, or dormitory. There long poles on swivels swing out over the flow, drop buckets into the water with a splash, then lift them out again brimming with water for the garden's fresh flowers and herbs.

A few steps further on, another branch is sluiced off. It ristles its way along a stone conduit that runs first in the open, then under stone walkways, slipping invisibly under walls and outbuildings, emerging in the vast stone-columned arcade of the cloister that is the heart of the abbey. There, under the open sky, the monks work, recite their prayers, stroll, do small tasks such as mend their frocks and sandals. The conduit passes the stalls of the *scriptorium*, where the older monks work in quiet retirement making documents and books.

Then it empties into an octagonal pool in the center of the cloister. Here the monks fill their ewers and basins in the morning, then turn back to their cells to bathe.

Passelewe nods silently to the monks, then bends to pluck a few errant blades of grass trying to gain a foothold between the thick hexagonal tiles of the walkway. He curses the tufts angrily before stuffing them into a leather pouch hanging from the thong-work of his belt. His words startle the monks within earshot. Thinking he is oathing them, they whisper to each other and bolt the doors to their cells.

The remaining water spills through small spouts on each face of the cloister pool into a channel running around the bottom. This flows into another conduit that runs diagonally across the cloister, beneath its southern walkway and the clerks' offices beyond, emerging on the periphery only to tumble into another sluice, this one serving the infirmary.

Here the largest portion of the sluice branches off toward the kitchens beyond, but a smaller branch flows down a short incline into a square stone pool, where a monk occasionally fetches water from it with a bucket. The bucket sinks and is hoisted out dripping, to be taken away for bathing and to steep the active ingredients in flowers, herbs, roots, and barks they use as medicines.

Then, its purity no longer important, the pool's water flows into a spout and thence to a second basin. This one, scummy with tallow film, is the infirmary's washtub. Nearby, attached to a trellis ascending a wall, hempen twines sag under the weight of dripping cassocks, frocks, and sheets. The frocks are hung upside down so that the tatters that will result from their having been bunched and tied tightly by the twines will not be noticeable amid the frays of coarse cloth constantly being dragged on the ground. Lighter garments are held up with clothespins made of split cane. Passelewe attends to a dozen or so which have fallen on the ground. He reattaches them to the twisted hemp, cursing what manner of monk it is who thinks a delver should tend to clothespins as if a washerwoman.

The laughter and light chatter from inside the infirmary mingles with the soft sounds of water eddying in the pool. Inside, several monks are

having their quarterly bleeding, to purge the humors that bring lust. It is a happy time for them, for they have been relieved of their duties for a week and get all the meat and wine they want. It is a time for shedding burdens, when true thoughts may be expressed (for are they not ill?) and they listen to one another's tales all the way through.

The branch that leads south into the kitchen undergoes a less leisurely fate. Its water tumbles from a spout that penetrates the kitchen wall near the door, splashing noisily into a stone trough that hugs the entire length of one wall, more than a dozen paces long. On the opposite side is an equally long fireplace.

The trough is divided into three basins, each lower than the previous. The first is the smallest, and contains water for cooking and drinking. The next is for rinsing. Above it are pegs, hooks, and a series of crude iron racks. On these, respectively, towels dry, sooty clothes are hung, and the kitchen's spits, pots, forks, knives, whisks, ladles, trivets, and basins are stacked up to dry. Alongside, a rack holds long, flat blades of iron used to spit meat and game birds for roasting next to the fire. Passelewe scoops

up a wisp of fat congealed along the rim of the rinsing trough, wipes it onto his leggings, and oaths about so careless a kitchen crew that thinks others should do their work.

Finally the water flows over a U-shaped efflux into the third and largest basin, the basin used for washing. Above it is a row of wooden boxes, or *fourmes*, which word in time came to describe the shallow wooden buckets used to curdle cheese, thence to the word for the making of cheese, *fourmage*, and finally the word for cheese itself, *fromage*.

One of the wooden *fourmes* is filled with the abbey's homemade soap—a mixture of rendered fat, oil, and ashes that is scooped out by the handful to clean the grease film off fire-blackened pots. Another has sand in it, for scouring off dried food and the crust of the abbey kitchen's ever-present burnt cheese. The last is stacked with lens-shaped white ovals of cuttlefish spines, which were washed up on distant seashores and been collected by itinerant pedlars who sell them as a soft abrasive for copper.

Passelewe's inspection of the water's grease-filmed exit is unheard amid the din of cauldron clangs, roaring fires, clattering spoons, shouted instructions, and splatters of fat bursting from roasts into the flames.

Past these buildings the stream begins to gather back the murky trickles from its branches. Yet its work is still not done. Beyond the square of the main part of the abbey is the small cluster of the abbot's quarters. His buildings are also cloistered in a square, just as Roman buildings adopted the square arcade to keep their courtyards sunny in winter and shaded in summer.

The largest building is the *atrium*, the abbot's offices, where the abbey's records, documents, and treasury are kept. A lesser building attached to it is the *locutorium*,

where guests are received. Next to it is the *scriptorium*, where the monks gather during cold winter evenings to play games, talk, or write. Here the river's water is brought in thimbles, to pour into inkwells. The ink is thinned so that if it is applied for a second time the thicker stroke will reveal an attempt to correct or forge. Abutting the abbey's main gate in the western wall (so visitors would enter in the same direction they would face if departing for Jerusalem), a small rivulet of the stream spills into a basin alongside the abbot's personal quarters. Attached to his residence are the abbey's stables, *cellarium* or wine cellar (locked with two locks), and the *sacramenoria,* wherein are kept the chalices of gold, jeweled vestments, silver monstrances, and altar silks. The river does not flow here, it is carried in carafes to thin the consecrated wine.

Still the water's utility is not done. Beyond the abbot's quarters, butted against the abbey's south wall, are work sheds. On its way there, the river first passes through the abbey's

gardens. Small wooden gates only slightly larger than a hand divert the flow into channels that rim the edges of more than a dozen rectangular plots, each hedged with boxwood to keep out nighttime's prowling animals. Graveled walkways lead between them, this plot for the infirmary's medicinal plants, that one for kitchen herbs, another for garlic, still others for the fruits, vegetables, and nuts that cannot be demanded from the peasant landholders outside the walls. Along the abbey's entire south and west periphery is a row of walnut trees which break the harsh winds of November and March. Beneath them is a sprawling, unmanaged patch of vines, whose grapes are not for wine but for the table—and while still green for verjuice, an astringent better than vinegar to whiten fish or fowl. In the middle of the garden is a gazebo for hot days, constructed of timbers and climbing glycines lashed together with leather thong-work. A trickle of the river passes here in a slim channel, to be dipped out to quench a thirst or smooth rough workaday wine.

Then the river flows towards the sheds. Here at last is Passelewe at home. He relaxes for the first time since his daily inspection began. The men here are men such as himself, fiefmen whose poverty came by birth rather than vow. Now suddenly he laughs and is loquacious as he gathers them and assigns each a tool as they prepare to go outside the walls.

Their party passes several channels, ruder that any of those before, which angle off to pools.

One is quite deep, and in this the monks bathe. Another flows into a paddle wheel, again turning an axle. This axle also ends in irregular wooden ovals. These turn beneath several wooden mallets. As the oval ends rise, so do the mallets, and as they drop, they thump against a stump-end that rests in a trough filled with wads of cloth remaining after the monks' cassocks have worn through. A monk sits at the edge, poking a large carved wooden spoon carefully among the rising and falling mallets, arranging the cloth continually until it has been shredded into irreducible fibers.

These fibers are dumped into a vat filled with water, and the whole is stirred until it is soupy and uniform. Another monk dips into this soup a flat wooden rectangle which has a metal screen across its open center. The screen is made of hundreds of wires that catch up the cloth threads in the soup and, when shaken, form them into an even, flat mass. He trims away the irregularities on the form's edges, lifts it out, turns it quickly upside down so the matted fibre sheet falls onto the flat surface of a *pressoir*, which is screwed down until moisture stops running out its edges. In a few moments they unscrew the *pressoir* and peel away from its bottom surface a thin, damp, new sheet of paper and droop it over a rack to dry.

Another channel flows to the tannery. Its water splashes into a large trough where new hides soak for several weeks so their hair can be loosened and stripped off. Some of the water is diverted to fill several carved stone basins, where it slowly leaches tannin from tree barks and color from flower petals to later tan and dye the leather. In other vats, broader and less deep, the scraped hides are soaked for weeks in a brine of coarse salt, oak bark, and horse urine. The newly tanned leather is then rinsed in a rapidly flowing part of the stream, dyed, and rinsed again. A final trough rinses away the last of putridity and color, and the new

leather is stretched to dry in the shade. Then it is rolled up in bundles tied with thongs to be taken to the sandal-making shed.

There are other channels. They take the stream's water to the forge, the carpenter's, the barrel-maker's, the hot baths used in winter, the troughs of the stable, and the waist-high, carved stone tubs where monks come to wash their frocks if it isn't their allotted laundry day.

The river leaves the abbey in a conduit under the southern wall. Not quite yet joined of all its parts, it is bridged by one last building. This is made of light-colored stone and has stained glass windows along its eaves. There, having been used by everyone to perform all the deeds that water can perform—washing, watering, diluting, rotating, powering, scouring, cooling, bathing, cleaning, quenching, pleasing ears as it passes, giving itself freely, having bubbled up into fountains, spilled over small dams, flowed through gates, swirled around vats, splashed up onto faces, it departs the abbey with a gurgle and a swish, taking with it the amassed residues of all the abbey's activities as it passes beneath the last building of all, the modest enclosure of the *necessarium*.

And here gather the rats which have come upstream, attracted by the rich, complex odors of the water leaving the abbey. They fight and squeal here, expel and accept newcomers, procreate, and are driven off briefly by Passelewe's workmen, who have come to repair the stones of the abbey wall's foundations. But, being rats, they are as proprietary as the abbey itself, and they fight similarly harshly when threatened. One, cornered by Passelewe jabbing at it with a spade, has no choice but to flee between his legs. As the rat passes it gnashes out fiercely with its teeth, gouging through Passelewe's leggings and into his flesh. Passelewe winces, curses, kills the rat with his spade, then resumes his work.

Within a day, after having mingled with a third or more of the abbey's monks or retinue, he becomes feverish and complains his underarms are painful and hot. He is soon in agony and screams again and again for water, and within two days is dead. Being a workman and therefore barely in possession of a soul, he is buried with no pomp. The monks of the

infirmary who come to deliver his last rites speak momentarily of the odd-colored swellings under his arms and the excruciating way he passed, attribute it to his choleric temper with its symptomatic signs of black-spirited mutterings and oaths.

Then they return to the century-old serenity the stream has brought into their walls.

1460

The Rosary

But for thirty-odd lines written by Luke, few would know much about an otherwise unremarkable young maid named Miriam. She was reported in Nazareth, at the marriage at Cana, at the foot of the Cross, in a handful of other places. No one could say when or where she died.

Now, thirteen hundred years later, she is the uniting radiance of the Church, surpassing her Son, God, and all the martyrs and saints. More than half the chapels in Christendom are dedicated to her. Knights and soldiers huzzah her name as they cut each other to bits. The theologians of Paris debate whether she possessed perfectly science and economics along with the other five Liberal Arts. Towns all over Christendom vie for which prays to her in the most dazzling way.

The Dominican friar Alain de la Roche learned that the folk of a certain French town had revived a centuries-old ritual they called the rosary, a simple cycle of prayers to the Virgin worshippers chanted in unison. Alain was ambitious, and like many friars of his time, knew well the example of Francis of Assisi, who created a following so large it begat him sainthood.

Now Alain stands on a low bluff overlooking this town, seeing its history spread away like a map. It had grown out of an ancient ford where shallow water ran swiftly over small stones, making it easy for animals to cross. At one tip of the town a smaller stream braids itself in. The first hamlet grew on this spit of land, soon growing prosperous enough to build a toll-keeper's house, a wooden gate, stone walls, a public bread oven, a granary.

Where the two waters joined there was a bastide, a fortified church with arrow-slit windows and a flat-topped tower rimmed with crenellations. In the rough centuries after the Church proclaimed the Peace of God, priests nonetheless built thick walls. What it was like under attack can hardly be imagined. The entire village would be trembling within, arrows hissing through the windows, great fires in the corners, men dying with their wives shrieking beside them, everyone praying the doors would hold.

Now it is little used. There are birds' nests in the eaves. One of its thick outer walls lies in pieces, remnant of a long-forgotten breach. Spreading before it is the first market square, scarcely larger than two or three houses. Some of the nearby farmers still come there to offer their cabbages and eggs. Around the square, weathered old houses hold each other up like a parade of drunk angles, half-timbers, half-air.

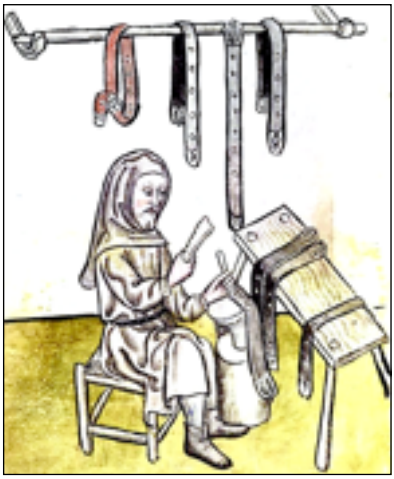
The old bourg had huddled under the bastide church. No one can now say how long it took for the town to grow and then to die. But at some point there came an empty time, perhaps of war or plague or a grasping line of foreign overlords, and the place where its growth stopped is more evident than the when. Half a dozen houses have collapsed. Two others are stone shells jutting their remnants of charred beams. Overgrown orchards nearby, fruitless and bare-limbed. Crumbled fences. A well without a bucket. Line

after line of *morte sans issue* in the marriage records, the sole remains of couples who died without children.

Beyond these old-town remnants now turned into garden plots and old dogs behind fences, there is the broad green of a common where the sheep and cattle are still herded at night. At its edge is a walled enclosure. There a new granary and hayrick speak of the vigor of the new bourg. A bridge, a stable, a carved stone wellhead with four spouts, a toll-keeper's quarters with room enough for five men. These are bright times. A powerful lord is extending his domains, town officials are importing stonecutters to build a new bridge over the ford, a traveling smith has set his son up with a permanent forge, villagers surging in and out of the market. Stone houses now appear alongside those of wood — houses whose shutters are now flung open, flying housemaids' flags of the linen being aired.

The old town's church was a church of the sword. The new town's church is a church of the Virgin. It has slim arches and a steeple like hands pointed in prayer, carved wooden chancel screens surrounding the altar to further distance the priest from the flock. Its flamboyance marks the dawn of a new time: the mother in a manger become Queen of Paradise.

Near the new church, a silent market cross gazes down on a noisy square. This market is ten times larger that the old bourg's, and even has its own timbered roof. It has booths for moneychangers and shoe menders,



herb sellers and soap makers, barbers, linen shops, lock-makers, lace. Banners hang out from the shopfronts, the buildings that soar next highest to the church. Their windows tell of the social order within: the lace-curtained floor of *Patron et Madame*, above them the linen curtains of the children, then the oiled-paper windows of *grandmère* and the aunts, and finally the tiny circle of the maid's quarters, cramped under the thatch eaves, dank and cold during winter, and reeking of smoke from a leak in the chimney. Behind, at the bottom of crooked stairs used by the help, water laps from a wellhead into a stone trough for the laundry. Threadbare smocks hang there from pegs, smelling of flowery scent. Madame buys soap now from the shops, for the family no longer keeps cattle, and the scented-oil soaps from Catalunya are finer by far.

Roads spread away from the square, passing first the houses of the cloth sellers and butchers, angling past the simpler shops of candlemakers and horse meat sellers. There the wooden walkway ends. Beyond lie the shops of the craftsmen, the glowing forge of the smith, the huts of the poor and the shoe menders and seamstresses, the old women whose men have gone, the last of the bakers, on out to the irregular shanties of the half-townsmen / half-peasants who dwell on a town's edges — cart drovers, hay sellers, stablehands, wall menders, ditch-diggers, egg sellers, butchers, wastrels. quoystrels, pickpockets, poachers.

Across the river is a cultivated area of rolling hillocks, checkered with the tiny plots of townsmen's gardens, each walled off from the other with wattle fences of woven reeds. Each has a gateway with a lock and a bower under a tree. The path to these fields follows the river's bank, touching down to water's edge at fishing weirs and anglers' stumps, then retreating to skirt oxbows and ponds.

A faint squall catches Alain's ear and he seeks out its direction. Half-hidden in the mist-daubed distance, in the middle of a field on the other side of town, he sees round tents and clusters of people. There wafts another tendril of sound, and this time it's a tune. A *loure* is there, a countryman's bagpipe. It guides him while he meditates on the rosary as he enters the soundscape between the town's cobbles and roofs.

The path down from the bluff begins with a light concerto of finches, swelling to a cow carillon against a sheep meadow of munches. Wash water and the contents of chamber pots hit the road with a gooey *swopp*. Whispery sounds scurry from an old woman on her way to the well, fast-patter sandal-scuffs vanishing into the giant dull thuds of an oxcart plod. Masons' chisels clink into bricks to break them in the right place. A carpenter's adze gnashes into rough shape a new yoke for an ox. Washerwomen whistle in

their breath as they brace for the weight of their buckets. Sausage sellers rearrange their bins, to the whiney impatience of mongrels.

The town may seem chaotic to the eye, but the ear remakes it into a midafternoon chord: hay rustlings, donkey beatings, coins slapped on barrel tops, hagglers belittling the high price of eggs, horse wheezes, boy yells, bellow hissings, sandals flopping along on some mission of urgency, linen ruffles as bedding is taken in from windows, dust-cloth snaps. Milkmaids urge along their slow charges with tapping sticks and *hyoop*s. A ragpicker pulls along his broken-wheeled cart, clacking over the stones as he rings his bell and sings his song. A furiously driven official's wagon careens to a halt, and the footman's steps gurgle in the mud as he rushes to open the door. Two cackles and a cluck signal precedence among the hens as they nibble at a bundle of greens tied to a string in the middle of a doorway, exactly peck-high.

The square is emptying, beckoned by the snake charm of the loure. Alain observes the tiny moments of near silence that break the town's euphony, silences resting lightly on day's end. Flies hover over broken fruit. A woman cracks mustard seeds with the back of a spoon. Five bold bongs from the new town clock are followed by a quiet protest of four from the neglected steeple down in the old bourg. A man with a wooden leg hesitates to cross a

street, patiently waiting until a deliveryman's donkey clips past, then finally make a rush for the other side clinging to his rustling basket of breads.

The sounds of the market tell as well of faces and shapes. A heavy-bearded sign painter speaks over his sketches in a voice that draws the eye to its power. He talks of composition, harmony, color, balance ... prices. A slurry of flaxen sounds blurs from a basket weaver on her way home. The rustle of leaves in a gutter marks a cat intent on closing in on a bird. A chomp goes by, holding in its hand an apple. Hair swept back and clinched by a pin, a merchant's daughter dressed in black brushes past the others, swishing her cape in a haughty flow of wrist. Two chatterers pass their way home, ripe and full of giggling, swathed in bodices a father's frown too tight. A clicking swash announces a young lord, adjusting his sword and saluting his broad hat as he acknowledges the tipped hats of passersby. The smoking volcano of a newlywed's spat seethes past on a low heat, words spitting from the tight fissures of their lips. Then a shirtless young butcher's apprentice comes wine-sliding along, laughing uproariously at the response he gets to a spluttery kiss blown at a flaxen heap of hair.

Then Alain hears the hunched scrape of cripple. Bent from a bad birth, she propels her tangled body using a one-handed shoe shaped to fit her hand, pulling herself along on a sled strapped to what remains of her legs. So frail

she could be blown away by pieces of the wind yet so iron she will be bent forever. She drags behind her a sack of plucked grass and sings to the mud:

> I don't know where to begin
> To tell the troubles I've been.
> But I've grass for your sleep,
> It's not pity I seek.
> Give Marie Lefief a sou
> for her grass
> And she'll be gone.

A pillow stuffer, surviving on what grass she can sell to travelers who will fold their neckerchief into a square, fill it with this grass and fold it again into a pillow. Alain beckons to her, gives her a coin. She beams and clasps her hands toward heaven. Sparrow of Mary, she tells the world that as She loves all She accepts all.

> Gramercy, kind Sire. 'Tis a long night ahead and it is enough for sleep to have grass for your head. My belly is filled past bearing with hunger. There's not many that sleep on grass any more. It's such a good sleep! And I've got a good bunch of roots, too. You can bake them with wet leaves in the stones of your fire. They be a small meal, but that is the fare of our sins! Eve snatched Paradise from the hands of her children and ate the apple that took the world. But the Virgin! The Virgin will love us! She

> is so beautiful, so very beautiful. It is everything I live for that someday I will see her. Haven't I told you before? She's more beautiful than anything we know, even the flowers! The loveliest bride in all heaven! God himself chose to live in her womb! In Jerusalem they said, 'She has conceived without a husband, you know what maketh her that.' And She said, 'Eve's sin is forgiven, God has come to us through a woman!' We souls, we will be waiting outside the gate, still in our chains, thinking only of ourselves and what God may do to us. And then unto us She will come! God himself will shine behind her, the Almighty and his Son! And her! Sitting on gold cloth and wearing a gold crown. Looking on us and blessing us! She will give us white robes and She will release us and thank us and we will sing and we will rise!

The rest of the town passes in a flurry of banners. Then Alain passes the granary onto the grass of the field. The bagpiper is still squalling his brocaded tattoo. His cheeks puff into a wooden tube and under his arm he holds a pigskin large enough to hold a lungful of air. Two pipes come out to loop over his shoulder, with tassels on the end and a foxtail between. These pipes moan the tonic tones around which his fingers string the tune. What he lacks in rhythm he makes up for in imaginings, fingers chasing out notes thick as mosquitoes in midsummer.

A chain dance forms, a serpentine mingling of colors and necklaces and hands. Young girls are the first to begin dancing, practicing with each other to get the steps right, then trying to unloosen the knots of boys around the

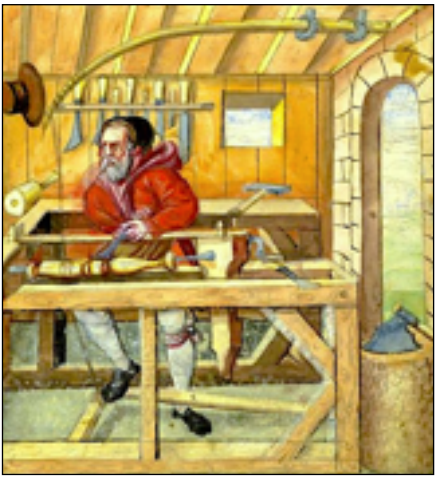
crowd's edges, the bowlines of faces they wish could be untied with with their eyes.

A moon-faced flutist joins the piper with a nod. With a bob of his head he catches the pace, then wails high a soprano world racing faster than time into the night. Beneath him a tambourine begins, and that brings in the clomp of wooden shoes and slaps on bent knees. The piper hurls out the first few notes of a catch, and the flutist goes still faster to garnish them with grace notes and trills. Then the embroidery thins and their notes glide out onto a song. It's an old tune the entire town knows. It is so smooth and gliding it makes them all wish they were a snake — and so they are: arms link and unfurl in the sly sex of the S-dance. The girls' seriousness softens from doing it right to doing it for fun, dancing themselves into a riot of melting colors.

A reedy *hautbois* joins the platform as the town's pillars gather their wives to go home to the uncertain solace of their portraits and mirrors. The mood of the dance changes from curtseys to swung arms. Spangle sounds come from wrist-bells, and aprons fly. A kiss slides by halfway through a turn, and a surprised face vanishes away into the two-step beyond. Bonnets fall and are snatched up in mid-beat, hair shakes loose in the tremble of the tune. A proud potbelly launches into a reel, turning a quick four-step into a two-step glide carried with such aplomb it is almost like grace. Another kiss

is grabbed, this time held for a handful of beats. A baby's chin is tickled as it sucks on its teething toy, a sack of mint tied in a cloth. A ball-shaped wad of wool stuffed with damp grass escapes from a circle of playing boys and rolls lumpily into the dance. A dozen feet field it and it goes spurting back out, erupting grass as it goes. Two or three women wear a curious necklace made of beans strung in three groups of ten with a white bean between, looped in a circle with a cross at one end. A group of old men have dressed in outlandish costumes — boots erupting grasses and pants stuffed gigantically with leaves, held up by waistbands twined out of flowers. They kiss a toothless old woman and with exaggerated bows lead her to the edge of the dance, holding her arms up in an imitation sarabande. She remembers most of the old steps, dancing at half the pace of the younger folk but with the same eyes.

Now the dance breaks loose from the chain. They link elbows two by two and weave a complicated knot that ends in a circle. A bow to the right, curtsey to the left, then left foot out, into the pivot and then the turn, ending face-out and wrinkling their noses in mock despair. But the bagpiper knows it's only for eight beats and shakes out a bagful of tunes. The dancers spin and rush to link up arms for the turn. Wrist bells flow into cuffs, belt purses and wineskins swash in a skirt sea. They swoop a hand-exchange over their heads and are back to the original pairs when a last sprinkle of grace



notes gives way to a wheeze. The dancers bow and smile in the sudden vast silence of the song's end. A wad of grass flies unfurling through the air over a young couple to chide them for dancing too tightly.

Alain notices that to these commonplace people commonplace things seem the most important. A loose headdress is about to fall from its pin so three women rush to refit it. Mothers who gossip always smooth their aprons as they do. Wine-keg men who primp their hair are the first to be sick from having too much. Merchants always furrow their brows when they speak of the future. Women who've had many children wear unshapely fashions made of thick cloth. Young men who've never known a woman sew their codpieces with different colored threads. A young woman's embroidery is always the most elaborate over her sex.

Enough! Alain knows what is to be done if these people are to be saved! He leaves the dance in the light of the setting sun, finds a bower by a stream, seats himself on the grass pillow the cripple Marie made for him, and writes:

> The Rosary shall be called the Divine Psaltery of the Promises. It must be prayed so that it consists of a cycle of 150 Ave Marias and fifteen Paternosters. Its divine numerology consists of the Eleven Celestial Spheres plus the Four Elements multiplied by the Ten Categories. This gives us its 150 Natural Habits. Multiplying the Ten Commandments by the Fifteen Virtues gives us its 150 Moral Habits.

Each of the Natural Habits is a queen whose nuptial bed is one of the divisions in the Paternoster ('Our Father / Who Art In Heaven / Hallowed Be Thy Name,' and so on). Each word in the Ave Maria signifies a Perfection of the Virgin. Each Perfection is symbolised by the precious stone which may be employed to drive away the animal symbolizing the sin governed by that Perfection. Each Perfection represents one branch of the Tree that carries the Blessed Ones, together with the Steps on which Christ ascended on his way to meet Pilate.

Thus, take the first word: Ave. Ave is the first word in Ave Maria. It means 'hail.' Hence it is the symbol of the Virgin's innocence, the girl who is unlike any other girl, on whom an angel came calling using that word. The stone of Ave is the diamond, for nothing can be purer, and its beast is the lion, for nothing can be more courageous. The lion represents the sin of Pride.

The next word, Maria, symbolisms Mary's wisdom, the fact that her knowledge of things came directly from God. Maria's stone is the ruby, symbolizing the pomegranate-hued tears she shed for the droplets of her Son's blood; its beast is the black dog, symbolizing the sin of envy.

The third word is ....

Hours later, the Fifteen Promises of the Divine Rosary now codified into a cycle of prayers, Alain dreams of what he will become. He will name his new order the Universal Confraternity of the Divine Psaltery. He will preach in every hamlet! He will convert the heathens! He will drive demons to flight! The faithful will be filled with abundant grace, as from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer. He will be blessed! He will be beatified!

He will be a saint!


Monroy le Sec
Gondre cour
Briey
Orne
Amelle
Foameix
Estain
LOR.
S Iean
Conflans en Iarnisy.
Iren R.
Harville
la Bauville
Malatour
Pareys
Mezeray
Marche ville
Tour de Voisivre.
Fresne
Gorze
Ver:
D E
la Chaussée
Hatton R.
Preny
S. Benoist
HATTON-CHASTEL
Marquisat
Thiocour
Trey

1483

Baptism

On the way to the baptism they speak little, and that only what to name him. He is the mother's thirteenth, the seventh of the males. The mother considers these to be auspicious numbers, but still, she prays he will be the last. By now she has borne so many that all the traditional ancestral patrimonies have been used. She cannot think of a new name for him.

The coughing clouds of a ragged dawn find them walking the familiar leagues to the church, clothes next to castoffs kept alive with ragged repairs. They pass Valchêve, the trodden earth of the community winnowing ground now riven with springtime shoots from wheat that fell into its cracks last fall. A few moments beyond they pass through Chaillou, where once during the Great Death a procession of penitents passed here, so time out of mind ago that a village grandmother's mother heard of it from her grandmother's mother when she was a child, yet to this day she can describe the penitents



with their chains and crosses as if they had passed this morning. Then to the low grove of Bâchérie, where each spring flocks of squalling blackbirds gather, an omen that devils are there lurking for souls. A few paces further on are the woodcutter's trestles of Clopard, surrounded by chips and the smell of bark. Then to Pennaxie, where once long ago a shepherd named Pennax listened to the knotted whistle of raptor wings as two overhead hawks culled and divided their prey — the sound of which he turned into a twin-piped whistle tune still played at village fairs.

They halt momentarily as a distant bell tolls the time for prime at dawn. They kneel to recite the prescribed words for this hour. When they rise, they hasten to make up the lost time, for they must be at the church when the

jays begin to call, marking the time for workday to begin. They walk faster now, even though the baby's head swings heavily against its swaddle.

Past Rôchinière, the Rockery, where on the day of Creation, as the angels were carrying the world's entire supply of stones in a sack, the sack leaked, raining down today's curiously round cobbles along the length of the valley. Today masons come to gather stones for doorstops and wheelwrights for the weights used on the back ends of two-wheeled carts to balance load of the drivers. Then they are at Combes, where once there lived a man who believed the key to fortune was not to spend a sou; in one of the rarest events of the time, his wife left him. Past Turpiniére, a once renowned abbey now dwindling its patrimony with gluttony and drink.

Across Guillotière, the pasture where from Christmas to May the sick cattle are slain and left to the hunger demons that lurk in the night. To Armeaux, where the Gypsy carts with their jingling horse bells come to ford the stream. A few paces onward lies Malvaudieres, where April's first grapevine tendrils always twine to the left.

The pious old one straightens her scarf, a withered hand murmuring its creases. The others are flowers trudging out their time, bearing the child in their only piece of good cloth. They pass other place-names on the route to the church, each only a few paces to a hundred paces from the next, each with its own heritage of legend or lore, about which the further they venture from their hamlet, the less they know. Already many of the stories have become vague and they know the place-names only for their character — Vertiere, where moss clings to stones, making them bright green; Tauperie, whose moles rustle unseen beneath the fallen chestnut leaves; Bouchardiere, a meadow of low pines and dry grasses; Filetières, where a stream hisses its protest through a defile of stones; Bertiniére and Boutiniére, both named after the flowers gathered there for use in wedding bouquets; Perrons and Origeaux, whose meanings are now lost; Aurons, where the herb ybright may be gathered to prepare an ointment that softens crow's feet behind the eyes; Bourgauderie; Lac Mousseau, a swampy grove of birches and ferns; Pierres, where a family of statue makers labors over their carvings; Forge, where the itinerant ironmonger sets up his bellows and anvil on every other

Saturday; Les Mellieres, the best two fields within a two-league walk — and foul be they who foul the flowers there. Past Fromagerie, where the goat-cheese makers live; Dangerie, a cliff above a rushing stream into which a child once fell to its death; Guijardiere, Granges, Barigonniere; Pre l'Evêque, the pasturage whose proceeds are the benefice of a bishop; Roulliere, Couloire, Planderies, Bourdes, Hardonniére; and finally Carroi, the crossroads, where they take the left-turning road — now a rutway of spring mire — to the church.

The road smells of the season, of mules and mud and the manure of pigs. They complain how they wish the sun didn't sleep such long nights, yet when its warmth rises at last, none of them says a word.

Once past Carroi, they leave behind the place names for which they know the stories. The route from there to the town and the church becomes a blur of footstep counts and meaningless syllables — Fontenils, Maçònniere, Blandiniere, Vâcherie, Bertholonniere, Durandrie, Belasserie, Brulots, Fougeres, Tauche, Bouguerie, Salvérte, Riviere, Gimondrie, Gropheteau, Mortiere, Rabottelliere, Saut-en-loup, Beaucaire, Boussardiere, Vallette, Pailletterie, Guignetiere, Ebats, Gaubertiere, Jagonniere, Croix Blanche, Chambord, Champ-verte, Ermitage, Teilles, Pinarderie, Blotiere, Chaponniere, Chenaye, Planches, Trois Cheminée, Reignere, Batisse, Bellonniere, Renardieres, Hustaudries, Raguiniere, Bejauderie, Bergerair,

Cosnelle, Sablons, Grieves, Mottes, Bouguerie, Duports, Landes, Boisviniere, Arpiniere.

At Arpiniere they pause to shift the child from the mother to one of the aunts. Then onward past Murier, Boutiniere, Coldreau, Aurons, Benetrie, Vaugaudry, Villeneuve (closer to the town now, they sigh in relief, for they hear a bell). The names become hamlets as they glimpse in the distance the spire of the church — Forneau the village bake oven, Avoine, Fontenay, Lavoir, Sanglier — about which the only memory to justify the name is that once a wild boar foraged during the summers there. Then past Chateau, Marais, Friches, Episettes.

They arrive at the thatched huts, then the timbers and brick. They are anxious amid the height and the whirl, the noise and the eyes. They pass through the market square like a vapor, entire lives whose entire history is two lines in a ledger inked in by a priest's pen.

The curé greets them in the eastern portal where the morning light is the warmest. As they climb the steps he smiles and starts chattering. He knows how tiring their morning has been, for he learned the place-names in the same manner as they. He escorts them to the baptismal font, where there is a bell, a book, a candle, and some salt. When the child yelps from the salt's sudden bitterness on his tongue, the curé chuckles and remarks how

miraculous is the will of God that such a tiny creature can make such a big sound.

'If salt were to lose its saltiness, young one, with what would you season?'

Then he asks the name, and they reply the name is Lefief.

'No, no,' he replies, 'the name of the child!'

They cannot give one. When they embarrassedly inform the curé he comforts them with, 'Not for the first time have I heard this tale. Families today are larger than of old. Children survive their first year now that the plague has gone.'

The curé ponders for a moment then pronounces, "'David', That is to be his name. 'David' means 'Courage' and to dare to live in times such as these certainly demands that!"

Then he sings the name high: "David ... Daviiid ... Daviiiiiid ... ," merging the name into an old plainsong *antiphon*.

Then his voice drops to a whisper. "David! You're going to be *alive* now! 'Blessed are they who desire the Kingdom of God'. And little one, from this hour on you will be welcome there — if you please the will of God. Who knows, I might even be there to greet you!'"

He winks at them and they shyly smile in return, their fingers over their lips concealing their giggles. A plain priest wrapped in plain cloth, bathed in plain light. A rarity in this venal time when sons of parvenu merchants become priests without heeding the vows and compete for parishes with the most lucrative rents and tithes. His patter comforts their shyness, an anthem to boyhood's delight, curiosity, daring.

"'David' means 'Courage' but it means other things, too, young one. When the Disciples came to Jesus and asked who was the greatest and the highest in Heaven, he called a child before them. 'I tell you this,' he said, "'nless you are like children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.' Then he gathered the children before him and he blessed them."

Then a long, ringing, exultant "*DA-V-I-I-I-D*!" fills the chapel with the news of this new life. He sprinkles water over the child's face, finger-flicking the last few droplets over the mother and the others. They self-consciously giggle, then nudge each other when the child makes a small sound.

"He is the one being born unto God, but the water of life is meant for us all. David ... Oh David ... Oh Daviiid ... Oh DaVie ... Eau de Vie. The child of life is the water of life. Such a thirst can be quenched only from an eternal spring's flow."

Afterward, the words, the blessing, the marks on paper, the hands held when they encircle the curé while he anoints the child with chrism.

He opens the huge doors for them, to the brilliant sun outside. The jays are squawking. As they move out *en-filé* into the noisy life of the village, the curé ascends the bell tower to toll the bell. He flings the clapper again and again until long after they vanish over the last hill.

Past Chateau, past Sanglier, past Lavoir where the washerwomen have now gathered to begin their day. Past Fontenay; past Forneau now clustered with women come to bake their bread. Past Avoine; past Bonivet, where

they turn for their last glimpse of the church's steeple Their workaday worries loom again into their day as they encounter the first of the place names they know as their own, Sauvegrain, Croix, Villeneuve, Vaugaudry, Benetrie, Aurons, Coldreau, Boutiniere.

There the child messes himself. As they remove the cloth to wash it in a stream, they remark to name the place Pissebas — Lowpisser — and vow to guide him to the location of his own place-name in the meadows, come the year in his life that he must learn to navigate the world as they themselves learned, by names, paces, and the direction of the sun.

Onward again, past Murier, past Mottes, past Grieves, past Sablons, where without their noticing, the sound of the church bell has dwindled to silence.

1518

Friarsgate

Out on the road where the town begins, Friar Guillaume begs:

> Masses! Rosaries! Trentals! Masses! Rosaries! Trentals!

Begging among workmen, itinerant tinkers, herders, haywards, women balancing loads of laundry, hire horses clopping the hasteless pace of their return to the stable, wet nurses walking with one charge at each breast.

> God's cookie, Sire? Bushel of barley, good man, to rest your soul well? Please, missy, a pretty sou for a mass? ... Or your mother, perhaps? There! There's your name, down on God's list! A slice of cheese, Sire, if you please?

A woman holds up sheaves of celery for sale, an expression of implacable boredom in her eyes. Dung collectors hasten back to their barns and stables from the river where they emptied their baskets. Carts from the country rumble past on huge wheels.

> God's labor for beef and bacon! Into my sack and your prayer's into heaven! We live in poverty. We know no delight. Give us a chicken and be remembered tonight! Prayers for you, kind Sires and Mesdames, prayers for you speeding to Christ. Our bodies are dead but for our knees and our prayers! Dear people, pay now to God and be paid back in Paradise!

To the river fords, where traffic must slow, a place of thigh-high boots waterproofed with pitch. Muddy ruts vanish into midstream. Here the oxen can cross, lolling their heads to each side as they plunge and then wade, the wheels of their wagons groaning axle-deep in the froth. Shepherds look across awaiting a quiet moment, then sizzle to their dogs who begin herding over their flocks. Farmers cross carefully, carrying strapped to their backs a wood-tined new harrow or the mended handles of a plow.

A splendidly caped gentleman ferries across on the hire boat, the boatman's lackey leading his horse across further downstream. Urchins besiege the man and he throws the smallest boy a coin, then smirks as the older boys beat him for it.

God's biscuit, Sire? A coin from your pocket? Almighty Lord bless you, Sire, you'll be remembered tonight. A knock on Purgatory, dear Mesdames, to send into heaven all your lost children? Into the hat, Mesdames, whatever you can spare! Prayers to Saint John, good folk, today is his day! A sou for your sister, dear Sir, if she's ailing — or even if she's not! Our prayers will keep her in good health, from hairpiece to slot!

An herb gatherer wades across with his sack, but the lightness of its swing from his belt portends there will be rain tomorrow, for the dew on them today makes the leaves too damp to pick.

Downstream a poacher stoops to pick pebbles, his sling hidden behind a bulge at his waist. Charcoal sellers wade by, forest-fire smells reeking from faces and hands half-skin, half-soot. The smith's hands are huge, beefy, thick fingered; the cooper's have been abraded by a lifetime of slivers. A goose farmer comes across with two huge blankets crammed with feathers. When he clears the town's side, he heads toward the shack of the pillow-maker.

Then come two girls, hair high and laughing, arms free of any load, destinations unknown but route noted by every woman they pass.

> We labor for your salvation and can open the Great Door. A chicken, pullet, anything you can give! God saves givers, leaves the others for lost! God's cookie, Sire, a wee God's crust? Into the sack and pray for you we must!

Toll takers, wagon searchers, quacks selling cremes. A rough shack outside the portal has a wrinkled cloth hanging over two partitions. Inside a

physician examines the pustules of a peddler to see if they are the kind that can spread. A bell hanging from a postern marks the door to the watch's hut at night. He will ring it once a little before sunset, twice as the sun vanishes, and thrice at the last calling of the birds. Then he will unknot the ropes to two huge chains and the portcullis will grind down to spear into the mud at his feet.

> Souls out of Purgatory! Your loved ones freed from their pain! Give what you can. Give what you may. Devotions for souls you want to be free! Masses! Prayers! Trentals! Masses! Prayers! Trentals! Trentals today — thirty masses for the price of ten. Give what you can, spare not your wealth! Sous in my hat, a God's cookie or piece of meat, and in Heaven your God you'll meet!

In the shadows of a tent a well-to-do merchant's wife tests the breasts of a wet nurse to gauge whether she has the quality and quantity she desires for her healthy infant son presently swaddled in sleep in his cradle at home.

A magistrate and gatekeeper rise from their table to examine a cartload of meat, pressing their fingers into the slabs within.

Keep your soul sprightly, give your coin lightly! We fast and we pray. We have no bliss. We have no wealth. We are here to bless, we are here to pray. You have fine bundles of leeks there, my good man! Give one to God and I will whisper in God's ear this day.

Old women carry baskets of dried prunes. A donkey opens its mouth, belches, then wheezes a few gasps into an ascending *hi-han*, *hi-han*, *hi-han* that thunders in the thread-needle passageways beneath the portal.

Toward the end of day Friar Guillaume leaves off from his begging to ponder his gleanings. He pauses a few moments to look over the populace of his gate: minstrels, tinkers, herb sellers, seasonal workers, farm hands, townsmen fleeing another town's debts, roaming soldiers in search of allegiance, priests heading for marriages and funerals, bishops making the rounds of their parishes before writing to Rome, wandering students, pilgrims with their staffs topped by water gourds, agents of foreign bankers, sellers of chopped snakes and perfume, troupes of actors, beggars, confidence men, sheep and cattle on their way to slaughter, gentry in wagons, oxcarts carrying huge timbers and lead sheets for the roof of a church. A wife holds her ill husband's head as he purges an apothecary's emetic.

Friar Guillaume sees little of this. Beyond a face before him at the moment, he has no need to observe the teeming life the townspeople have devised to accommodate to the fact of a shallow ford in a local stream. Beyond the litany of phrases he strings together to appeal to the face before him, any perception of the world beyond his unctuous patter is neither needed nor wanted. He knows no music besides that of the day's Primes to Nones. He has never set a pace in life beyond an amble. He owns only his thoughts, and those are few. He has not the faintest glimmer how thoroughly loathed his life has come to be seen in a world that once believed in the sanctity he represented. When they observe the carriage that arrives to return him to his priory, no fantasy is beyond belief.

What Friar Guillaume does see is other friars — begging friars, preaching friars, friars minor, *cordeliers*, each with his own distinctive habit and manner of begging. He is so intent on chasing other friars away from his post that he scarcely notices a traveler of slight build, drab hat, and muddy boots who is seemingly intent on avoiding the friar's notice, and who is carrying into the town concealed in one of his satchels a sheaf of roughly printed pamphlets acclaiming a man in a faraway land speaking a barbarous tongue who has a marvel to proclaim to the world, a man named Luther.

1539

Doomsday for a Market Scribe

The farmers who come to market say, 'Who sleeps with his mule at dusk sells first in the morning.'

Thus they come. Toward twilight, dust-laden and tired, they converge from the side paths and tracks. Riding sidesaddle on the backs of their oxen or shuffling along leading their mules, legs steady in their rhythms, prodding along their animals with the tassel-ends of long whips, into Paris's contours of cityscape and populace, they come.

Behind them, astonishingly laden animals and carts, almost invisible under burdens of goods to sell, kindling for the fires, pouches of dried fruit, mounds of straw for the animals, baskets woven to pass winter's long nights.

Donkeys wheeze beneath sacks brimming with nuts, apples, wheat, greens from stream sides, barrels of back-shed wine. Leather and hemp twines are stretched to their limits.

They pay the fee and enter through the portals. The universities, archbishops, rectors, princes, garrets, garlic peelers, streets, castles, cathedrals, portals, roofs of Paris — these sum to nothing. Paris means marketplace. It has stalls. That is enough.

So they weave unerringly through the labyrinth of streets, heading for the square of the Place de La Bastille, with its tented arcade around the edge. The light is now thinning and they hurry. When they arrive at their familiar stalls, the women make ringlets of stones in which they kindle twig fires. Children blow up the flames until the air froths with sparks. On go basins of water for soups, and thin-hammered pans filled with quick-bread doughs, scraps of meat on skewers, mugs to warm the wine, water for washing.

The men unload the hay first to feed the animals. While they are docile, the men's sons hobble their legs to large stones on the ground, then loosen the intricate knots that release their wares. Enormous mushroom-shaped blankets begin to lose their shape as off come the baskets, ristling to the ground in the soft sound of wickerwork. Everything is arranged into a circle to be covered for the night with rush mats and straw, a lumpy but effective bed for the dogs. A dozen chickens cackle together. One hen pecks out at a passing ankle, jutting its legs backward and revealing that all of them are tied together with a twine of briar runners. The briar still bristles its thorn, no harm to a chicken but a deterrent for thieves.

As the animals are unladen the men stroke their backs and check their skins for chafing or bruises. When their work is done and they look for faces they know. Wineskins begin their gruff rounds in swallows and belches. The low-voiced speech of men used to hard labor rumbles along with curses and guffaws. They stay away from the inns and wineshops, with their fast-talking men and playing cards and shell games and stories too good to be true. They all learned, once.

So mingling together in the kind of talk they alone know, amid the smells and unkemptnesses and things done by necessity, they speak of harvests and weather and times and kings. Silence comes over them as tax

collectors arrive on the other side of the square, surrounded by armed guards in crimson and crosses, each on his horse (Horses! — How many barren fields could improve with the help of that strength!), who have arrived to dine with the market officials and to sleep at the inn.

Then to sleep with their wives and children, with cattle, dogs, chickens, dried beans. It is fitful town slumber, disturbed by the shifting of animals and the cry of the watch wandering the streets. A bleary child's eye marks the watch's passage, two or three armed men carrying a flaming oil-soaked rag guttering pale yellow light from the end of a long pole.

The first arrivals in the morning look deformed in the shadowy murk of predawn. Then from shoulder slings and waist bags spill bundles and baskets. Into this one goes a mound of dried grapes, into that one peas; a third cradles newly washed eggs. A woman unrolls a cloth which was spindled around her waist and mats it down flat, revealing dozens of patties of fresh butter, each on its own leaf still moist from the night's chill.

Tinkers set out tiny anvils and knee-squeezed bellows made of sewn leather. One surrounds himself with hammers and tongs, pancakes of rude tin, puddles of lead, a charcoal brazier on which he begins his day by warming a breakfast of minced meat in a pie his wife wrapped in a damp cloth for him last night.

Next to him, and wrinkling his nose at the smell of hot metal, the market scribe Eustache Lefief adorns himself with the badge of his trade: a green cap. A document maker by training and a poet by claim, Eustache can write in Latin and all the local dialects with a hand that is upright and fluid, serviceable enough for betrothal pacts and tradesmen's contracts — but not for the bishop's chancery.

Unknown even to himself, Eustache is the most lettered of all the Lefiefs. Being the eleventh of fifteen children, there was at his birth no hope of land or goods. The family patrimony by then had been spread so thin that his parents, Arnoul and Plaisance, gave him at the age of his maturity, twelve, a choice between the clergy or the military. As fortune would have it, there was an appointment open for a commoner as


Die sollent euch nit lassen sidere
Hie weber der meyster sin rede an
Die sollent ir nu wol verstan
Man leset von eyner keyserynne
Die hatte leyder kranken synne
Ir hertze nach mannes mynne
Stunt vnd dar zu alle ir synne
Daz zu male vnzemlich was
Mit vrlaup sal ich ich sagen daz
Ich forchte man fynde er nach wol dry
Wolde got daz er keyn me sy
Schade wer es sicherlich
Daz aller frauwen name wertglich
Ir keyne wolde ich nit honen
Eyn bidderbe wip ist wol zu kronen
Behelt sy eyns wibes name

apprentice copyist in the chancery of the Bishop of Toul. Eustache began in 1498 what he presumed to be a long and comfortable, if tedious, life reproducing wills, testaments, citations of canon law, the squabbles of clerics, records of baptisms and confirmations, procedural agreements between local lords and the bishopric.

Sadly, due to a minor defect of birth, his writing hand was misshapen. Though his script was legible, his manner of holding a quill alarmed the other copyists, and after twelve years of training, he was denied vows. In 1520, at the age of twenty-four and with only his penmanship to support him, he headed unerringly for the one place he knew he would be able to provide for himself a subsistence: Paris.

Now at the age of fifty-three, in moderate health and possession of most of his teeth, he salves his pride by maintaining to clients that, yes, a chancery clerk has a fine hand, but is it not true that such a clerk is reduced to a mere copyist obliged to have no sense of design of his own? Why, what chancery clerk would ever dare flourish his script?

Eustache concludes these thoughts, with proper neglect of the fact that clerics decorate their documents each and every day. He thins his ink in a thimbleful of water. Life is better here in the market, he tells himself. Does he not know nearly everyone by first name and next of kin? What could possibly replace that as the pride of a life's vocation? Paper knowledge, he maintains, tends to fill books and empty heads, while people knowledge tends to do the opposite. Why, in this very city of Paris, does not the faculty of the University expel those who work with their hands? Unhandy minds and unminded hands — where have these led if not to lives ruled by habit first, fear second, and rumor third? Doesn't he alone, with his scripts and paper and penmanship and ink, possess the power to move people, to bring them to conclude that which they otherwise would not believe? To everyone else in the market, should they think so far, the past is nostalgia, the present is survival, but the future is so artificed by soothsayers that it resembles the sun after passing through the colored windows of the church. No, Eustache sees these illusions for what they are, for is he not similarly able to create artifice from ink-tints and verbs?

He sets out his tools: a hardwood easel with three legs, dozens of quills with tufts of feather each of a special feel so he can pick one out without having to glance up from his work, a scraper to work away dried ink, small cups to thin inks so a rewritten document can be matched to the original, a dozen thumbnail-sized crucibles for blending pigments, twigs to mix water dipped from a boxwood mug.

Eustache looks up. The detail of market life parades before his eyes. Loops of leather sewn into tunics reveal the presence of workers' tools and thus the manner of their trade — the shearers and shapers and fine knives of leather workers and shoemakers; for the goldsmith tiny hammers and stippling dies; large loops of rope and small pouches of nails for the horse farriers; sturdy back leather for rings with dozens of keys for the market watch; two huge pouches for loaves and wide slits for the knives of the cheese sellers.

In an unclaimed corner a forester lays down stacks of twigs for those who need fire. Next to him lie heaps of lentils spilled over a sack's brim, sprays of parsley tied in bunches, urns of fresh milk circling a mound of fresh cheese — soft, white cheese, riven by crevices after being loosened from its cloth. The stallholder picks away grass bits, shakes away the last watery whey, and with a little patterned wood pommel stamps her design in its middle. The design, reversed and indented, is a cross and a flower, carved by her husband on a wintry fireside night.

Under a nearby eve a woman appears in a tiny dormer window to empty the contents of her night's chamber pot out the window without troubling herself to note if anyone might be passing below.

One of the men now wraps some straw around the horns of a heifer, the sign that she's for sale. She is small and thin hipped. No one inquires about the look in his eyes as he calls out her virtues, but he's got the accent of the province next door, owned by a marquis who believes lordship is as God-given as the birth that gave him his station, and that if his land is half as peopled it thus must be twice as taxed. Why else should such a fine animal need be sold this time of year?

Amid her gentle lowing there rise the tents, draped on poles held fast by piles of stones. Burlap roofs flurry dust as they go up.

Near the square's fountain head, a well-dressed drunk man fondles a laundress. Her entreaties for help bring no one for no one dares challenge wealth wearing a sword. Besides, what true laundress would be so unseemly as to wear a blue garment when her duties mandate that it be brown?

A chestnut seller is stolid next to their scuffle, tending to her fire and blackened pans with puffy fingers and thick arms, silent to the cries next to her.

A man arrives with a dripping basket. He finds a small place for himself near the fountain, fetches a bucket of water, splashes it over the basket, then opens it. A small army of snails begins a tentative escape. He tosses the speed-kings back into the bottom of the bucket. Tiny antennae unfurl again and ponder their way forward.

An egg-seller arrives, wearing his tradesman's signature of an old straw hat and a rolled-up pouch containing his product and his coin. He carries a wicker basket filled with chickens and straw. The chickens go into a pile in the center, tied by their ankles. The rooster of the lot manages to raise himself valiantly from the dust to crow a hoarse protest, stepping on and being pecked by the hens in the process. He is halfway through a

magnificent *cocorico* when a boy on a passing mule cart tosses a handful of hay on him.

Then a cloth-seller commences his *cri*:

> What do ye lack, what do ye buy?
> See what ye lack, see with ye eye!
> Pins and points and ribbons and garters,
> Lace from Spain and feather-trimmed darters!

He marks out his wares in rhythm and rhyme — amencloth in double twill; bombassin and brusselcloth and bustyans from Flanders; chamblette and cogware both available in crimson; durance and damask, dowlas from Denmark; estamine and frisadue and gallonier woven in grosgraine; janet with horsehair and kersey without; linsey-woolsey woven in blue; pampilion and passamayne and penniston from England at twenty-seven ells to the length; riggscloth, russelcloth, sarcene, and satin; taffeta with spangles and tilsent without.

His recital is echoed in monosyllables by the pie-seller next to him:

> Hot pippin pies, hot hot hot!
> Hot pud pies, hot hot hot!
> Hot suet pies, hot apple pies, all of them hot!
> All of them all of them hot hot hot!

A nearby farmer alludes to the secret of his *prunelle*: soak a measure of prunes in five measures of wine, add honey, stir, let marry for two days, drain, and ...

> Friste, freste, prune wine's the best!
> Cric, crac, how much do ye lack?
> Ziste, zeste, it's wine to digest!
> Piffe, paffe, you'll crap up a stack

He passes out a taste of it so potential customers can gauge for themselves. Then, appetite sharpened by his own claims, he takes time out for a simple meal of snails and acorns, washed down with goat's milk and wine.

To these the permanent stallholders now add their traditional *cris* — leather makers, harness repairers, plow makers, tooth pullers, weavers, fortune tellers, dispensers of salt, story tellers, barrel hoopers:

> Ha'e ye wood to sell, good good wood?
> A cooper I am and hoopin's my trade.
> I've got the best little wife
> God ever made!

A silversmith across from Eustache sets out his tools: dozens of pawls, all broad-handled to fit his palm. A varied assortment of point styles from diamond-shaped with sharp edges for plowing a smooth furrow to blunt tips

for smoothing out waves and wrinkles, slender hammers with various sizes of peen, a rabbit's foot with soft hair for polishing to a sheen, cotter's pincers to pick up fine wires, a small anvil with one end round and the other a point, dividers and small vices, rough bars of raw metal, rasps, burring tools, soft cloths, and a work table of smoothed marble.

Nearby a stall boy works in tattered boots and cast-off clothes, sweating as his wooden spade scrapes up knee-deep piles of urine and filth, his face bile-yellow from a lifetime knee-deep in waste.

Then Eustache spots something he cannot recall having seen before. A man arrives nearby with a pack on his back scarcely larger than his chest. He lays out its contents in several rows — wares so unusual as to be virtually an apparition — chapbooks covered with blue paper, each containing a dozen or more identical pages. Eustache, being a man whose marks on paper convey others people's meanings, knows the importance of formula phrases as well as he knows the importance of flourished capitals.

For indeed, precise wordings were the gravest matter Eustache knew. The exact phrase for the transfer of a tithe on a vineyard; defining the limits on the right to store hay and corn in a neighbour's barn; which land in a forest is barren fit for the taking and which is legal pasturage available to all who own cattle; what a woman must say as she declares herself thenceforth a *béguine* who follows the way of the veil but not the veil itself and therefore may walk publicly under no rule of the convent; the complaint of a hairdresser against a soap-maker for adulterating ash with salt, to the great distress of three of her client's coifs; proper proof of the parentage required for a minor son to marry; deciding the knotty issue of whether a widow with

no progeny belonged in the eyes of the law to her hearth or whether her hearth belonged to her; how to enroll a woman on the preceptor's tax registers so she may pursue one of the professions open to women of the time — apothecary, doctor, dyer, plasterer, copyist, bookbinder, miniaturist, schoolmistress. These were just a few, and each mandated its own specific wording on the register. For centuries scriveners before Eustache had girdled the edifice of their trade just as canon lawyers had girdled the cartularies and decretals of the Church, in the shadow of which Eustache in both senses now stood.

But the literature of the marketplace by compare had always been crude — improbable deeds by even more improbable knights-errant, or anticlerical tomfooleries disguised as skits, all of them impressed from carved wooden blocks by papermakers of poor skill, smudged with ink from print blocks being slid away carelessly at an angle, smeared from the thumbprints of a pass-along readership of dozens, fading from one side of the page to the other because of a poorly inked press, having been moved from toll station to toll station concealed in the garments of wandering friars and renegade monks. The chapbook's chunky depictions and inelegant text was how the market square populace learned of kingdoms, heroes, legends, foreigners.

But these, Eustache shakes his head, these are so very different! He discerns immediately the improvements in quality. Far from the crude, rough-edged images and oversize letters of the woodcuts of his time, these pages are as if graven in silver.


HISTOIRE
DE HUON
DE BORDEAUX.


LA VIE
DE LA MERE MAGDELAINE
DE S. IOSEPH
RELIGIEVSE CARMELITE
DESCHAVSSEE,
A PARIS.
Chez la Veuue IEAN CAMVSAT,
ET
PIERRE LE PETIT, rue Saint Iacques,
M. DC. XLV.

He fetches over the silversmith to get an expert opinion. The smith nods and says, yes, this is of the quality of fine worked silver — see how the lines in the pictures are combined equally of broad and thin, see how the metal's surface has been stippled by fine burins to create a dot-work appearance of clouds, see how the maker has worked a series of fine parallel lines into the illusion of cloth — yes, the smith nods, this picture cannot have been made but from silver. But then he shakes his head — no, silver cannot be pressed unto paper for paper is too strong, silver loses its edge, silver bends under pressure, silver is altogether too soft for this kind of impression.

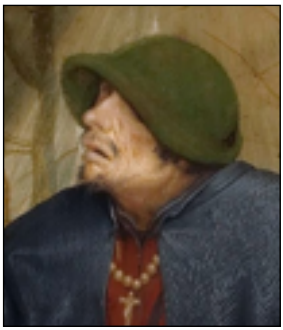
And yet there are so many! Dozens with the same title! Why, everyone knows woodblock chapbooks are so laborious they can be made only one at a time! Doesn't every tradesman carry but one copy of each work? What manner of commerce is this when a seller travels alone with no donkey and carries dozens of the same title?

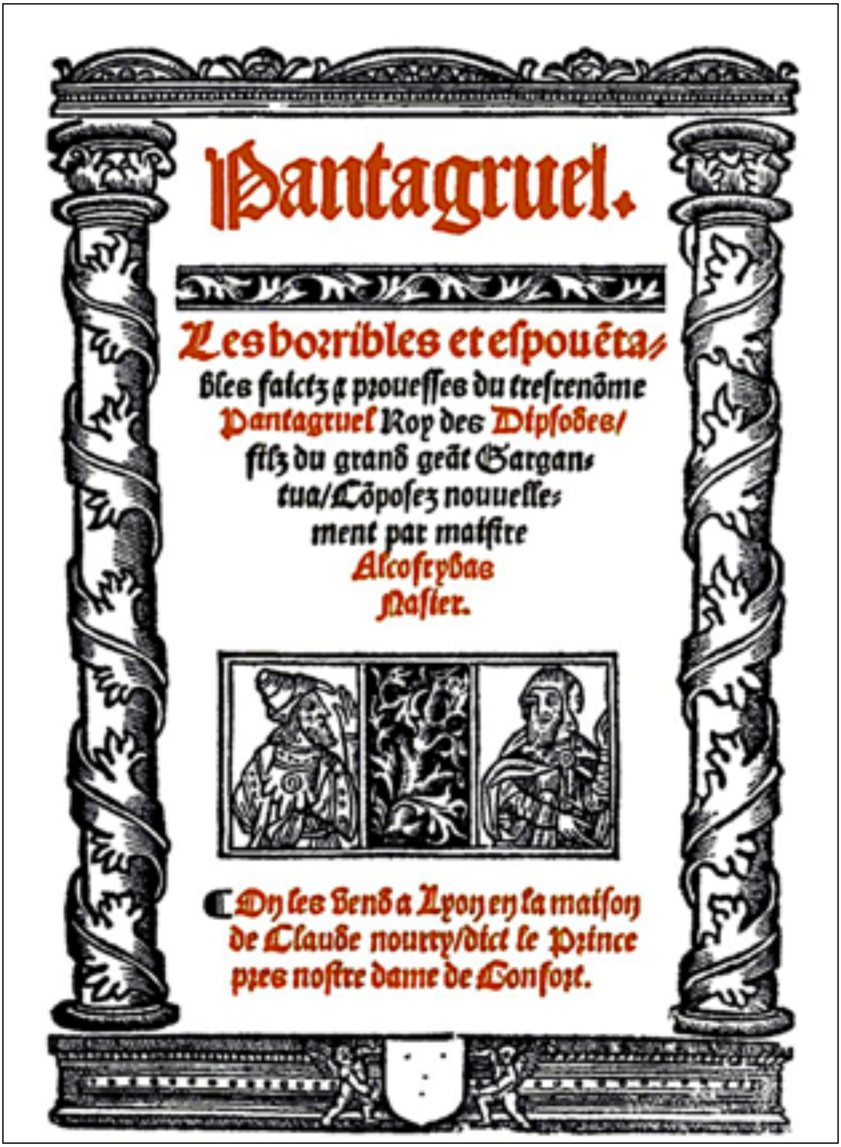
They turn to the seller, who shrugs his shoulders, and relates how he picked them up at a very advantageous price from a workshop in Lyons of whom none of them had ever heard, that of one Claude Nourry. And the name of this work! What could one possibly make of the title *Les horribles et espoventables faictz a prouesses du tresrenome Pantagruel Roy des Dipsodes?*

Eustache, whose entire existence serves the embellished sentence, is dumbfounded by what happens when someone embellishes an existence.

The chapbook seller, under the pressure of what he takes to be a hostile reception, lets slips four words which Eustache has heard but did not until this moment grasp to be a sea wave of change rising far beyond the shoreline's eye: 'graven copper' and 'moving letters'.







Pantagruel.

Les horribles et espouẽta-
bles faictz & prouesses du tresrenõme
Pantagruel Roy des Dipsodes/
filz du grand geãt Gargan-
tua/Cõposez nouuelle-
ment par maistre
Alcofrybas
Nasier.

On les vend a Lyon en la maison
de Claude nourry/dict le Prince
pres nostre dame de Confort.

The market is divided into *quartiers*. One is for food and spices, another for animals and hay and leather, a third for implements and smiths and labor. Another is the most colorful of all — bolts of cloth, rows of wooden spoons, women crushing cardamoms.

A mother and daughter stand near the market fountain. The daughter's waist-length hair hangs loosely in a fan. Her mother explains to a passerby that the girl is soon to be wed and her long tresses are for sale to the highest offer. Beautiful hair on a new wife who must now work, she maintains, is of no use. The girl is unwillingly betrothed to a merchant about whom she would never give a second thought were it not for her mother's social ambitions. The promise of her young life is about to be reduced to conceiving and bringing up numberless children, cleaning house and cooking meals for a man whose wealth and standing her mother covets. The mother pinches her elbow to hush her as she extols to a potential buyer the magnificent hairpiece that may be fashioned from such youthful tresses.



Several stalls are set aside for dealers in discards. Used cloaks, torn cloth, strips of leather from the trash of a shoe maker, piles of cloth destined for rags. Others sell potions, amulets, scented candles, rosaries of strung beans. Money changers weigh their used coins, old men with tight lips and tight purses and tiny balances under the Sign of the Scales. Palm-kneading Gypsy women in brilliant costumes with jewels stroke hands with their long fingers and sing the roundelay:

> Almanac, almanac, fine fine almanac!
> Fine fine almanac the rest of the year!
> The rest of the year you'll find it all here!
> You'll find it all here, almanac, almanac!

A seller of sweet scents stands amid his pouches of powders, woods from far shores, thick substances gummy with camphor, bay leaves, flower blossoms, dozens of seeds, expensive pigments in carved wooden boxes. As the day warms he grooms his stall, then starts a small fire. When it dies into coals he takes up a pinch of tiny purple petals and

sprinkles them onto the coals, which then erupt into lavender. He does it again and the smoke billows high and the sellers of used clothes crowd around his advertisement-cum-fumigation. They display their wares by hanging them over their outstretched arms like great woolen-winged angels.

Tooth-pullers sit under open-sided tents, buckets of water alongside. In a pouch hanging from a peg lie their tongs, pliers, knives, scrapers, and strips of cloth to wad into the hole.

An apothecary sets up a makeshift table on top of a discarded half-barrel and smooths a tattered cloth across the top. Onto it he places bags, bottles, painted cards, sacks, trays, bins, ladles, phials stoppered with twigs, bits from a cadaver dried in the sun, hedgehog quills by the hundredweight, powdered mushrooms, dead green beetles, dried flowers, thick gums. Slivers of rare woods, the dried skins of hedgehogs turned spiny side in. Lizard tails, shells tied together with string, broken bird wings, dried blood, silvery dusts, the boiled-down fat of a felon hung outside of a churchyard.

The apothecary knows his timing as well as his words. First a quick babble as he sets up his stall, then a low drone as down go his baskets. A reverential silence as he puts up a crucifix, then a low muttered prayer as he adjust his balance scale. The morning crowds don't buy, he knows, they are mostly widows and paupers. Toward midday he holds up his scales, slaps the table three times, and begins to sell in earnest:

> ... and if you fail to be fixed, may my ventpeg slip, my stopper fail me, my poop-pipe collapse, and my fundament fall out! Is there any man or woman among you to say that it's contrary to law or faith, against any reason, not self-evident, or opposed to Divine Writ? No! Far from it! There's not a word in the Holy Book that stands against it! I ask you, look back on your days and try to count the number of times you've had coughing spells, sweating states, sneezing attacks, hiccups that won't stop, bad breath, farts with or without sound, hemorrhages, ague, bad sleep, bad dreams, bad eliminations, the rash, attacks of tears, paroxysms at any hour, mucus from your nose, hemorrhoids, or spells of the wheeze! If so, God's good merciful name be praised! He has turned your feet to me today! For who among you will tell me it cannot be true? Ha-haaa! May I drop dead on the spot if a single word I say is a freewilliger lie! Made from a secret formula by the mystic apothecaries of Galore, it contains exotic dried roots, fruits, leaves, berries, gums, seeds, barks, and juices. There's not a wise-woman alive who wouldn't churn it, whirl it, jumble it, tumble it, stroke it, beat it, bump it, tweak it, bang it, shake it, lift it, clip it, eye it, smell it, breathe it in, look at it twice and breathe it back out, fondle it, splash it, whiff it, stuff it, swig it, savor it, sip it, relish it, enjoy it, smack her lips at it, belch twice, and declare it ambifanfreluche**LATE**Dly good for oils and boils, breaks and shakes, quivers and shivers, colds and moulds, sneezes and wheezes, sweats that wet, cases of bile, and attacks of catarrh! There isn't a piddle, poop, sob, sneeze, cough, yawn, snore, sweat, hack, hawk, bark, whoop, snort, snivel, snuff, mewl, weep, twit, howl, yowl, wiggle, or waggle that won't throw up its hands and head for the back door! Sharp nose, sunken eyes, hollow temples, cold ears, tight forehead, hurting gums, wrinkled eyelids, blue veins, and soussulated teeth! Gone, ladies and gentlemen, gone, gone, **GONE**!

And so are many of his would-be customers. He sighs and awaits his next opportunity.

Day moves across the market like summer across fruit, from richness to ripeness to rot. Afternoon brings clots of flies and scavengers and pickers of spoils. A prostitute walks by, exhausted from births, nursing a child from her wrinkled breast.

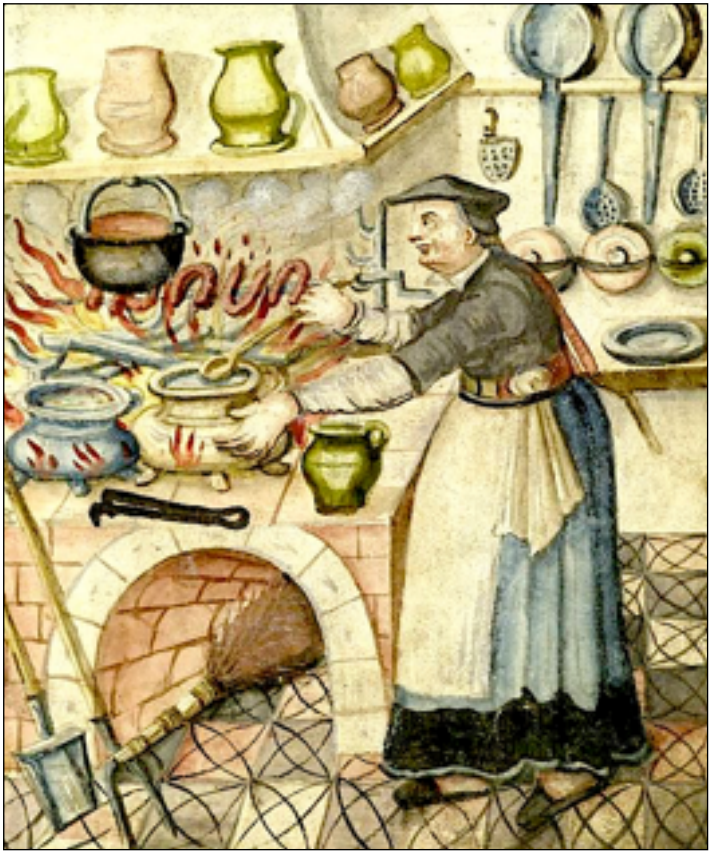
Snatches of work sounds ring out from the stalls. A donkey sneezes, rasp to wheeze to cough to thunderclap. A woodcutter's saw shreds through a plank, the wood's hollow gnash descending from splinter to clatter. Muleteers holler *Shyaaahh*! Two chatterbox fast-talkers are too distant for anything but their mutual insistence to be heard. Beneath these sounds lies the labyrinth of the market square's counter-tenor: cat's hiss, boy squabbles, pig's squeal, mule wheezes,

anvil's ring, the scent-seller's latest eruption. A woman on an errand hurries by with her newborn, the infant bound in linen and slung over her back, head lolling as it sleeps to her song.

An old carpenter's bucksaw still does a straight line, even though now in his dotage he must plane his work to make its edges fit. His stall is poised eternally on collapse. Its only light comes from a single hole in the roof. Sun shafts illumine the interior's dust, the skitter of cedar chips arcing across the floor, the pee-mound of chips in a far corner. Sitting on one of his freshly sawn stumps, he talks with a customer as he holds a dovetail between his hands and his knee. The smell of wood is everywhere. He barks an order to his son, whose perennially procrastinated duty is to keep the dust down with water fetched from the pool beneath the marketplace fountain.

A few men dislodge from their work and seek out a tattered sign hanging from a pole in front of a shop. It is a painted cloth banner with the fading image of a grinning pop-eyed fish in bright red on a dark green background. Rough print announces, *Auberge du Carpe Frite*, The Fried Carp Inn. From behind the thick canvas door there comes the unmistakable smoke-and-wine-dregs smell and raucous laughter of a drinking place.

Inside, the inn is smoky, dim, lighted only by guttering fish-oil lamps which sting the eyes until they begin to adjust. Then the new arrivals can make out the shapes of a dozen or more men, most of them seated on long benches or at rough-hewn tables, with a few others standing at a bar of flat boards. Behind the bar is an enormous bristle-bearded man with a rag around his neck and a wine pot in his hand. He fills it from one of the large tuns on wood cradles stacked to the ceiling. His is blunt wine for blunt tongues: *rouge*, *rouge*, and *rouge*, five or seven *deniers* the measure, depending on whether it is accompanied by a herring.



The ceiling is so black with soot that only some dangling spiderwebs confirm a ceiling to be there. The men at the tables sit on three-legged stools, leaning forward and shouting into each other's faces. Each has his own bib, a piece of matted wool that combines as a napkin, sweat rag, and horse curry. The roar of talk and laughter suffocates all other senses. A man bawls something to the innkeeper's daughter, who is sitting at a fire grilling halved herrings. They spatter and crackle greasy smoke clouds out into the room. Another man wipes off his mouth with the back of his hand as he sets down a tankard. He stops a narrative in mid-sentence, temporarily distracted by a fish bone in a tooth, which he tries to dislodge with a knife. Others are roasting plucked songbirds, then eating them drumstick by tiny drumstick. Under the tables several dogs have established a hierarchy of the bone piles. In one corner a ladder with two missing rungs ascends perilously to a shelf of earthenware crocks, dust-covered bottles, a funnel made from a gourd, and jugs shaped from boiled leather. A cat curls there sleeping, its tail tip just covering its nose.

Around the beam posts are pegs on which men have flung their hats. Most are the plain felt hats of working men — a smith's hat of dark blue with a low brim; a beggar's hat with a thick rolled-up edge to make it easy to hold; a drover's hat shaped like a helmet to keep off the rain. A student's hat seems incongruous in bright green with a feather.

Two men at the tables wear the rough wool and leather chaps of *debardeurs*, haulers of heavy goods who own their teams of oxen. Their jackets are frayed with bramble snags and twig punctures. One of them lays his coiled whip on a table covered with fish spines and herring heads. He wipes his hand across his mouth and bellows for more wine in a voice like the agonies of a castrated bull.

As if in counterpoint to the inn's cacophony within, on the market lanes outside the sound of a bugle's tattoo at the far end of the market followed by the hail of a public crier announces an event that hushes the market to near-silence. The bugle blares again, and a bell rings a thrice-repeated tintinnabulation. The crowds in the market's central avenue part to leave a wide path for a truly bizarre procession to pass through.

A woman riding a donkey has been stripped to the waist and slathered with honey. Her long greying hair has been combed with pig lard which is now melting and dripping down her nude back. A cloud of flies and biting wasps torments her, but she cannot swat them away because her wrists are bound to the saddle pommel. Little boys jeer, whistle, and throw animal droppings at her. As she slowly passes through the crowd, the surrounding women shake their fists and jeer while the men mock lewd kissing sounds with their lips.

Behind her rides a man bound to the pommel of a second donkey. He is adorned with a tall rack of elk antlers, to which have been tied red pennants, bells, and sprigs of mistletoe. Directly behind him a veiled woman lashes him mercilessly with a whip made of thorny rose stems. The women screech curses at him using words they would never use around their husbands, while the men splutter mock flatulent sounds with their lips. The street urchins now having exhausted the available supply of animal droppings, pluck rotten tomatoes and fruit from the discard bins of fruit vendors and hurl them at the pathetic couple. Adolescent boys hold high their hands with their index and middle fingers spread into a wide vee, which they waggle back and forth in naughty-naughty gestures.

Following them is the town crier with his bugle, on which he now blares another tattoo. He reads in in unctuous officialese the proclamation, 'Be it hereuntoafter reported to the populace of Lutèce that before you appear Madame Berthe de Villiers, a commoner most low; and Villein Maurice-Claude Chausseur, a shoe-mender, have outraged the public with an adultery conducted in a manner of the most lewd nature. All be now informed that aforesaid commoners de Villiers and Chausseur are banished from the baillage of La Bastille for the period of one year and one day. Their goods are declared forfeit and bound over to their most chaste and outrageously wronged spouses.'

Immediately behind them a magistrate cloaked and behatted in black rides a horse slathered in pink-red ochre, the color of lust.

As the afternoon dust slowly invades, prices begin to fall. The bargain hunters shuffle into action — the poor, the landless, the beggars with leaking eyes or amputated arms. It is the time of the sun's thinning and the afternoon's broken fruit.

> Brooms brooms!
> Good brooms old, good brooms new!
> Busking for brooms,
> and old boots too!
>
> Rats 'n' mice! Rats 'n' mice!
> Polecats 'n' weasels, sows with measles!
> Kill them all what peeps from holes!
> Good good poison for creepers 'n' peepers!

A drifting snatch thief feasts his fingers on the tumult. He wears a long cloak and carries a hooked stick. He flourishes on the disturbances and dogfights, harvesting from the attention-diverting argument that loosens eyes from their wares, the drunk squabble between two ox-handlers or the goat that's eaten through its rope and now leads its owners a winding chase.

The soprano of a pig being carried by one ear and its tail is diversion enough for the thief's stick to rake in a tomato. An insult exchange between two harridans culminates in a cantata of shrieks so elaborate the entire market cranes a free ear — and the scavenger's sleeve nets two eggs, a sprig of parsley, and a quick three swallows of wine from an unattended mug. And having long since learned the value of patience, he waits innocently nearby until the negligent owner returns to hoist the mug. As a dark look comes over his face and as he upbraids his neighbor he loses two apples for his efforts. A flurry of yells and running feet signal something stolen by another thief. As the thief weaves a serpentine flight ended by a stumble and dust-punctuated fight, the scavenger nets a cuff load of cheeses. The struggle of two hobbled sheep results in an apple and a plum. He pauses every few minutes to ponder his gleanings, eat what he can, then store the rest in a burlap bag hidden amid the tethered donkeys.

Quick, quick, mussels, quick!
Eels, eels, fine young eels!
Cockles cockles, great cockles great!
And plaice, plaice, fine fat plaice!

Good for your gullet,
Good for your gout!
Oil for your gut,
Within and without!

Out on the periphery, standing amid their stick-supported roofs and canvas awnings and faded cloth banners, guildsmen work with their sons. The names of trades shaped the names of *les Parigots*: The sheep grew wool, the shepherd guarded it, the shepherdess cut and washed and combed it, the shepherd's son took it to market, the parter bought and sorted it, the dyer tinted it, the oiler sprinkled it with oil, the mixer rubbed the oil in, the carder made patties of it, the spinster spun it, the weaver made cloth of it, the brayer cleaned the cloth of dirt and burrs, the burler removed knots and loose ends, the fuller washed it, the walker tromped it while still in the bath, the shearman turned it and leveled its nap, the drawyer stretched it until it was finished, then the merchant sold it and the housewife bought it. Once

bought the wife's daughters cut it, the maid trimmed it, the embroiderer decorated it, the seamstress finished it, and the husband paid for it.

Yet this is but the beginning of the details of the trades. In one corner of the square, two felters make blankets for horses. In front of their stall lie huge baskets filled with wet wool. It is clumpy, wet, matted, filled with briar. The youngest sons tend glumly to carding and cleaning, taking up tufts and swashing them between two bristled combs, this way and that, turning the wool again and again until it is fluffy and clean enough to be taken to the troughs and be washed. Then it is carded once again until it is smooth.

Beside the two men are baskets filled with now-clean fleece. The men's wives shape it into palm-sized, wispy-edged flat patties. The younger of the two men carefully arranges these into a large rectangular shape, overlapping the pieces, squaring the edges, piling them five to six deep. His brother begins tamping them with a wood switch, lightly at first, then harder. When the fluffy edges begin to mingle into a mat, he slips on wooden shoes and starts treading on it. He walks doubly around the periphery, then sideways, up and down, back and forth, until the mat has become blanket-like and dense enough to be lifted. The two of them lift it onto a sturdy wooden table, then wet it with water, dye, and soaps. The soap froths thickly and penetrates into the fibers. Then the men's shoulders knot and their backs stiffen as they bend into the most exacting part of their trade: kneading the fibers into a oneness that will not fray. Foam and color squeeze up between their fingers and they begin to sweat even though the day is cool. From nones until vespers they sweat over one blanket, sometimes walking on the mat, then going back to kneading, their feet and hands becoming the color of the day.

Then to the trough, carrying the rolled-up blanket dripping between them. There they wash and rinse it a dozen or more times until the water runs clear. They take it back to the wooden table, which their sons have cleared and washed while they were gone, and check both sides of the blanket to get rid of any last imperfections. Then a discarded door weighted with large stones goes on top to flatten it. At dusk they will lift away the stones and hang the new blanket over the cross beam that holds up their roof to dry overnight. The sides of their shop are lined with piles of their week's work. Brushed and trimmed, the blankets are folded three or four together in a rainbow of colors.

Afternoon comes in wind puffs and a breeze, wafting char smells from the braziers toward the tied-up dogs, who add a toccata of howls to the donkey soliloquies and haggling.

> Garlic, garlic, good good garlic!
> Good garlic young and good garlic tart!
> Garlic, garlic, fine young garlic!
> Garlic, garlic, to make you fart!

The afternoon sun's thinning turns thoughts to the long trip home. Boys braising meat enjoy a huge trade. Their charcoal-heaped pans are stacked full across with meats on iron skewers: chunks of goat marinated two days in garlic and oil, fatty chopped pork rolled expertly into sausages, bits of beef skewered on sticks. Smoke roils upward, agonizing the dogs.

Around, the pace thins. Melons and cabbages are slung into nets, broken cauliflowers and green peppers go for a song. Girls with water jars teeter along carefully, puffs of dust scooting back from their feet. Boys stop chasing each other only to taunt cripples. Fathers' orders bring groans. Errands are run to the fuel-sellers' stalls or the reeking premises of charcoal makers with black faces, black hands, black mules, who pride themselves on never washing. The straw mats that were last night's mattresses are now taken down from the day's airing in the sun and rolled into tubes. A mule, freed from its rope harness for a moment, immediately kneels and flops on its side to roll deliciously in the dirt.

A leather-ware seller begins to disassemble his ornate and incredibly complicated display. First off come the low things, the purses and portfolios for papers and coins, the hats, tooled fringework, ankle chaps for shepherds, thin leather for shoes and thick leather for soles, thongs for laced bodices. Following them come the egg baskets, lawyers' satchels, shallow panniers, magnificently patterned sheaths for documents and ledgers, pieces of fine red-brown leather from Cordoba to make into jacket cuffs or collars.

All these come loose as if by magic. When he begins to reach for the topmost items, the slow sellers like jackets and table coverings, he takes up a slim hooked stick, deftly reaches up, loosens the desired item without disturbing its neighbors, and lifts it easily away without collapsing the entire

construction. His deftness mystifies a handful of snatch thieves, who have been hovering nearby for hours, trying to discern the stealable items in that honeycomb of straps, handles, hooks, and pegs. They realize they've been defeated and shuffle off. The leather seller sees this without acknowledging them and relaxes his vigilance. A long stretch up to the topmost item, spare straps for a harness, then that's gone too.

Heaps of grain and dried beans vanish into aprons and shawls. Reluctant mules accept their wooden saddles shaped like trestles. One of them doesn't and starts kicking. Everyone scatters and laughs and it is kicked and pulled by the tail until it regrets having even breathed, and the saddle goes on uneventfully.

Dogs are untied and their recently established harmony dissolves into growls and fights. Wandering youths follow girls, jogging each other and smirking. Younger boys trail the older ones and listen avidly as they speak grandly of Lyons and Tours and other places they haven't been — the nights with the girls there, the delights, the sighs . . . the crestfallen faces as dream tales are interrupted by commands from their fathers.

Eustache the scribe looks up from his work for the first time today. All these hours he has worked on a baptismal certificate, curling flowery lines to every corner of the page, then filling them with names and dates and brief sketches from the lives of saints. He knows his place on that page, the smiling artificer peering from the lacework of the first letter of the first word, just as God painted Himself into the first word of Genesis. Has not art depicted itself always thus, the smiling face bewondering the immensity of things?

Yet now that he looks around Eustache notices the chapbook seller has gone. Odd, he thinks. Who would leave the marketplace until the day was over? He asks his neighbors whatever has become of the fellow. They reply that his booklets were sold long before noon, so he returned to Lyons to pick up some more. Two stall holders proudly display the copies they bought for themselves, a marketplace ribaldry so hilarious it has made their day.

A fruit seller consults with his wife. She departs. He begins by releasing the dozens of knots that keep aloft their sackcloth sunshade. It crumples in a tangle on top of their wares, gusting clouds of flies out from the edges. He pulls free the loops from half a dozen pegs, and his tent falls in on itself with a great clatter. He gathers the ropes, winding each between his elbow and palm, giving each skein a half-twist so it loops into a figure eight.

His wife returns with their sloe-eyed donkey. They fold their burlap sacks into two pouched bags, knot them in several places, then throw them over the donkey's back. These they fill with their unsold melons, apples, grapes, milk, lentils. Wicker hampers take in the week's purchases, over which the woman has bartered for half the day.

They relate to each other the times when they wouldn't see specie or coin for a month. But those times seem to be gone. A strong king has changed the face of the marketplace. The stallholder and his wife haven't decided what to make of it. Coin gets things done more quickly, but they miss the old chats. The roads are now free of robbers, so their eldest sons can work the fields rather than working their swords, but how odd that these sons seem uninterested in the girls of their hamlet. Neighbors visit less often, having little in common to say in the absence of barter. There are more goods, some from far away, but everything seems expensive and becoming more so. Life is less dangerous, but there are more frauds. There is more of everything, but such quantities seem destined for something larger than the market square they know.

Scratching his head, Eustache tries to divine the meaning of these things. The use of this new thing called print is already closing off monasteries to book copying, and now Eustache foresees a flood of the very chapbooks he saw today. He is no fool. He realized their importance the moment he saw how readable they were. But what frightens him suddenly is the speed of their selling. What — oh dares he ask? — What would it mean to the substance of his life if there came to the marketplace a trader of baptismal certificates, wedding announcements, encouragements to enter an order, bequeathals of smallholdings too negligible for the attention of a priest?

No, Eustache assures himself. That could not be. How could printed pieces of paper possibly replace his scribe's erudition? What fool would prefer the gracelessness of fixed phrases to the erudition and attention of his time?

That he cannot imagine. He has not yet heard of the word '*nouvelles*,' now being used for the first time to describe events of unprecedented origin, literally 'news.' That 'news,' too, has begun to be conveyed in print would utterly mystify him. No, the beauty of the old way, the beauty of things as they are, the spirit of the market and its people — these are life, and life, given by God, can never change. What could possibly change the *Place de la Bastille*?

Of a man named Luther and his squabbles with the Church, of these Eustache has of course heard but takes to be of no more import than the tiresome squabbles of friars. Of the King's court and his drawing of courtiers under the jewels of one crown, of these Eustache knows but little. Of a new and growing class of merchants who buy and sell coin instead of things and who take their wisdom from books rather than the marketplace, of these he knows next to nothing. Of the gold now coming from some land called America and of its silently cheapening everyone's currencies, of this he is entirely ignorant. And of the immense wave that will engulf forever the lives of his great-great-great-great-great-great grandchildren in this very square a quarter of a millennium hence, it is an invisible tremor so far out to sea no one can imagine its existence.

The fruit seller and his wife now finish their day. Straw mats and coarse blankets are rolled up and tied to the donkey's flanks. Two urns of milk, sealed by leather circlets tied with cord, slip into nets hung over the saddle. Wads of hay in coarse nets hang on the donkey's neck, unused fodder to be taken home. When the donkey begins to shuffle and tread uneasily, the man calms it with a pat and a mumble, puts on a few last things, then turns to his wife.

She picks up a net, loops it over her shoulders, then bends forward to balance the load of shawls, homespun blankets to keep them warm after twilight, figure eights of rope, a new pair of sandals, a tiny pouch of pepper, a bit of marzipan for *grandmére*, three pots, the charcoal brazier for cooking supper, the soot-greasy grill, and cloth spindles containing the food they will nibble on the way home. Finding no convenient place for their earthen cooking pot, she puts it over her head, tilting it just enough so she can see the ground.

She stands. Her husband adjusts the net's leather headband as she leans into it, loops her fingers through the cords, balances the load, and finds the angle she will maintain for the next seven hours. He ties the donkey's cord to his waist, picks up a cloth bag of fruit in each hand, and adjusts his hat with his wrist.

They move forward as one. The clamor of Paris, of children and dogs and drovers and church bells and archbishops and perfumers and artists and lawyers dwindles in intensity but is still faintly audible an hour out into the silence.

1669

Bread

Wheat achieves its perfection with simplicity. Its stem has no need to branch. Its leaves are slender and tough and thrifty. It has eliminated petals, nectar, scent, color. It has no need of bees or butterflies. Soil and sun and water do everything.

And when it is wheat's time, its end is as simple as its life. The men come to the field with scythes, the women with sickles. The children carry baskets and woven reed pans. The women fetch water plants to weave into cords that will tie the sheaves. Children hang hampers from limbs.

The day warms so slowly that no one notices the sun until a jacket is taken off and lain in the stubble. Jokes about backaches begin the days-long cycles of cut, bunch, sheave; cut, bunch, sheave.

Then come the horses to bring in the cut wheat. It is bunched into sheaves spreading wide their gold crowns, then bound onto the wagons with strands of rough reedwork. At the threshing circle the children cut the knots and the bundles fall loosely into heaps. The heaps are strewn into a circle while the men bring in the horses with broad hooves.

In the center of the circle there is a shaft on which a bar pivots, to which the horses are harnessed as they nicker belly-deep in dry stalks. Then,

ears laid flat back, nostrils flaring for breath, they trudge in a circle until the husks of the grains are cracked under their hooves. Hour upon hour, at the touch of the stick or the mumble of the drover, they circle and circle, smelling of sweat and leather and droppings and dust, endlessly merging hoof steps with their dull circular world. Finally the moment comes when they are released from the pole and led away to water and the stream bank's fresh grass. The men and women then wade into the chaff.

The men commence the *battage*, slamming down leather-bound flails to free the last grains from their husks. The women slide wooden spades into the heap and toss it up to the wind. The wind catches the flax and trails it into a cone far down the field. The spades rise and then throw, rise and then throw, with a pause in the middle to get the balance just right, rising and then throwing in a rhythm of pure motion.

They stop only long enough to take water from an unglazed jar which was fired at the low heat of burning brambles and chaff so the water would seep from inside and keep it cool. The women wear their skirts tucked up and bend low to scoop the grain into shallow leather baskets. Baskets scoop-shaped and broad, as wide around as their encircled arms, with reed handles for carrying the grain in the grain's time, the apples in apple time, lettuce and fruits, hay for the animals, dirt from the house, fresh soil for the herbs, greens from the garden. In the winter by the fire, they are lined with clean straw for the mother cat and her kittens.

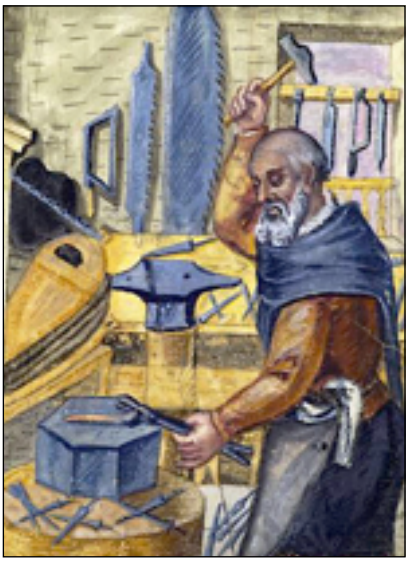
The work is unpausing, backs aching from bending as they fill baskets and pouches with mounds of the grain. Four or five days for winnowing. Ceaseless hard work from the cold glow of dawn to the last light of dusk, and longer if there's a winnow moon, long hours that add up to a short life. And when they are finished, two-fifths must be sold to pay the King's tax, one-tenth must go to the curé of the church, another tenth is for the abbot and his clerks, and the rest ... the rest can be kept. It takes a thousand years to make a peasant, and thirty to kill one.

The road to the mill is a rutway ankle deep in fall mire. Like most roads it follows a creek. It was first broadened centuries ago by the prints of poets and pilgrims and priests, and now with the feet of merchants, tramps, tinkers, smiths, scholars. Prostitutes dressed as nuns. Pedlars, gypsies, friars winding each to destinations they know like their palm lines. Then the ear hears the faint rumble and hiss of the mill, with its groaning wheel outside and clacking wooden gears inside changing the horizontal flow of a millrace's froth into the vertical spin of a stone. The ear senses the crushing grind of the stone's mass, as heavy as two barrels full of water and wider around than a plow-horse's belly.

Coming from the wet woods, where only the birds interrupt the mule's clops, the sound of the mill is a tumult of sonics and silence. Dozens of animals are tied up all around, for while the towns may boast of markets and fairs, the mill is the true country man's home. No farmer would be so great a fool that a gathering of men should waste itself on words. And so with the baskets of wheat to be milled, perhaps a spare hen or ewe or rabbit can be sold ... or won. For along the

stream banks are circles where the grasses have been flattened into low stubs, trod now even lower as the harvest begins to come in. There, for longer than anyone can remember, they have arranged rock circles for their oldest of sports. Cockfights flurry in flashings of feathers, quick bets, cheers, dull croaks, hot blood mingling into the mud.

And here, too, the animals are shod, for the itinerant smith knows the mules of the mills like the lawyers know the estates with no heirs. The smith sets up early, clearing two plots as broad as his extended arms. Between them is his anvil. To his right the brazier, filled with charcoal made white hot by two leather bellows bound with wood hoops. To his left a bucket of water. Around him are his tongs, shears, pliers, hammers, lumps of crude metal, and a bucket of charcoal. He makes an adze blade quickly to order, pounding a lump of yellow-hot metal into a strip, flattening one end into a wide blade, then twisting the other into an oval loop for the handle. He bides his time between major projects by sipping on wine and pounding out nails. He takes a piece of bar as round as a finger and twice as long, hammers one end into a point, then flattens the other into a fan, which he curls with pliers into a loop. He throws it into the water, where it cools with a snarling sizzle.



All this is but a lappet in the mill's sea of simple talk. No one hurries for this is a family-and-field-free day they have to themselves. A grizzled relic with a mournful mustache rings in the laughter by rising and cackling, 'I'm over sixty now, but who would believe it to see me in the fields tickling the titties and raking the hay?'

Soon the talk turns to fields. Fields they now own, fields they did own, fields they hope they will own, wish they might own, curse their luck for not having owned, or wouldn't own even if they could.

Only the soil can be trusted to bring forth its full. The peasant lives between that soil and his hut. He plows it in March, rakes and harrows it in April, sows wheat in it in May, eats the bread which lays all day upon it in June, drinks it in the dark water he scoops up with his hands in July, spits it as it swirls from behind his scythe in August, rises to see it as it looms out of the first light, slumbers on it in the heat of midday, dreams about it as he thinks of his sons, curses it as it vanishes away with the wind, knows his worth from it by that of his neighbors, and when he knows he will soon rest in it wracks his brain how fairly to divide it. He does not think in the same way of any other thing, even heaven.

Beneath the sound of speaking men is the streaming sound of living water, first heard against the fishing weirs and boats, then against the mill's tamped dam, then through a sluice into the millrace, then jetting against the great wheel. Some of the paddles are missing so the wheel's turn is a slow cycle from the groan at the bottom's struggle to the shrike at the top's fall.

The mill house is built of rough stone and oak timbers, boat-shaped to part the water uneddyingly and join it again, with a shingled roof and maze of sheds. A dozen years of autumn leaves have clogged its gutters. Flour dust fans out from cracks and mouse holes. The men working inside cough and spit white, and everyone shouts against the stone's hollow roar.

The stone's granite faces are a flinger of flour that takes an hour to work through a man's load. Above them is a bin with a trough that leads out over a hole in the top stone's center. A stick wedged into the trough adjusts the wheat's flow. Men pour their sacks of grain into the bin. It trickles slowly into the spinning maw of the stone and vanishes almost instantly to dust, to be swept up by a whisk and scooped into sacks, so fine and pure it brings a lump to a man's throat.

Theodule Lefief left home with five sacks of grain before dawn and now returns before supper minus the twentieth taken as a toll, with the pullet someone wanted for dinner, a few nails, a wine flush on his cheeks, gossip enough for a week, and the smile of a day among friends.

The hamlet ahead awakens and stretches itself after its afternoon nap. '*Allonz-y*!' calls bring kids into the streets, boys to the woodpiles, girls to the wellheads. Chores, hunger, cats chased out, cows up to the pastures, bacon frying, gossip telling, dinner planning . . . bread baking.

Inside a dark door, next to a smoking chimney, Theodule's wife Brun stirs her oven's coals. She is a heavy woman whose short hair has the lusterless look of a lifetime without washings, The chimney erupts into smoke as twigs catch into the embers. Then she brings out the pans where she will make the dough.

Thick-waisted farm wives get there by way of their backs, becoming barrel-stave strong and almost as bent. Then they are ready to bear their ten or more children, of whom a few will survive to become as strong as themselves. They acquire first the nimblenesses of kneading and knitting, then the skill of milking the cow, then breeding (first the animals and later themselves), and finally ending life working harder, relaxing less, and dying sooner than their men.

Clad in dull black, Brun wrings her work-warped hard hands as she inspects the new flour to see if it contains one of the miller's tricks, a layer of acorn or barley flour slipped in during sacking. She has never heard the troubadours' honeyed lines about women stealing men's speech and leaving them sighs. Her day is apportioned to the thousand small things that make up a meal.

The warmth of her life is the stone of the hearth, place of a thousand snapped cinders and a thousand late meals. At the edge of the fire is a black iron kettle, flat-bottomed and fat, the treasure of her dowry. It is set well back on the stones, where the heat is the deepest. Heat so long replenished by each day's new wood that the hearth hasn't cooled since the day she was wed.

Her bed is of fern on a floor of tamped dirt, where the night is of loomings from embers flicking a blue light. Yet everything is immaculate, for her home is of shelves and household things, bound twigs and feather whisks, pottery jars for soap-making, sweet oils and scents of flowers and salt, herb jars, laurel and lemon, candles, medallions of saints, and a rosary of strung beans.

For the magics of the soul are not for the mind's touch. A flight of twilight birds smoothing a pond into calm silver are not the grey ghosts of a water sky, they are looming bands of Satans coming to swirl away a soul. The squalls of starlings in search of a tree are witches come to take away the young calf. The devastation of thunderstorms is avenged by the lacework of swallows, always flying after them in loops of fine lace. An itinerant pedlar tells of a night in the deep woods, of seeing a fire with dancing around. Was it witches at a *sabbat*, or woodcutters feasting with wenches?

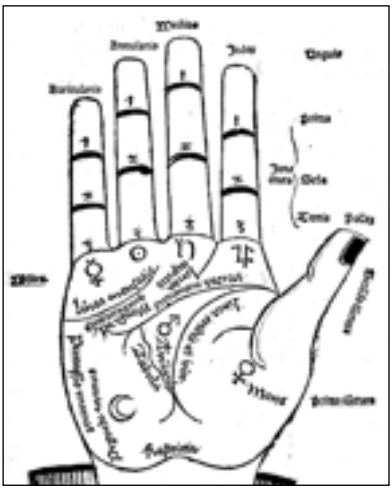
Witch-work is of night beings inflamed by a half-light's truth. Brun crosses herself to ward off bad spirits as she opens the bag of flour.

For bread is not in man's but in God's hands. Hero wheat shares no limelight. Falsetto yeast sings only on days of wet warmth. Eggs and rubbed salt are content with small parts. The hands weave all these into the shape of a loaf. But what is it, if not the thin spirit in all things, that makes bread rise?

First water and blossoms are put into jars stoppered with green twigs. Out in the sun Brun spreads a damp cloth on top of a wood board. Her ring and her breadboard were the first givings of her man. Off to the side she wets a glazed bowl. Then on a quern, a little hand mill, she crushes some walnut shells. She kneels with her skirt tucked up to her knees, and conjures bread from powders and sprinklings and a hand's obedience to a hummed tune.

Into the bowl go a dozen handfuls of flour, then water, eggs, and dark crystals of salt. Furrows of beads blend into the dust. Next she bends and starts kneading with her fists. It's the first motion she can remember her mother teaching her. Folding and turning, then rolling the soft ball, she watches it begin to wrinkle and glaze, and finally toughen enough to hold a thumb's dent.

She takes care of her hands, for they are the windows into the witchcraft world.



The thumbs are Satan's, his handles on the soul. Of the two, the left one is the worst. If that thumb is taken from a body less than nine days dead, it becomes the Lamp of the Burglars, keeping victims asleep no matter how loud the noise. And if the body is that of a child, the thumb can cure any other child's warts.

But in God's plenteous grace all truths have opposites. The next finger to the thumb, the one most often used, is the body's conduit to God. A single drop of its blood, if lost onto the earth, will be seized by underground spirits in slake of their thirst: you must beware dying by water. Yet the same blood softened in water is a cure for the bilious humor.

The middle finger is Doom, the finger of Death. She who dies lacking Doom must wander forever, never finding peace in the Being Without End. But if at the death of one who is so lacking, a carved wooden finger is

placed in its stead, the soul can be claimed by the Devil or by God, whomsoever possessed the first right. Three drops of its blood, if touched to a willow stick, will enable the holder to know where a lost thing is to be found.

The fourth finger is the body's own, its aperture to life. With it medicines must be mixed, and measurements are made in relation to its volume and length. If a red yarn is tied to it in a coil or spiral, one who has a fever will fling off the bad choler.

And the little finger is Margot, the Magpie, the wing of the thumb that is the harbinger of death. If it is the thief of the soul, is it not also the best thief of men's things? When Margot touches an object covetously, there is no need for a purse, for the thing will vanish to wherever you like. But Satan will wait there also, holding your leash.

Brun twists her fingers amid the knowledge of these truths, smiling at her mysteries and the aloneness of her wisdom. Only if all the fingers are used, each doing as much as it must, only then will the bread rise.

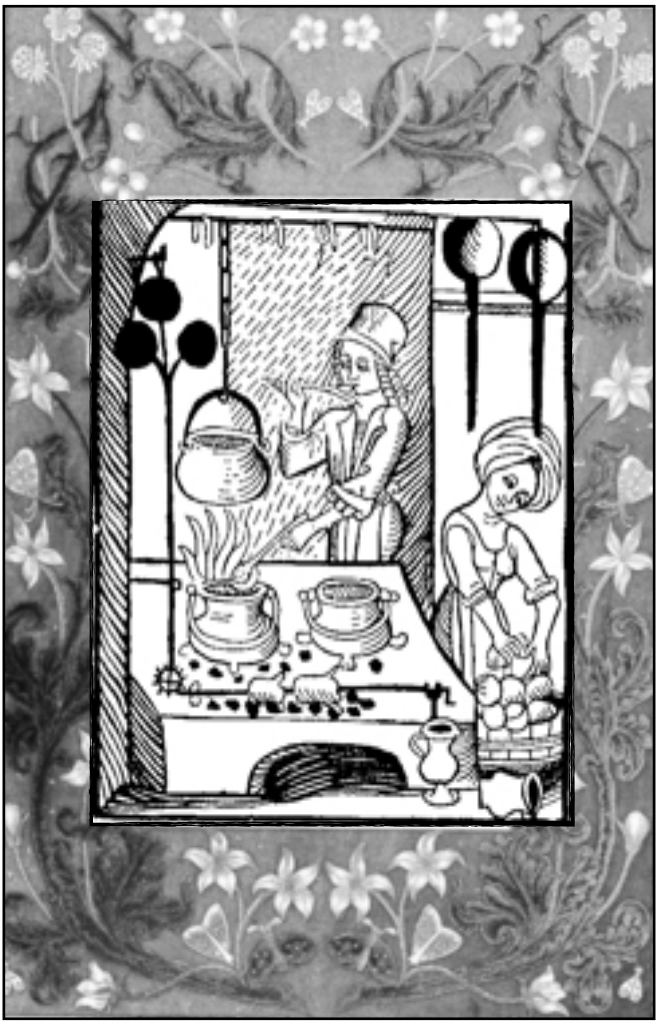
And they do, losing their pink sheen. She kneads the loaf again, this time softening her fists. Too much of her weight will make a crust that's too coarse, and too little of it will make the loaf coarse within.

One handful is spun rounded and flat, another rolled into a long twist. She coats them on the bottom with the walnut dust so they won't stick to the hearth, then covers them with a cloth and puts them aside.

So now her bread can rise as fine as it may, while she thinks of supper. A jubilant supper! For isn't it autumn and the harvest was good? Isn't it Monday the Day of Jubilation? Sunday is past. Christ has delivered mankind again through the bread of his life. Tomorrow the week can begin its long descent to Friday, Day of Death, day of Christ's passion, when bread becomes flesh and wine becomes blood.

So a fine supper! What's it to be? Ah! Pocket soup and mortrew, and for a treat, meat cooked in almonds and garlic, with sorrel and tarragon strained in with its juice. And for a sweet, strained grape pulp mixed with honey and cream.

Pocket soup she makes when there is fat meat. Trimmings and trotters are splintered on stones, then simmered in herb water until the water is near gone. Then it is cooled until it jells almost as firm as lean, and rolled into a pouch lined with sweet gums and celery leaf. To make soup, she slices it into boiling water and sprinkles it with an aroma made of powdered flowers and thyme.



She thinks a mortrew of chicken and fish. White meats are boiled then mortared to paste. This is mixed with bread crumbs and egg yolks, shaken in a gourd until it froths, and boiled again until the mass congeals. She'll serve it with diced bacon and pieces of smoked tongue on a trencher of hard bread.

These things are half done when the bread is fully risen. What has puffed it up if not the Spirit in all things? Behind her hearth is a brick dome with a fire pit and a stone door. The smoke of the flamed has dwindled and the coals are bright red.

Brun now works swiftly, turning out the loaves onto a flat board, rubbing them with water and quickly cutting crosses on top so bad spirits won't spoil the bake — so quickly she misjudges and gives herself a slight cut! She looks at it gravely and swiftly tells the oven her secrets to ward off bad spirits. Then in go the loaves, sliding to a rest on the hot stones. She takes out the plank and puts in a small bowl of water. It slides to the center, where the heat is the fiercest, and begins to sizzle and steam. Then she plugs the opening with a stone and crosses herself three times.

Three, the magic number of God.

Three persons in the Trinity. Three persons in Christ's family. Three epochs of history — creation, present, hereafter. Three ends of life — heaven, hell, purgation. Three arts of the *trivium* — grammar, rhetoric, dialectic. Three ages in the life of man — learning, experience, knowledge. Three estates of society — priest, prince, peasant.

Three multiplied of itself is more magical still. Heaven has nine choirs of angels; the Church has nine orders in its hierarchy; a prayer said thrice times thrice has the power of nine times nine.

But if three is the prime number of God, four is the prime number of Earth: the four winds, the four directions, the four elements of air, earth, fire, water; the four points of Christ's cross; the four points of the compass; the four paradisiacal rivers of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; the four cardinal virtues; the four bodily humors; the four sciences of the *quadrivium*: geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music.

Yet while these be harmonies, they are not yet music. Only when summed do they become the most mystical hymn of nature, seven — seven planets, seven virtues, seven deadly sins, seven sacraments, seven notes in the Church's chant, seven ages of man, seven seals in Revelation, seven directions in Heaven's unity of thought: thing, mind, matter, past, present, future, God.

All that rise to these converge. When wheat rises it converges to bread.

Bent from a poor birth yet unbroken by a poor life, the wonder is why it isn't the weather or work that kills, but the tiny cut on a finger. The scratch from a rough place on a piece of wood. A too-serious disagreement with the cat. A cut from a blade that nicks too far into the loaf. A scratch that can swell, become blue, spread swiftly for no reason. Brun sucks the malific vapors out of the cut, sees that it is on Magpie, and heeds that sign.

She crosses to her votive shrine, a small shelf with candles and amulets and an image of the Virgin once blessed by a priest. She bows her head and prays, 'Three biters go away, three betters help me today.' Saying this three times, she takes off her ring and kneels to recite a Hail Mary.

Three biters: cuts, pricks, abrasions. Three ways the blood can be cursed. Three paths for the soul's escape.

Three betters: Father, Son, Spirit — the Trinity of One that hears her prayer.

She shakes her finger to make sure the bleeding has stopped, then returns to the bread. The stone door falls away at the pry of her stick. She allows the bread to take its own time. When the loaves are ready she scoops them out with a board. They crackle fiercely when they first meet the cool air, thick-crusted and light brown, sending out an aroma that'll soon have neighbor boys at the door clamoring for a piece.

She ponders her hands, meeting place of magic and wheat. If a swallow's flight can chase away a huge storm; if a year can begin dying from the same rain that once brought it life; if the dance of a pond's colors can reveal the beings lurking beneath, then what makes bread?

Brun prays from the last pew in the church, for to approach God too closely is to be naked before every eye in the universe. But Mary can be prayed to from even a humble hearth. Men may masquerade with their shrines and their garments, but it is the woman who makes the miracle.

1788

Pilloried

The *taille* land tax falls due at the end each *quartier*, and when that quarter embraces the harvest months does it seem the most wasted.

Now in the time of King Louis *le Bien-Aime*, as his courtiers style him, when he and his minister of finance de Brienne decide on the *taille*, the courtiers airily regard it as a duty for the tax-farmers, not they.

The Assembly of Notables is besieged by high nobles and ladies, who though they pay no tax of their own, plead that their provinces also be touched with a soft feather, for that is where the revenues derive for their chateaux and carriages and tapestry-lined salons. The burden devolves to those less able to mount trappings and pretense, who know nothing of the King's ill-chosen alliance with the Colonials of America against England's King George. They know little of the former finance minister Necker's habit of paying France's debts by borrowing more money, but they did know who was groaning under the burden of paying for it all.

In each province every high official will be similarly besieged. The wealthiest landowners pass their hour in the portrait-lined salons. Framing the *taille* as a matter of the gravest concern that someone must surely address, they shrewdly make clear their unsuitability via gifts of fine wines and florid flattery.

Many a petty lord's mistress lightens his *taille* in the ancientest of ways, harvesting the last fruits of a fading coquette.

Over the decades the names of the tax farmers have changed but the *taille* has only become greater. In the least provinces the poorest districts receive thus the main share, passing it on to the poorest back parish. After the curé preaches the Sunday sermon and lists the week's lost sheep, the news is delivered like the crooked finger of doom.

'It's higher than ever!' come the cries, 'It's impossible!' 'Have they no mercy?'

The parish elders summon the villagers to the oak grove in front of the church. There are no good ways to raise bad money. All the men over twenty can vote, but only the elders do any talking. The cruelest decision is the appointment of Collector, the local resident appointed to the post of State Collector for the Crown. The argument seethes, for the Collector

soon becomes the commune's most reviled man. From every throat there come cries of 'Not me!', 'My wife is dying!', 'My *grange* burned to the ground!', 'I have twelve children to support!' But once the Collector is appointed he has to assess, and the assessment's size means his duty can be neither simple nor graceful nor fair nor clean.

Last quarter's Collector will of course be duly rewarded, for he did his duty well and everyone nourishes a grudge. But then justice grows gossamer. 'The wealthiest farmers down in the village must be touched with a soft feather, for are not at least a dozen of us at this very meeting in debt to their lands?' 'So-and-so's brother is an official in the Dispensary of Salt; to assess him anything would be madness.' And with more than a trace of doubt in her voice another woman mutters, 'So-and-so's wife says her uncle found papers in Scotland proving her great-grand-aunt was sired by a Laird. Now she has calls herself a Fount of Honor and thus a high-born and therefore may no longer pay the *taille*. A most suspicious tale by my reckon. Methinks her uncle bought those papers from a forger. Greasy as a butcher's

doorknob, that story is. Everyone knows if a Scot kisses you, you must be sure to count your teeth.'

Descend thus the *taille* did, till the poorest village alone is obliged to pay the whole of its tax. Its unfortunate Collector must now survive off whatever he can glean over his due. His face becomes indistinguishable from the ghastly grimace of the stone gargoyles on the church. He is greeted with evasions and threats, passive resistance, expressionless shrugs. Payment comes in a *sou* at a time, pleas to consider a spare hen as part payment, or a measure of butter plus a half-cheese. He tramps all over the region, his own fields falling to ruin, arguing, cajoling, bartering like a boy, finding himself the unwilling recipient of every unwanted odd and end in the village economy. Which somehow he must convert into gold sovereigns on the

final day of his term or be assured of a year in tax-debtor's jail — a place from which one is ill-likely to emerge upright.

So every sign of prosperity becomes jealously whispered. Any fool living above subsistence can be sure his tax will be doubled next quarter. It becomes difficult to distinguish bad farms from good. Church-going families don plaincloth instead of their finery. And what fool is so keen to shorten his life by manuring his fields to better their yield, knowing a Collector will be duly noting his labour? In the poorest villages people make do with black bread and roots; wine and meat become autumn-end luxuries. Household gardens yield more food than large fields, for pottage plots are by tradition exempt from the *taille*.

The lowborn's duty is to sweat and say nothing, be submissive and serene, bind his fate to luck and the weather, accept in silence any lord's bidding, say nothing of what he himself needs, mumble his words and not raise his voice, shrug off the inequities that gnaw at his life, and tack together as best

he can the planks of a living. And when he dies leaves what little remains to insolent heirs who think only of themselves.

For young people are no longer content to accept their role as *villeins regardant*. The roads are free of cutthroats for the first time in centuries. The pomp of the papacy lies in Lutherian ruins. King Louis *le Bien-Aimé* has lost two of France's provinces to debts incurred supporting the war of American colonials, but what meant that to the progeny of *corvée* who yearns to be free? The kingdom's shrinking boundaries have opened young eyes to a world on the other side of the ocean. The future is an open book for sons who learn how to read.

All over the provinces gossips tattled their tales into truth — 'One year he was Adjutant, the next year Sub-prefect' ... 'He sold his good character in search of the dazzling' ... 'With deaf ears to mercy and stern use of his

powers, he maneuvered a minor post in the *baillage* into a Master-of-Requests rank,' the lowest rung on the courtier's ladder. And having bought a few coins' worth of hired history from a pliable scribe, his sole shortcoming was wealth until an opportunity to administer church funds yielded in one year an embezzler's miracle.

Thus were the men of anomie's rise They move their portraits out of the anteroom into the salon, become remorselessly modern, touch up their faces with brushes and tints, pile onto subordinates more duties than they can handle, snap at anyone whose demeanor is less certain, take over more of a room than anyone else, interrupt others in mid-sentence, acquiesce to superiors' derisions but suppress them in their lackeys, preach of the importance of assets and law, hint at their knowledge of statecraft and power, assemble a stable and acquaint themselves with the hunt, and give to

a passing beggar a coin of disdainful worth while smirking to a companion, 'It is true what they say, an empty sack cannot stand.'

The King is bedizened with flattery and baubles. His court is rife with intrigue and incompetence. In a legalist's hands a toll can be found for the drinking of water and walking on ground. Dressed in their new merits and scorning those old, such men are the miasma from the swamp of a ideal's decay. They bubble up again and again, no matter the times, when a man with an idea of himself thinks himself ideal.

Sylvain Lefief is pilloried standing up. If his legs give way he chokes until he can stand again. Street urchins splatter his face with with overripe tomatoes, spoiled cabbages, eggs that rotted after too long in the sun. Taunted by youths, spat on by drunkards, smirked at by coiffed wives, three days thus in the sun, the rain, the cold, the wind. Water and hard bread brought once each morning, fetid soup at night. Nauseous from hunger, sitting in his own excretions, neck chafed bloody by the gnawing slivers of the wood, half-dead from immobility, he had pleaded with the magistrate, 'Sire, mercy! I had naught to eat for three days!' only to hear in return, 'Three days, you say? Very well then, by the Grace and Beneficence of the Crown shall Sylvain Lefief be pilloried three days for the offense of stealing a loaf of bread.'

The pillory is located in a square where once there stood a market cross. In the time when twice made custom and custom made law, men bound their word to their salvation with a simple oath over clasped hands in front of that cross. Now the pillory stood there. The market of barter had become the market of exchange: merchants and moneychangers and lawyers and taxmen. Men who learned how to inure writ-law to the benefit of themselves found it to be a cup that never lacked liquor.

Hardly had the bailiff finished locking the pillory's headboard over Sylvain's neck to the sound of a dull wooden *kerchunk* when the town's urchins and brats gathered to break in this new victim. Now they crack rotten eggs over his head and proclaimed him a wonderful omelette — fetid, sulfurous, a reek worse than the combined chamber pots of hell. Then comes the spit, the rotten fruit, the spoiled milk, the vinegary remnants from the bottoms of barrels. Within two hours the stench's fumes rise in waves while the wasps and flies cloud in for the feast.

Then comes the sunset when the market closes for the day. Sylvain gives in to the hopelessness of his misery and sobs out his soul. Broken-man sobs, utterly helpless against the humiliations of injustice.

When the salt of tears finally ends there remains not remorse but a raw festering hatred, his fury redoubled by being unable even to scare away the clouds of insects. The flies soon learn that the trembling of a pinioned arm is the worst they have to fear, and the mosquitoes are too stupid to care. Stench, the stupid smug stares of stupid stupid people with stupid stupid faces, the ache beyond relief, the intolerance of a town that has progressed from sin to crime, from God to money, from market square to market worship.

Whatever forgiveness exists in a man who has no choice but to thieve festers into murderousness after three days in the pillory. On the third day, after washing himself in a river, Sylvain beats a petty lord to death with a broken-off limb so he could take the man's sword and knife. Eleven months later he is cheering himself hoarse as the guillotine slides down its trunnion to hammer into the *lunette* with the sound of a dull wooden *ker-chunk*.

To his last breath he relishes the memory of Citizen Antoinette looking up at the guillotine after being unceremoniously dumped off the back of a tumbrel, asking, 'What is this?'

Payment of the Tithes, Pieter Brueghel the Younger

Twenty-five copies of this work were painted between 1615 and 1622


OL
DENTAL

1889

Chemin de Fer

A hundred years ago the hardest metal France knew was made for the guillotine. Now an even harder metal, steel, wraps all France in silvery ribbons, and on them pass the *chemin de fer*.

Gèrard has been walking for an hour. For the first time now he can see the glow of predawn as he nears Port Boulet.

It is a two-hour route he has often walked before. Past Le Pressoir, an oak-arbored hollow near the three farmhouses of Le Peu Muleau, where during the grape harvest an itinerant pressman blocks up the wheels of a cart with a wine press bolted to it, lets his oxen loose in the meadow of Guillotiére nearby, and attends to the small-plot farmers who bring the harvest from their few rows of unkempt vines.

Past Les Caves Saint Martin, where time out of mind ago local farmers carved out caverns while cutting the soft stone to build their houses and fences. Now they use the caverns to lodge their *futs* and *cercles* of wine to age through winter.

Past Le Moulin, the long disused flour mill on the banks of the little river Lâne, the mill's graceful sails now made obsolete by manufactured flour brought by the *chemin de fer* from La Beauce, the great granary of France, which surrounds Chartres cathedral with kilometer upon kilometer of wheat.

Past Les Mellieres, a reedy oxbow in the embrace of the Lâne, where village herb gatherers once came to pick nettle which, when boiled, was said to calm the pain of women in their flow. Now it is an impenetrable thicket because no one remembers how to prepare the balm.

Past Forgier, a hamlet so ancient that only the oldest men in the village can recall that it was named for the descendants of a smith who had once set up his forge to shoe horses there.

Past Huberdelliere, at one time said to be the finest pasture for kilometers around. Now it is being inexorably filled with sand and river debris by the owners of the gravel quarry bordering the Loire nearby, whose lawyer maintains that since no land should be without an owner, if no one now keeps cattle there, *ipso facto* it has been abandoned and therefore may be claimed by anyone who makes good use of it. Local people have already begun to call it Gravellois.

Gèrard looks to his right toward the ruins of the once-great abbey of Bourgueil whose friars were expelled by rioting villagers during the Revolution. Today it is a rubble of stones under an arcade of broken arches. Of that Gèrard responds with a shrug. To his mother Marie-Claire's utter horror, two days after his eleventh birthday he informed her that the *Mercure de France* he had purchased as a birthday gift to himself wrote that Parisians regard religion as a waste of time, and therefore he would no longer attend mass with his family on Sunday.

Lefief was an inauspicious surname at best. To Gérard the name Lefief was a byword for a peasant while he was determined to be a bourgeois. As for what he could present as credentials for his aspirations, he had only his

pencils. He had obsessed about the servile status implied by the name Lefief ever since he discovered at the age of thirteen that he had a talent for drawing. No one in his family had ever displayed such a talent before.

His first pencil sketches of his sisters were so lifelike that his mother confiscated them to show to the local abbé. The abbé visited their house and admonished Gérard that drawings were a trick the Devil used to steal souls. Portraits committed the sins of both envy and pride. Gérard retorted, "Then why is the Virgin Mary always so beautiful and Jesus always so handsome?" He was summarily excommunicated for thirty days by a nearly speechless abbé. When the thirty days stretched into thirty months, the Abbé acknowledged the obvious, branded Gérard a heretic and forbade him to enter the parish churchyard.

That was five years ago. Gérard had no desire to obey the abbé — or anyone else for that matter. He set himself the goal of revealing people's souls in his pictures instead of casting them out. For him, drawing an image turned lines with a pencil into a life with a soul. With a few curves and squiggles he could suggest who people really were on the other side of their smiles. He sketched cows that could fly and cats that could catch fish underwater. His drawing of the abbé looked remarkably like the backside of an ass.

Over the years Gérard's images became more complex as he filled his imaginary worlds with mountains made of muscles and forests made of lace. There was no color in his pictures because pencils were all he had, so he studied the engraved filagree bordering five-franc notes to learn how to create the shadows of trees and shimmer of ripples on water. He turned the lines, angles, and Greek letters in the geometry book at school into night-sky constellations named after the Lefief's farmyard chickens — a drawing he deemed so funny that he surreptitiously slipped it into the teacher's textbook. The teacher never demanded who in the class had put it there.

Gérard then informed his classmates that he could prove the teacher didn't read his own textbook.

No one suspected Gérard was inventing this secret universe. He threw every drawing he made into the fire as soon as he finished it. No one — not his sisters, not his parents, nor his friends — must know. After the abbé left that day five years ago, Gérard vowed he would never again subject himself to the humiliation of an ignorant fool.

Now with a kilometer still to go Gèrard, whiffs the astringent metallic oil-and-steel smell of the *chemin de fer*. He reaches Port Boulet's short stretch of oiled-gravel road. The coal merchant's shutters are not yet open, which relieves Gèrard, for his father Jacques owes the man forty francs and the merchant harangues Gèrard every time he passes.

A few doors further on Gèrard crosses the road to avoid speaking with Marcel, the owner of the best of the town's two cafes — famed locally for its specialty of lark patties simmered in the white wine of Saumur — who is buffing his brass door knob with the sleeve of his shirt. Gèrard doesn't want anyone to know that he is secretly leaving his family forever, that he intends to be the first Lefief to abandon the wilted flowers of ancestry to seek the bouquets of success in the grandest city in the world.

Now eighteen, Gèrard has prepared for this day for five years. On his thirteenth birthday he walked the nine kilometers from his family home at Fougerolles to the *gare* of the *chemin de fer* at Port Boulet and spent the two sous he had earned carrying bricks in a hod for a copy of the *Journal de La Jeunesse*. He then took a seat in the waiting room and read the entire issue, oblivious to anything but the fashions, the politics, the business affairs, the mistresses, the magical aura that surrounded *Le Paris de grand luxe*. Over the years he watched the engines steam in, the passengers embark, and vowed that one day he would be one of them.

Today is that day. As he takes the shortcut path through La Jacqueliniére to the station, he mentally counts the eleven francs in the envelope in his valise that took him three years to save. He passes two old men and a woman, pushing their barrows of vegetables along, their heads bowed low as they lean into their loads. Gèrard shivers at the sight. Paris

will never have such sights! He reads the *Journal de La Jeunesse*, and there are no pictures of barrow-pushers there! The *Journal's* engravings portray a clean, bustling Paris with crowds of polite, well dressed people making their way in fiacres or promenading along paved streets with monuments on every corner, all freshly cleaned by the rains.

He reaches the station half an hour after dawn and, for the tenth time that year, examines the schedules. There will be a train to Tours/Orleans at 7:15, and another to Paris at 7:45.

The *chemin de fer* even has pictures of itself. The poster of the express train 'L'Auvergne' on the billet-window wall shows a squat, proud engine speeding across an abyssal gorge into an orange-colored sunset, blurring the *wagons-lits* trailing behind amid chuffs of smoke from the engine's exhaust chimney. The picture of the dining car shows the chef in a white smock, separated from the flower-adorned white tables by a low partition so the diners can watch him work. Vines grow from polished brass pots embraced in the stylish curves of metal brackets. On the white-clothed tables are vases filled with flowers the poster avers are cut every morning in Angers.

The Port Boulet *chefs de la gare* are wearing new uniforms today. This being the year of the *Centenaire* of the Revolution, all France is garbing itself in garments of white. In four days it will be July 14. Gèrard will stand with the multitude in the *Place de La Bastille* as the fusiliers snap to attention holding their historic weapons and the politicians stand on bunting-draped platforms with their wives or mistresses. Children will cry and put their hands over their ears as great cannons thunder and fill the air with flint-smelling smoke.

Gèrard walks onto the platform, a length of *cord-du-roy* logs whose tops had been sawn to a flat surface, then set side by side. Weeds grow from the crevices and knotholes. On some spur tracks nearby, a team of oxen whose yoke has been moved up to their foreheads push gondola cars under a gravel chute, where they will be filled with river-rounded stones from nearby Gravellois.

Here Gèrard sees his first *Parigot*. Gèrard surmises that the man must be a *Parigot* — a resident of Paris — for he is dressed in a grey suit with black edging around the collar and pocket flaps, a high white collar, a striped cravat, a black bowler hat with a velvet band, and black leather shoes. He is totally unlike the others on the platform, with their durable country clothes of serge in dark colors. No woman on the platform could compare with his elegance!

The *Parigot* examines the others with an air of disdain. He carries a malacca walking stick with a gold head, which he stamps on the platform to indicate his displeasure at the time consumed awaiting the *chemin de fer*.

Gèrard stares at the man. Gèrard had read that many well-to-do men of the

provinces adopt the British-inspired patterned-waistcoat garment when they ride the *chemin de fer*, considering the *wagon-lit* lounge car *as* a form of mobile boulevard on which it is perfectly appropriate to ape the *flâneurs* of the *boulevards de Paris de grand luxe*.

As to what he will do for subsistence when he arrives in Paris, Gèrard does not know. When his father was not picking apples or gathering grapes in seasonal labor, he carried bricks and timber for the building trade. Gèrard knows the duties and terminology of that trade, so surely he can be of use there. He will do that until an opportunity presents itself — and of course it will, for is it not Paris where everything is possible and no one is hindered by birth?

The *chemin de fer* is half an hour late. The *Parigot* has tired of stamping his cane and has retired to the bookstall to peruse with tepid interest a copy of the *Cahiers* of the local historical society, in which several authorities from Chinon identify all the places near Bourgueil mentioned in the great chronicles of Rabelais. The *Parigot* rolls his eyes at the very thought that someone surely takes pride in producing such a scribble.

Gèrard secretly gazes at the man, then goes into the W.C. and looks himself up and down in the mirror. There is nothing he can do

about the black serge suit and scuffed shoes that were once his Sunday church clothes, but at least he can get rid of the antiquated starched collar. He rips it off angrily, furious that he had been obliged to wear this badge of peasant conformity in order to attend Sunday mass.

Then he hears the engine coming. He jams the starched collar in his pocket and walks quickly to the far end of the platform and conceals himself behind an oak tree.

The engine driver sees the young man with a rattan valise hiding there and knows what he is up to, so he shouts '*Bon courage*!' as he passes. He stops the engine so the vestibule of the last carriage is directly in front of Gèrard. The *chef de gare* is at the other end of the platform repeating, '*Vos billets, monsieurs et mesdames, vos billets*!' There is no other ticket taker in sight. Gèrard leaps aboard *wagon-lit* and races up the steps. A whistle screeches, the train shudders, and he is on his way to Paris!

In an increasing blur of speed they pass Lavoir and Sechoir, where the washerwomen come down to the water wearing the signs of their trade, cloth strips knotted around their knees. Past Pic-Vert, where the green woodpeckers store acorns in autumn and retrieve them in winter. Past Sanglier, where the boar hunters come to sell their meat.

Gèrard reminds himself to not be distracted by scenes out the window. He must beware the ticket-collector. He had seated himself in the very last second-class bench seat near the *wagon-lit* door to the next carriage so he would be as inconspicuous as possible when the ticket-collector entered on his way through the train. Gèrard wants to be out that door before the collector notices him. He will then enter the women's toilette and hide inside until after the ticket-collector has passed through to the last carriage. Gèrard surmises that the woman's toilette will be the only door the collector will not open if he inspects the *wagon-lits* for *passagers clandestin*.

The woman's toilette is an unpleasant experience. The seat is much too small for a man. There is a sickly odor of stale perfume that reminds Gèrard of wilted honeysuckle. The windows are made of frosted glass, so he cannot see anything. Worst of all, the toilette is located directly above the carriage wheels, making any visit there a jolty, deafening experience. After what seems an interminable time he feels certain the collector must by now have passed through the carriage. He exits the toilette and passes the rest of his voyage with his face into the wind at the open-air door of the carriage.

As Gérard gazes out over the speed-blurred land he is in a state of almost boundless joy. He has successfully left behind a life he has loathed ever since that dreadful experience of the abbé telling him he must smother his talent to save his soul.

Now the *chemin de fer* passes station platforms whose names are a world completely new to him — a world in which every possibility awaits. Armeaux, Bourgosiere, Goulieres, Loges, Bouchardiere, Poitivinière, Noyers. Past Avoine where the chateau of Ussé looms in the distance. Past Cinq-Mars-La-Pile, a Roman watch tower built with mortar so hard that after two thousand years it still cannot be scored with a knife. The names of *gare*s become such a blur that Gèrard does not notice that he has forgotten the place-names of his past forever. In Paris he will be a Lefief no longer. He will be what he makes of himself, a new man with a new name.

Hours later, as the carriage nears an arched bridge, Gèrard glimpses a great swooping tower looming so high into the sky he has to bend low to see the *Tricolore* at the top furling in the breeze. Gèrard knows it to be the tower of Monsieur Eiffel, completed hardly three months before.

Suddenly he remembers the starched Sunday-church collar he had jammed into his pocket in the *gare de Port Boulet*. He takes it out of his pocket, glares angrily at it as if some sort of malevolent spider, scribbles the word "Lefief" across it, and hurls it as hard as he can into the Seine. He watches the Seine swallow the last trace of *La Familie Lefief's* past.

Ahead of him, the carriages of the *chemin de fer* clatter as they cross an arched bridge. Monsieur Eiffel's tower rises ever more precipitously on the far side. The *chemin de fer* races into Paris. Gèrard grasps the window rails firmly and leans his head out as far as he can with his face into the wind. Oh the speed of it! Oh the beautiful speed of it!

Finally the brakes clamp the wheels with a high-pitched squeal and the *chemin de fer* slows. Gèrard sees side tracks diverge away from the line his carriage is on. Then he sees switches, semaphores, steam locomotives attached to long trains of passenger carriages and wood-sided goods wagons. The smell of oil is everywhere. The train enters the shadows of an

enormous metal canopy in which numerous other carriage trains are lined in parallel rows. They glide to a stop.

Gèrard returns to his seat and freezes in shock. The ticket-collector is sitting in his place waiting for him! The man grasps Gérard's valise firmly under his arm and sternly informs Gérard that he is detained and must be remanded to the *gendarmerie de la gare* once the other passengers have disembarked.

Gérard is hardly the first rural rustic in an ill-fitting Sunday suit to stand before the railway gendarmes in the Gare de l'Ouest that afternoon. Boys his age have become a familiar and undesirable sight in the months preceding the *Centenaire* celebration of the storming of the Bastille. Now, four days before that day, Paris is filling with provincial dignitaries and foreigners from abroad who will stand in awe beneath Monsieur Eiffel's great edifice to watch the *Tricolore* raised while military bands play *La Marseillaise*, cannons roar, and

fusiliers raise their historic flintlocks to the sky and fire them off in noxious clouds of white smoke.

But Gérard is the first *passager clandestin* to remain resolutely mute as the railway gendarmes pepper him with their litany of questions designed to determine which train to put him on to send him back to where he came from. After half an hour of silence the gendarmes decided perhaps he is a deaf-mute after all. One of them suggests that perhaps something in his valise might yield a clue to the origins of this truculent wretch. The gendarme breaks the lock and upends the contents onto the interrogation floor. To no great surprise they see garments any proper Parisienne would regard as lice-infested rubbish. They are about to throw the valise and its contents into a bin when one of the gendarmes notices an envelope amid the wrinkled clothes. He tears off one end to inspect it. They are startled when the young man suddenly lurches forward, snatches the envelope out of the gendarme's hand, shouts, "*I have not told you my name because I do not have one!*" and races out the door into the crowded *gare*.

The gendarmes blow furiously on their whistles, whose piercing squeals alert everyone to the presence of a miscreant in the *gare*. The contingent of pickpockets that habituate the *gare* are the only people in the crowd to pay attention to the gendarmes' whistles. They know that inexperienced travelers check the pocket or purse where they keep their wallets when they hear a gendarme's whistle — a reaction which every pickpocket dutifully notes.

Amid the commotion Gérard has already fled out the entrance and vanished into the afternoon. He runs as fast as he can, pretending to chase after one of the horse-drawn trolleys on rails that are filled with people leaving the *gare*. When he reaches the next street corner he turns onto it and slows to a walk. At every corner thereafter he turns onto a new street no matter in which direction it leads. He is hungry, but wants no one to know where he has hidden his envelope of francs until he can discreetly distribute the notes into several different pockets and inside his stockings.

Hours later, he finds himself on the banks of the Seine. It is dusk. He conceals himself in an alcove beneath one of the great irons rings to which barges are moored overnight until they can be unloaded onto horse-drawn carts in the morning. Covering himself with the coils of ropes for warmth, he drifts into sleep wondering who he will become now that he is no longer a Lefief.

When Gérard awakens the next morning he gazes at the Seine below and the Île de La Cité beyond. The great Cathedral of Notre Dame looms to his left. He recalls that the ancient Romans called the Île and village around it Lutetia. That word does not quite sound right as a surname for a young man of 1889. He ponders for a time, then removes the empty envelope from his pocket and scribbles two words on it: "Jacques" and "Lutèce."

Jacques Lutèce crosses the Seine into Paris. He has eleven *francs*, no idea where to find work, and no clue what his future will bring. His only possession is his gift of magic with a pencil.

1975

The Last Remains of the Family Lefief

She stares out from an old photo wearing a shapeless wool dress. She appears ill at ease being the center of attention. One hand holds a Bible, the other drapes over a carved wooden table. The photographer told her to look into the camera, and that she dutifully did. Unsmiling, unblinking, somewhere in mid-years as the shutter was snapped. Her puffy thick fingers and soiled cuticles reveal a lifetime of cows and cooking and cold-water laundry, in this the only known record of her life.

Her husband's photo mirrors the pose minus the Bible. Faded pencil on the back of his picture reads: '1905. Lefief: Jacques, Marie-Claire'.

Good, solid, uneventful French surnames, as plain and sturdy as their shoes. Not the French of Matisse and chateaux and musicians and world trade, but of gardens and furrows and drudgery and rain, lived with a wealth that could afford but one portrait in a lifetime — and that with standard portrait-studio props of a white lace caplet for women and bow tie for men.

Their lives were not of comforts or goods or fame, but of the sun and the wind and the dusk and the summer, the indomitable peasant spirit, and the countless generations of forebears that undergird their name.

Their goods must not have been great, for in 1905 one visited the photographer wearing one's best. There are no children in the pictures, although the Lefiefs were neither too young nor too old and it was the custom of the time to be photographed as family. The scanty baptismal notes in the late nineteenth century parish ledgers in and around Bourgueil

on the Loire River near Chinon cite a Lefief patronymic associated with the names of two males, a Jacques and a Gèrard, but no dates of birth or death.

When Jacques and Marie-Claire died, what was left? Photography studios were a transitory trade in the best of times, so there is little use searching for client details there. Statistically, the name Lefief is 1 in 190,870 in France, so searching the records in old churches would be a mammoth task even for a scholar on a fellowship.

Their estate likely comprised a table, a few chairs, a plow, rakes, hoes, two or three changes of clothing, some debts left unanswered, a cow or two, some chickens, and these two photographs.

World War I would have taken care of the chickens and cows. Troops passed through, eating whatever they could. The debts died of their own accord. The furniture might have gone to neighbours or relatives, but after World War I, the French were so eager to modernise that rustic and not particularly well-built furniture went quickly into wintertime fireplaces. In the 1970s a retro vogue for such things led to their being cleaned up and sold for astronomical prices — money that during Marie-Claire and Jacques' lives would have cleared them of all debts and left a subsistence besides.

The rakes, hoes, and plows would have lasted longer, the need for such things in the countryside being eternal. But there are only so many repairs that can be made, and one by one their broken handles and rusted blades would have been stacked in some unused corner of a shed, forgotten until the shed should be torn down.

Their clothes would have been worn till threadbare by whomever inherited them, then cut into quilting. When the quilt went it would have been cut into rags, and when the rags went they would have thrown into the fire.

*According to the records in the website *Forebears* (https://forebears.io/surnames/lefief), in 2014 some 348 French citizens bore the Lefief surname, of which 76 resided in the Centre-Val de Loire. This reveals little about the number of people with that name in 1905 living in or round the Ville de Bourgueil. The genesis of the name Lefief is also uncertain. The earliest documented use of surnames in France was during the eleventh century, but surnames as we spell them today did not come into general use until the fourteenth century.

The photographs would have gone to a family member interested in genealogy and maintaining the ancestral records. When these two photographs had been duly logged and the scrapbook put back on the shelf, the Lefiefs would have been forgotten except at baptisms and weddings. Although the scrapbook survived World War II and the rise of France as a political power and cultural wellspring famed for its artists and philosophers, its owner probably did not.

Now, seven decades after these photos were taken, the economic changes following the 1968 social protests were giving the French their first real taste of prosperity since the 1860s. Anything with memories of the old days was thrown out to make room for new houses, new furniture, new cars.

The scrapbook found its way to a flea market in Bourgueil, where it was disassembled by a stall holder into the fantasy postcards, the historical-scene postcards, the touristic postcards, the handwritten genealogies, a few envelopes with collectible stamps, and these two photographs.

The postcards were sold to a dealer from Holland, the empty scrapbook sold to a collector, the genealogies and photographs laid out on the ground alongside some pieces of pipe from a plumber, a hubcap, three screwdrivers, a wool scarf, and a couple of dolls.

The day started off with everything priced at a franc. Towards four in the afternoon everything dropped to half a franc. By half past four everything was a *vingtieme*, a twenty centime coin worth about five pence. Someone stepped on the photos, breaking them in half. Ten minutes before the market closed, only the photographs remained, marked down now to ten centimes.

At five minutes before five, when the remnants of the market day would have gone to the bin, I came along and bought the last remains of the Family Lefief for a five-centime piece.

But for a penny they would have been lost.

Which of these

tells the Lefief tale?

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p.011, *Local Lord Refusing People*, detail from Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Massacre of the Innocents*, (c. 1565–1567), British Royal Collection. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massacre_of_the_Innocents_(Bruegel)#/media/File:Pieter_Bruegel_the_Elder_-_Massacre_of_the_Innocents_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg>

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p.0161a-c, –017d-g, *Frieze of six images from Book of Hours, Loire region, France, c. 1475*, J. P.Morgan Library MS G.1 fol.1r & ff., <http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/1/76958>

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p.048, *The Assumption of Saint Mary Magdalene*, about 1392–1402, Niccolò da Bologna, from the *Gradual of Niccolò di Lazzara for Santo Spirito in Farneta* (Lucca). Tempera colors and gold leaf on parchment, 7 1/2 x 8 in. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms. 115 (2017.122.4), leaf 4.

p.050, *Poor woman carrying burning coals in tongs*, lower far left detail from Pieter Breughel the Elder, *De Vlaamse spreekwoorden* (Netherlandish Proverbs),

oil on oak wood, 1559, copy in Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. The particular proverb is. 'What can smoke do to iron? (i.e., there is no point in trying to change the unchangeable). <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/7e/Pieter_Brueghel_the_Elder_-_The_Dutch_Proverbs_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg/1920px-Pieter_Brueghel_the_Elder_-_The_Dutch_Proverbs_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg>

p.051, *Notre-Dame de la Belle-Verrière* (in French), situated on south side of Chartres Cathedral so that it greets visitors to the choir loft. Author photograph acquired mid 1970s.

p.052, *Richard II meeting with the rebels of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, Bibliothèque nationale de France. < http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8438605h/f336.item>

p.053, *Man taking brothel woman while companions kill looters*, *BL Harley 4183 Bible historiale*, 1403–1404, fol.30r. <https://manuscriptminiatures.com/4119/17549>

p.044-045, *Children playing at jousting, with broken spear*, Bodleian Library MS. Bodl. 264, The Romance of Alexander in French verse, with miniatures illustrating legends of Alexander the Great and with marginal scenes of everyday life, by the Flemish illuminator Jehan de Grise and his workshop, 1338-44. <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/60834383-7146-41ab-bfe1-48ee97bc04be/surfaces/7c2889c4-cc23-4e74-b45d-2c4368540fe5/>

p.056a, *Metalsmith fabricating bronze cannon & bell*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-279-18-v>

p.056b, *Armour maker polishing helmet on buffing wheel powered by water mil*l, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317b-27-v>

p.056c, *Metalsmith making chain mail of linked metal loops*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-103-r>

p.056d, *Ironmonger shaping breastplate from suit of armour with hammer on anvil*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–

1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317b-29-r>

p.057 *The Battle of Crécy between the English and the French in 1346*, Workshop of the Boucicaut Master c.1415, British Library, Cotton Nero E. II pt.2, f.152v.

p.058, *Combat between archers, siege during Crusade*, from The Impossible First Crusade, Kenneth Harl, Great Courses Daily 14 Sept 2016. <http://www.thegreatcoursesdaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Kerbogha_Antiochie.jpg>

p.062, Abbaye de Senànque chapel amid rows of lavender, author photograph c. 1973.

p.063, *Monk or friar holding broom and carrying water ewers or pots*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-102-r>

p.065–065 *Ground and hydraulic water management diagram, priory of Christ Church, Canterbury*, Eadwine psalter: Waterworks of the Priory and Christ Church Cathedral in Canterbury, c. 1174, illumination on parchment, R.17.1, f. 284v-285r. Image credit: Saint Louis University Library.

p.066, *Bookbinder working with press to make leather-bound volumes*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-279-21-v>

p.067, *Friar or abbey workman shaping mill wheel rim with adze*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-86-v>

p.068a, *Illuminated cartouche showing bloodletting*, The historiated initial "U" on folio 11v of this 13th-century French manuscript shows bloodletting. <https://www.wga.hu/art/zgothic/miniatur/1251-300/2french/70french.jpg>

p.068b, *Monk in abbey kitchen stirring pots over fire*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-95-r>

p.069, *Novice monk wearing wood clogs sweeping abbey grounds*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-55-r>

p.070a, Kitchen chimneys at Abbaye of Fontevraud, author photograph c. 1974.

p.070b, Ornamented capital in cloister arcade, Abbaye du Senànque, author photograph c. 1974.

p.071a, *Monk crushing grapes in half-barrel tun*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-82-v>

p.071b, *Hide tanner sorting various animal skins by colour*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-105-v>

p.071c, *Tanner sorting hides while other hides dry on racks overhead*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-62-v>

p.072, *Celler master transferring wine between two barrels using bellows pump*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-94-r>

p.074, *Passelewe Lefief digging near monastery walls*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-77-v>

p.075, *Three monks singing antiphon or anthem*, from the Psalter of Jean, Duc de Berry (Paris, Bib. N., MS. fr. 13091), illuminated by André Beauneveu, 1335–1403. https://earlymusicmuse.com/performingmedievalmusic3of3/

p.076–077, Cloister walkway at Abbaye de Fontevraud, France, photograph provided by Dana De Zoysa, South Africa.

p.078, Idealised view of City of Lyons, France, hand-coloured woodcut from the Nuremberg Chronicle, 1493.

p.079, *Alain de la Roche*, illustration dans le *Psautier et le Rosaire de Notre-Dame*, 1492.

p.080a, *Man clearing land with woven wicker fence*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-279-12-r>

p.080b, *Man placing tiles on newly built roof rafters*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-279-25-v>

p.081, *Carting slaughtered cow & wine barrel to market*, Richental: Konzilschronik. In: Feger, Otto (Bearb.): Ulrich Richental: Das Konzil zu Konstanz, 1464. (Konstanz, Rosgartenmuseum, Hs. 1, fol. 70r).

p.082a, *Leather worker making belts*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-63-v>

p.082b, *Leather worker making horse tack*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-14-r>

p.083a, *Carpenter cutting small mortise with axe*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317b-37-v>

p.083b, *Knife maker*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-68-r>

p.084a, *Shoe maker cutting leather for bootie*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-96-r>

p.084b, *Hosiery maker inspecting leggings*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-23-r>

p.085a *Cooper making buckets*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek

Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317b-18-r>

p.085b, *Cooper hammering clamps over newly made barrel*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-97-r>

p.086a, *Dyer fixing red wool in alum*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <http://data28.i.gallery.ru/albums/gallery/299309-4a542-99590670-m549x500-u38052.jpg>

p.086b, *Weaver at loom*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-279-33-v>

p.087a, *Wiremaker pulling drawing newly shaped wire through die*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-40-v>

087b, *Nail maker pounding several sizes of nails and tacks*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317b-28-v>

p.088, *Leather worker making what appears to be leather saddlebags or possibly brassieres*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-38-v>

p.088b, *Comb maker filing fine teeth in ivory comb*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317b-15-v>

p.089a, *Lantern maker shaping base of portable lantern*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-155-v>

p.089b, *Cordwainer pulling single strand for future rope out of fleece in bag around waist*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. Mendel I Amb. 317.2° Folio 16r. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-16-r>

p.090a, *Locksmith shaping lock hasps with file*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. Amb. 317.2°, via http://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/, hans (Hans) schelhamer (Schelhamer; Schellhammer), slosser (Schlosser) Transkription und weitere Informationen siehe http://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-72-v/data. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317b-65-v>

p.090b, *Foot and swing-arm lathe turning wooden table leg*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band II. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317b-47-r>

p.091a, *Bead maker shaping beads using two-arm lathe*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-13-r>

p.091b, *Bead maker cutting beads off stock using bow saw* (precursor to modern jigsaw), Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317b-16-v>

p.093, *Portrait of couple praying rosary before home altar*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-61-v>

p.094 Section of place-name map taken from large map of Lorraine near Metz, provenance unrecorded..

p.095a, *Couple walking to market* from *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, p.348.

p.095b, *Two washerwomen with bundles on heads* from *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, p.260.

p.095c, *Couple walking holding hands* from *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, p.348.

p.0960a, *Fishwives offering fish to passing man*, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, p.219.

p096b, *Woman walking with three-tine hay rak*e, from *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, p. 355.

p.096c-097b, *Two-page spread of hay wagon followed by herd of cows from near town of Ripen* in *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, p.315.

p.097a, *Man and woman walking with donkey carrying flasks in cradle* from *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, p.239.

p.098a, *Woman carrying two types of bags on shoulder stick*, from *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, p.402.

p.098b, *Woman selling beverage (probably barley beer) to passerby,* from *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, p.233.

p.099, *Fletcher and sword maker conversing with man with two pigskin flasks on back of donkey*, from *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, p.146.

p.100, *Family-scale fish salting operation with burning fish heads and bones in background*, from *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, p.233.

p.102, *Two mothers playing with child*, centre-right detail from *Visit to the Tenants*, Marten van Cleve (Antwerp 1524-1581), oil on panel c.1550–60. Courtesy Christie's in London website. <https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-6238421?ldp_breadcrumb=back&intObjectID=6238421&from=salessummary&lid=1>

p.103, *Father cleaning up after child's pottie*, lower left detail from *Visit to the Tenants*, Marten van Cleve (Antwerp 1524-1581), oil on panel c.1550–60, Courtesy Christie's in London website. <https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-6238421?ldp_breadcrumb=back&intObjectID=6238421&from=salessummary&lid=1>

p.104, *Satan escorting sinful nun to hell*, high-relief sculpture at Chartres Cathedral, France.<https://www.worldhistory.org/img/r/p/750x750/9322.jpg?v=1599111902>

p.105, *Bored-looking woman selling celery or leafy vegetables in market*, Tübinger Hausbuch, Md 2, Iatromathematisches Kalenderbuch. <http://idb.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/opendigi/Md2#p=82>

p.106b, *Scene from public market with full stalls and quotidian vendors on ground*, Tübinger Hausbuch, Md 2, Iatromathematisches Kalenderbuch. <http://idb.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/opendigi/Md2#p=61>

p.107b, *Femme donnant à manger à ses poules*, Ibn Butlân, Tacuinum sanitatis. Rhineland, 3rd quarter 15th century. Paris BNF, département des Manuscrits, Latin 9333, fol. 63.

p.108a, *Noble woman tests the exposed breast of a prospective wet nurse*, Aldobrandino of Siena, Le Régime du corps. France, N. (Lille?), 3rd quarter of the 13th century (perhaps c. 1285). British Library, Sloane 2435, f. 28v. <https://imgprx.livejournal.net/b097e0ff68d926fe36d3006daca8415901acb610/-Igp4BmN1e4wcZ_mdazmaEJx60PQGhnVMopelc1Zui9sYQc2buUiw2TRjw94mtQ8sqoLjolZC76N6gz3IJnzPGsS3ful7Jc21LJTMMfW9nPk3ei0S4CWme8HZTYe4wd3lMEIjXG60x9YY74o5PSbr1m5_6b26oQCk9cS0lYJ_3c>

p.108b, *Baby swaddled in cradle*, Tubinger Hausbuch, Md 2, Iatromathematisches Kalenderbuch. <http://idb.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/opendigi/Md2#p=111>

p.109a, *Man with basket of Leeks*, Fourteenth century northern Italian Medieval Health Handbook: *Tacuinum Sanitatis* (NY: George Braziller, 1976). <https://media.sciencephoto.com/c0/44/84/58/c0448458-800px-wm.jpg>

p.109c, *Man purging emetic while being comforted by woman*, Tacuinum Sanitatis, a 14th century Latin translation of an 11th century Arabic text of medicine and the natural sciences. *Tacuinum Sanitatis* is a valuable about ordinary life in the late middle ages that was directed to the educated population of the time. <https://i.pinimg.com/564x/a3/48/68/a34868c5b5039060130d58973d3e3012.jpg>

p.110, *Market vendors selling hats, saddle; seamstress inside stall*, Schachzabelbuch, Konrad von Ammenhausen, Hagenau 1467, Cod.poet.et.phil.fol.203r Handschrift Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart; Bildausschnitt. <https://dfg-viewer.de/show?tx_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=http%3A%2F%2Fdigital.wlb-stuttgart.de%2Fmets%2Furn%3Anbn%3Ade%3Absz%3A24-digibib-bsz3300528969&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=413&cHash=c1bff034573cd93f4f71bb2df0100cfd>

p.111a *Stall vendor selling finely made gloves and small belt purses*, Hortus sanitatis. Mainz, 1491, Titelblatt zum Kapitel *De lapidibus*.

p.111b, *Woman looking disconsolate*, Tubinger Hausbuch, Iatromathematisches Kalenderbuch. <http://idb.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/opendigi/Md2#p=250>

p.112 *Women bathing monks*, Knihovna Národního muzea v Praze; Praha; Česká republika, IV.B.24, (follow thumbnails to image f.78v, then click on page thumbnail). ('Monks in the bath'). Czech manuscript of the Hussite period. *Jenský kodex Antithesis Christi et Antichristi, 1490-1510*. <http://www.manuscriptorium.com/apps/index.php?direct=record&pid=AIPDIG-NMP___IV_B_24_____3TQMIOE-cs#search>. While the provenance of this image is not in doubt, it must be seen in the context of the anticlerical views found in many locales in Europe in the second half of the fifteenth century up to the open expression of dissent symbolised by Martin Luther nailing 95 theses to the church door in Württemberg in 1515. This image appeared in the *Jensky kodex* in support of a school of thought following the example of the reformer Jan Hus, John Hus, a Czech theologian and philosopher who became a Church reformer and the inspiration of Hussitism, a key predecessor to Protestantism, and a seminal figure in the Bohemian Reformation. Hus is considered to be one of the earliest the Church reformer. He was burned at the stake on 6 July 1415, almost exactly one century to the day before Martin Luther's appointment with the Württemberg church door. Hus's teachings had a strong influence, most immediately in the approval of a reformed Bohemian religious denomination. After Hus was executed, the followers of his religious teachings refused to elect another Catholic monarch and defeated five consecutive papal crusades between 1420 and 1431 in what became known as the Hussite Wars. Both the Bohemian and the Moravian populations remained majority Hussite until the 1620s, when a Protestant military defeat resulted in Habsburg dominion accompanied by the forced return to Catholicism.

The text of the *Jensky kodex* is written in a difficult to decipher early version of Czech, but a page-by-page examination of the painted illuminations reveals a clearly anticlerical point of view. For any who doubt, the image of the Pope being stuffed into the mouth of Hell on folio 80r, tiara and all, testifies to a fantasy considered worthy enough to pen a 154-page hand-painted and written manuscript on vellum. [Much the same can be said for folio 97v in Konrad von Ammenhausen's Schachzabelbuch, Cod.poet.et.phil.fol.97v, Haganau, 1467]. <https://dfg-viewer.de/show?tx_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=http%3A%2F%2Fdigital.wlb-stuttgart.de%2Fmets%2Furn%3Anbn%3Ade%3Absz%3A24-digibib-bsz3300528969&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=202&cHash=8108b053d06e1c1486afa9a2e1e41336> We do not know from the context and scanty interpretation of the text whether the salaciousness of the brothel image is based on an actual brothel catering to clergy in a Czech city in the 1480–1510 era, or is simply the product of a

vivid imagination and male-gaze ideation. We allow the image onto these pages because as the context shows, it is an example of public fantasies of the secret lives of the clergy that led to a century and half of revolt all over Europe. The first three books of François Rabelais penned between 1532 and 1546 amply illustrate the mindset in France with respect to the clergy's standing in the public eye.

p.113, Kitchen staff member pointing angrily as he speaks to attentive pie crust maker in busy seventeenth century palace or monastic kitchen. Provenance unrecorded.

p.114, *Man and woman printing documents with small letterpress*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band II. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg.<https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317b-11-r>

p.115, *Wagon navigating miry spot on road*, extracted from Jan Brueghel's A wooded landscape with travellers on a path, c. 1607, Courtesy of Christie's London. <https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-jan-breughel-i-a-wooded-landscape-5899667/?>

p.118, *Eustache Lefief as apprentice copyis*t, Goethe Universitätsbibliothek, Frankfurt, Mittelalterliche Handschriften, Die sieben weisen Meister, Ms. germ. qu. 12, 1471, [8] fol.2v. <https://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/msma/content/pageview/3654392>

p.120, *Thoughtless servant throwing contents of chamber pot on unsuspecting man below*, Konrad von Ammenhausen, Schachzabelbuch, Cod.poet.et.phil.fol. 285v, Haganau, 1467, Handschrift Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart; Bildausschnitt. <https://dfg-viewer.de/show?tx_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=http%3A%2F%2Fdigital.wlb-stuttgart.de%2Fmets%2Furn%3Anbn%3Ade%3Absz%3A24-digibib-bsz3300528969&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=578&cHash=01acb73a5f81afefb5270419dc7f4261>

p.122, *Man buying bolt of cloth*, Schachzabelbuch, Konrad von Ammenhausen, Hagenau 1467, Cod.poet.et.phil.fol.244r Handschrift Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart; Bildausschnitt. <https://dfg-viewer.de/show?tx_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=http%3A%2F%2Fdigital.wlb-stuttgart.de%2Fmets%2Furn%3Anbn%3Ade%3Absz%3A24-digibib-bsz3300528969&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=495&cHash=1c1d56d8843bdaa2108f2ab067b5d638>

p.123, *Cooper tightening bands around barrel as accompaniment to cooper's market cri*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band 1. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. <https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317b-86-r>

p.124, *Silversmith with wares in permanent market retail sales stall*, Hausbuch der Mendelschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, Band II. Nürnberg 1426–1549. Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg.<https://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317b-11-r>
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