

The Knight of the Flower

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Tel: 00 33 1 72 38 81 37

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The Knight of the Flower

This is *Gaston's* story,
it is the first volume of the trilogy :

"the Lord-Magicians"

comprising

"the Knight of the Flower",

"the Lady of Noble Love" and

"the Knight of the Boar"

by the same author.

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Preface to the French publication

Time and again, nations will disappear and civilisations will crumble, slowly enveloped by the ashes of time. But what really matters is the destiny of men, whether they have lived during the fallacious splendours of the centuries of apogee or otherwise having groped amongst the ruins of empires or their own families.

What really matters for each human being is the encounters he makes during his own existence. Homer in his *Odyssey*, Goethe in the *Wilhelm Meister*, the tales of the Knights of the Round Table, and so many other stories over time trying to show us how the young man, whether he be born prince or pauper, is accepted, guided, initiated by another man who is endowed with such mission on this Earth.

Accepted in which manner? Guided whither? Initiated into what? Is it only as Plutarch tells, of Alexander approaching his adversary, the wounded king Purus, fallen and vanquished on the battle field? He asked him what treatment he expected. When the defeated king replied: "As a King", Alexander offered his hand, invited him into his tent and gave him back his kingdom...

Indeed, yes, that is what it is about, and naturally, a lot more, in this strange and fascinating tale of "The Knight of the Flower". It is not surprising that the author chose to transport us back into the fourteenth century, because details and authentic descriptions of his adventure can only enchant our imagination in the most magical manner. Sometimes even the Machiavellian spirit of the Middle-Ages is present, when the struggle between light and darkness appears.

And then, we know full well that in principle, knighthood was something other than a pretext for vanities and to satisfy passions. We suspect that beyond the rites, there was, at least in its origins, the passing on of what is essential.

Thus, the message although veiled is nevertheless clear. The serf, the slave, trampling his whole life long in the maze of the metro's corridors, one day will meet, if it is written in his destiny, he who holding out his hand, will treat him as a King.

Pierre de Proyart

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Chapter 1:

Knighthood with a Grand Ceremony

The small peasant hut with its thatched roof was full of smoke as usual. The only openings were a door and a hole high up in the opposite wall which was blocked as soon as winter approached. There was no chimney and a fire burnt on the dry mud floor. The smoke worked its way out of the house very slowly through a hole in the roof, only after first smudging the inhabitants and then smoking the drying slices of pork and fish hanging from the ceiling.

In the hamlet only two or three houses were rich enough to have a chimney and tiled floor. Some serfs were not so poor, but Gaston's foster parents were amongst the poorest. They eked out their meagre living with much hardship, but this did not prevent them from clinging onto life and their modest belongings. The rare feasts, some days a little less weary than others, would bring a bit of joy thereby making their existence worthwhile, even desirable.

Our story begins one evening with the family huddled together around the small fire spreading its weak light. The old woman was brewing a mash of cereals in the cauldron. In winter, the fire pushed the cold out of the only room making up the house; but inside the house it was still dark: the smoke took a long time to wriggle its way through the small hole in the roof with the closed door and the filled-up hole in the wall. The old couple, the boy and their few chickens lived together, while in more fortunate hamlets there were partitions dividing the house into rooms for sheep, a pig, a cow, and even a room for the children if they were too many to sleep in the big family bed.

The old couple had a big bed, but Gaston slept on the floor, on a cowhide spread over straw. When the couple realised that they were unable to have a child, they adopted Gaston who was barely two months old. They bought him from gypsies who were obviously not his real parents because he didn't look at all like them.

"No doubt a stolen child," said Philippe after they had paid for him.

"So what?" replied Marthe, "with us he'll be in good hands. I shall bring him up like my own son."

They needed him to look after them in their old age, and even if their intentions were somewhat selfish, their affection for him was sincere. There was much tenderness in the ties linking the old couple to the charming child with his round face, hazel eyes and light brown hair which seemed to sparkle when the sun caressed the silky straight locks. A

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generously big mouth with lips not too thick, salient cheeks, and a straight nose were features which did not attract attention. The beauty lay in their harmony, just as the whole is more important than its details. His white complexion was not suitable for a serf but rather for a child of noble lineage. Philippe and Marthe were proud of the son whose face reflected such a pleasant character: neither too good, nor too bad, but rather even-natured and tolerant.

It was easy to see that Philippe, of robust stature, had been strong in his youth. His face, compared to Gaston's, was coarse although harmonious. The man, in spite of his exceptional animal strength, was able to express his emotions knowing all the while how to control them.

Marthe was of medium build with a round childish face. She was kind and gentle. A woman of limited intelligence, incapable of subtlety as well as nastiness, she was in the habit of listening to her husband as soon as things became too complicated for her. He reasoned in a simple and straightforward manner. Like most peasants he brought things down to their proper level, and avoided intellectual discussions which, as he would say, "led one nowhere."

In the house there were few objects: a cauldron on a tripod placed over the fire, a wooden tub to wash in, an old coffer, three woollen blankets, feather pillows, three stools, wooden bowls and some knives. A shelf fixed against the wall to keep the food out of the chickens' reach. As there was not enough room for a table, each one held his bowl with both hands to swallow the soup.

Gaston called his step parents "papa" and "mama" and they called him "my son" more often than "Gaston". There are families with blood ties and material wealth who have never known the peace and tenderness which our three friends were able to appreciate in spite of their poverty.

Like the other serfs, instead of buying their clothes, they made them themselves, and that was a lot of work. From flax and hemp, Marthe would weave coarse cloth from which she would cut out footwear and long shirts. From sheep wool she made hooded coats and wide dresses. They went barefoot in summer or wore clogs. They hardly ever wore cloth or leather. Marthe always covered her head with a bonnet, or a white linen head wrap or a hat. She would patch their clothes when they became worn out. At first sight, one would have thought them to be in rags; but that would have been a wrong impression. Although they were certainly poorly clad, and there was little to envy, they were well protected from bad weather and they filled their stomachs more often than one might have suspected.

Many serfs knew how to laugh and endured their modest conditions because they had learnt how to take advantage of the more important things in life: a warm meal in winter, a roof under which to sleep and companions with whom to share their joys and sorrows. They didn't ask for much more. For many generations they had learnt that their lord's life was not for them, and as Philippe would say to Gaston when one of their masters came by on their land while hunting: "They are not happier than us, my son. Riches never come alone. They always bring difficulties with them. Not the same as ours, that's the only difference."

"In what way?" Gaston asked the first time Philippe had spoken thus.

"We fear for our harvests, we dread disease, but if things go well, we are able to have a good night's rest. The wealthy are forever anxious. They do not always sleep at night, because they are afraid of conspiracies. And often they go to war without being

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sure of victory." Such was the father's explication.

The evening when our story begins, the conversation was about a major event due to take place the next day. "Our baron must be worried about Sire Dupuy attacking him," declared Philippe.

"Is there going to be a war?" exclaimed Gaston. He was overcome with excitement.

"I'd be less enthusiastic if I were you," said Philippe harshly although he rarely showed impatience towards the boy. In a softer tone he added: "If Sire Dupuy should lay siege to the castle, his army would destroy everything we have. Even burn down our house. And if we were not quick enough to take refuge in the castle, we would be killed."

The young lad gazed at Philippe in surprise.

"That is what war means," said Marthe flatly. "Fortunately for us our lord is the most powerful baron in all the land. He levies taxes upon us, that is true, but not too much, and he does protect us well."

The boy was overcome with shame and was angry with himself for having considered war as exciting. Philippe understood the lad and while putting a fatherly hand on Gaston's shoulder, he said: "Tomorrow several esquires will be knighted at the castle. Our army is getting bigger. Sire Dupuy, instead of daring to defy us had better prepare himself for an attack from our lord."

"That's how they try to reassure us," said Marthe. "I'd rather not think about it. Each day lived in peace, without hunger and sickness, is a blessing from the sky above."

If one had asked her: "What do you have more today than yesterday?" she would have replied, as many like her, that her gains consisted of good memories. All she desired was to be able to say on the day she died: "I lived well enough." Looking back into the past, she couldn't imagine that one could, day after day, acquire a kind of wealth which could benefit one only after death. She didn't like the priests' beautiful promises and dedicated her life to practical things. She wasn't entirely wrong. None of our three friends suspected that Gaston was going to discover that which one could obtain day after day and benefit from it daily, and especially after death. But let's not get ahead of our story...

"I have to go to the castle tomorrow," said Philippe after a short pause during which they ate their soup.

"To pay our taxes?" asked Gaston.

"Indeed," said Philippe: "four chickens and a dozen eggs."

"Let's hope that the chickens lay lots of eggs tonight," Marthe added with a smile.

"They have never let us down so far," said the old man.

"And here we give a lot less than the others do to their barons," said Marthe.

"May I come with you?" asked Gaston.

"Of course you may, my son," said the foster father reassuringly. "And if we have enough time we can watch the games and jousts which follow the knighting ceremony. You've never seen anything like that before."

The young boy's eyes lit up. "Oh, no. Never!"

"Now that you are twelve years old, you can appreciate it. You must go to sleep straight after supper. The road to the castle will seem very long for your little legs."

Gaston had great difficulty in falling asleep. He saw the castle which he knew so well. He imagined the wide fields at its entrance filled with a great crowd admiring the

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handsome knights as they charged each other in joust. During the rare moments he managed to find sleep, his dreams were as frightening as they were wonderful.

As soon as the sun was up the two men left Marthe. Gaston carried the basket containing the dozen eggs for the baron and some food for his father and himself. Philippe held two chickens in either hand by the legs. They stopped twice on the way to eat and rest.

The field in front of the castle was crowded. The fairground stall holders and merchants were putting the finishing touches to their temporary constructions; the former accompanied by their strange animals. Fortune tellers, jugglers, and fake magicians entertained a crowd of peasants which increased with the passing time. The merchants sold foodstuffs, cloths, and many a useful object like buttons which they had brought from the towns. The terrain allotted to these people was swarming with life.

A little further off, with all the seriousness of a military camp, stood the tents of the knights who were to take part in the jousts. Esquires busied themselves over the horses making them ready for the approaching contests while a knight here and there sat on a stool checking his equipment. The atmosphere of this place offered a striking contrast with that which reigned amongst the crowd. No one spoke because everybody was executing an important task while the people in the crowd were laughing loudly and calling out to each other; many having drunk more than was good for them.

Still further off, and in a place out of the way, a platform had been mounted, draped in brightly coloured sheets, and protected from the sun by a large canvas sheet serving as a roof. Soldiers were already posted around the platform while the last workers were hurriedly putting in the finishing touches. Behind the platform was an imposing portal, flanked on either side by a tower. This portal was the opening in a high wall hiding the moat surrounding the castle. The high wall ran for a few paces on either side before giving way to a wooden fence which didn't go all the way around the castle - and in any case it could hardly protect the castle. Gaston had always wondered what was the use of the fence, the towers and the portal. In front of the portal two guards brandished their halberds. Like all the soldiers they had a hauberk over which they wore a red surcoat. The swing doors of the portal were opened wide to allow a never-ending flow of peasants to pass. At times one would see the occasional knight amongst the serfs.

After crossing the outside portal, Philippe and Gaston stepped onto the drawbridge which passed over the moat full of water. This is where the three-metre thick wall, jugged with towers at strategic points, rose as the first serious defence line. The two towers framing the entrance appeared to be three times as high as the two towers on the outer side of the moat. There were guards everywhere. No doubt their presence served to calm the excited serfs; one felt compelled to behave with reserve when entering the lower courtyard.

While passing under the hearse Gaston shivered as he imagined it falling upon his head. It was in the lower courtyard that the serfs deposited chickens, eggs, hams, etc., on a wide table. Behind it a small, fat and bald man sat on a low chair. With his goose feather he wrote down what was being placed on the table while the steward dominated the scene from a high chair, checking the payments with a cold eye. Even in this courtyard there were soldiers to ensure that the queue of peasants remained orderly. The queue moved forward slowly, and this allowed Gaston to observe his surroundings.

Near the stables he saw the blacksmith, and a little further off was the well. His attention was attracted by the drawbridge which led to the upper courtyard, guarded by

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two soldiers, as serfs were not allowed to go there. At this place the wall was very high, and made up the second defence line. Invading the lower courtyard did not mean capturing the castle. The baron and his family lived in the upper courtyard tower which had only one real weakness; it didn't have a well. Although they did keep a large store of fresh water. The kitchen, the chapel, the new lodgings and the turrets built into the wall were all part of the upper courtyard buildings.

The peasant in front of Philippe put down twelve breads, four measures of oats and two hams. There were those who gave geese, some pigs, sheep, even a heifer. Gaston noticed that he belonged to the poorest class of serfs without feeling the slightest bit of jealousy. On the contrary, it gave him a feeling of satisfaction because his situation could only improve. With Philippe and Marthe for foster parents, he considered himself fortunate enough.

In the queue there was much chatter, and it was mainly about the knighting ceremony which was to take place in the upper courtyard. Eleven squires were going to be knighted. Gaston lent an eager ear to what the serfs near him were saying. He learnt that the evening before the future knights had confessed their sins and spent the night in prayer in the chapel where, on the alter, they had placed their swords. It was the ritual during which they meditated as a group.

The possibility of a war against Sire Dupuy encouraged the pious boost of the knights to be, and prevented the night's vigil from taking a less serious turn, as could well have happened with a long evening spent amongst happy companions in arms. Early that morning the postulants had partaken of Christ's body, an act of great importance at a time when communions were rather infrequent. Then, on leaving the chapel, they made their way to the main tower where the court of honour was to be found. Just as the future knights left the chapel, the audience let out a shout which could be heard in the upper as well as the lower courtyard.

"May I go and see?" Gaston asked Philippe.

"If the guards will let you," answered Philippe. He added with a fatherly smile: "We'll meet in front of the outer fence."

"Oh, thank you!" exclaimed the boy, and with a joyful leap he left the queue of lackadaisical peasants to gain the upper courtyard. The guards blocked his passage in front of the drawbridge.

"I want to watch the ceremony," said Gaston in his usual naive way.

"Terribly sorry," said one of the guards, "but you're not allowed to. Don't you know that there'll be jousting in the field very soon. If I were you I'd go there right away, otherwise you mightn't get to see very much. Just look at the crowd over there already!"

"I'll go later," Gaston insisted. His begging tone and the imploring look on his face made the two soldiers smile.

One of them softened the refusal. "I wouldn't even be allowed to let my own son into the upper courtyard. Forget it and hurry to the field to make sure you get a good spot."

A powerful horse approached the drawbridge mounted by a knight who, instead of wearing a helmet, wore a bassinet which left his head uncovered. His tanned face reflected goodness and courage. The mesh of his hauberk sparkled where it wasn't hidden by the green surcoat encrusted with a gold Maltese cross.

He was holding a lance in his right hand and the horse's reins in the other. A shield

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bearing the same coat of arms as the surcoat hung from the left side of the saddle. A metal plate, crowned with a horn, protected the horse's head making it look like a unicorn, while a large green cloth covered the animal's back and flanks. Gaston, marvelling at this vision, forgot everything else and stood there on the drawbridge, mouth wide open, staring at the splendid apparition.

"How now, young lad," laughed the knight. "Are you refusing me access to the upper courtyard?" The two guards burst out laughing. They knew the knight very well. His reputation of wisdom and courage went way beyond his baron's lands.

Unable to understand the joke, the boy stuttered: "Oh no, not you Sire. It is I who may not enter." The soldiers laughed all the more as the poor boy's confusion increased.

"That'll do," said the knight after a short while. "Take my horse by the bridle and lead me to the court of honour."

Gaston was paralysed. This magnificent knight was asking him, a poor serf, to render him a service! Taking hold of himself, he seized the bridle and, with a proud and determined march, led the horse across the drawbridge while the soldiers looked on in surprised amusement. As soon as they were in the upper courtyard, the noble warrior thanked the boy and abruptly abandoned him while Gaston was still trying to stutter his gratitude.

The handing over of the arms ceremony was about to begin. All eyes were turned to the baron who was to do the knighting. Nobody noticed the peasant boy who approached the court of honour without embarrassment, which only excessive vanity or naivety can allow. He had forgotten his modest rank, moved slowly, as if in a dream, fascinated by the wonderful spectacle which was unfolding before his eyes, fixing them upon the bishop and the baron.

With his impressive mitre, a long and sumptuous robe with many gold threads, his jewellery shining in the sun, his hands covered with rings, the big golden cross hanging from his neck, the bishop made a deep impression upon the young boy who would have found him perfect had it not been for the arrogance in his eyes.

The baron raised his hand and the conversations ended abruptly. Several seconds of silence and stillness followed; everyone was filled with respect for this grave and solemn moment. A second hand signal, and the eleven candidates presented themselves in great array. The bishop blessed each sword before giving it to the baron, who put it into the sheath strapped around the waist of each knight to be. Immediately afterwards the baron handed over the stirrups.

Gaston noticed that only one of the fortunate candidates seemed to be rich enough to possess golden stirrups. He watched his assistants as they finished dressing the new knight with his hauberk and helmet and passed the shield strap over his neck. The warrior's face displeased the young lad who believed it reflected both cruelty and disdain. His red surcoat was adorned by a black boar on the chest; and the shield displayed the same coat of arms of which neither the colours, nor the image, pleased Gaston. Nevertheless, in spite of an instinctive aversion for the new knight, Gaston was unable to take his eyes off him.

Upon receiving his armoury, the candidate pronounced the traditional oath at the bishop's request. Gaston was near enough to be able to hear the words far too beautiful to be uttered by a voice vibrating with the same cruelty and arrogance that Gaston could distinguish in the face: "Very holy Lord, all powerful Father, you who have permitted on the earth the use of the sword to reprimand the malice of the wicked and to defend

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justice, who, for the people's protection, desired to constitute the order of chivalry, do, in disposing his heart for the good, that your servant who is here should never use this sword or another, to unjustly wrong someone, but that he should always use it to defend justice and the truth."

The ceremony, comprising of a prayer and the handing over of the equipment, ended as piously as methodically with a punch given by the baron on the bottom of the neck, which could have unbalanced the man in the red surcoat had he not been soundly kneeling. It was at this precise moment that he became a knight, proud of all his rights, but subject to all the duties that the order entailed. Gaston lost sight of the new knight as he disappeared into the crowd and he directed his attention to the knighting of the next candidate.

He followed the ceremony for each candidate and the spectacle would have been of an unforgettable splendour but for the red knight with the black boar, for he did not deserve to be among the other knights. Even though he was the tallest, the best built and, no doubt, the most seductive in the eyes of the ladies, he had sullied the ceremony by his mere presence. How could a man so cruel and so vain be allowed to enter the noble order of chivalry?

These emotions came from deep down inside Gaston who had never felt such violent and negative feelings before, and he was surprised to discover that he could hate so much. Jealousy tortured him. Because his humble origins excluded him from their fellowship, he demanded that knights be like gods and considered himself more apt to respect their vows than the man in the red surcoat.

He went away to find Philippe at the palisade. His enthusiasm had left him giving way to frustration. Knighthood had always been an institute of perfection to him, and now he was profoundly disappointed.

"Don't you feel well?" asked his stepfather. And all he got for an answer was a wry smile. "What's the matter?"

"I thought that knights were noble."

"Don't torment yourself." Philippe put a tender arm around the boy's shoulders. "Their duty is to command soldiers in war, protect ladies' honour and defend their lords. Look upon them as your protectors as they are the first to risk their lives, not only to defend the baron's wealth, but us as well, the serfs who depend on the baron. In any case, whether you are baron, knight, priest, merchant or peasant, you are no more than a man. We are no less noble than them, only poorer, that's all. Once you have understood that, life will have fewer disappointments for you."

They slowly walked away from the castle. "But tell me. What happened? Did a knight insult you because you, a peasant boy, were among the important people?"

"Oh no," replied Gaston emphatically. "It was thanks to a noble knight that I was able to watch the ceremony."

"What then, my son, is the problem?"

"One of the new knights seemed to me to be wicked."

"What did he do?"

"Nothing."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing."

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"So where's the problem?" said Philippe raising his hands to the sky.

"His face, and even his voice, were full of wickedness."

"Don't be like the fortune tellers who pretend to read your character, and even your destiny, from your face," protested the old serf.

"And yet," murmured the boy, "in his case they wouldn't be wrong."

Philippe ended the discussion with: "Come along. It's a beautiful day. Marthe doesn't expect us home before night fall. Let's go watch the games, maybe they'll bring back your smile."

Gaston nodded in agreement and they mingled with the boisterous crowd. A knighting ceremony, especially when it concerned several candidates, was followed by revelry lasting several days and began, as soon as the ceremony was over, by jousts which allowed the new knights to exhibit their skills.

No sooner had they reached the area reserved for the serfs in front of the platform, than Philippe and Gaston heard the horns blowing. The heralds were proclaiming the arrival of the baron and his escort, important men and ladies in their most beautiful dresses, who occupied the seats of honour. Gaston noticed the knight in green and gold escorting the baroness and her two daughters, one of whom seemed to be younger than himself. The sight of this noble man warmed the boy's heart who would have gladly waved his hand if only the knight were to look his way. But this did not happen and, in his childish heart, Gaston was disappointed.

In the middle of the platform, on the seat of honour, sat the baron. On his right sat his wife and daughters. On his left were the bishop and the knight in green and gold. Once again the heralds brought their horns to their lips announcing the beginning of the games. Then merchants and stallholders lost their last customers as everyone, or almost, hurried to see the spectacle. Around the tents of those who were to participate in the jousts there was much anxious activity.

The quintains - as were called the dummies resembling warriors pitched on poles and equipped with a sturdy shield - were arrayed in front of the spectators. The art in this game was to pierce the quintain in the centre of its shield with the first thrust of the lance. Otherwise, as the quintain was fixed to a rotating pole, it would spin violently; and with its two arms having heavy cudgels for hands, the inept knight who did not aim correctly would receive a mighty clout on his neck or back and would fall from his horse in shame and sorrow.

The knight in red and black, the only one to be wearing gold spurs, had the privilege of trying the first feat. Passing before the baron, he saluted him from his horse amidst the crowd's applause, then he dismounted to get back onto his horse with a single jump and without stirrups, which was quite a feat, considering the weight of his armour. The crowd acclaimed this fine display of prowess. Then, lowering his ashwood lance with a steel point, he dashed his horse towards one of the quintains.

Gaston, whose father had perched him upon his shoulders so that he could see better, could not help himself from applauding the elegance with which the detested knight charged upon the quintain. His aversion suddenly took hold of him again and he wished with all his might that the quintain would swing around and throw the proud knight to the ground. Nothing of the sort happened and Gaston had to go along with the crowd's enthusiasm: the "villain" had struck right.

"And without stirrups!" remarked several of the onlookers.

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"With knights of his quality," added others, "we have nothing to fear of Sire Dupuy."

The games also served the purpose of reassuring the serfs who paid their levies without protest, like happy taxpayers! The other new knights showed what they had learnt during their apprenticeship as esquires. Not one of them dared to imitate the exploit of mounting his horse in a single leap without stirrups.

After these initial exercises the jousts took place and the knight in green and gold triumphed over all his adversaries. He charged at such speed and struck his adversaries' shields so forcibly that he knocked them off their horses. In the heat of the combat the crowd withheld its cries. One could only perceive the sound of hooves on the grass, the crashing of shields and the cracking sound of wooden lances breaking. Some of the participants had brought more than a dozen lances. There was a growing tendency to regulate tournaments. At one castle, only eight lances were allowed per combat, at another the number was reduced to three. It all depended on the baron's discretion.

When evening came, the knight in green and gold was declared the winner for being the only one still on his horse after having affronted all those who had defied him. His prizes consisted of two sturdy horses, some money, and a falcon, not to mention the esteem of the ladies and the glorious honour of being chosen by the baroness whose colours he would be permitted to bear during some future tournament. Gaston admired the modesty with which his hero accepted all these favours.

In the meantime the other knights bandaged their injuries while their horses were attended to. Thereafter the participants put on their most beautiful clothes before going to eat, drink and dance around the tables set up in the upper courtyard, where they also enjoyed the jugglers' tricks and jokes.

The multitude of peasants went back to join the merchants and the funfair in search of the same kind of distractions, although somewhat less refined. As soon as his favourite knight was consecrated hero of the day, Gaston made his way back to his thatched hut with Philippe. He told himself that he would also like to be handsome, strong and noble. Upon their return Marthe had to listen to the young boy tell the tale of the day's happenings. He was still steeped in the euphoria of what he had lived and seen.

"I'm going to be a knight," he stated with a seriousness that only his innocence could explain. "And I'll be just like today's victor. In any case, he's my friend because he let me see the knighting ceremony."

Marthe laughed heartily. "You must be joking! He's already forgotten you."

"But I," replied the boy deeply hurt, "shall never forget him."

A sign of disapproval from her husband stopped her from teasing the boy. "Let him dream," whispered Philippe. "With time he'll understand that a serf's life consists of tilling the land and leaving to others the task of fulfilling other duties."

But he had not understood the ray of hope that had sparkled in the child of twelve. He did not realise that no one could prevent him from embarking upon a destiny that even the hero in green and gold would envy. It was a serf of unknown origin, poor and exhausted by the emotions experienced during the day, who went to sleep that night and who would wake up years later as a knight of the highest order...

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