

The Demoiselle d'Ys

By Robert W. Chambers

*Mais je croy que je
Suis descendu on puiz
Tenebreux onquel disoit
Heraclytus estre Verité cachée.*

*There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, for which I
know not:*

*The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the
way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.*

I

The utter desolation of the scene began to have its effect; I sat down to face the situation and, if possible, recall to mind some landmark which might aid me in extricating myself from my present position. If I could only find the ocean again all would be clear, for I knew one could see the island of Groix from the cliffs.

I laid down my gun, and kneeling behind a rock lighted my pipe. Then I looked at my watch. It was nearly four o'clock. I might have wandered far from Kerselec since daybreak.

Standing the day before on the cliffs below Kerselec with Goulven, looking out over the sombre moors among which I had now lost my way, these downs had appeared to me level as a meadow, stretching to the horizon, and although I knew how deceptive is distance, I could not realize that what from Kerselec seemed to be mere grassy hollows were great valleys covered with gorse and heather, and what looked like scattered boulders were in reality enormous cliffs of granite.

"It's a bad place for a stranger," old Goulven had said; "you'd better take a guide;" and I had replied, "I shall not lose myself." Now I knew that I had lost myself, as I sat there smoking, with the sea-wind blowing in my face. On every side stretched the moorland, covered with flowering gorse and heath and granite boulders. There was not a tree in sight, much less a house. After a while, I picked up the gun, and turning my back on the sun tramped on again.

There was little use in following any of the brawling streams which every now and then crossed my path, for, instead of flowing into the sea, they ran inland to reedy pools in the hollows of the moors. I had followed several, but they all led me to swamps or silent little ponds from which the snipe rose peeping and wheeled away in an ecstasy of fright. I began to feel fatigued, and the gun galled my shoulder in spite of the double pads. The sun sank lower and lower, shining level across yellow gorse and the moorland pools.

As I walked my own gigantic shadow led me on, seeming to lengthen at every step. The gorse scraped against my leggings, crackled beneath my feet, showering the brown earth with blossoms, and the brake bowed and billowed along my path. From tufts of heath rabbits scurried away through the bracken, and among the swamp grass I heard the wild duck's drowsy quack. Once a fox stole across my path, and again, as I stooped to drink at a hurrying rill, a heron flapped heavily from the reeds beside me. I turned to look at the sun. It seemed to touch the

edges of the plain. When at last I decided that it was useless to go on, and that I must make up my mind to spend at least one night on the moors, I threw myself down thoroughly fagged out. The evening sunlight slanted warm across my body, but the sea-winds began to rise, and I felt a chill strike through me from my wet shooting-boots. High overhead gulls were wheeling and tossing like bits of white paper; from some distant marsh a solitary curlew called. Little by little the sun sank into the plain, and the zenith flushed with the after-glow. I watched the sky change from palest gold to pink and then to smouldering fire. Clouds of midges danced above me, and high in the calm air a bat dipped and soared. My eyelids began to droop. Then as I shook off the drowsiness a sudden crash among the bracken roused me. I raised my eyes. A great bird hung quivering in the air above my face. For an instant I stared, incapable of motion; then something leaped past me in the ferns and the bird rose, wheeled, and pitched headlong into the brake.

I was on my feet in an instant peering through the gorse. There came the sound of a struggle from a bunch of heather close by, and then all was quiet. I stepped forward, my gun poised, but when I came to the heather the gun fell under my arm again, and I stood motionless in silent astonishment. A dead hare lay on the ground, and on the hare stood a magnificent falcon, one talon buried in the creature's neck, the other planted firmly on its limp flank. But what astonished me, was not the mere sight of a falcon sitting upon its prey. I had seen that more than once. It was that the falcon was fitted with a sort of leash about both talons, and from the leash hung a round bit of metal like a sleigh-bell. The bird turned its fierce yellow eyes on me, and then stooped and struck its curved beak into the quarry. At the same instant hurried steps sounded among the heather, and a girl sprang into the covert in front. Without a glance at me she walked up to the falcon, and passing her gloved hand under its breast, raised it from the quarry. Then she deftly slipped a small hood over the bird's head, and holding it out on her gauntlet, stooped and picked up the hare.

She passed a cord about the animal's legs and fastened the end of the thong to her girdle. Then she started to retrace her steps through the covert. As she passed me I raised my cap and she acknowledged my presence with a scarcely perceptible inclination. I had been so astonished, so lost in admiration of the scene before my eyes, that it had not occurred to me that here was my salvation. But as she moved away I recollected that unless I wanted to sleep on a windy moor that night I had better recover my speech without delay. At my first word she hesitated, and as I stepped before her I thought a look of fear came into her beautiful eyes. But as I humbly explained my unpleasant plight, her face flushed and she looked at me in wonder.

"Surely you did not come from Kerselec!" she repeated.

Her sweet voice had no trace of the Breton accent nor of any accent which I knew, and yet there was something in it I seemed to have heard before, something quaint and indefinable, like the theme of an old song.

I explained that I was an American, unacquainted with Finistère, shooting there for my own amusement.

"An American," she repeated in the same quaint musical tones. "I have never before seen an American."

For a moment she stood silent, then looking at me she said: "If you should walk all night you could not reach Kerselec now, even if you had a guide."

This was pleasant news.

"But," I began, "if I could only find a peasant's hut where I might get something to eat, and shelter."

The falcon on her wrist fluttered and shook its head. The girl smoothed its glossy back and glanced at me.

“Look around,” she said gently. “Can you see the end of these moors? Look, north, south, east, west. Can you see anything but moorland and bracken?”

“No,” I said.

“The moor is wild and desolate. It is easy to enter, but sometimes they who enter never leave it. There are no peasants’ huts here.”

“Well,” I said “if you will tell me in which direction Kerselec lies, tomorrow it will take me no longer to go back than it has to come.”

She looked at me again with an expression almost like pity.

“Ah,” she said, “to come is easy and takes hours; to go is different—and may take centuries.”

I stared at her in amazement but decided that I had misunderstood her. Then before I had time to speak she drew a whistle from her belt and sounded it.

“Sit down and rest,” she said to me; “you have come a long distance and are tired.”

She gathered up her pleated skirts and motioning me to follow picked her dainty way through the gorse to a flat rock among the ferns.

“They will be here directly,” she said, and taking a seat at one end of the rock invited me to sit down on the other edge. The after-glow was beginning to fade in the sky and a single star twinkled faintly through the rosy haze. A long wavering triangle of water-fowl drifted southward over our heads and from the swamps around plover were calling.

“They are very beautiful—these moors,” she said quietly.

“Beautiful, but cruel to strangers.” I answered.

“Beautiful and cruel,” she repeated dreamily, “beautiful and cruel.”

“Like a woman,” I said stupidly.

“Oh,” she cried with a little catch in her breath and looked at me. Her dark eyes met mine and I thought she seemed angry or frightened.

“Like a woman,” she repeated under her breath, “how cruel to say so!” Then after a pause, as though speaking aloud to herself, “how cruel for him to say that.”

I don’t know what sort of an apology I offered for my inane, though harmless speech, but I know that she seemed so troubled about it that I began to think I had said something very dreadful without knowing it, and remembered with horror the pitfalls and snares which the French language sets for foreigners. While I was trying to imagine what I might have said, a sound of voices came across the moor and the girl rose to her feet.

“No,” she said, with a trace of a smile on her pale face, “I will not accept your apologies, Monsieur, but I must prove you wrong and that shall be my revenge. Look. Here come Hastur and Raoul.”

Two men loomed up in the twilight. One had a sack across his shoulders and the other carried a hoop before him as a waiter carries a tray. The hoop was fastened with straps to his shoulders and around the edge of the cirler sat three hooded falcons fitted with tinkling bells. The girl stepped up to the falconer, and with a quick turn of her wrist transferred her falcon to the hoop where it quickly sidled off and nestled among its mates who shook their hooded heads and ruffled their feathers till the belled jesses tinkled again. The other man stepped forward and bowing respectfully took up the hare and dropped it into the game-sack.

“These are my piqueurs,” said the girl turning to me with a gentle dignity. “Raoul is a good fauconnier and I shall some day make him grand veneur. Hastur is incomparable.”

The two silent men saluted me respectfully.

“Did I not tell you, Monsieur, that I should prove you wrong?” she continued. “This then is my revenge, that you do me the courtesy of accepting food and shelter at my own house.”

Before I could answer she spoke to the falconers who started instantly across the heath, and with a gracious gesture to me she followed. I don’t know whether I made her understand how profoundly grateful I felt, but she seemed pleased to listen, as we walked over the dewy heather.

“Are you not very tired?” she asked.

I had clean forgotten my fatigue in her presence and I told her so.

“Don’t you think your gallantry is a little old-fashioned,” she said; and when I looked confused and humbled, she added quietly, “Oh, I like it, I like everything old-fashioned, and it is delightful to hear you say such pretty things.”

The moorland around us was very still now under its ghostly sheet of mist. The plover had ceased their calling; the crickets and all the little creatures of the fields were silent as we passed, yet it seemed to me as if I could hear them beginning again far behind us. Well in advance the two tall falconers strode across the heather and the faint jingling of the hawk’s bells came to our ears in distant murmuring chimes.

Suddenly a splendid hound dashed out of the mist in front, followed by another and another until half a dozen or more were bounding and leaping around the girl beside me. She caressed and quieted them with her gloved hand, speaking to them in quaint terms which I remembered to have seen in old French manuscripts.

Then the falcons on the circlet borne by the falconer ahead began to beat their wings and scream, and from somewhere out of sight the notes of a hunting-horn floated across the moor. The hounds sprang away before us and vanished in the twilight, the falcons flapped and squealed upon their perch and the girl taking up the song of the horn began to hum. Clear and mellow her voice sounded in the night air.

“Chasseur, chasseur, chassez encore,
Quittez Rosette et Jeanneton,
Tonton, tonton, tontaine, tonton,
Ou, pour, rabattre, dès l’aurore,
Que les Amours soient de planton,
Tonton, tontaine, tonton.”

As I listened to her lovely voice a gray mass which rapidly grew more distinct loomed up in front, and the horn rang out joyously through the tumult of the hounds and falcons. A torch glimmered at a gate, a light streamed through an opening door, and we stepped upon a wooden bridge which trembled under our feet and rose creaking and straining behind us as we passed over the moat and into a small stone court, walled on every side. From an open doorway a man came and bending in salutation presented a cup to the girl beside me. She took the cup and touched it with her lips, then lowering it turned to me and said in a low voice, “I bid you welcome.”

At that moment one of the falconers came with another cup, but before handing it to me, presented it to the girl, who tasted it. The falconer made a gesture to receive it, but she hesitated a moment and then stepping forward offered me the cup with her own hands. I felt this to be an act of extraordinary graciousness, but hardly knew what was expected of me, and did not raise it to my lips at once. The girl flushed crimson. I saw that I must act quickly.

“Mademoiselle,” I faltered, “a stranger whom you have saved from dangers he may never realize, empties this cup to the gentlest and loveliest hostess of France.”

“In His name,” she murmured, crossing herself as I drained the cup. Then stepping into the doorway she turned to me with a pretty gesture and taking my hand in hers, led me into the house, saying again and again: “You are very welcome, indeed you are welcome to the Château d’Ys.”

II

I awoke next morning with the music of the horn in my ears, and leaping out of the ancient bed, went to a curtained window where the sunlight filtered through little deep-set panes. The horn ceased as I looked into the court below.

A man who might have been brother to the two falconers of the night before stood in the midst of a pack of hounds. A curved horn was strapped over his back, and in his hand he held a long-lashed whip. The dogs whined and yelped, dancing around him in anticipation; there was the stamp of horses too in the walled yard.

“Mount!” cried a voice in Breton, and with a clatter of hoofs the two falconers, with falcons upon their wrists, rode into the courtyard among the hounds. Then I heard another voice which sent the blood throbbing through my heart: “Piriou Louis, hunt the hounds well and spare neither spur nor whip. Thou Raoul and thou Gaston, see that the *epervier* does not prove himself *niais*, and if it be best in your judgment, *faites courtoisie à l’oiseau*. *Jardiner un oiseau* like the *mué* there on Hastur’s wrist is not difficult, but thou, Raoul, mayest not find it so simple to govern that *hagard*. Twice last week he foamed *au vif* and lost the *beccade* although he is used to the *leurre*. The bird acts like a stupid *branchier*. *Paître un hagard n’est pas si facile*.”

Was I dreaming? The old language of falconry which I had read in yellow manuscripts—the old forgotten French of the middle ages was sounding in my ears while the hounds bayed and the hawk’s bells tinkled accompaniment to the stamping horses. She spoke again in the sweet forgotten language:

“If you would rather attach the *longe* and leave thy *hagard au bloc*, Raoul, I shall say nothing; for it were a pity to spoil so fair a day’s sport with an ill-trained *sors*. *Essimer abaisser*,—it is possibly the best way. *Ça lui donnera des reins*. I was perhaps hasty with the bird. It takes time to pass *à la filière* and the exercises *d’escap*.”

Then the falconer Raoul bowed in his stirrups and replied: “If it be the pleasure of Mademoiselle, I shall keep the hawk.”

“It is my wish,” she answered. “Falconry I know, but you have yet to give me many a lesson in *Autourserie*, my poor Raoul. Sieur Piriou Louis, mount!”

The huntsman sprang into an archway and in an instant returned, mounted upon a strong black horse, followed by a piqueur also mounted.

“Ah!” she cried joyously, “speed Glemarec René! speed! speed all! Sound thy horn Sieur Piriou!”

The silvery music of the hunting-horn filled the courtyard, the hounds sprang through the gateway and galloping hoof-beats plunged out of the paved court; loud on the drawbridge, suddenly muffled, then lost in the heather and bracken of the moors. Distant and more distant sounded the horn, until it became so faint that the sudden carol of a soaring lark drowned it in my ears. I heard the voice below responding to some call from within the house.

“I do not regret the chase, I will go another time. Courtesy to the stranger, Pelagie, remember!”

And a feeble voice came quavering from within the house, "*Courtoisie.*"

I stripped, and rubbed myself from head to foot in the huge earthen basin of icy water which stood upon the stone floor at the foot of my bed. Then I looked about for my clothes. They were gone, but on a settle near the door lay a heap of garments which I inspected with astonishment. As my clothes had vanished I was compelled to attire myself in the costume which had evidently been placed there for me to wear while my own clothes dried. Everything was there, cap, shoes, and hunting doublet of silvery gray homespun; but the close-fitting costume and seamless shoes belonged to another century, and I remembered the strange costumes of the three falconers in the courtyard. I was sure that it was not the modern dress of any portion of France or Brittany; but not until I was dressed and stood before a mirror between the windows did I realize that I was clothed much more like a young huntsman of the middle ages than like a Breton of that day. I hesitated and picked up the cap. Should I go down and present myself in that strange guise? There seemed to be no help for it, my own clothes were gone and there was no bell in the ancient chamber to call a servant, so I contented myself with removing a short hawk's feather from the cap, and opening the door went downstairs.

By the fireplace in the large room at the foot of the stairs an old Breton woman sat spinning with a distaff. She looked up at me when I appeared, and smiling frankly, wished me health in the Breton language, to which I laughingly replied in French. At the same moment my hostess appeared and returned my salutation with a grace and dignity that sent a thrill to my heart. Her lovely head with its dark curly hair was crowned with a head-dress which set all doubts as to the epoch of my own costume at rest. Her slender figure was exquisitely set off in the homespun hunting-gown edged with silver, and on her gauntlet-covered wrist she bore one of her petted hawks. With perfect simplicity she took my hand and led me into the garden in the court, and seating herself before a table invited me very sweetly to sit beside her. Then she asked me in her soft quaint accent how I had passed the night and whether I was very much inconvenienced by wearing the clothes which old Pelagie had put there for me while I slept. I looked at my own clothes and shoes, drying in the sun by the garden-wall, and hated them. What horrors they were compared with the graceful costume which I now wore! I told her this laughing, but she agreed with me very seriously.

"We will throw them away," she said in a quiet voice. In my astonishment I attempted to explain that I not only could not think of accepting clothes from anybody, although for all I knew it might be the custom of hospitality in that part of the country, but that I should cut an impossible figure if I returned to France clothed as I was then.

She laughed and tossed her pretty head, saying something in old French which I did not understand, and the Pelagie trotted out with a tray on which stood two bowls of milk, a loaf of white bread, fruit, a platter of honeycomb, and a flagon of deep red wine. "You see I have not yet broken my fast because I wished you to eat with me. But I am very hungry." she smiled.

"I would rather die than forget one word of what you have said!" I blurred out while my cheeks burned. "She will think me mad," I added to myself, but she turned to me with sparkling eyes.

"Ah!" she murmured. "Then Monsieur knows all that there is of chivalry—"

She crossed herself and broke bread—I sat and watched her white hands, not daring to raise my eyes to hers.

"Will you not eat," she asked; "why do you look so troubled?"

Ah, why? I knew it now. I knew I would give my life to touch with my lips those rosy palms I understood now that from the moment when I looked into her dark eyes there on the moor last night I had loved her. My great and sudden passion held me speechless.

“Are you ill at ease?” she asked again.

Then like a man who pronounces his own doom I answered in a low voice: “Yes, I am ill at ease for love of you.” And as she did not stir nor answer, the same power moved my lips in spite of me and I said, “I, who am unworthy of the lightest of your thoughts, I who abuse hospitality and repay your gently courtesy with bold presumption, I love you.

She leaned her head upon her hands, and answered softly, “I love you. Your words are very dear to me. I love you.”

“Then I shall win you.”

“Win me,” she replied.

But all the time I had been sitting silent, my face turned toward her. She also silent, her sweet face resting on her upturned palm, sat facing me, and as her eyes looked into mine, I knew that neither she nor I had spoken human speech; but I knew that her soul had answered mine, and I drew myself up feeling youth and joyous love coursing through every vein. She, with a bright color in her lovely face, seemed as one awakened from a dream, and her eyes sought mine with a questioning glance which made me tremble with delight. We broke our fast, speaking of ourselves. I told her my name and she told me hers, the Demoiselle Jeanne d’Ys.

She spoke of her father and mother’s death, and how the nineteen of her years had been passed in the little fortified farm alone with her nurse Pelagie. Glemarec Renè the piqueur, and the four falconers, Raoul, Gaston, Hastur, and the Sieur Piriou Louis, who had served her father. She had never been outside the moorland—never even had seen a human soul before, except the falconers and Pelagie. She did not know how she had heard of Kerselec; perhaps the falconers had spoken of it. She knew the legends of Loup Garou and Jeanne la Flamme from her nurse Pelagie. She embroidered and spun flax. Her hawks and hounds were her only distraction. When she had met me there on the moor she had been so frightened that she almost dropped at the sound of my voice. She had, it was true, seen ships at sea from the cliffs, but as far as the eye could reach the moors over which she galloped were destitute of any sign of human life. There was a legend which old Pelagie told, how anybody once lost in the unexplored moorland might never return, because the moors were enchanted. She did not know whether it was true, she never had thought about it until she met me. She did not know whether the falconers had even been outside or whether they could go if they would. The books in the house which Pelagie the nurse had taught her to read were hundreds of years old.

All this she told me with a sweet seriousness seldom seen in any one but children. My own name she found easy to pronounce and insisted, because my first name was Philip, I must have French blood in me. She did not seem curious to learn anything about the outside world, and I thought perhaps she considered it had forfeited her interest and respect from the stories of her nurse.

We were still sitting at the table and she was throwing grapes to the small field birds which came fearlessly to our very feet.

I began to speak in a vague way of going, but she would not hear of it, and before I knew it I had promised to stay a week and hunt with hawk and hound in their company. I also obtained permission to come again from Kerselec and visit her after my return.

“Why,” she said innocently, “I do not know what I should do if you never came back;” and I, knowing that I had no right to awaken her with the sudden shock which the avowal of my own love would bring to her, sat silent, hardly daring to breathe.

“You will come very often?” she asked.

“Very often,” I said.

“Every day?”

“Every day.”

“Oh,” she sighed, “I am very happy—come and see my hawks.”

She rose and took my hand again with a childlike innocence of possession, and we walked through the garden and fruit trees to a grassy lawn which was bordered by a brook. Over the lawn were scattered fifteen or twenty stumps of trees—partially imbedded in the grass—and upon all of these except two sat falcons. They were attached to the stumps by thongs which were in turn fastened with steel rivets to their legs just above the talons. A little stream of pure spring water flowed in a winding course within easy distance of each perch.

The birds set up a clamor when the girl appeared, but she went from one to another caressing some, taking others for an instant upon her wrist, or stooping to adjust their jesses.

“Are they not pretty?” she said. “See, here is a falcon-gentil. We call it ‘ignoble,’ because it takes the quarry in direct chase. This is a blue falcon. In falconry we call it ‘noble’ because it rises over the quarry, and wheeling, drops upon it from above. This white bird is a gerfalcon from the north. It is also ‘noble!’ Here is a merlin, and this tiercelet is a falcon-heroner.”

I asked her how she had learned the old language of falconry. She did not remember, but thought her father must have taught it to her when she was very young.

Then she led me away and showed me the young falcons still in the nest. “They are termed *niais* in falconry,” she explained. “A *branchier* is the young bird which is just able to leave the nest and hop from branch to branch. A young bird which has not yet moulted is called a *sors*, and a *mué* is a hawk which has moulted in captivity. When we catch a wild falcon which has changed its plumage we term it a *hagard*. Raoul first taught me to dress a falcon. Shall I teach you how it is done?”

She seated herself on the bank of the stream among the falcons and I threw myself at her feet to listen.

Then the Demoiselle d’Ys held up one rosy-tipped finger and began very gravely,

“First one must catch the falcon.”

“I am caught,” I answered.

She laughed very prettily and told me my *dressage* would perhaps be difficult as I was noble.

“I am already tamed,” I replied; “jessed and belled.”

She laughed, delighted. “Oh, my brave falcon; then you will return at my call?”

“I am yours,” I answered gravely.

She sat silent for a moment. Then the color heightened in her cheeks and she held up her finger again saying, “Listen; I wish to speak of falconry—”

“I listen, Countess Jeanne d’Ys.”

But again she fell into the reverie, and her eyes seemed fixed on something beyond the summer clouds.

“Philip,” she said at last.

“Jeanne,” I whispered.

“That is all,—that is what I wished,” she sighed,—“Philip and Jeanne.”

She held her hand toward me and I touched it with my lips.

“Win me,” she said, but this time it was the body and soul which spoke in unison.

After a while she began again: “Let us speak of falconry.”

“Begin,” I replied; “we have caught the falcon.”

The Jeanne d'Ys took my hand in both of hers and told me how with infinite patience the young falcon was taught to perch upon the wrist, how little by little it became used to belled jesses and the *chaperon à cornette*.

"They must first have a good appetite," she said; "then little by little I reduce their nourishment which in falconry we call *pât*. When after many nights passed *au bloc* as these birds are now, I prevail upon the *hagard* to stay quietly on the wrist, then the bird is ready to be taught to come for its food. I fix the *pât* to the end of a thong or *leurre*, and teach the bird to come to me as soon as I begin to whirl the cord in circles about my head. At first I drop the *pât* when the falcon comes, and he eats the food on the ground. After a little he will learn to seize the *leurre* in motion as I whirl it around my head, or drag it over the ground. After this it is easy to teach the falcon to strike at game, always remembering to '*faire courtoisie à l'oiseau*,' that is, to allow the bird to taste the quarry."

A squeal from one of the falcons interrupted her, and she arose to adjust the *longe* which had become whipped about the *bloc*, but the bird still flapped its wings and screamed.

"What *is* the matter?" she said; "Philip, can you see?"

I looked around and at first saw nothing to cause the commotion which was now heightened by the screams and flapping of all the birds. Then my eye fell upon the flat rock beside the stream from which the girl had risen. A gray serpent was moving slowly across the surface of the boulder, and the eyes in its flat triangular head sparkled like jet.

"A couleuvre," she said quietly.

"Is it harmless, is it nor?" I asked.

She pointed to the black V-shaped figure on the neck.

"It is certain death," she said; "it is a viper."

We watched the reptile moving slowly over the smooth rock to where the sunlight fell in a broad warm patch.

I started forward to examine it, but she clung to arm crying, "Don't, Philip, I am afraid."

"For me?"

"For you, Philip,—I love you."

Then I took her in my arms and kissed her on the lips, but all I could say was: "Jeanne, Jeanne, Jeanne." And as she lay trembling on my breast, something struck my foot in the grass below, but I did not heed it. Then again something struck my ankle, and a sharp pain shot through me. I looked into the sweet face of Jeanne d'Ys and kissed her, and with all my strength lifted her in my arms and flung her from me. Then bending, I tore the viper from my ankle and set my heel upon its head. I remember feeling weak and numb,—I remember falling to the ground. Through my slowly glazing eyes I saw Jeanne's white face bending close to mine, and when the light in my eyes went out I still felt her arms about my neck, and her soft cheek against my drawn lips.

* * *

When I opened my eyes, I looked around in terror. Jeanne was gone. I saw the stream and the flat rock; I saw the crushed viper in the grass beside me, but the hawks and *blocs* had disappeared. I sprang to my feet. The garden, the fruit trees, the drawbridge and the walled court were gone. I stared stupidly at a heap of crumbling ruins, ivy-covered and gray, through which great trees had pushed their way. I crept forward, dragging my numbed foot, and as I moved, a falcon sailed from the tree-tops among the ruins, and soaring, mounting in narrowing circles, faded and vanished in the clouds above.

“Jeanne. Jeanne,” I cried, but my voice died on my lips, and I fell on my knees among the weeds. And as God willed it, I, not knowing, had fallen kneeling before a crumbling shrine carved in stone for our Mother of Sorrows. I saw the sad face of the Virgin wrought in the cold stone. I saw the cross and thorns at her feet, and beneath it I read:

“Pray for the soul of the
Demoiselle Jeanne d’Ys,
who died
in her youth for love of
Phillip, a Stranger
A.D. 1573.”

But upon the icy slab lay a woman’s glove still warm and fragrant.