

The Story of King Florus and of the Fair Jehane

translated by

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Here begins the story of a certain King who was named King Florus of Ausay. This King Florus was a very stout knight, and a gentleman of proud descent. He was wedded to the daughter of the Prince of Brabant, a gentlewoman of high lineage. Very fair was the maid when she became his dame, slender of shape and dainty of fashion, and the story telleth that she was but fifteen summers old when King Florus became her lord, and he was but of seventeen years. A right happy life they passed together, as becometh bride and groom who wed fondly in their youth; yet because he might have no child of her King Florus was often dolent, and she for her part was vexed full grievously. This lady was very gracious of person, and very devout towards God and Holy Church. She gave alms willingly, and was so charitable that she nourished and clothed the needy, kissing their hands and feet. Moreover, so constant and private in service was she to the lepers of the lazar house, both men and women, that the Holy Ghost dwelt within her. Her lord, King Florus, so long as his realm had peace, rode forth as knight-errant to all the tournaments in Allemaigne and France and many other lands of which the noise reached him; thereon he spent much treasure, and gained great honour thereby.

But now my tale ceases to speak of him, and telleth of a knight who dwelt in the marches of Flanders and of Hainault. This knight was wise in counsel, and brave of heart, very sure and trusty. He had to wife a right fair lady, of whom he had one daughter, young and fresh, named Jehane, a maid of some twelve years. Many sweet words were spoken of this maiden, for in all the country round was none so fair. Her mother prayed often to her lord that he should grant the girl in marriage, but so given were all his thoughts to the running of tourneys that he considered nothing of the trothing of his child, though his wife admonished him ever on his return from the jousts.

This knight had for squire a man named Robert, the bravest squire in any Christian realm. His prowess and his praise were such that oft he aided his lord to bear away the prize from the tournaments whereat he ran. So great was his praise that his lady spake him thus—

“Robert, more careth my lord for these joustings than for any words I speak, which thing is grievous to me, for I would that he gave care and pains to wed this daughter of mine. I pray you, therefore, for love of me, that if you may, you tell him that very ill he does, and is greatly to be blamed, not to marry his own fair child, for there is no knight of these parts, however rich his state, who would not gladly welcome such a bride.”

“Lady,” said Robert, “you have well spoken. Very readily will I speak thereof, and since my lord asks often of my counsel, every hope have I that he will take heed to my words.”

“Robert,” said the lady, “you will find me no niggard, so you do this task.”

“Lady,” said Robert, “your prayer is guerdon enough for me. Be assured I will do all that I may.”

“I am content,” returned the lady.

Now within a little space the knight made ready to fare to a tournament very far from his land. When he came to the field, he (with a certain knight in whose company he rode) was joined to one party, and his banner was carried to the lodging of his lord. The tilting began, and such deeds did the knight, by the cunning service of his squire, that he bore off the honour and the prize of that tourney from the one side and the other. On the second day the knight prepared to return to his own country; so Robert took him often to task and blamed him greatly that he had not bestowed his fair daughter in marriage. Having heard this many times, at the end his lord replied—

“Robert, thou and thy lady give me no peace in the matter of the marriage of my daughter; but at present I see and know of none in my parts to whom I am content to give her.”

“Ah, sir,” cried Robert, “there is no knight in your realm who would not receive her right joyously.”

“Robert, fair friend, they are worth nothing, not one of them; neither will I bestow her there with my good will. I know of no man in the

world who is worthy of her, save one man only, and he, forsooth, is no knight."

"Sir, tell me his name," answered Robert, "and I will find means to speak to him so privily that the marriage shall be made."

"Certes, Robert," returned the knight, "meseems thou art very desirous that my daughter shall be wedded."

"Sir," quoth Robert, "you speak truly, for it is full time."

"Robert," said the knight, "since thou art so hot to carol at her wedding, she shall soon enough be married if thou accord thereto."

"Certes, sir," said Robert, "right willingly will I consent thereto."

"To that you pledge your word?" demanded the knight.

"Truly, sir, yes," answered Robert.

"Robert, thou hast served me very faithfully, and ever have I found thee skilled and true. Such as I am, that thou hast made of me; for by thine aid at the tourneys have I gained five hundred pounds of rent. 'Twas but a short time since that I had but five hundred; whereas now I have one thousand pounds from rent of land. This, therefore, I owe to thee, and I acquit me of my debt by giving thee my fair daughter, so thou art willing to take her at my hand."

"Ah, sir," cried Robert, "for the pity of God, say not thus. I am too low a man to snatch at so high a maiden, nor dare I pretend to one so rich and gracious as my demoiselle, since there is no knight in all the realm, whate'er his breeding, who would not count it honour to be her lord."

"Robert, know of a surety that never shall knight of this country call her his; but I will bestow her on thee, if thou refusest her not, and for her dowry shall she bring thee four hundred pounds from rent of my lands."

"Ah, sir," said Robert, "you are pleased to make a mock of me."

"Robert," said the knight, "be assured this is no jest."

"Ah, sir, neither my lady nor her mighty kin will endure to consent thereto."

"Robert," said the knight, "this matter concerns none of them. Hold, I give thee my glove, and I invest thee with four hundred pounds of my land, and this is my warrant for the delivery thereof."

“Sir,” said Robert, “I will not refuse so goodly a gift, since it is given with so true a heart.”

“Robert,” replied the knight, “the grant is sealed.”

So the knight granted him his glove, and invested him with rights in that fair maiden and her land.

Thus they passed upon their ways until it fortuned that this knight returned to his own house. When he was entered therein, his wife—that comely dame—received him right sweetly, and said—

“Husband, for the love of God, give thought at this time to the marriage of our maid.”

“Dame,” said her lord, “thou hast spoken so often of this matter that I have trothed her already.”

“Sir,” inquired the lady, “to whom?”

“Certes, dame, I have pledged her to a man who will ever be loyal and true. I have given her to Robert, my squire.”

“To Robert! Alas the day,” quoth the lady. “Robert is but a naked man, nor is there a knight, however noble, in all this realm who would not have taken her gladly. Certainly Robert shall have none of her.”

“Dame, have her he shall, for I have delivered to him as my daughter’s portion four hundred pounds in rent of land, and all his rights therein I warrant and will maintain.”

When the lady heard this thing she was sore troubled, and said to her lord that of a surety should Robert never possess her maid.

“Dame,” said her husband, “have her he shall, with good will or with bad will, for I have made a covenant with him, and will carry out my bargain.”

When the lady heard these words of her lord she sought her chamber, and wept and lamented very grievously. After her tears were shed then she sent to seek her brothers and other kinsmen of her house, and showed them of that thing her lord would do, and they said—

“Lady, what have we to do herein? We have no care to go counter to your lord, for he is a stout knight, weighty of counsel and heavy of hand. Moreover, can he not do as he will with his daughter, and his land besides? Know you well that for this cause will none of us hang shield about his neck.”

“Alas,” said the lady, “never may my heart find happiness again, if thus I lose my child. At the least, fair lords, I pray and require you to show him that should he make this marriage he acts not rightly, nor after his own honour.”

“Lady,” said they, “this we will do full willingly.”

So they sought out the knight and acquitted themselves of their task, and he answered them in courteous wise

“Fair lords, I will tell you what I can do for your love. So it be your pleasure, I will defer this marriage on such understanding as I now declare. You are great lords, and are rich in gold and lands. Moreover, you are near of kin to this fair maid of mine, whom very tenderly I love. If on your part you will endue her with four hundred pounds of rent on your lands, I, on mine, will disavow this bond of marriage, and will wed the girl according to your wise counsel.”

“In the name of God,” answered they with one accord, “would you spoil us of all the wealth in our wallets?”

“Since, then,” replied the knight, “you may not do this thing, suffer me to do as I will with my own.”

“Sir, with right good mind,” answered they.

Then the knight sent for his chaplain, and before him affianced Robert and his fair daughter together, appointing a certain day for the marriage. But on the third day Robert prayed his lord that he would dub him knight, since it was not seemly that he should take a wife so fair and of such high station till he was of her degree. His lord agreed thereto with a glad heart, and on the morrow granted him his desire; therefore after the third day he married the fair maid with great joy and festival.

At the hour Messire Robert was made knight he spake thus to his lord—

“Sir, once when I was in grievous peril of death, I vowed to seek St. James’s shrine on the morrow of that day I gained my spurs. I pray you be not wroth with me if to-morrow morn it becomes my honour to wend thither directly after this marriage, for in no wise will I fail to observe my vow.”

“Certes, Messire Robert, if you do this despite to my daughter, and go lonely upon your road, very rightly will you be held to blame.”

“Sir,” said he, “so it pleases God, I shall soon return, but go I must on peril of my soul.”

When a certain knight of the lord’s household heard these words, greatly he reproached Messire Robert for parting from his bride at such an hour, but Robert answered him that he durst not break his oath.

“Truly,” said the knight, who was named Raoul, “truly if you wend thus to St. James’s shrine, leaving so fair a bride but a wedded maid, very surely will I win her love ere you return. Certain proofs, moreover, will I give that I have had my way with her; and to this will I pledge my lands against the lands our lord has granted you, for mine are fully worth the rents of yours.”

“My wife,” answered Messire Robert, “does not come of a race to deal me so shrewd a wrong, and since I give no credence to your words, willingly will I make the wager, if so it pleases you.”

“Yes,” said Raoul, “and to this you pledge your faith?”

“Yea,” said Messire Robert, “willingly. And you?”

“I, too, pledge my faith. Now let us seek our lord forthwith, and set before him our bargain.”

“That is my desire also,” said Messire Robert.

Then they went straight to their lord and laid before him this wager, and plighted troth to observe their covenant. So in the morning Messire Robert was married to the fair maiden, and when the bridal Mass was ended, incontinent he parted from the hall, without tasting the wedding meats, and set forth on his way, a pilgrim to Compostella.

Now ceaseth the tale to speak of him, and telleth of Raoul, who was hot in thought as to how he might gain the wager and have to do with the fair lady. So relateth the tale that the lady behaved very discreetly whilst her husband was on pilgrimage, for she spent much time upon her knees in church, praying God to bring her lord again. For his part Messire Raoul was in a heat in what manner he might win the wager, for more and more it seemed to him that he should lose his land. He sought speech with an old dame who attended on the lady, promising that so she brought him in such a place and hour that he might speak privily to Madame Jehane, and have his will, then he would deal so largely with her, that never in her life should she be poor.

“Certes, sir,” said the crone, “you are so lovely a knight, so sweet in speech and so courteous, that verily it is my lady’s duty to set her love upon you, and it will be my pleasure to toil in your service.”

So the knight took forty sous from his pouch, and gave them to her that she might buy a kirtle. The old woman received them greedily, and hiding the money in a secret place promised to speak to her lady. The knight bade farewell, and went his way, but the crone tarried in that place, and when her lady entered from the church said straitly

“Lady, for God’s love, tell me truly, when my lord went to Compostella did he leave you a maid?”

“Why ask you such a question, Dame Hersent?”

“Because, lady, I believe you to be a virgin wife!”

“Certes, Dame Hersent, and that I am, nor do I know woman who would be aught else in my case.”

“Lady,” returned Dame Hersent, “ah, the pity of it! If you but knew the joy that women have in company of the man they love, you would say that there is no fonder happiness to be found on earth. Greatly I marvel, therefore, that you love not, *par amours*, seeing that every lady loveth with her friend. Were the thing but pleasing to you, fair falleth the chance, for well I know a knight, comely of person, sweet and wise of speech, who asks naught better than to set on you his love. Very rich is he, and lovelier far than the shamed recreant who has left you in this plight. If you are not too fearful to grant him grace, you can have of him all that you please to ask, and such joy moreover as no lady can hope for more.”

Whilst the crone was speaking, the lady, who was but a woman, felt her senses stir within. Curiously she inquired who this knight should be.

“Who is he, lady? God above! one has no fear to cry his name! Who should it be but that lovely lord, so courteous, so bold, Messire Raoul, of your father’s house, the sweetest heart of all the world.”

“Dame Hersent,” said the lady, “you will do well to let these words be, for I have no wish to do myself such wrong, neither come I of such stock as goes after shame.”

“Dame,” replied the old woman, “I know it well; but never can you have the joy of maid with man.”

Thus ended their discourse; but presently Sir Raoul came again to the crone, and she made plain to him how she had spoken to her lady, and in what fashion she was answered.

“Dame Hersent,” said the knight, “so should a virtuous lady reply; but I pray you speak again with her of this matter, for the archer does not wing the bird with a first arrow; and, stay, take these twenty sous, and buy a lining to your coat.”

So that ancient dame took the gift, and wearied the lady with enticing words, but nothing came of all her proffers.

Slowly or quickly thus passed the days, till came the tidings that Sir Robert was on his way from Compostella, and was already near to Paris. Very speedily this news was noised abroad, and Sir Raoul, fearing greatly to lose his lands, again sought speech with the crone. Then said the old woman that in no wise could she snare the bird, but that for the great love she bore him this thing she would do—so he would recompense her service—namely, that she would put matters in such a case that none should be in the house save himself and the lady, and then he could act according to his pleasure, whether she would or whether she would not. So Raoul answered that he desired no other thing.

“This I will do,” said the old woman. “Messire shall come again in eight days, and on that day shall my lady bathe within her bower. I will see that all her household are forth from the castle, so may you come privily to her chamber, and have your desire of her, whether she cry yea or whether she cry nay.”

“You have fairly spoken,” answered he.

Hard upon this came letters from Messire Robert that he would be at the castle on Sunday. On the Thursday, therefore, the crone caused the bath to be heated in the bower, and the lady disarrayed herself to enter therein. Then the old woman sent messages to Sir Raoul that he should come speedily, and moreover she caused all the household to go forth from that place. Sir Raoul came to the bower, and entering, saluted the lady, but she deigned no reply to his greeting, and said—

“Sir Raoul, of a truth I thank you for this courtesy, yet you might have asked if such a visit would be according to my wish. Accursed may you be for a most ungentle knight.”

But Sir Raoul made reply—

“Madame, for God’s sake have pity upon me, for I die for love of you. Lady, as you hope for grace, so grant grace to me.”

“Sir Raoul,” cried she, “never for pity will I grant you this day, or any day, the grace of my love. Know well that if you do not leave me alone in peace certainly will I tell your lord, my father, the honour that you require of me, for I am no such woman as you think.”

“Nay, lady, is it so indeed?”

“Yes, and very surely,” replied she.

Then Sir Raoul sprang forward, and clasping her in his arms (for he was very mighty) bore her towards her bed. As they strove he saw beneath her right breast a black spot upon the groin, and thought within himself that here was certain proof that he had had to do with her. But as he carried her towards the bed his spurs caught within the serge valence about the foot thereof, so that they fell together, the lord below and the lady above; whereupon she rose lightly to her feet, and seizing a billet of wood from the hearth, smote him upon the head so shrewdly that the blood dropped upon the rushes from the wound. When Sir Raoul knew his wound to be both deep and large no more he desired to play, so he arose from the floor and departed straightway from that chamber to his own lodging, a long mile thence, and sought a surgeon for his hurt. For her part the faithful lady called upon Dame Hersent, and returning to her bath, complained to her of this strange adventure with the knight.

Very great and rich was the feast that the father of the fair lady ordained against the home-coming of Sir Robert. Many a lord was bidden to his hall, and amongst these my lord, Sir Raoul, his knight; but he sent messages that he might not come, for reason of his sickness. On the Sunday came Sir Robert, and was sweetly welcomed of all; but the father of the fair lady sought out Sir Raoul, nor would hold him excused from the feast because of his grievous wound. Therefore he tired his face and his wound the best that he was able, and went to hall, where all day long the lords and ladies sat at meat and drink, and rose for morris and to dance.

When closed the night Sir Robert sought his chamber, and very graciously the lady received him, as it becometh every wife to receive her husband. On the morrow again the guests were gathered about the board, but after dinner uprose Sir Raoul demanding that Messire Robert

should pay his wager, since he had had to do with his wife, by sign and token of a certain black spot beneath her right breast.

“Of that I know nothing,” answered Sir Robert, “for I have not looked so boldly upon her.”

“I require you by the faith that you have pledged me to take heed, and to do me justice herein.”

“That will I, truly,” answered Sir Robert.

When came the night once more, then Sir Robert observed his wife curiously, and marked the black spot upon her white body, whereat the greater grief was his. In the morning he sought out Sir Raoul, and owned before his lord that he had lost the bet. Sick at heart was he throughout the day. When darkness came he went to the stable, and saddling his palfrey, issued forth from the courtyard, taking with him what he might carry of his wealth. So he set forth on the road to Paris, and coming to the city sojourned therein for some three days. There the tale ceaseth to speak of him, and telleth of his wife.

Very dolent and right heavy was the fair lady that thus her lord had fled his house. Very long and right greatly she considered the reason of his flight. She wept and lamented her widowhood, even till such time as her father entered her chamber, and said that it were much better that she had never wed, since she had brought him to shame, him, and all her house, and told her how and why. When she heard this thing she was sick of heart, and swore that never had she done such deed; but her words profited her nothing, for though a woman gave her body to be burned, yet would none believe her clean of sin, once such blame is set upon her.

Very early in the night the lady rose from the bed, and taking what wealth she had in her coffer, saddled a palfrey and took the road. She had sheared her dainty tresses to the shoulder, and in all points was clad as a boy. In this manner came she to Paris, seeking for her husband, for to her heart she declared that never would she give over her search until they were met together once more. So she rode at adventure, a squire searching for her lord. Now on a morning she departed from Paris, and riding on the way to Orleans came to Tombe Isoire, and there met with Sir Robert, her husband. Her heart was very full as she drew close and saluted him, and he rendered her greeting for greeting, saying—

"Fair friend, God give you heart's desire."

"Sir," said she, "from whence come you?"

"Certes, fair friend, I am of Hainault."

"Sir, and whither go you?"

"Forsooth, fair friend, little I know where my path may lead me, nor have I home where I may dwell. Where Fortune hales me, thither I must go, and the Dame looks not kindly on me, for I have lost the thing that most I loved in all the world, and she hath lost me. Moreover with her went house and lands that were fair and deep. But tell me, what is your name, and whither doth God bring you?"

"Certes, sir," answered Jehane, "I purpose to seek Marseilles, near by the sea, where as I hope there is noise of war. There, if I may, will I enter the service of some hardy captain and learn the trade of arms, so it be God's pleasure. For such is my plight that in nowise can I stay in my own country. To my eyes, sir, you seem a knight whom I would serve very gladly, if such was your will, nor of my fellowship could you take any harm."

"Fair friend," answered Messire Robert, "truly am I a belted knight, and in what place the battle is set, there would I gladly ride. But tell me now, what is your name?"

"Sir, my name is John."

"It is right welcome," said the knight.

"And you, sir, what is your name?"

"John, my name is Robert."

"Sir Robert, join me to your company as squire, and I will serve you to the utmost of my power."

"John, so would I do gladly, but I have so little money in my pouch, that ere three days are gone I must sell my very steed; therefore I may take no squire."

"Sir," said John, "be not troubled thereat, for God will provide, if so it seems good to Him. But where are you set to dine?"

"John, my dinner is a simple business, for I have nothing in my purse save three sous of Paris."

"Sir, be not troubled thereat, for on my part I have with me nearly ten pounds of Tournay money, and these are as your own, since your wallet is not heavy to your wish."

“Fair friend, thanks, and thanks again.”

The two comrades rode at a brisk pace to Montlhery, where John found meat for his lord, and they ate together. When they had eaten they sought their chamber, the knight lying in a fair bed, and John sleeping in another, at his feet. Refreshed with sleep, John rose and did the harness upon their horses, so they mounted and passed upon their way. Journeying thus at last they lighted at Marseilles upon the Sea, but to their grief they might not hear the rumour of any war. There for the time my story ceases to speak of the two of them, and returns to Messire Raoul, that false knight, who, by leasing, had wrongly gained the land of Sir Robert.

For more than seven years did Messire Raoul hold the lands of Sir Robert against law and right. Then a sore sickness took hold upon him, and afflicted him so grievously that very near he came to death. Much he feared the wrong he had wrought to that fair lady, the daughter of his lord, and to her husband besides, for by reason of his malice were they utterly undone.

So great was his sin that he dared not show the matter to the priest, but tossed upon his bed in utter unrest. On a certain day when his sickness lay too heavy upon him he bade his chaplain draw near his bed, for this priest was a wise confessor, loyal and true, and very close to the sick man’s heart. Then he spake—

“Father—my father in God, if not according to the flesh—the time is come when I must die. For God’s love give me now your counsel, as you are a ghostly man, for on my soul there lies a sin so ugly and so black that scarcely may I hope to be anealed.”

The priest prayed him to speak more plainly, so that he might aid him to the utmost of his power, wherefore Sir Raoul brought himself to tell the story that you have heard. At the end he begged the chaplain for the love of God to show him what he must do to obtain the grace of pardon for a sin so dark.

“Sir,” said the priest, “be not altogether cast down, for so you are willing to do such penance as I lay upon you, I will take your sin on me and on my own soul, and you shall be clean.”

“Now tell me of this penance,” said the knight.

“Sir, within a year of your recovery from this sickness must you take the cross and pass beyond the sea, and in all places where men ask the reason of your pilgrimage, there you must tell the story of this bitter wrong. Moreover, this day must you give hostages to God that thus you will do.”

“All this will I do gladly.”

“Sir, what rich pledge can you offer, therefor?”

“The best,” replied the knight. “You, yourself, shall be hostage and surety for me; and on my honour as a knight well will I redeem my pledge.”

“Sir,” said the priest, “in the hand of God am I set as your pledge.”

The sick man turned from death to life, and soon was altogether healed. A full year passed away, and yet he had not taken the cross. Right often the holy man reminded him of his bond, but he treated the covenant as a jest. Then the chaplain told him straitly that except he discharged him as his surety before God, he would tell the whole matter to the father of the fair lady whom he had utterly destroyed. When the knight heard this he said to the chaplain that within six months would he seek the sea for the springtide crossing, and thereto he plighted faith. But now the story ceases to speak of Messire Raoul, and returns to King Florus of Ausay, of whom it has told nought for a great while.

A right happy life led King Florus and his wife together, as becomes bride and groom who wed fondly in their youth, but very dolent and sore of heart were they that they might get no child. The lady caused Masses to be sung, and was urgent in prayer for her desire, but since it was not according to the will of God, no gain she got thereby. On a day there came to the castle of King Florus a holy hermit who dwelt deep within the great forest of Ausay, in a very desolate place. The queen received him very gladly, and because he was a wise man and a holy, would be shriven by him of her sins. So she bared him her secret wound, and told him of her grief that she might have no child by her lord.

“Ah, madame,” said the holy man, “it becometh you patiently to suffer the pleasure of our Lord. When it is His will, then shall the barren become a joyful mother of children.”

“Certes, sir,” said the lady, “would that it were now, for less dear am I to my lord therefor. Moreover, the high barons of this realm cast the

thing against me, and give counsel to my lord that he should put the barren woman away and take another bride."

"Truly, madame," said the holy man, "grievously would he sin against God and Holy Church by such a deed."

"Ah, sir, pray you to God for me that I may bear a child to my lord, for much I doubt that he will put me away."

"Madame," said the holy man, "prayers of mine are little worth, save by the will of God, yet such as they are you shall have them willingly."

Hardly had this holy man departed from the lady, when the barons of the realm drew together before the King, and counselled him that he should put away his wife, since by her he might have no child, and take another bride. Moreover, if he would not abide by their counsel, then would they withdraw their fealty, for in no case should the kingdom remain without an heir. King Florus feared his barons greatly, and gave credence to their word, so he promised to send his wife to her kindred, and prayed the lords to seek him another queen, which thing was accorded between them. When the lady knew thereof she was stricken to the heart, but nothing might she do, for well she understood that her lord was purposed to forsake her. Therefore she sent to seek that hermit who was her confessor, and when he was come she set before him this business of the barons, and how they would bring another wife to her husband. "So I pray you, fair father, to aid me with counsel as to what I must do."

"Lady," said the holy man, "if it be thus, you must suffer it as best you may, for against king and barons you can make no head."

"Sir," said the gentle lady, "you speak truly; so, if it pleases God, I will dwell as an anchoress near to you, for then shall I serve God all the days of my life, and yet draw some stay and comfort from your presence!"

"Lady," said the prudent man, "that were too hazardous a thing, for you are too tender in years, and fair and fresh. But I will tell you what to do. Near by my hermitage is a convent of White Nuns, very quiet and devout. If you go thither, right gladly will they receive you, as well by reason of your blameless life as of your high degree!"

"Sir," said she, "wisely have you spoken, and this I will do, since so you counsel me."

On the morrow King Florus spake to his wife, and said—

“Since you may have no child by me, needs must we say farewell. I tell you truly that the parting presses hardly upon me, for never again shall woman lie nearly to my heart as you have lain!”

Then might he speak no more because of tears, and the lady wept with him.

“Husband,” said she, “for God’s love have pity upon me, for where may I hide myself, and what may I find to do?”

“Wife, so it pleases God, your good days are not yet past, for honourably and in rich estate shall you return to your own friends in your own land.”

“Lord,” said the dame, “I require none of this gear. So it please you, I will bestow me in a certain convent of nuns, if it will receive me, and there I will serve God all my life; for since I lose your love I am she whose heart shall never harbour love again.”

So King Florus and the lady wept together very bitterly.

On the third day the Queen set forth to her convent; and the fresh Queen came to the palace in great pomp, and held revel and festival with her friends. For four years did King Florus possess this lady, yet never might he get an heir. So now the story ceases to speak of King Florus, and turns again to Messire Robert and to John, who were come to Marseilles.

Very sad was Sir Robert when he came to the city that he might hear of no arming in all the land; so he said to John—

“What shall we do? You have lent me much money, for the which I owe you more than thanks. I will give it you again, though I have to sell my very palfrey, to discharge me of the debt.”

“Sir,” said John, “if it please you give heed to me, and I will show you what we have to do. There remain yet to us one hundred Tournay sous. If you grant me leave, I will turn our two good horses into better money. With this I will make French bread, for I am the lightest baker of whom you have heard, and I doubt but little that we shall gain our money and our livelihood besides.”

“John,” said Sir Robert, “I am content that you should do according to your will.”

The next day John sold his two horses for ten pounds Tournay. With these he bought corn, and carried it to the mill. Afterwards he bought baskets and set to work at his oven to bake good French bread. So white and so fresh were these loaves of his baking that he sold more than the best baker of the town, and prospered so greatly that within two years he had put by well one hundred pounds for their need.

Then said John to his lord –

“Would it not be good to hire a fair large house, with cellarage for wine, that we might offer hostelry and lodging to wealthy folk from home?”

“John,” answered Sir Robert, “your will is mine, for every reason have I for content with you.”

Then John hired a house, both fair and great, and there gave lodging to honest folk, gaining money very plenteously. He clad his lord in costly raiment, so that Sir Robert bestrode his own palfrey, and sat at meat and drink with the most honourable of the town. Moreover John caused his board to be furnished with all manner of wines and store, so that his companions marvelled greatly at the abundance thereof. With all this so bravely did John prosper that within four years he had put by more than three hundred pounds, besides the furnishing of inn and bakery, which very well was worth another fifty pounds. But here the story ceases to speak of John and Sir Robert, and turneth again to tell of Messire Raoul.

Now telleth the tale that the chaplain pressed Sir Raoul right earnestly that he should pass beyond the sea, and thus discharge his surety from the bond, for much he feared that the knight would yet find reason to remain. So instant was the priest in pleading, that Sir Raoul saw well that go he must. He made him ready for his journey, spending money without stint, and at the end set forth upon the road, him and his three squires. He drew presently to Marseilles-on-Sea, and there sought lodging at the French Hostelry owned by Sir Robert and by John. When John set eyes upon him he knew him well, because he had seen him many times, and for reason of the scar of the wound that he had given him. The knight sojourned in the town for fifteen days, till he might find passage in some vessel going oversea. Whilst he was dwelling at the inn John took him apart and asked him of the purpose of his journey, whereat Messire Raoul told him openly all the occasion thereof, just as

the tale hath related already. John listened to his story, but answered naught for good or evil. Presently Sir Raoul caused his harness and his gear to be bestowed on the nave, and mounted in the ship, but for eight days it might not depart from forth the harbour. On the ninth day the vessel sailed from port on its way to the Holy Sepulchre. Thus Sir Raoul did his pilgrimage, and there made honest confession of his sins. In sign of penitence his confessor charged him strictly to restore to the knight and his lady the fief he held in scorn of law and right; and Sir Raoul promised straitly that when he came again to his own land he would carry out the wishes of his heart. So parting from Jerusalem he voyaged to Acre, and took passage in the first homing ship, as a man who desires above all things to look upon the face of his own country. He adventured on the sea, and fared so speedily, by night as by day, that in less than three months he cast anchor at the port of Aigues Mortes. Parting from the harbour he stayed not till he was come to Marseilles, where he rested eight days at the inn owned by Sir Robert and John, which inn men called the French Hostelry; but Sir Robert did not recall him to mind, for he thought but little of Sir Raoul. At the end of eight days he set forth from Marseilles with his three squires, and at length returned to his own home where his household received him gladly, for he was a great lord, very rich in land and in store. His chaplain inquired of him if any had asked the reason for his journey.

“Yes,” said he, “in three places, to wit, Marseilles, Acre, and Jerusalem. Moreover, that priest who shrived me counselled me to give back his lands to my lord, Sir Robert, so I may find him, or if I may not hear of him, to his wife or his heirs.”

“Certes,” said the chaplain, “he gave you godly counsel.”

So Messire Raoul dwelt in his own house for a great while in peace and ease; and there the tale ceaseth to speak of him, and returns to Messire Robert and to John.

Sir Robert and John dwelt as citizens in Marseilles for the space of six years. At the end of six years had they put by in a sure place the sum of six hundred pounds. John and his business prospered exceedingly, for so gentle was he and diligent, that he was beloved of all his neighbours. Men spake almost too well of him, and he maintained his lord in such estate and worship that it was marvellous to see. When the end of the

seventh year drew near, John sought occasion to speak soberly to Sir Robert his lord, and said—

“Sir, we have dwelt a great while in this city, and have been so fortunate in our dealings that we have gained nearly six hundred pounds in money and in silver vessels.”

“Certes,” said Sir Robert, “all this, John, is not mine but yours, for you have earned it.”

“Sir,” said John, “saving your grace, it is not mine, but yours, for you are my own true lord, and never, please God, will I take another.”

“John, I thank you heartily,” said Robert. “I hold you not as servant, but as comrade and as friend.”

“Sir,” said John, “all my days have I given you loyal service, and so will I ever do.”

“By my faith,” said Sir Robert, “what you require of me, that is my pleasure. But as to returning to my own country, I know not what to say. So much have I lost there that never can it be made up to me.”

“Sir,” answered John, “fret not over your loss, for, so God pleases, you shall hear good news when you come into your own land. And be not fearful of anything, for in whatever place we shall be, please God, I shall gather enough for me and for you.”

“Certes, John,” said Sir Robert, “I will do that which pleases you, and lodge wheresoe’er you will.”

“Sir,” said John, “now will I sell our goods and make ready for the journey, for we shall part within fifteen days.”

So John sold all the fair furnishing of his houses, and bought thereout three horses, a palfrey for his lord, another for himself, and a pack horse for the road. Then they bade farewell to their neighbours and to the most worshipful citizens of the town, who grieved sorely at their going.

Sir Robert and John travelled so hardily that in less than three weeks they drew to their own country, and Sir Robert caused it to be told to his lord, whose daughter he had wedded, that he was near at hand. The lord was merry at heart, for much he hoped that his daughter might be with her husband; and so she was, but hid in the trappings of a squire.

The lord greeted Robert warmly, but when he could learn no tidings of his daughter, his mirth was turned into sorrow; nevertheless he made a rich banquet for Sir Robert, and bade his knights and his neighbours to

the feast. Amongst these came Sir Raoul who held Sir Robert's land in his despite. Great was the merriment on that day and the morrow, and during all this joy Sir Robert told to John the story of his wager, and of the manner in which Sir Raoul spoiled him of his land.

"Sir," said John, "challenge him to combat as a false traitor, and I will fight the battle in your stead."

"John," said Sir Robert, "this you shall not do."

Thus they left the matter till the morrow, when John came to Sir Robert, and said that he was purposed to speak to the father of his wife. So they sought the lord, and John spake him thus—

"Sir, you are, after God, the lord of my master Sir Robert, who in the years that are gone married your child. As you know, a wager was made between him and Sir Raoul, who said that ere Sir Robert came home from St. James's shrine he would gain the lady to his wish. Sir Raoul spake falsely, and is a most disloyal and traitor knight, for never had he part or share in your daughter's love. All which I am ready to prove upon his body."

Then Robert strode forth and said—

"John, fair friend, this business is mine alone, nor because of it shall you hang shield about your neck."

So Sir Robert held forth his gage to his lord, and Sir Raoul tendered gage of battle in return, though but fearfully; for needs must he defend himself, or be proclaimed recreant and traitor. Thus were the pledges given, and the day for the ordeal by battle pronounced to be fifteen days thence without appeal.

Now hearken well to this strange story of John, and what he did. John, who more sweetly was named Madame Jehane, had in the house of her father a certain cousin, who was a fair demoiselle of some twenty-five years. To this cousin Jehane went and discovered the whole matter, telling her all the story, from the first thing to the last. She prayed her, moreover, to keep the business hidden, until such time and hour as she should make herself known to her father. The cousin—to whom Jehane was very well known—promised readily to conceal the matter, saying that never should the secret be made plain by her fault. Then was the chamber of her cousin made fresh and ready for Madame Jehane. Therein for the two weeks before the battle Jehane bathed and

perfumed her, and took her ease as best she might, for well had she reason to look her fairest. Also she caused women to shape closely to her figure four goodly gowns; one was of scarlet, one of vair, one of peacock blue, and one of trailing silk. Thus with rest and peace she came once more to the fulness of her beauty, and was so dainty, fresh and fair, that no lady showed her peer in all the world.

As for Sir Robert, very greatly was he discomfited during all these fifteen days at the loss of John his squire, for he knew nothing of his fate. Nevertheless on the appointed day he got himself into his harness, and prepared him for the battle stoutly and with a good heart.

On the appointed day the two knights entered within the lists together. Drawing apart for a little space, they rushed furiously the one on the other, and gave such mighty strokes with the blades of their great swords that their horses were borne to the ground beneath them. Sir Raoul was wounded lightly in the left side, so Sir Robert getting first upon his feet came swiftly to him, and smote him with all his force upon the helm. So mighty was the blow that the sword sheared clear through the helmet to the coif of steel, but the coif was so strong that the head was not wounded; nevertheless of that stroke he reeled so that had he not caught at his saddle, certainly he had fallen to the earth. Then Sir Raoul, who was a very stout champion, struck Sir Robert so fiercely upon the headpiece that he was all bemused, and the sword glancing downwards upon the shoulder hacked off the mail of the hauberk, but did him no hurt. Thereat Sir Robert smote him again with all the strength that he was able, and the blow lighting upon the buckler carried away a quarter of the shield. When Sir Raoul knew the hardiness of his foe much he feared for the issue of the combat, and well he wished himself once more beyond the sea, and Sir Robert settled safely on his land. However, he put forward all his prowess, and pressed Sir Robert so grimly that with one great stroke he clove to the boss upon the very middle of Sir Robert's shield. For his part Sir Robert struck fairly at Sir Raoul's helm, but he thrust his shield before him, and that mighty blow passing clean through the buckler came full upon the charger's neck, so that horse and rider tumbled to the ground. Messire Raoul climbed stoutly to his feet, as a valiant man who had often ridden with the spears, but Sir Robert

lighted from his steed, for he would not deign to fight at vantage with a foe on foot.

Now strove the two knights together, hand to hand, in such fashion that shield and helm and hauberk were hewn in pieces, and the blood ran from their bodies by reason of their trenchant glaives. Had they been able to deal such blows as in the first passage of their arms, very quickly both one and the other had been slain, for of their shields scarce enough held together to cover their gauntlets. The fear of death or shame was now before their eyes, and the nearness of their persons summoned them to bring this judgment to an end. Sir Robert gripped his sword in both hands, and with all the greatness of his strength smote Sir Raoul upon the helm. Half the shattered headpiece fell upon his shoulders, and the sword cutting through the coif made a grisly wound. So bewildered was Sir Raoul at the stroke that he was beaten to the knee; but he rose lightly again, though, since he knew that his head was naked, very fearful was he of death. He ran therefore at Sir Robert, smiting with all his power at the remnants of his shield. Through shield and helmet went the glaive to the depth of full three fingers, but the wearied sword coming full upon the coif of steel brake in pieces, for the armourer's work was very strong. When Sir Raoul looked upon the shards of his sword, and remembered that his head was naked, much he doubted of his end. Nevertheless he stooped to the ground, and seizing a great stone in both his hands flung it at Sir Robert with all his might. Sir Robert stepped aside quickly, avoiding the cast, and ran in upon his adversary, who turned his back and took to flight about the lists. So Sir Robert cried that save his foe admitted himself recreant and shamed he would slay him with the sword.

"Gentle knight," answered Sir Raoul, "I yield thee what remaineth of my sword, and throw myself entirely on thy grace. Show mercy on me, gentle knight, and pray thy lord and mine that he have pity upon me, and spare my life. Take back thy land that I have held against both law and right, and therewith take my own; for all I said against that fair and spotless lady was just foul lies."

When my lord, Sir Robert, heard these words he thought within himself that Sir Raoul might do no more. Therefore he prayed his lord so

urgently to pardon Sir Raoul for this felony, that his prayer was accorded on such terms that Sir Raoul should abide over sea for all his days.

In such fashion Sir Robert won back his land, and added that of Sir Raoul besides. But in this thing he found little comfort, for grief of heart over the fair and faithful lady from whom he had parted. Moreover, in no wise could he forget John, his squire, who was lost to him also. His lord, too, shared in his sorrow, for reason that he might never gain tidings of his one fair child.

But Madame Jehane, who had spent two weeks in her cousin's chamber in all ease and comfort, when she heard that her husband had gained the battle, was greatly content. As we know, she had caused her women to shape closely to her person four goodly gowns, and of these she arrayed herself in the most rich, which was of cloth of silk, banded with fine Arabian gold. So shapely was she of body, so bright of face, and so gracious of address that nothing more lovely could be found in all the world, so that her very cousin, even, marvelled at her exceeding beauty. For the bathing, the tiring, and ease of mind and body of the past fifteen days had given her back her early freshness, as was wonderful to see. Very sweet, very ravishing showed Madame Jehane in her silken robe banded with gold. So when she was ready she called to her cousin, and said —

“How seem I to thee?”

“Why, dame, the prettiest person in all the world!”

“Now, fair cousin, I will tell thee what thou shalt do. Go thou straight to my father, and tell him to be heavy no more, but rather merry and glad, because thou bringest him good news of his daughter. Tell him that she is sound and well, and that so he come with thee, he shall see her with his eyes. Then lead him here, and he will greet me again, I deem, right willingly.”

The maiden answered that gladly would she give the message, so she sought out the father of Madame Jehane, and said as she was bidden. When the lord heard thereof he wondered at this strange thing, and going after the damsel found his daughter in her chamber. When he saw her face he cast his arms about her neck, shedding tears of joy and pity, yea, such was his happiness that scarcely could he find a word. When he might speak he asked where she had been so long a while.

“Fair father,” said the lady, “you shall hear it in good time. But, for the love of God, cause my mother to come to me speedily, for I die till I see her once again.”

The lord sent incontinent for his wife, and when she was come into the chamber where her daughter lay, and saw and knew her face, straight she fell down in a swoon for joy, and might not speak for a great space. But when her senses were come to her again no man could conceive the joy and festival she made above her child.

Whilst mother and daughter held each other fast, the father of the fair lady went in quest of Sir Robert, and meeting him said thus—

“Fair sweet son, very joyful news have I to share with you.”

“Certes,” said Sir Robert, “of joy have I great need, but God alone can help my evil case, for sad at heart am I for the loss of my sweet wife, and sad, besides, for the loss of him who did me more good than any other in the world, for John, my faithful squire.”

“Sir Robert,” said the lord, “spoil not your life for John; squires can be met with at every turning. But as to your wife, I have a certain thing to tell, for I come from her but now, and know well that she is the most peerless lady in all the world.”

When Messire Robert heard this he fell a-trembling with joy, and said to his lord—

“Ah, sir, for God’s love bring me to see that this is true!”

“Right willingly,” said the lord, “come now with me.”

The lord went before and Robert followed after, till they were come to the chamber where mother and daughter yet clasped each other close, weeping with joy the one upon the other. When they knew their husbands near they drew apart, and as soon as Sir Robert saw his wife he ran to her with open arms, and embraced her. So they kissed each the other with many little kisses, and wept for joy and pity. Yea, they held each to the other in this fashion whilst a man might run ten acres of land, nor ceased enlacing. Then the lord commanded that the tables should be spread for supper; so they ate with mirth and merriment.

After supper, when the songs and the dances were done, they went to their beds, neither was Sir Robert parted from the lady Jehane, for they were right happy to be met together again, and talked of many

things. At the last Sir Robert asked of her where she had been so great a time, and she said—

“Husband, it is overlong a story to tell, but you shall hear it all at a more convenient season. Tell me, rather, what you have done, and where you have been all this while.”

“Wife,” said Sir Robert, “I will tell you gladly.”

So he told her all the tale she knew by rote, and of John his squire, who gained him bread, and said that so distressed was he at the loss of his companion that never would he give over the search till he had found him, yea, that he would saddle with the morn and part.

“Husband,” said the lady, “that would be madness. Are you set again to leave me, and what shall I do thereof?”

“Certes, lady, I can do none other; for never man did such things for his friend as he has done for me.”

“Husband,” said the wife, “what he did for you was but his duty; he did no more than what he should have done.”

“Wife,” said Messire Robert, “by your speech you should have known him.”

“Truly,” answered the lady, “truly, I should know him well, for never aught of what he did was hid from me.

“Lady,” said Sir Robert, “I marvel at such words.”

“Sir,” said she, “there is no need for wonder. If I tell you, yea and verily, that such a thing is true, will you honestly believe my word?”

“Wife,” said he, “on my honour.”

“Believe, then, what I am about to tell you, for know assuredly that I am that very John whom you would seek, and this is how it happened. When I was told the matter of the wager, and of the treason of Messire Raoul; when, too, I knew that you were fled because of your grief at my faithlessness, and by reason of the land that for ever you had lost, then was I more cast down than any woman since woman first was made. So I clipped my hair close to my head, and taking all the money in my chest, about ten pounds Tournay, I arrayed me in the guise of a squire, and followed after you to Paris, coming up with you at Tombe Isoire. From there we companied together, even to Marseilles, where I served you as my own liege lord for near seven years, nor do I grudge you varlet’s service. And know for truth that I am innocent and clean of that deed the

foul knight fastened upon me, as clearly now appears, for he has been put to shame in open field, and has publicly confessed his treason.”

Having spoken thus, Madame Jehane embraced Sir Robert, her lord, and kissed him very sweetly on the mouth. When Messire Robert was persuaded that she, indeed, was John, his faithful squire, his joy was greater far than thought or words may express, and much he marvelled that so high a lady could prove so lowly and so serviceable. For which thing he loved her the more dearly all the days of his life.

Thus came together these two parted lovers; thus, on their own domain, which was both broad and fair, they lived a happy life, as becometh lovers in their youth. Often Sir Robert rode to tournaments in the train of his lord, and much honour he gained and such wealth, moreover, that his land became twice as great as that he had. After the death of the father and mother of Lady Jehane he became the heir to all their substance. So stout a knight was he, that by his prowess he was made a double banneret, and was worth four thousand pounds in land. Yet always must he be a childless man, to his exceeding grief, though for more than ten years he was with his wife after the combat with Sir Raoul.

After the term of ten years, by the will of God—which is mightier than the strength of man—the pains of death gat hold upon him. He met death like a brave knight, assoiled by the rites of Holy Church, and was laid in his grave with great honour. His wife, the fair lady, mourned so grievously upon him, that all about her felt pity for her sorrow. Yet, during the days, the sharpness of her grief was assuaged, and she came to take a little comfort, though as yet it was but a little.

The Lady Jehane bore herself during her widowhood as a devout and kindly lady, devoted to God and Holy Church. Very humble was she and right charitable, dearly cherishing the poor and needy. So good was she that no tongue might say aught of her but praise; and so fair that all who looked upon her owned that she was the mirror of all ladies in the world for beauty and for virtue. But now for a little space the tale ceases to speak of her, and returns to tell of King Florus, for it has been dumb of him o’erlong.

King Florus of Ausay lay at his own castle sorely grieved and vexed at the departure of his first wife, for she whom the barons had seated in her chair, though fresh and gracious, might not bring that peace of heart

which was that lady's gift. Four years they lived together, yet never might have an heir. At the end thereof the pains of death seized the lady, so she was buried amidst the weeping of her friends, and with such fair state and service as were fitting to the dignity of a queen.

King Florus remained a widower for above two years. He was yet a young man, for he was no more than forty-five years of age, and his barons prayed him that he would seek another wife.

"Certes," answered King Florus, "I desire not greatly to do this thing, for I have had two wives, yet might not get an heir by either. Moreover, the first wife that I had was so virtuous and so fair, and so dearly did I love her in my heart for her exceeding goodlihead, that never is she absent from my thoughts. I tell you truly that never again will I wed till I may meet a woman sweet and good as she. God rest her soul, for as I hear she passed away in that White convent where she was withdrawn."

"Ah, sire," said a knight who was in his private counsel, "many a comely dame goes about the realm whom you have never seen. One at least I know who for kindness and for beauty has not her like in all the world. If you but saw her fairness, if you but knew her worth, you would own that fortunate indeed were he—yea, though a king—who might own such rich treasure. She is a gentlewoman, discreet, and rich in money and in lands, and, if you will, I can tell you many a tale of her discretion and of her worth."

The King replied that gladly would he hear; so the knight related how the lady set out to follow after her lord, how she came up with him and brought him to Marseilles, and the many kindnesses and the great services she rendered him, just as the tale hath told before. Thereat King Florus marvelled much, and said privily to the knight that very gladly would he become the husband of such a wife.

"Sire," answered the knight, who was near neighbour to Madame Jehane, "I will seek the lady, if such is your good pleasure, and will speak her so fairly, if I may, that in marriage you twain may be one."

"Yea," said King Florus, "get you speedily to horse, and I pray you to be diligent in your embassy."

The knight passed straightway upon his errand, and without any tarrying came to the land where dwelt that lovely lady whom the tale calls Madame Jehane. He found her in a certain castle of hers, and she

welcomed him gladly as a neighbour and a friend. When they might have some private speech together, the knight conveyed to her the commandment of King Florus, that she should ride to him and be wedded as his wife. When the lady heard his word she smiled more sweetly than ever siren sang, and answered softly to the knight—

“Your king knows less of women, nor is he so courteous, as fame has bruited, to command that I should hasten to him that he may take me as his wife. Certes, I am not a handmaid to ride to him for wages. But tell your king rather to come to me if he finds my love so desirable and sweet, and woo me to receive him as husband and as spouse. For truly the lord should pray and require the lady, and not the lady the lord.”

“Lady,” answered the knight, “all that you have told me will I tell him again; but I doubt that he will come for pride.”

“Sir knight,” said the lady, “he will do the thing that pleases him; but in this matter he shows neither courtesy nor reason.”

“Lady,” said the knight, “in God’s name, so let it be. With leave I take farewell to seek my lord the King, and will tell him as I am bidden. So if there is any over-word give it me before I part.”

“Yea,” said the lady. “Take to him my greeting, and add my fairest thanks for the honour to which he calls me.

The knight parted from the lady forthwith, and on the fourth day returned to King Florus of Ausay, whom he found in his chamber, deep in business with his privy council. The knight saluted the King, who gave him his salutation again, and seating him by his side, asked how it chanced in this matter of the lady. Then the knight gave the message with which she charged him; how she would not come, for she was no kitchen-maid to haste at his bidding for her wages; but that rather should a lord pray and require of a lady; how that she sent him her fairest greeting, and her sweetest thanks for the honour he craved of her.

When King Florus heard these words, he pondered in his seat, nor did any man speak for a great space.

“Sire,” said a knight, who was of his inmost mind, “what do you consider so deeply? Certes, all these words most richly become a discreet and virtuous lady, and—so help me God—she is both wise and brave. In good faith you will do well to fix upon a day when you can seek her, and

send her greetings and letters that on such a day you will arrive to do her honour, and to crave her as your bride.”

“Certes,” said King Florus, “I will send her letters that I will lie at her castle for Easter, and that she make all ready to receive her husband and her King.”

Then King Florus bade the knight who was his messenger to prepare himself within three days to carry these tidings to his lady. On the third day the knight set forth, and, riding hard, brought messages to the lady that the King would spend Easter at her castle. So she answered that since it was God’s will it was woman’s too, and that she would take counsel with her friends, and would array herself to receive him as the honour of a lady and his greatness required. At these words the knight returned to his lord, King Florus, and gave him the answer of the fair lady as you have heard. So King Florus of Ausay made him ready for his journey, and with a great company set forth to the country of this fair dame. When he was come there he took and married her with great pomp and festival. Then he brought her to his own realm, where she was welcomed of all most gladly. And King Florus joyed exceedingly over his wife because of her great beauty, and because of the right judgment and high courage that were in her.

Within the year that the King had taken her to wife the fair Jehane was delivered of a daughter, and afterwards she rejoiced as the mother of a son. The boy was named Florence, and the girl Flora. The boy Florence was very goodly to see, and after he was made knight was esteemed the hardiest warrior of his day, insomuch that he was chosen to be Emperor of Constantinople. A mighty prince was he, and wrought great mischief and evil to the Paynims. As to the Princess Flora, she became the Queen of her father’s realm, and the son of the King of Hungary took her as wife, so was she lady of two kingdoms.

Such honour as this God gave to the fair lady because of her true and loyal heart. For many years King Florus lived happily with his virtuous wife, and when it was the will of God that his days should end, he took back to his Maker a stainless soul. The lady endured to live but six months after him, and departed from this world as became so good and loyal a dame with a quiet mind.

Here finishes the tale of King Florus and the fair Jehane.