Faithful But Not Famous

Chapter I

The Armorer of the Petit Pont

SPRING sunshine was just peeping through the vine and olive leaves in the gardens of Dauphiny when a stout, rosy-faced peasant lad set forth from his native village with a small bundle slung over his shoulder, and a stout stick in his hand. By his side walked an elderly careworn woman; but they had not got far beyond the village before the youth stopped.

"You must go back now, Mother, or you will be tired," he said. But though he begged his mother to return, he did not seem disposed to go on.

"You must not linger, Claude," said the woman, a little sternly; "it is a weary march to Paris, and you will be some days on the road."

"I wish I were not going," said the youth. "I have no wish to become a priest; I would rather stay and help you work in the vineyard."

His mother looked displeased. "Never say that again, Claude," she said; "it is an honor to enter the service of the Church, and it ought to be enough for you that Father Antoine and I both wish it."

It was not enough for the youth, apparently, for he still looked discontented and unhappy. "I would rather stay and work for you and Margot and Fanchon, than go to this school of St. Germain l'Auxerrois. I ought to stay and work for you," he added, almost passionately, "for you are a widow, and have no other son that can help you."

"Hush, hush, Claude, you must be content to do as the holy father bids you. It would be wrong—wicked—to disobey his commands, and the terrible curse of the Church would fall upon you if you did;" and the poor woman fairly trembled with terror as she spoke.

But the boy still looked unconvinced and unsatisfied. He felt very little reverence for the Church or the priests either. He had been indifferent until lately, merely going to mass and confession to

please his mother; but indifference was giving place to positive hatred, now that he was forced to leave home and friends, and go into a world of strangers at the bidding of the priest. This, too, was increased by the thought of what his mother would suffer, but she had little fear.

"I can work," she said, "and so can Margot; and, if sickness comes, our noble and kind friend, Madame Farel, will help us. You know Guillaume Farel said so when he heard you were to become a priest."

"But Guillaume Farel will be going to Paris himself very soon," said Claude, still in the same discontented tone.

"But his family will not; and let this content you, my son, that it is needful for you to go to Paris." And having said this she once more bade him farewell, and resolutely turned back, though it cost her heart a pang to do this, and leave him standing in the road.

How much it cost his mother to part with him Claude did not know. He believed that the priest had worked upon her superstitious fears, to induce her to send him from home, and devote him to the service of the Church; but of the agony it cost her, he knew nothing.

Nor did he know fully what had caused this decision. Only a few fragments had reached his ears. The valleys of Dauphiny are so near those of the Waldenses, that some rays of religious light

continually penetrated from one to the other. Claude's father had received a measure of saving truth. Hence he became an object of suspicion and aversion to the priests of the districts in which he lived; and on his death, Father Antoine came to the conclusion that the best way to eradicate the taint of heresy from the family would be to compel the widow to dedicate her only son to the Church. He would thus prove his zeal to his ecclesiastical superiors, and check the further spread of the hated doctrines in the village.

Claude had now reached the age at which he must begin his studies for the priesthood; and the widow was compelled to give up her son in fulfillment of the vow she had made, in the hope of procuring the deliverance of her husband's soul from purgatory.

After they had parted the youth stood for awhile watching his mother's receding figure as she passed up the road, and wondering when he should see his native village again. Not for many years, he feared; for Father Antoine had told him he must not return until he had cast out the love of mother and sisters from his heart—that henceforth his whole love and life must be given to the Church.

Slowly and sadly he turned away as the last glimpse of his mother was lost, and a bitter feeling arose in his heart against the Church and priests alike.

ERADICATE: *completely remove*
HERESY: *views that go against accepted beliefs*
ECCLESIASTICAL: *church*

Although Paris, in the year 1510, was already renowned for her patronage of learning, and for all the latest improvements of the age, the roads from the south of France to the capital were little better than mule tracts and bridle paths, often leading through miles of forest infested with wild boars and wolves, and scarcely less savage bands of robbers.

Of the latter, however, Claude had little to fear, for he had nothing to lose; but the bad state of the roads, and the care required in passing through the forests, made his progress very slow and tedious, and he was many days upon the journey.

But Claude's long march came to an end at last, and the gate of Paris was gained. He was just in time to enter before the gate closed for the night. Faint, weary, and footsore, he made his way through the ville or town, as one-third of Paris was called, by the Rue St. Jacques to the shop-crowded Petit Pont, one of the bridges over the Seine, uniting the island—the original city of Paris—to its suburb, the ville.

At the shop of an armorer, the shutters of which were not yet closed, he stopped to inquire his way to Pont Nôtre Dame, for he had heard that the monastery at which he was to deliver his letter was not far from this bridge. The young girl who came forward as he went in, glanced at his travel-stained clothes, and pale, weary face, as she said, "You must be a stranger in Paris not to know that the

Pont Nôtre Dame is in a straight line from here."

"I am a stranger," said Claude, glancing curiously at the brightly gleaming pieces of armor and coats of mail hanging round.

The girl looked at him again, and then said, "Wait a minute until I fetch my mother," and darted away into a room at the back of the shop. In a minute or two she returned, followed by a kindly-looking matron, who, glancing at Claude's tired look, said, "You cannot walk further tonight."

"Nay, I am not so tired but I can walk a little farther," said Claude; but his looks belied his words.

"Thou art from the country, I perceive," said the armorer's wife.

"Yes, I am from the province of Dauphiny," said Claude. "I have come to your school of St. Germain l'Auxerrois."

"There, Mother, did I not say he was a poor scholar," whispered the girl; "and you know my father always likes to help them if he can."

The matron held up her finger warningly. "Where do you lodge tonight?" she asked.

"I know not, unless I find shelter at the monastery," said Claude.

"The brothers of St. Germain l'Auxerrois are but poor men themselves," said the armorer's wife. "I advise you to tarry here. All poor scholars are welcome to what we have to give—a morsel of bread and a shelter for the night," she added, in a pleasant voice.

BELIED: *contradicted*

Claude was anxious to reach the monastery as soon as possible, but he did not like to refuse the proffered kindness; and it was well he did not, for he was far more exhausted than he thought. No sooner had the need for exertion ceased than his strength gave way, and he had scarcely uttered his thanks before he fell fainting on the floor.

"Run, Babette, and fetch some water, and get me some burnt feathers," said the matron, raising Claude's head.

"Oh, Mother, is he dead?" asked the girl in a frightened whisper.

"No, no; he is only overcome with weariness and hunger, perhaps. Poor boy, he looks very ill, and not fit for the hard life of a poor scholar."

It was some time before Claude recovered. Warm cordials had been given him, and he was lying on a bed in a little room at the side of the shop—a little slip that seemed to have been portioned off from its width, and used as a storeroom for old armor. Rusty poniards, chain coats, breastplates and *espadons*, or two-edged swords, were hung round the walls, or piled in the corners. But Claude did not see these at once, for a kind, motherly face was bending over him, and he heard a gentle voice say, "Is he better, Mother?" and then the door opened, and a tall, benevolent-looking man came in, and Babette exclaimed, "Father, here is a poor scholar almost dying from his long walk from Dauphiny."

PROFFERED: *offered*
PONIARDS: *daggers*

"From Dauphiny," repeated the armorer; "why, surely all the lads are coming from Dauphiny to our Sorbonne."

"Why?" asked Babette, and her mother looked the same question as she again put the cordial to Claude's lips.

"Well, I have been to see Maître Thibauld in the Rue St. Denis, and he tells me a young noble from Dauphiny, Monseigneur Farel, arrived there this afternoon, and craved a lodging."

"And he has come to our far-famed Sorbonne," said the matron, with a touch of pride.

"Yes, our little doctor of Etaples is the great attraction, as thou knowest," said the armorer.

"What other news hast thou heard tonight?" asked his wife, without noticing how her patient had started at the name of Farel.

"Well, something that will stir all Paris, and the Sorbonne, too, methinks," answered the armorer. "Thou heardest that my former customer, Monsieur Bodæus, had suddenly given up hawks and dogs, tilting and tournaments, to apply himself to study."

"Ah! a good customer we have lost in him," sighed the matron; "for he always paid his debts right honestly, although he lived so riotously. But what of him?" she asked; "I heard that he was as earnest now in the pursuit of learning as he had formerly been in the pursuit of pleasure."

"Ah! but the learning is not of the right sort according to our Sorbonne. The learned physician,

TILTING: *jousting*

Cop, and Monsieur Vatable, with Bodæus, have set themselves to the study of Greek and Hebrew, which the Sorbonne has declared to be deadly heresy."

"Heresy?" repeated his wife. The word had not grown to be a terror then, and she scarcely knew its meaning.

"Yes, the learned professors declare that the study of these languages will lead men to forsake the teaching of our holy mother Church, and blaspheme the name of the ever-blessed Virgin."

The matron looked shocked. "Why, there must be witchcraft in it," she said; "why do not the Sorbonne burn all the books?"

"They would if they could; but the Jews, as thou knowest, are everywhere, and the Hebrew is their native language—so it cannot be done."

"But the Sorbonne will prevent them from learning this dreadful language," said Babette.

"They will if they can," replied her father; "but the Sorbonne and our bishop are not agreed about this thing. He and Monsieur Ruzé, the lieutenant of the city, take the part of these students against the Sorbonne; and it is said that the king's niece and nephew, Marguerite and Francis of Valois, lean towards them, too."

"And our little learned doctor of Etaples, what of him?" asked the matron.

"Oh, thou knowest he is a most learned man, as well as a devout Catholic; and so he would see but little danger in these studies."

This pleasant gossip was here interrupted by the entrance of a customer whom the apprentice could not serve; and by the time Frollo had suited him, and the shop been shut up, Claude had so far recovered, that Babette and her mother went to have their own supper, leaving him to wonder how Guillaume Farel had managed to reach Paris so soon. For Farel was his own near neighbor in Dauphiny, they had played together as children; and Claude knew that he had left home for Paris some time after he himself had started.

He had not paid much heed to the rest of the gossip, beyond remembering the name of the learned professor, Dr. Lefèvre of Etaples. In the midst of conjectures about when he should see Guillaume Farel, he fell asleep.

The ringing and clattering of the armorer and his apprentice at their work awoke Claude the next morning, and he got up feeling greatly refreshed, but still very weak. When he had partaken of some breakfast which his kind host insisted upon his eating, he set off in search of the far-famed school of St. Germain l'Auxerrois. He had little difficulty in finding it; and the monk to whom his letter was addressed, having charge of the school, he had no difficulty in gaining admission as a day scholar; but beyond this, Brother Clement could not help him.

Claude looked dismayed. He had not thought to ask Father Antoine whether all his wants would be supplied as soon as he reached Paris—he had

taken it for granted that it would be so—and he could only look at the monk in blank amazement when he said: "My son, we can give the bread of knowledge here; but we are too poor to do more than that."

"But what am I to do then?" faltered Claude; "I am very poor; my mother is a widow."

"But you wish to become a priest, and—"

"Father Antoine commanded me to come here," interrupted Claude, quickly.

The monk waved his hand and frowned. "The Church has decreed that you shall serve her, and you must not rebel. The discipline is doubtless needful—the humility and poverty to be borne as a poor scholar;" and without another word, the monk turned away, and Claude was summoned to take his place in the class appointed. At dinner-time most of the scholars went home, and the monks retired to the monastery; but there was another scholar seemingly as poor as Claude himself, and they both drew near to the fire, which was burning brightly on the wide hearth.

"You are not going home," said the other, looking up from the volume he was reading, and speaking in a courteous tone.

"I have no home in Paris," said Claude, with a deep sigh, as he thought of the little cottage so many leagues away.

"Neither have I," returned his companion; "so that in that we are alike. We are both poor scholars."

"I am poor enough," said Claude, bitterly; "for I know not where to get a shelter at night, or how I am to earn my living and attend the school."

"And the school you must attend," said the other, decisively.

Claude nodded. "You are very fond of learning," he said, noticing the book.

"Yes, very. I forget that I have no dinner when I have a book like this," and he looked fondly at the volume he held in his hand.

Claude did not ask what it was. He cared more for his dinner just now, and said rather impatiently, "Well, can you tell me how I am to get something to eat, for I am very hungry."

"Can you sing?" asked his companion.

"I used to sing in the choir at home," replied Claude.

"Then you can sing in the streets here," said the other; "when singing fails, you will have to depend upon charity, as many other poor scholars do."

Claude shrugged his shoulders. This was not at all to his liking. The young peasant who had been used to honest labor, could not descend to be a beggar at once. "I can work," he said, "and I will do so;" and he left the schoolroom at once to make inquiries in the neighborhood for some work that he could do between school hours.

When the monastery bell rang for the scholars to reassemble, Claude crept back to his place in the class, weary, hungry, and thoroughly dispirited; for no one would employ him, and one or two

had even laughed at his application.

When afternoon school was over, all were compelled to leave the shelter of the schoolroom; and Claude, with the other poor scholar, shrank behind their more fortunate companions, and were thus thrown together again.

"Come with me tonight, and I will help you if I can," he whispered to Claude.

The poor boy was growing almost desperate, and he knew his companion must be very hungry, for he had been at school all day without having anything to eat; but at the sound of the *vesper* bell he turned into one of the neighboring churches, and remained until the service was over, Claude, meanwhile, growing very impatient. "I don't believe in it; I don't believe in anything; I don't mean to go to school anymore," he said, as they were leaving.

The other looked shocked. "Hush! hush! you must not talk in that way," he said, reprovingly. "You will feel better tomorrow; you are hungry, and cold, and tired now." He had a little money in his pocket—enough to buy himself a meal, and this he cheerfully shared with Claude; and then they went out in search of a sheltered corner where they could stand and sing.

No one interrupted them. It was so usual for poor peasant lads who had a taste for learning, and came to Paris penniless, for the sake of attending one of the schools, to get their living in this way, that it was hardly looked upon as a disgrace, and

VESPER BELL: *bell for evening prayers*

many who did not care for the singing gave the boys small coins.

After singing for about an hour at this corner, Claude proposed that they should go somewhere else.

"We shall not get much more tonight," said Jacques, "unless we get asked into some of the large houses."

"Do you ever go to the Rue St. Denis?" asked Claude, thinking of his friend Guillaume Farel. He remembered the name of the street where he lived, and asked where it was.

"The Rue St. Denis, oh, we will go there," said Jacques. "We are lucky tonight," he said, as he counted over his money by the light of the flaring street torches; "we have enough to pay for a lodging, and get some breakfast in the morning—the sweet Mother of mercy has heard my prayer." He bowed and crossed himself as he passed one of her shrines at the same moment; but Claude turned away: he was weary and hungry and homesick.

Claude had now more leisure to look about him, and notice the splendid buildings of the city. To a country lad who had never seen a town until within the last few weeks, the sight of so many magnificent houses, churches, abbeys, and monasteries, seemed almost bewildering. They were in the University suburb where these abounded, and where the Sorbonne—half-monastery, half-college—ruled as the king did in the city proper—the island city which the old chronicler[1] speaks

[1] French historian Henri Sauval (1623-1676)

GAY: *bright and cheerful*

of as "like a great ship sunk in the mud, and run aground lengthwise in the stream about the middle of the Seine." The river was sparkling, as though it had caught and imprisoned a thousand stars; for lights were gleaming from the windows of the houses on the different bridges, making it look almost as gay as modern Paris, with its myriad jets of gas, although gas had not then been heard of.

For our two poor scholars who could not afford to buy a torch, the narrow winding streets were very dark and very perplexing too; although Jacques thought he had mastered all its intricacies. Claude followed him, wondering when they should reach the Rue St. Denis. Not that he had any intention of seeking assistance from Guillaume Farel—he had quite made up his mind not to do that, but he would like to see him as he passed. Thinking of Guillaume Farel, he had quite forgotten that Jacques had told him not to lose sight of him in going round the corners of streets; and now, as he looked up, he saw nothing of his companion. He ran forward a few steps, but was almost knocked down by coming in contact with the buttress of one of the houses; and when he had recovered from this blow, Jacques was still nowhere to be seen.

In vain Claude called him by name, and sang the hymn to the Virgin which Jacques had told him was his favorite. No one came in answer to his calling or singing; and at last he had to give himself up to the thought that he was lost in the streets of Paris.

JETS OF GAS: *gas lamps*
BUTTRESS: *a stone support for a wall*