Lion de Bourges (continued)

You have heard how Count Harpin of Bourges and his wife Alis were banished from their lands by Charlemagne, how they came into the deep forest in Lombardy where their son Lion was born, how Alis was carried away by robbers and lived in disguise in the Saracen city of Toledo, how Harpin in his grief became a monk in the forest of Rommenie, and how Lion was suckled by a lioness, then raised as the adopted son of Bauduyn of Monclin. You have heard, too, if you were truly attentive, how Lion discovered that Bauduyn was not his father and how he arrived in poverty for the tournament at Monlusant and won there his bride, the fair Florantine, with help from the White Knight. But you have not yet heard of the grief and affliction which pursued Lion and Florantine, and of the treason which saddened their lives.

Part *III. HOW LION AND FLORANTINE WERE TWICE BETRAYED BY GENOIVRE OF CALLABRIA BEFORE THEIR MARRIAGE COULD BE CELEBRATED. HOW LION HAD A SON BY CLARISSE, SISTER TO DUKE GARNIER OF CALLABRIA.*

When the tournament of Monlusant was closed, Genoivre of Callabria ardently urged that the prize be given to her cousin, Duke Garnier. But her advice went unheeded, and when Florantine's father, King Henry of Sicily, pronounced in favor of Lion, she sent word at once to her cousin. Garnier, incensed that the one he loved should be given to a poor and unknown knight, made immediate plans to carry her off.

On the day following the tournament, King Henry, accompanied by his daughter and a duke, rode into the marketplace to crown the champion. Each knight hoped to be chosen, but the king stopped before Lion, placed the crown upon him, and said, "Bold and brave youth, by your skill in the tourney you have won my daughter and the right to govern my kingdom after me." Florantine took his hand and led him back to the palace where a great feast was held that day in preparation for the marriage which was to be celebrated on the morrow.

As Lion was returning to his lodgings, the White Knight reminded him of his promise to share his winnings equally. "Do not be angry with me," replied Lion. "You have indeed won more honor in this tourney than have I, and I wish you to wear the crown of Sicily. For my share, I desire only Florantine. I am young and strong and will win other lands." —"You have answered so well that you may keep both the lady and the land," replied the White Knight, who then explained to Lion who he was and why he had come to help him. Lion knelt and praised

God as the White Knight vanished into the heavens, after promising to aid Lion whenever he had need.

Once at his lodgings, Lion wrote a letter to his foster father, Bauduyn, telling him of his good fortune and urging him to come to Sicily. He next called before him the patient innkeeper Thiery and said: "You fed me and many brave knights loyally even when people were mocking me and you were not sure of being repaid. Now I offer you a thousand florins a year and will make you my chamberlain." Thiery acknowledged that his generous act had been done at his wife's bidding, but humbly accepted Lion's gratitude.

That night there was a full moon. Genoivre awakened Florantine just after midnight, saying, "Arise, my lady, soon it will be time to ready ourselves for the wedding. But first let us go out into the orchard." While Florantine waited with her faithful lady-in-waiting Marie in the sweet smelling orchard, Genoivre let her cousin into the city, as they had arranged. When Florantine refused to accompany Garnier willingly, he seized both her and Marie. The night-watch spotted them as they were leaving the city and roused the town. King Henry, Raymon of Vauvenisse, Lion, his squire Ganor, his new chamberlain Thiery, and the White Knight (returned at Lion's prayer) set off in pursuit. Garnier sent his bastard brother, called the Bastard of Callabria, with Florantine, and the other ladies ahead to Reggio, while he fought a delaying action in the stronghold of Monterose, on the march of Callabria. My God, how distraught was Florantine! How often she glanced back toward noble Sicily!

Garnier's sister Clarisse was waiting in Reggio for news of the tournament. When she saw her bastard brother returning with Florantine, she asked expectantly: "Tell me of the tournament in Sicily. Have we won the fair Florantine?" —"Your brother did not win me fairly," replied the princess with anger. "I have been betrayed by Genoivre and taken from the boldest knight who ever lived. He is fair and young, perfect in every way." Genoivre scoffed: "She doesn't even know where he comes from! Yet he is young and handsome, bold and doughty. They call him Lion." On hearing these praises, Clarisse felt love for Lion surge through her breast.

Meanwhile the siege of Monterose grew stronger and Duke Garnier sent his messenger to ask the Bastard to return with reinforcements. When Florantine learned thereby that Lion was besieging Garnier in Monterose, she took heart and sent a message to him by a wandering pilgrim. Through him she informed Lion that she was kept a house prisoner at Reggio and urged him to defeat Garnier and thus avert their impending marriage. Overcome once more with love, Lion determined to exchange clothing with the pilgrim and go himself to Reggio with his reply. King Henry and Duke Raymon urged him not to leave, and the

White Knight gave him warning: "I swear by the ever-truthful God that if you go there you will suffer before you return. Be careful not to anger the Lord, for if you fall into sin I must leave you at once."

With face blackened and carrying the staff and purse of the palmer, Lion left King Henry in charge of the siege and made his way to Reggio. When he entered the palace he was recognized only by Florantine, but because they talked at length Clarisse grew suspicious that this might be a spy sent from Lion. Genoivre moved across the room to get a closer look and recognized immediately that this was Lion himself! When he was about to leave, Clarisse summoned him to her chambers and in spite of his denials soon established his true identity. She had hot water and herbs brought to bathe him and saw that he was as handsome, gentle, tall, strong and mighty as Florantine had said. She wanted him for herself. Clarisse sent Genoivre and the others away and began to speak with Lion. "Fair sir, take my advice and forget Florantine. She is Garnier's. But I am beautiful and soft, tender to kiss, daughter of a mighty duke. You are now my prisoner, but I can free you if you serve me well." —"My lady, your brother has taken from me all I had. Ill luck has made me your prisoner, and I must do your bidding." That night Lion engendered in Clarisse a hardy bastard who would be called Girart.

All this time Clarisse had forgotten about Florantine and Marie, who had profited from the occasion by fleeing in men's clothing. When Clarisse learned of their escape, she cried: "Woe! ... I dare not await Garnier's return, for I know he'll have me killed! "My lord," she told Lion, "if you will promise to take me with you into Sicily, after your marriage to Florantine, for love of you I will gladly serve her in her household." Lion swore that if she set him free, he would take her with him from Reggio. That night Clarisse made ready their horses and they left the city under cover of darkness. Riding all the next day through a forest, they came at nightfall to a castle. Alas, why did they ever stop there? This castle I have mentioned was held by thirteen highwaymen, who nearly slew Lion before he could overcome them. Three, however, escaped with the fair Clarisse, whose cries for help were finally overheard by a passing knight, Gautier of Monrochier. The three cowardly robbers fled before Gautier, who rescued Clarisse, took her to his castle north of Callabria on the road to Rommenie, and made her his wife.

Riding the next day in search of Clarisse, Lion encountered the White Knight who informed him that because of his infidelity to Florantine he would have to suffer grievous penance before he would again have God's special aid.

While Florantine and Marie, still in disguise, were fleeing through the countryside of Puglie, they were stopped by a single knight

who said: "Gentlemen, have you seen a bold knight with a lily-white lady?" —"We have seen no one these past two days," was their answer. "Tell us, whom do you seek?" —"I seek my lady Clarisse, stolen away by the accursed Lion of Monclin, who they say has wed her!" No sooner had he departed than Florantine fainted from grief. In her jealousy she refused to listen to Marie's reasoned explanations. "Ah, Love! How you've deceived me! Ah, Lion! Your beauty and boldness will make me die of grief!"

Marie carried her mistress to a nearby abbey where she told the abbess their story and the reasons for their strange disguise. The abbess assured them of her protection and let them exchange their armor for nuns' habits.

But now it is time to leave Florantine and tell you about her father, King Henry, who was still besieging Monterose. His spirits were at a low ebb because he had lost his daughter and because neither Lion nor the White Knight were there to help him. At the urging of Raymon of Vauvenisse he mounted an assault, but it was repulsed, and soon the Bastard of Callabria arrived from Reggio with thirty to forty thousand fresh troops to aid his beleaguered brother. The Bastard camped below Monterose and pondered how to get word to Garnier of his presence and of how Lion had carried off Clarisse after Florantine's flight. That night he sent a messenger through the Sicilian lines and he and Garnier were able to coordinate their attack.

The following morning the horns sounded, banners unfurled in the breeze, and polished armor glistened in the sun. Crossbowmen fired the first salvo, then the armies moved together. The clash of steel and blaring of horns could be heard a league and a half away. The Sicilians were outnumbered three to one and Duke Raymon was grievously wounded by the Bastard. Sensing victory, and noting the absence of Lion and the White Knight, Duke Garnier urged his Callabrians forward and soon the Sicilians were in disordered flight, like sheep pursued by wolves. King Henry himself was captured.

The retreating soldiers had scarcely left the field when they encountered Lion, returning at last to join the siege of Monterose. "What!" he cried. "You're not wounded and your shields are whole. Go back! I swear I'll split to the teeth the first who flees another step!" Now hear what Lion did to confuse the Callabrians: he dressed one of his knights all in white, so that when the enemy saw him they thought the White Knight had returned. Lion thereby rescued King Henry and killed the Bastard of Callabria, but the retreating Prince of Taranto was able to slay the fake White Knight.

Duke Garnier reached the palace at Reggio and Genoivre ran forth to meet him. "My Lord," she said, "your sister Clarisse has betrayed you and freed Lion; Florantine has escaped!." —"It is you who have be-

trayed me," retorted the duke. "But by the Lord who died at Calvary, I'll have you burned!" At the last moment, with the fire already lit, Genoivre was saved from death and sent into exile by the intercessions of the Prince of Taranto.

The very devils of hell led Genoivre to the abbey in which Florantine and Marie had taken refuge. Florantine had recovered her health and now knew the truth about Lion. Her former passion returned with renewed vigor, and she wrote to Lion telling him to come for her. But before he could reach the abbey Genoivre had recognized Florantine and seen the opportunity to get back into the good graces of Duke Garnier. A message to the duke brought him to the abbey with the Prince of Taranto, the Seneschal of Lombardy, and five hundred men. When he entered Florantine's room he found her lying ill upon her bed. "I have scarcely eaten or drunk since I left your chambers," she told him. "I greatly regret my leaving. I gave my love to Lion and he has proven false. By God Almighty, I'll never let him wed me! But if you promise to pursue him and bring him to justice, I'll be your bride." No one alive can protect himself from a woman's wiles, for if she sets her mind to seduce, deceive and befuddle a man she'll always suceed. Her word is not to be trusted. By Florantine you see this proven, for no one ever hated anyone as much as she hated the duke, yet he believed her; and when she asked not to be moved for several days, he thought it was on account of her illness, but in truth it was to give Lion time to arrive.

Another urgent message from Florantine reached Lion as he was just ten leagues distant. He left most of his men hidden in the woods and took thirty men with him to enter the abbey. He strode into Florantine's chambers and found her feasting with Garnier. Knowing he was betrayed, Garnier rose to do battle with Lion and soon the white wine on the tables had turned to red. Outside the abbey the small troop of Sicilians was put to rout by Duke Garnier's Callabrians, who then rushed to the aid of their lord. Within, Lion and his men were quickly overcome. With Florantine and Marie they were bound in irons. "Lord God," said Lion, "my companion told me that I would pay dearly for my sin; I see my time has come and I must bravely die. Ah, Florantine, I grieve more for you than for myself: you are innocent and must suffer for my sin! Heavenly Father, who sent your only son to save sinners by his death on the Cross, pardon my sin and send back your White Knight to rescue us from death." Riding out of the East in answer to his prayer, the White Knight and a heavenly host routed the Callabrians and released their prisoners. After miraculously curing Lion of his multiple wounds, the White Knight and his host were enveloped in a cloud and disappeared into the heavens.

Lion, his squire Ganor, Florantine, and her lady Marie rode through Puglie until they neared Monlusant. Seeing their approach, King Henry and Duke Raymon of Vauvenisse led a great procession out of the city to welcome them. Lion told them how he had found the traitorous Duke Garnier seated at the table beside Florantine, how he had attacked him and been captured, and how he had been rescued by the White Knight. The next morning at dawn King Henry of Sicily had his daughter dressed in her finest robes and married to Lion in the bishop's presence. Afterwards a great feast was held in the palace, with plenteous food, music and entertainment.

While the feast was still going on, a noble knight entered and asked the reason for such celebration. He was told that the princess was marrying the boldest and finest knight in all the world. "And who is this knight?" —"Sire, he is called Lion of Monclin." The strange knight was taken aback: "Can this be true? For ten months I have sought him. I cannot believe that he has come to such a high estate!" You must know that the strange knight was Lion's foster father, Bauduyn of Monclin. Lion honored him greatly and all those present paid him honor for Lion's sake.

That night Lion lay with Florantine for the first time and engendered twin sons, Harpin and William. (7803-13030)

Part *IV. HOW LION AVENGED HIS FATHER HARPIN OF BOURGES. HOW THE DECEITFUL DUKE GARNIER OF CALLABRIA CONTINUED HIS EFFORTS TO TAKE FLORANTINE.*

Even thoughts of Florantine could not erase the treacherous Duke Garnier from Lion's mind. He stayed but two weeks with her, the time to ready his men and equipment for war. Leaving Bauduyn of Monclin in Monlusant to protect Florantine, he set forth with King Henry of Sicily, Duke Raymon of Vauvenisse, six thousand archers, ten thousand mounted knights and fifteen thousand footsoldiers to lay waste Callabria. News of his campaign soon reached Garnier, who recognized that if he dared oppose Lion on the field of battle he would lose his life. He determined therefore to ask his cousin Gaudiffer of Savoie (yes, that same Gaudiffer who earlier in our story had betrayed the noble Harpin of Bourges!) to obtain a papal intervention on his behalf. He came to Rome and, after telling his story to Gaudiffer, obtained an audience with the pope. "Holy Father," pleaded Gaudiffer, "the noble Duke of Callabria humbly asks you to make peace between him and the Sicilians who are devastating his lands. If he has done them any ill, he will gladly make it good; and if they have done him wrong he asks no recompense." —"I know who is at fault and the story behind this war," replied the pope. "This duke is responsible; but for love of you,

Gaudiffer, I will have Lion come here." A papal envoy was sent to Lion. After consultations with King Henry, and because he was eager to obtain justice of the Duke of Callabria quickly so that he might resume the search for his parents, Lion consented to come to Rome.

Lion reached the Holy City and after hearing Mass at St. Peter's came into the pontiff's presence. No sooner did the Holy Father see Lion than he perceived the close resemblance between his former attendant, Harpin, and Lion. Although the pope recognized Garnier's treachery, he sent the case before a panel of twelve senators. There Garnier offered to become Lion's liege man, serve him with ten thousand men, and pay him a hundred thousand gold florins. It was an offer Lion could not refuse. He accepted Garnier's kiss, but it was falsely given, as you will later hear.

Garnier returned to his lands, plotting treason, while Lion came once more before the pontiff. When he had told him his story, and that he was seeking his father whom he had never known, the pope said; "My child, I know your father. He was called Harpin and was chased from his inheritance of Bourges because of the slanderous words of Clariant of Hautefeuille." —*"I* am certain you are correct, replied Lion, "for recently I met my squire Ganor who for thirteen years had been seeking this same Harpin. I cannot tarry longer, but must leave at once to find him." —"Alas, it will be impossible," answered the pope, "because he died not long ago. May God pardon his soul." The pope then told Lion all he knew of Harpin's wanderings and how he had died while on pilgrimage with Gaudiffer of Savoie. At Lion's urging he summoned Gaudiffer and requested that he take Lion to see his father's tomb. Gaudiffer accepted readily, but in his heart he was plotting to be rid of the son as well.

That night Gaudiffer offered Lion and Ganor hospitality in his palace. When they were safely asleep, he rounded up twenty henchmen to attack and kill them, but the White Knight came to Lion, told him his father's true fate, then warned Lion of his own immediate danger and stayed to help him kill fourteen of the attackers. In an attempt to save himself, Gaudiffer came before the pope the next day to claim that he had been set upon by robbers in the night and had himself killed fourteen of them. No sooner had he left than Lion appeared before the pope with the true story and demanded a single combat with Gaudiffer. The combat was set for the morrow and each participant offered his pledges.

In the morning Lion and Gaudiffer dressed in their finest armor and came onto the field. A chaplain brought forth the relics on which they were to swear their oaths: the body of St. Simon, the cheekbone of St. Peter, two of St. John's teeth (they say), and one of the nails of

the True Cross. Lion swore that Gaudiffer had either killed Harpin or sold him to the Saracens, and that he himself had been set upon by Gaudiffer's hired killers. Gaudiffer answered: "So help me God, I swear that this vassal has lied, and that I never acted wrongly toward him or his father!" He moved to kiss the relics, but staggered backwards, fell, and rolled over fifteen times. In spite of this omen, Gaudiffer took the field against Lion. A lengthy battle ensued in which Gaudiffer lost first his helmet, then an ear, and finally an eye. Lion challenged him: "You are dead, Gaudiffer, whenever I choose; but first confess your sins and you can die in peace." —"Let the devils take my soul!" blasphemed Gaudiffer. "I'd rather be lodged beside Hell's furnace than in Heaven!" But after Lion cut out his other eye, Gaudiffer agreed to tell the truth. Upon learning of Gaudiffer's treachery, the senators had him drawn, quartered, and hanged.

Lion, King Henry, Raymon and Ganor left Rome and returned to Monlusant, to the great pleasure of Florantine. The following day Raymon took leave to return to Vauvenisse and his wife Parise. Scarcely would he return, however, than he would find himself in conflict with Clarembaut and Hugon, as you have heard in another tale.

Hardly a month passed before Lion summoned Ganor to have him prepare their horses and provisions to set off in search of Harpin and Alis. Florantine, who was heavy with child, tenderly implored her husband to remain, but in spite of her pleas and those of all the townspeople, Lion made his chamberlain Thiery castellan of the city, left Florantine in the care of Bauduyn, and set off to find his parents. Before his return they would all suffer greatly and the city would be razed and burned. Now it was Monlusant, but soon it would be Montoscour. (I am told that there is still a seaport in Sicily called by that name.)

Let us put aside for a while the adventures of Lion and speak of Florantine who, just after his departure, bore him twin sons, William and Harpin, whom we now call Olivier. A spy ran from Sicily to Callabria with news of Lion's departure and the birth of his sons. Recognizing his opportunity, Duke Garnier instructed Genoivre to find a way to be rid of the newborn heirs, while he himself would make plans to attack Monlusant and capture Florantine. Listen to what Genoivre did: she disguised one of her ladies as a pilgrim and sent her to Monlusant to seek an audience with Florantine by pretending she had news of Lion. The ruse succeeded and the false pilgrim was richly feted and allowed to sleep in Florantine' s chambers. Just at dawn she stole from her bed and lifted Harpin from his cradle, but he cried out loudly and she dared not stop to get William. At her return to Reggio she presented the child to Garnier and assured him that the second had died, else she would have brought him, too. Garnier paid her a hundred florins, then gave the child to a base, loathesome squire named Henry to be killed. He took him into

the woods outside the city, unwrapped him, and raised his sword to behead him. But behold the miracle that God wrought: when the child saw the sword gleaming in the sunlight, he laughed aloud, and this laughter so moved Henry that he spared the child, wrapped him again in the silken cloth, and placed him beneath an olive tree.

Believing that both of Lion's potential heirs were now dead, Duke Garnier summoned the Prince of Taranto and readied his army to attack Sicily, in spite of the promises of peace he had made in Rome. He captured many towns and castles, then laid siege to Bonivant, ten leagues from Monlusant. He sent a message to King Henry: "I, Duke of Callabria, request and order that you send me your daughter, the beautiful Florantine, whom you have falsely given to Lion. It is time that she be returned to me and made duchess of my lands. If you do not send her, I offer you my challenge." The king responded immediately to this challenge by readying his armies to march to Bonivant. Florantine begged him to put someone younger and stronger at the head of his troops, but he was determined to go himself. "An army without a leader isn't worth a bezant," he told her, "and I know no one to whom I could trust my men. They are my friends, my men, my soldiers, and will follow me better than anyone, and I will pay them richly if they serve me well." He left Florantine in the care of Bauduyn of Monclin and set off for Bonivant.

The two armies advanced to the sounds of trumpets and olifants. The rows were so tightly aligned that had an apple fallen upon them from the sky, it could not have reached the earth. The battle was fierce but indecisive until Genoivre sent thirty thousand Callabrian reinforcements. These troops, attacking from the rear, caught King Henry by surprise and slew him. In the ensuing confusion the burghers fled the city with their treasures. The following morning Garnier entered the abandoned city, which he gave over to squire Henry as a reward for slaying Lion's son.

From Bonivant Garnier marched straight to Monlusant, to which he also laid siege. After two days and two nights of fighting, the Callabrians were able to take advantage of a weakly protected wall and enter the city proper. They massacred the women and children and surrounded the donjon in which Florantine and her son had taken refuge. "My precious child," wept Florantine, "now you'll never see your father. He's been gone a year already and must be dead, for were he alive he'd have returned by now." The donjon walls held firm, but their provisions soon ran low. "My lady," spoke Bauduyn, "let us out-fit a ship and sail from this city. Garnier has no navy and cannot stop us. I'll take you away to a place where we'll never again fear Garnier, and when we learn news of Lion we'll return." —"By St. Richier, I accept this advice." Leaving Thiery in charge of the garrison, they

sailed forth until Florantine saw a noble city on the horizon. She asked a sailor: "What city is this?" —"Palermo," he answered. "It's held by the Saracens, but there are many Christians here, too." They came to port and found lodging with a rich burgher, Ysorez by name.

Meanwhile, Thiery, by a daring pre-dawn raid, was able to reprovision the donjon. Garnier took his only chance: "Castellan," he offered, "if you make peace with me and give me Florantine. I'll make you lord of Palermo, Bonivant and Monlusant, and you'll have two hundred thousand marks in golden florins." —"Sire," replied Thiery, "my lady left here two weeks ago by ship with her son William, Bauduyn, and Marie." Garnier was astounded to learn that Florantine still had a son alive. Everything seemed to have turned against him. He set fire to the city of Monlusant and left squire Henry to keep pressure on Thiery. He himself retired from the field, remembering the prophecy once given him by a clerk from Toledo, that he would die by the hand of Lion's son.

Garnier's death will not come to pass for many years, and more pressing matters must concern us first: Will Lion return to Florantine? What is to become of Clarisse? Will Harpin and Alis ever recognize one another? What of the tiny Harpin, whom squire Henry has left beneath the olive tree? Who will slay the wicked Garnier? If you are attentive, my friends, you will hear of deeds more marvelous than ever you've been told. . . . (13021-15305, 15382-16418)

[To be continued]

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