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CHAPTER FIVE

The Towns

**EVERYTHING CAME** together in the towns: the spices from the Orient, the grain from the countryside, and the fish from the sea; the monks, the knights, the scholars, and the craftsmen; the learning of antiquity and the frivolity of the moment. All these mingled in the narrow and noisome streets of the towns. Most of the towns in France grew up around the castle of some noble or bishop or around a fortified monastery. Whatever its origins, the town's inhabitants usually went about their daily business of getting and spending in the shadow of a church, and the town's protection was usually in the hands of knights, men in the service of the ecclesiastical or secular prince who claimed the town as his own, and who passed a good part of his time within its walls. Moreover, a town of any size had its school or schools, where boys and young men