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by William Harrison Ainsworth**

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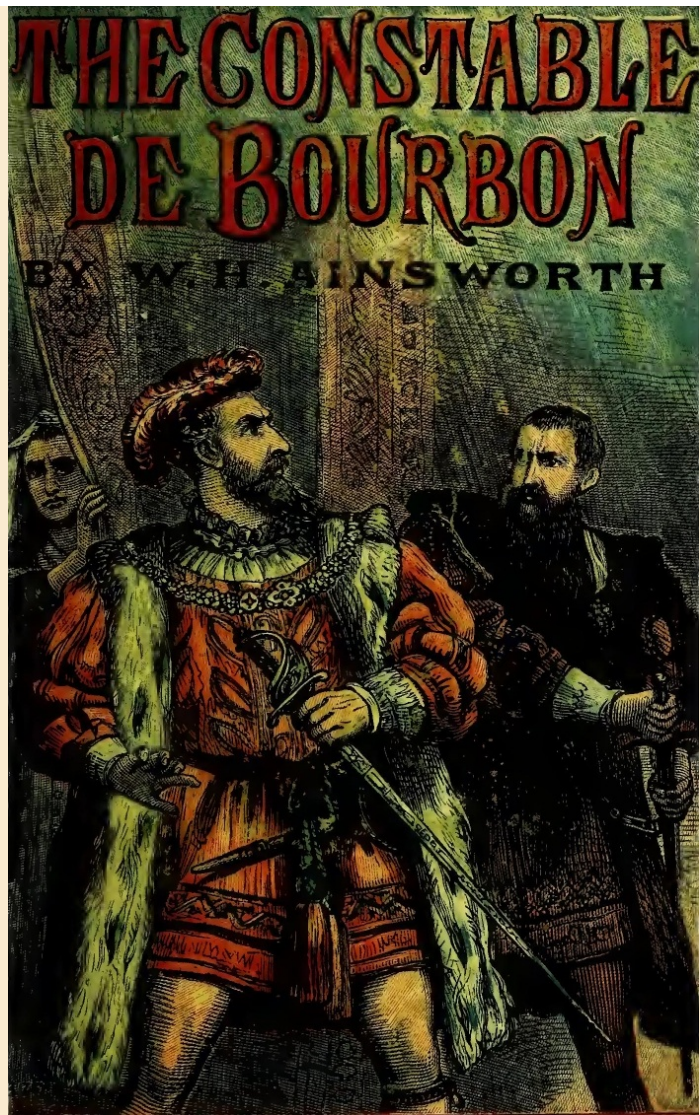
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CONSTABLE DE BOURBON ***

THE CONSTABLE DE BOURBON

By William Ainsworth

1878



Original

THE
CONSTABLE DE BOURBON.

BY
WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH,
AUTHOR OF
"THE TOWER OF LONDON," ETC.

Oh, the Bourbon! the Bourbon!
Sans country or home,
We'll follow the Bourbon,
To plunder old Rome,
BYRON.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN & HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.
1878.

Original

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BOOK I.—THE AFFRONT.

I. FONTAINEBLEAU.

On a fine day, in the early part of June, 1523, a splendid cavalcade, consisting of three hundred well-mounted gentlemen, habited in velvet, and each having a massive gold chain round his neck, entered the Forest of Fontainebleau from the side of Nemours, and proceeded along an avenue bordered by noble trees towards the palace.

For the most part, the persons composing this brilliant troop were young and handsome cavaliers, whose looks and haughty bearing proclaimed their high birth, but there were some veterans among them, whose bronzed visages and martial deportment showed that they had served in many a hard campaign. But all were equally richly attired in the sumptuous livery of their leader—black velvet embroidered with gold—and their pourpoints and the housings of their steeds bore a princely badge, woven in gold, together with a sword wrought in the same material, which denoted that their lord held the office of Constable, one of the highest military dignities of France.

The leader of the troop, a very striking personage, whom it was impossible to regard without interest, was a man of large stature, with handsome, strongly-marked features, very stern in expression. An ample chest and muscular throat indicated the possession of great personal strength, but his frame, though stalwart, was admirably proportioned, and it was easy to discern, from the manner in which he bestrode his steed—a powerful block charger—that he was a consummate horseman. His looks and deportment were those of one accustomed to command. If not absolutely young, he was in the very prime of life, being just thirty-three. His complexion was swarthy, his eyes dark and piercing, and his beard, which he wore exceedingly long, black as jet. His firm-set mouth betokened inflexible resolution, while his towering forehead indicated great sagacity. Though he was magnificently arrayed, his bearing showed that he was not one of the silken gallants who thronged the gay and chivalrous court of François I., and who delighted in the banquet, the masquerade, or the tourney—but a hardy warrior, who had displayed prowess in the field, and could lead hosts to conquest.

Like his followers, this noble-looking personage was clad in black velvet, but his habiliments were ornamented with precious stones. His girdle was set thick with gems, as was the handle of his poniard, and his plumed toque was ornamented in a similar manner. Around his neck he wore the superb collar of the

order of Saint Michael, bestowed upon him by François I., and upon the caparisons of his steed was embroidered a sword, a symbol of the dignity with which he had been invested some eight years ago, on the accession of the Duke d'Angoulême to the throne of France.

This noble warrior, who equalled Roland in bravery and military science, was the illustrious Charles de Bourbon, Constable of France. At this time Bourbon was the most redoubtable person in the kingdom, as well from his daring and ambitious character, as from the power which he derived from his vast possessions. As the second prince of the blood—the Duc d'Alençon being the first—he was not many degrees removed from the throne, which the descendants of his house occupied at a later period. Sprung from Saint Louis, by that monarch's sixth son, he was head of the branch Bourbon-Montpensier, and had espoused Suzanne, daughter of the Duchess Bourbon-Beaujeu, herself the eldest daughter of Louis XI., and widow of Duke Pierre de Bourbon. The Duchess Suzanne had died about six months previously, leaving Bourbon without issue, for her three children had preceded her to the grave.

The Constable de Bourbon's possessions were immense. Whole provinces belonged to him, in which he exercised feudal sovereignty. His titles were Duke de Bourbon, Duke d'Auvergne, Comte de Montpensier, Comte de Forez, Comte de la Marche, Vicomte of Carlat and Murat, and Seigneur of Combrailles and La Roche en Reigniers. In Poitou he had the duchy of Châtelleraut, and in Picardy the earldom of Clermont. These vast possessions, combined with his pretensions to the throne and ambitious character, naturally excited the jealousy of François I. Other causes conspired to heighten the king's dislike of him. The victory of Marignan, which signalled the first campaign of François in Italy, and gained for him the duchy of Milan, was virtually won by Bourbon. Though the Constable did not boast of the achievement, his haughty manner offended the king, who sought on several occasions to lower his pride, but only succeeded in irritating him.

In Louise de Savoie, Duchess d'Angoulême, and mother of the king, Bourbon found an active and powerful enemy. Though she was thirteen years older than the Constable, the duchess had conceived a violent passion for him, and, in order to forward his ambitious views, Bourbon feigned to respond to it. But he soon threw off the mask, and treated her with indifference. For a time, the Duchess d'Angoulême contented herself with brooding over her wrongs, perhaps believing her faithless lover would return, but when he completed his perfidy by uniting himself to Suzanne de Bourbon-Beaujeu, an alliance which greatly increased his wealth and power, by uniting two branches of the family, the hostility of the duchess took a more decided form. By her advice the large pensions bestowed upon Bourbon by the king were recalled, and other indignities were offered him.

Bourbon was too proud to complain of these unworthy proceedings, but his mother-in-law, the haughty old Duchess de Bourbon-Beaujeu, sought an interview with the Duchess d'Angoulême, and bitterly reproached her with the injustice done to her son-in-law. The indignation and menaces of the daughter of Louis XI. produced some effect, and the Duchess d'Angoulême promised that the pensions should be restored. But she did not keep her word.

Bourbon worthily avenged himself by making it manifest that he was independent of court patronage. On the birth of his son he prayed the king to stand sponsor for the child, and François assented. The baptismal ceremony took place at the Château de Moulins, and the entertainments given on the occasion were on a scale of more than regal splendour, the Constable's retinue being larger and more magnificent than that of the king. François was greatly offended at this display, and his mother took advantage of his anger to propose to him a scheme for the complete humiliation of the haughty duke. This was no less than to despoil Bourbon of all his vast possessions—an iniquitous design which she proposed to accomplish by setting up a claim to the succession as direct heiress of the elder branch of the house of Bourbon. The claim was as unjust as iniquitous, but the Chancellor Duprat, who owed his post to her, and who was her confidant and adviser, told her that by suborning the judges, and by using all the influence of the king, it could be established. For a long time François refused to listen to the odious proposition, but his mother persisted, and in the end he yielded. The duchess was aided in her vindictive plan by the numerous enemies whom Bourbon's pride had raised up against him, but chiefly by the king's favourite, the Admiral Bonnivet, the rival and enemy of the Constable.

Bonnivet, of whom we shall have to speak more fully anon, was the handsomest man at court, and distinguished as much for his gallantry as for his remarkable graces of person. Envy of Bourbon's rank and power, apprehension that he might regain his influence over the Duchess d'Angoulême, and through her govern the king, conspired to make Bonnivet dread and detest the Constable, and he became a ready instrument in the duchess's hands, losing no opportunity of inflaming the king's anger against the best and bravest of his nobles. A scornful remark of Bourbon converted Bonnivet into an implacable enemy, and made him eager for the Constable's destruction. A magnificent fête was given by the Admiral at his château in Poitou. Resolved that Bourbon should witness his rival's splendid hospitality, the king took him to Bonnivet's château, and thinking to mortify him, asked him if he did not think it splendid?

"I have only one fault to find, sire," replied Bourbon. "The cage is too large and too fine for the bird."

"You are piqued, cousin," rejoined the king. "You are jealous of the Admiral."

"I jealous of Bonnivet!" exclaimed Bourbon, with deep scorn. "How could I be jealous of one whose ancestors would have deemed it an honour to be esquires in my house?"

This bitter speech was reported by the king to his favourite, and, as we have said, rendered the latter Bourbon's implacable foe.

From this moment, Bonnivet wanted no urging from the Duchess d'Angoulême to injure Bourbon in the king's opinion. Nothing but the downfall of the Constable would now content him. Moved by his favourite's representations, which were seconded by the wily Duprat, and yielding to his own jealous feelings, the king at last gave consent to a measure which was fraught with disastrous consequences to himself, and nearly cost him his throne. A feudal process was commenced by the Duchess d'Angoulême, designed to dispossess the Constable de Bourbon of his vast territories. This suit, impolitic as well as unjust, was sustained by the king's advocate, Bizet, and by the duchess's advocate, Guillaume Poyet. It was impolitic, we say, for it was undertaken at a juncture when a war with the Emperor Charles V. caused François to require the aid of all his great nobles, and especially of so sagacious a commander as Bourbon. From its importance and long

duration, and from the illustrious personages concerned in it, the process excited the attention of all Europe, and the wily Emperor failed not to take advantage of the opportunity of alienating so able a commander as Bourbon, and caused secret overtures to be made to him. Henry VIII., also discerning the great mistake that François had committed, entered into a league with the Emperor to reduce the power of France. Both these monarchs regarded Bourbon as the most important auxiliary they could obtain; but François, insensible to the danger, allowed the process to go on. That the issue would be adverse to the Constable, little doubt could be entertained. The Parliament of Paris showed themselves disposed to comply with the king's wishes, and it was almost certain that a decree would be pronounced in favour of the Duchess d'Angoulême. But before the matter was decided, Suzanne de Bourbon died, leaving the duke, as we have stated, without issue.

This event, which revived the smouldering fire in the breast of the Duchess d'Angoulême, and awakened new hopes, caused her to suspend operations for a time. Bourbon had been a widower for six months, during which he had remained at the Château de Moulins, when he was summoned by the king to Fontainebleau, and set out at once, attended, as was his custom, by a numerous and splendid escort. He rested on the last night of his journey at the Château de Nemours, in order to reach Fontainebleau at noon.

Amid the crowd of nobles and gentlemen who accompanied him were René de Bretagne, Comte de Penthièvre, and Jean de Poitiers, Seigneur de Saint-Vallier, and Comte de Valentinois. The latter belonged to one of the oldest families in France, and had been governor of Dauphiné during the reign of the late king Louis XII. He had raised a large number of men for François I. during the war in Italy, and, like Bourbon, had good cause to complain of the king's neglect and ingratitude. Saint-Vallier's daughter, the beautiful Diane de Poitiers, had recently married Louis de Brézé, Comte de Maulévrier, grand seneschal of Normandy. Saint-Vallier was somewhat stricken in years, his beard and locks were grizzled, and his noble countenance had a grave and melancholy expression, as if he foresaw the misfortunes in store for him. He was a man of the highest honour, and Bourbon, who had great faith in his judgment, generally consulted him. Of the gentlemen in attendance upon the Constable, the two in whom he chiefly confided were the Seigneurs Pompérant and Lurcy, both young men of good family, graceful in exterior, mettlesome, proud, and eager for distinction.

Since the accession of François I., the old feudal château of Philippe Auguste and Saint Louis had been almost entirely demolished, and had given place to a superb palace, reared in the style of the Renaissance. François I. had not as yet completed his grand designs, but he had done enough to make the Palace of Fontainebleau one of the noblest structures in France. Its splendid apartments were full of objects of art, paintings, and sculpture brought from Italy, and its glorious gallery, just completed, was richly decorated. The old walls and moat of the mediaeval chateau had given place to delicious gardens, with broad terraces, parterres, alleys, fountains, lakes, bosquets, and all that could contribute to enjoyment. As Bourbon drew near the palace, and gazed at its magnificent façade, he could not refuse it the meed of admiration it so well deserved.

The approach of the Constable and his suite was watched by a number of arquebusiers, pages, grooms, and serving-men, collected in the outer court, or grouped upon the great horse-shoe stairs leading to the principal entrance of the palace. Various comments were made by these persons on the number and splendour of the Constable's retinue, and the general opinion seemed to be that the king would take offence at the display. Among the observers were two magnificently-attired seigneurs, who, being stationed on the summit of the lofty stairs, commanded a complete view of the scene. Evidently, from the respect with which they were treated, these persons were of the highest rank. The most noticeable of the two—though both were noticeable—was a very distinguished-looking man, in age about thirty-five, though he did not look so much, and possessing features of classical regularity, and a figure of incomparable grace. In stature he was a little above the ordinary height, and his deportment was haughty and commanding. His rich brown locks were shorn close, as was then the mode, and he wore a pointed beard à l'Espagnole. Both for his graceful exterior and fascinating manner he seemed formed to captivate, and indeed almost all those whom he had addressed—and he made the highest dames his mark—had found him irresistible. He was accounted the handsomest, as well as the most accomplished cavalier at court, and excelled all his compeers in manly exercises, as he surpassed them in grace.

This preux chevalier was Guillaume Gouffier de Boisvilliers, Seigneur de Bonnivet, Admiral of France. From the favour bestowed upon him by his royal master, he was called "le Grand Mignon du Roi." Audacious in love as in war, equally at home in the mêlée or at the masked ball, Bonnivet was the most gallant and profligate personage of the most gallant and profligate court in Europe, he had fought by the side of his royal master at the battle of Marignan, and was subsequently sent by François as ambassador-extraordinary to England, where he distinguished himself at the gorgeous court of Henry VIII. by his unparalleled magnificence. Brave to a fault, rash, enterprising, spiritual, lively, a boon companion, inordinately addicted to gallantry, Bonnivet exactly suited the king. A perfect courtier, he maintained his influence over François, while he strengthened his position by ingratiating himself with the king's mother. His prodigality was excessive, and his audacity in love affairs unparalleled. If we are to believe Brantôme, he resorted to the most extraordinary stratagems in the prosecution of his amours, and had trap-doors contrived in the chambers of his château. He was the secret lover of the king's mistress, the beautiful Comtesse de Châteaubriand, and he even dared to raise his eyes to the Duchess d'Alençon, the king's sister. To Louise de Savoie he was so subservient, that he became little better than her tool, but she requited him by showering favours on his head. It was by her desire that the command of the army of Guienne was bestowed upon him; and he had but recently returned to court, flushed with the successes he had gained over the Spaniards in Fontarabia.

Vain and presumptuous, Bonnivet had offended most of the old commanders, but, being supported by the king and the duchess, he was unassailable.

The person who stood next to Bonnivet, and who watched Bourbon's approach with as much surprise and as much curiosity as the Admiral, was very different in appearance and manner from the royal favourite, though equally richly attired. Though not handsome, he had a striking countenance, and his deportment was proud and martial. He was no other than the renowned Anne de Montmorency, one of the haughtiest and wealthiest nobles of France, and one of the bravest of her captains. Though he did not envy Bonnivet the king's favour, nor seek to supplant him, he held him in contempt, and would probably have rejoiced in his downfall.

Montmorency belonged to a ruder and hardier school than that represented by the Admiral, and had distinguished himself by many feats of arms and personal courage. On account of his valour and military skill he had just been named a marshal of France by the king.

"By Heaven! it *is* the Constable de Bourbon!" cried Bonnivet. "What brings him to Fontainebleau?"

"I know not," replied Montmorency, "but I trust he may be restored to the king's favour, and this abominable process abandoned."

"That is not likely to be the case," remarked Bonnivet. "If Bourbon humbles himself, the king may overlook his faults—not otherwise."

"I have yet to learn what faults he has committed," said Montmorency. "I know he has been unjustly treated, and so I shall not hesitate to tell the king."

"You had better not say as much to the duchess," remarked Bonnivet.

"Wherefore not?" demanded the marshal. "If this suit is pressed to an issue, mischievous consequences are sure to follow, and I therefore hope it may be amicably arranged. From Bourbon's appearance here, I augur favourably. If I can help to set the matter right, I will."

"Take my advice, marshal, and do not meddle in the matter," said Bonnivet. "You will only incur the duchess's displeasure."

"I care not for that," said Montmorency.

"And yet it is to the duchess you owe your bâton. You are ungrateful, monsieur le maréchal."

These words were not uttered by Bonnivet, but by a singular personage, who had approached them unawares, and listened to their discourse. On turning, Montmorency beheld Triboulet, the king's jester. The court buffoon wore the parti-coloured garb proper to his office, and carried a bauble in his hand. Misshapen in person, he had high shoulders, long arms, large feet and hands, and an immense head. His brow was low, his eyes lighted up by a malicious flame, and his countenance altogether had a cunning and mischievous expression, which inspired fear while it excited mirth.

Immediately behind Triboulet stood a tall, thin man, whose appearance offered a striking contrast to that of the jester. This personage wore a black taffeta robe with loose sleeves, and a silken skull-cap of the same hue, which set off his sallow features. His eyes were thoughtful in expression, and a long grey beard, descending to his girdle, added materially to the gravity of his aspect. This individual was the renowned Cornelius Agrippa, who after many years of travel and strange adventure in Germany, Switzerland, the Low Countries, and England, now formed part of the royal household of France, and occupied the post of physician and astrologer to the Duchess d'Angoulême, who had great faith in his medical and mystic lore. Though the courtiers affected to deride Agrippa's predictions, and sometimes charged him with dealing in the black art, they nevertheless stood in great awe of him.

"Why dost charge me with ingratitude, thou ribald knave?" said Montmorency to the jester.

"Because you turn upon your benefactress," replied Triboulet.

"Bah! I have got no more than my due," said Montmorency. "Thou shouldst talk of my ingratitude to the duchess—à propos of the Constable de Bourbon."

"Her highness has no reason to be grateful to the Constable," said Triboulet, with a strange grin.

"But the king has," rejoined Montmorency. "Without him, Maignan would scarce have been won. I would rather lose my marshal's bâton than Bourbon should be deprived of his possessions."

"The king shall hear of this," muttered Bonnivet. "Did the stars tell you that Bourbon would come here to-day, learned sir?" he added to Cornelius Agrippa.

"I expected him," replied the philosopher.

"Then possibly you know his errand?" continued Bonnivet, with an incredulous smile.

"I know it," replied Agrippa, gravely. "I could tell you why he comes, and what will befall him, but I care not to read the future to those who mock my lore. The star of Bourbon is temporarily obscured. But it will break out with added splendour. This day is the turning-point of his destiny. If he stays here he will be great—but if he departs he will be greater."

"How are we to interpret that, compère?" inquired Triboulet,

"As you will," rejoined Agrippa, contemptuously. "The words of wisdom are unintelligible to fools. But mark me, messeigneurs," he added to Bonnivet and Montmorency. "The destinies of the king, the duchess, and the Constable, are this day linked together—but the influencing power resides in Bourbon."

"Why in him? Explain your meaning, doctor!" demanded Bonnivet.

"I have said all I care to say," replied Agrippa. "But here comes the Constable. Will you stay and bid him welcome?"

"No, I will in, and inform the king of his arrival," said Bonnivet.

"You will find his majesty in the grand gallery," said Agrippa. "I left him there, not many minutes since, with the Comtesse de Chateaubriand."

"I will go thither," replied Bonnivet, hastening across the vestibule.

"Methinks the Constable is like a wild beast about to fall into a trap," remarked Triboulet to the astrologer. "Were I the king, if I once caught him, I would not let him go."

"Neither would I," replied Agrippa, significantly. "But his majesty cannot read the future."

By this time Bourbon had dismounted from his charger, and was received with the ceremony due to his exalted rank by the chamberlain, who descended the stairs to meet him. Pages, esquires and gentlemen bowed as the haughty Constable mounted the steps, and when he reached the summit the Marshal de Montmorency advanced to meet him, and a very cordial greeting passed between them.

"I am right glad to see you here again, prince," said the marshal. "I hope we shall soon gather fresh laurels together in the Milanese."

"I should rejoice to fight by your side," replied Bourbon. "But I know not why I have been sent for by the king."

"Have you been sent for?" said Montmoreney, surprised. "I thought you came of your own accord. So much the better. You will be well received. The king is in a very gracious humour—and so is the duchess."

"Ah! the duchess!" exclaimed Bourbon, with an expression of deep disgust.

"You do not speak of her highness as she speaks of you, prince," observed Triboulet. "I have heard her sigh and seen her change colour at the mention of your name."

Bourbon made no reply to this remark, but graciously returned the salutation addressed to him by Cornelius Agrippa. A slight sign from the astrologer, who was standing within the vestibule, drew him towards him.

"I would fain have a word with your highness," said Agrippa, as the Constable approached him. "I have been consulting your horoscope."

"Ha! what have you found therein, good doctor?" asked Bourbon, who was by no means free from superstition.

"Much," replied Agrippa, gravely. "This is a critical hour with you, prince—the most critical hour of your existence, since it forms the turning-point of your career. According as you now act, so will your future destiny be influenced. Comply with certain propositions which will be made you, and which will in no respect affect your honour, and your position will be assured, and you will be elevated to almost supreme power. Decline them—"

"What then?" demanded Bourbon, fixing his dark eyes searchingly upon the astrologer.

"Decline them, I repeat," pursued Agrippa, "and you will incur great perils—very great perils—but you will baffle the schemes of your enemies, and obtain brilliant successes."

"You promise this, doctor?" cried Bourbon, eagerly.

"The stars promise it you, prince, not I," returned Agrippa. "But I have more to tell, if you have courage to hear it," he added, gravely.

"Say on!—let me know all," cried Bourbon.

"You will not long enjoy your triumph. You will meet a warrior's death before the walls of a great city."

"The very death I covet," said the Constable. "Take this, doctor," he added, detaching a gem from his doublet, and giving it him. "Your prognostication decides me."

"A word more and I have done," said Agrippa, lowering his tone. "You will gain friends as powerful as those you will lose. There are other monarchs who can better appreciate your noble qualities than the King of France."

Bourbon looked at the astrologer, as if he would fain question him further, but the latter signified by a glance that he had nothing more to impart, and the Constable left him and followed the chamberlain, who led him across the vestibule towards the doors of the grand gallery, before which ushers and a guard of halberdiers were stationed.

II. FRANÇOIS I.

The magnificent gallery which we are now about to enter had only just been completed, and formed the principal ornament of the palace, though it was subsequently eclipsed by another and yet more magnificent gallery reared by Henri II. The gallery of François I., which still exists, though reft of some of its ancient splendour, was of great length, admirably proportioned, and possessed a superb plafond, painted by the best Italian masters, and supported by a grand gilt cornice. The walls were adorned with colossal figures of goddesses and nymphs carved in oak, and between these statues were introduced admirable paintings. On either side were lofty windows with deep embrasures, embellished like the walls with carvings and paintings. The windows on the left looked on an exquisite orange-garden, while those on the right commanded a spacious court, with a fountain, a chef-d'oeuvre of art, in the midst of it.

At the upper end of the grand gallery a brilliant party was now assembled. Chief among them, not merely in point of rank, but for his lofty stature, majestic and graceful deportment, and splendid habiliments, was François I. At this period, the king, who was still under thirty, was in the full éclat of his manly beauty. So lofty was his stature, that he towered above the tallest of his courtiers, and his person was strongly but admirably proportioned. With his remarkable physiognomy, rendered familiar by the breathing portrait of Titian, all are acquainted. All can conjure up that countenance, so handsome, intellectual, refined, haughty, sarcastic, of which perhaps the sole fault was that the principal feature was too prominent—a peculiarity which caused the monarch to be popularly surnamed *François le grand nez*. The king's eyes were dark and full of fire, and his clear skin was set off by a pointed beard. His brown locks were cut short, in consequence of a severe wound he had received on the head, and as a matter of course the fashion had been followed by his courtiers. His teeth were magnificent, and were constantly displayed, his countenance being rarely without a smile. His expression was jovial and good humoured, though somewhat proud and sarcastic; his deportment full of majesty, but he was so affable that he set all who approached him at ease. Familiarity, however, was never attempted with François, even by his greatest favourites. In a word, he fully merited the appellation to which he aspired, and which was universally bestowed upon him, of the First Gentleman in Europe.

François I. was not remarkable merely for his personal accomplishments and graces. His mental qualifications were of a very high order. If not erudite or profound, he was well read. He was fond of poetry, and was himself a poet. He delighted in romances of chivalry, "Lancelot du Lac," "Garin le Lorrain," and took for his model the peerless "Amadis de Gaule." In consequence of his predilection for them, the favourite books with the gallants and dames of his court were "Gérard de Nevers," "Pierre de Provence et la Belle Magueloune," and "Petit Jehan de Saintré." Not merely was François I. a lover of literature, and a patron of poets and men of learning, but he warmly encouraged the arts, and his court was frequented by the best painters, sculptors, and architects, whom he brought from Italy.

Endowed with some of the highest and noblest qualities, by nature frank, loyal, and chivalrous, though fiery and impetuous, passionately fond of war, and always thirsting for military renown, François was a perfect type of the nation over which he ruled, and next to Henri IV., who to a certain extent based himself upon him, is the best loved of the French monarchs. His splendid person and noble features, his kingly deportment, his accomplishments, his martial tastes, his courage, his address in the tilt-yard and in the management of arms of all kinds, pike, rapier, two-handed sword, his unequalled skill and grace in horsemanship, his jovial humour, his bonhomie, his devotion to the fair sex, are dwelt upon with satisfaction, and his faults overlooked or forgotten. The following poetical portrait of him is far too brightly coloured:

C'est luy qui a grâce et parler de maître,
Digne d'avoir sur tous droit et puissance,
Qui sans nommer, se peut assez connoître.
C'est luy qui a de tout la comioissance.
De sa beauté il est blanc et vermeil,
Les cheveux bruns, de grande et belle taille;
En terre il est comme au ciel le soleil.
Hardi, vaillant, sage et preux en bataille,
Il est bénin, doux, humble en sa grandeur,
Fort et puissant, et plein de patience.

The faults of François I. were profligacy and prodigality. More than once he exhausted his treasury by the immense sums he lavished upon his mistresses and his favourites. So completely did he yield to his love of pleasure, that the greater part of his life which was not occupied in the field was spent in sybaritic enjoyments. Though not tyrannical, he was capricious and vindictive, and not unfrequently strained the royal prerogative to the utmost.

On this occasion the splendid person of the king was displayed to the utmost advantage by his magnificent attire. His habiliments were of white and blue—the colours of the Comtesse de Châteaubriand. His doublet, of azure velvet slashed and puffed with white silk, glittered with diamonds, and his girdle was ornamented with rubies and emeralds. Over his doublet he wore a white brocade mantle, trimmed with minever, and so fashioned as to display the puffed sleeves of his jerkin. The handle and sheath of his poniard were studded with gems, as was also the guard of his long rapier. His sky-blue velvet toque was encircled by a white plume, and ornamented by diamonds. The perfect symmetry of his lower limbs was displayed by his white silk hose, and below the knee he wore the Garter, with which he had been invested by Henry VIII. prior to their meeting at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. His buskins, of blue velvet slashed with white satin, like his doublet, were ornamented with pearls. He was vain of his small feet and finely-formed hands, and his fingers were loaded with magnificent rings. Around his neck he wore the collar of the order of Saint Michael.

The court of François I., as we have intimated, was not only attended by the first nobles, but by the most beautiful women of the kingdom, and, though distinguished more than any other of the period for splendour, refinement, and chivalry, was not remarkable for strictness and decorum, though the fair fame of his neglected consort, Queen Claude, was never impeached. But this devout and discreet princess was queen only in name. The hands that really held the reins of government were those of the Duchess d'Angoulême, while the king's affections were estranged by his mistresses.

The Comtesse de Châteaubriand, who at this time held absolute sway over the fickle heart of the amorous monarch, was in sooth a most lovely and fascinating creature. Françoise de Foix, daughter of Jean de Foix, Vicomte de Lautrec, and first cousin of the heroic Gaston de Foix, surnamed "*le Foudre d'Italie*" was early united to the Comte Laval de Chateaubriand, whose jealousy of her beauty induced him to immure her in a solitary chateau in Brittany. His precautions, however, were unavailing. François having heard of the incomparable charms of the countess, compelled her jealous spouse to bring her to court, and at once became passionately enamoured of her. The nature of Françoise de Foix was unambitious, and she might not have exercised the influence she possessed over the king beneficially but for her brothers, the elder of whom, Odet de Foix, Seigneur de Lautrec—a brave but not a successful leader—she made a marshal of France; while the Comte de Lesparre, the younger, also owed his advancement to her.

Françoise de Foix was tall, slender, and exquisitely proportioned. Her features were of extreme delicacy, her eyes large and of a tender blue, her eyebrows beautifully pencilled, her locks blonde, and her complexion ravishingly fair. Her attire was of white brocade, her long stomacher being covered with gems, while the girdle that encircled her narrow waist was studded with precious stones. Over her gown she wore a surcoat of azure satin embroidered with gold, and having loose hanging sleeves. A magnificent head-dress of goldsmith's work confined her blonde tresses, and set off her lovely countenance. Françoise de Foix was as fascinating in manner as she was charming in person, and her royal lover seemed spellbound by her attractions. She was not, however, more faithful to him than she had been to her husband, but she had the art to conceal her infidelities, and never incurred his suspicions. Unable to brook his dishonour, the Comte de Châteaubriand had withdrawn wholly from court, and secluded himself in his lonely chateau in Brittany, where he meditated a terrible revenge, which he afterwards consummated. The end of the lovely countess

was very tragical.

From the contemplation of the bewitching Françoise de Foix we must turn to another lovely woman, who formed part of the assemblage in the gallery. This was the king's sister, Marguerite de Valois, Duchess d'Alençon—La Marguerite des Marguerites, as she was styled by her royal brother, who tenderly loved her. Graceful of person, beautiful of feature, amiable in disposition, a model of virtue in a depraved court, united to a husband she could not respect, and who was incapable of appreciating her merits, yet to whom she was faithful, highly accomplished, learned, and witty, the Duchess d'Alençon was the chief ornament of the court of François I.

About two years subsequent to the period of our history Marguerite was liberated from her husband by death, and espoused in her second nuptials Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre—a consort in all respects better suited to her. As Queen of Navarre, her court was thronged by poets, savants, and men of letters. Clement Marot thus eulogises her:

Entre autres dons de grâces immortelles,
Madame écrit si haut et doucement,
Que je m'étonne, en voyant choses telles,
Qu'on n'en reçoit plus d'ebanissement.
Puis quand je l'ouïs parler si sagement,
Et que je vois sa plume travailler,
Je tourne bride, et m'ébanis comment
On est si sot de s'en émerveiller.

Ronsard, then a handsome page, thus addresses her:

Ainsi tu fus, ô princesse,
Ançois plutôt, ô déesse,
Tu fus certes tout l'honneur
Des princesses de notre âge,
Soit en force de courage,
Ou soit en royal bonheur.

By some she was styled the Tenth Muse and the Fourth Grace. Her *Nouvelles*, which obtained a wonderful celebrity in her own day, may be classed with the *Decameron* of Boccaccio.

Marguerite was dressed in crimson velvet, richly embroidered, and her head-dress was of goldsmith's work, like that of the Comtesse de Châteaubriand. If she was not so fascinating as the latter syren, she possessed infinitely more dignity, and her features had an expression which nothing but purity can impart.

Many other beautiful and high-born dames and demoiselles were present, but we do not think it necessary to describe them, neither can we do more than allude to the brilliant collection of young seigneurs, all magnificently arrayed, by whom the king was attended.

"So you are resolved to go to Italy, sire," observed the Comtesse de Châteaubriand to the king, who was standing near an open window, gazing into the orange-garden. "Nothing that I can say will detain you."

"I must win back the duchy of Milan, which your brother, the Maréchal de Lautrec, has suffered Prospero Colonna and Pescara to wrest from me," rejoined François. "Had I been there, this would not have happened. I have been idle far too long, and must conduct the war in person."

"I trust it will be a brief campaign," sighed the countess.

"Doubt it not, ma mie," replied the king. "The duchy shall soon again be mine. During the winter I will hold my court at Milan, and you shall come thither, if you list."

"I would I might accompany you during the campaign, sire! Let me go with you, I entreat you!"

"No, that cannot be. You could not cross the Alps with the army. But you shall follow speedily. Nay, content you, mignonne. You shall go with me as far as Lyons."

At this moment, Bonnavet, who had come quickly down the gallery, approached them.

"You have some news for us?" said the king, looking inquiringly at him. "Any tidings from Bayonne, or from the Milanese?"

"None, sire," replied the Admiral. "I merely come to announce to you a most unexpected visitor. Not to keep you a moment in suspense, I will add that the Prince Mal-endurant has just arrived at the palace."

"The Constable de Bourbon arrived here!" exclaimed the countess.

"His arrival is not unexpected," replied the king, smiling. "In fact, I sent for him."

"You sent for him, sire!" exclaimed Bonnavet, surprised, and exchanging a glance with the countess. "I did not suppose you would adopt such a course. If I had been aware of it, I would have counselled you against it."

"And so would I," added the countess.

"For that very reason, I did not mention my design," remarked François. "What will you say, ma mie, if I should be reconciled to the Constable?" he added to the countess.

"I shall say that your majesty is not true to yourself," she replied, unable to conceal her vexation.

"Reconciliation with Bourbon is impossible, unless the Duchess d'Angoulême will forego her claim—and she will never do that!" cried Bonnavet.

"Hum!" exclaimed François. "One cannot tell what may happen. I always pay the greatest deference to my mother's wishes, and, as she has expressed a desire to see the Constable, I have sent for him."

"It is strange I should hear nothing of this before, sire," remarked Françoise de Foix, in a tone of pique.

"Not so strange as you think, mignonne," replied the king. "The duchess bound me to secrecy."

"What can be the meaning of this?" thought Bonnavet. "The duchess hates Bourbon too deeply to make terms with him."

"I see it!" mentally ejaculated the countess, instinctively arriving at the truth. "Her love for Bourbon has been suddenly revived. But will he accept her terms? If I know him, he will not."

"Here comes the Constable," remarked François, as the tall and majestic figure of Bourbon was seen moving slowly down the gallery. He was preceded by the chamberlain, and followed by Saint-Vallier and René de Bretagne.

"He has not lost his insolent deportment," remarked the Admiral. "I ought to have informed your majesty that he has brought with him an escort of three hundred gentlemen."

The observations told, and a frown of displeasure passed over the king's brow. But it fled before Bourbon came up, and gave way to a gracious smile.

"Welcome, cousin," he cried, in a voice that bespoke cordiality. "I am right glad to see you again at Fontainebleau."

At the same time he advanced towards the Constable, and embraced him affectionately.

"Sire, your kindness overwhelms me," said Bourbon, moved by the warmth of the reception.

"You have been absent from court far too long, cousin—far too long," pursued the king. "Our sister the Duchess d'Alençon, and the Comtesse de Chateaubriand, will tell you how much we have missed you."

"It is not my fault that I have been absent, sire," replied Bourbon. "Your majesty will own that I had good reasons for keeping away."

"I wish you had come, notwithstanding, cousin," rejoined François. "A few words of personal explanation would have helped to set matters right. But you shall not depart till we have settled our differences."

"Then I must tarry long, sire," observed Bourbon, smiling sternly. "Your majesty, I hear, has been pleased to style me le Prince Mal-endurant, and I own that the appellation is merited, but I am not altogether as patient as you imagine."

"I do not wonder at it, cousin. Heaven knows, you have had good cause for anger! And if you have exhibited a patience worthy of the long-enduring patriarch himself, I admire you the more for it. But if I inflict injuries, I know how to repair them, and your wrongs shall be redressed."

"You own I have been wronged, sire?" exclaimed Bourbon. "That is something."

"Foi de gentilhomme! I will make you amends, cousin," cried the king. "You shall be abundantly satisfied."

Bourbon's sternness could not fail to give way before these and many other equally gracious expressions. It was evident that François desired to conciliate his offended visitor, and as he employed his irresistible fascination of manner to that end, he succeeded. The king next addressed himself to Saint-Vallier and René de Bretagne, greeting them both with marked condescension and kindness, and, while he was thus engaged, Bourbon paid his devoirs to the Duchess d'Alençon and the Comtesse de Chateaubriand. By the latter he was coldly received, but Marguerite de Valois accorded him a welcome as gracious as that of her royal brother. A haughty salutation passed between the Constable and Bonnavet.

"I must have a few words with you in private, cousin," said the king, turning to Bourbon, as soon as he had concluded his brief discourse with Saint-Vallier. "Come with me, I pray you."

The Constable bowed, and he and the king quitted the gallery, and entering a corridor on the left, proceeded to a suite of magnificent apartments which François himself had recently constructed. The most friendly understanding seemed already re-established between them. François treated the Constable like a brother, and placed his arm affectionately upon his shoulder.

"I will now avow the truth to you, cousin," he said. "This process has been a great pain to me, but there is only one way of settling it. Methinks you can readily guess that mode."

"No, sire, I confess I am completely puzzled," replied Bourbon.

"You are duller than I thought," said the king. "The matter rests with the Duchess d'Angoulême. You must talk it over with her."

"With the duchess, sire!" exclaimed Bourbon. "Impossible! You must hold me excused."

"Nay, I insist, cousin," rejoined François.

"The interview will be productive of no good, sire, and will rather aggravate existing difficulties. Again, I pray you to excuse me."

"Nay, I am resolved, cousin. I know what is for your good. Come with me to my mother's private cabinet. She expects you."

"Expects me!" cried Bourbon. "Then this is a preconcerted scheme. I warn your majesty it will fail."

"I will listen to no more objections," said François. "You will thank me for my firmness anon."

III. LOUISE DE SAVOIE.

BOURBON yielded with an ill grace, and entered an ante-chamber with the king, in which several gentlemen and pages were assembled. Two ushers were stationed at a door at the farther end of the chamber. At the king's approach this door was thrown open, and Bourbon found himself in the presence of the person he most hated on earth.

The Duchess d'Angoulême was seated at a table, engaged in converse with the Chancellor Duprat, who arose on the king's entrance with Bourbon, and made a profound obeisance, but the duchess retained her seat.

Though at this time Louise de Savoie was nearer fifty than forty, she had by no means lost her personal attractions. She bestowed great care in the preservation of her charms, and Nature seconded her efforts, Careful, temperate, active, both in mind and body, ill health had produced no ravages upon her frame, and at forty-five—nay, even at forty-seven, which was her exact age when Bourbon appeared before her—the duchess looked younger than many an indolent beauty of thirty-five. Her complexion was fresh and blooming, her cheek rounded and full, her eyes bright, her brow white as marble and with scarcely a wrinkle, and her dark tresses entirely untinged with grey. In brief, she was still so handsome that it was supposed she must have discovered some wondrous potion for the preservation of her youth. Her figure was tall, and admirably proportioned, with a slight tendency to embonpoint, which she successfully combated by exercise and abstemiousness. It was from the duchess that François and Marguerite inherited their symmetry of form and beauty of feature. Her hands were small, white, soft, and dimpled, and her long taper fingers were covered with rings. Her deportment was majestic, and at times imperious. She did not neglect to heighten the effect of her charms and imposing appearance by richness of attire. On this occasion she was arrayed in purple cloth of gold tissue, her stomacher being embroidered all over with flat gold and damask. Her sleeves were paned with gold and quilted, and fastened with gold aiglets. She wore a partlet ornamented with rubies and other precious stones; her head-dress, diamond-shaped and having long side lappets, glittered with gems. From her neck hung a chain of gold, enamelled black, sustaining a magnificent diamond cross, and her girdle was ornamented with diamonds, rubies, and pearls. Over the king her son, as we have said, Louise de Savoie had early obtained an extraordinary ascendancy, which she never lost. He appointed her Regent of the kingdom when he set out on his first Italian campaign, and had resolved to entrust the government again to her care during the war which he now meditated for the repossession of the Milanese.

Ambitious of power, the Duchess d'Angoulême was also greedy and avaricious, and scrupled not to enrich herself from the royal treasures. Of a miserly disposition, she amassed money, not to spend, but hoard it, and she died possessed of enormous wealth.

Louise was the daughter of Philippe, Duke de Savoie, and Marguerite de Bourbon, and was wedded at the age of twelve to Charles d'Orléans, Comte d'Angoulême. Six years later she became a widow.

Bourbon's swarthy cheek flushed, and the blood mounted to his brow, as he stood before the duchess. Bowing haughtily, he remained at a little distance from her.

Approaching his mother, the king said, in his cheerful accents,

"I have brought back the truant chevalier, madame."

Adding a few words in a low tone, he turned to Bourbon, and telling him he would return anon, quitted the chamber with Duprat.

Left alone with the Constable, Louise regarded him anxiously and tenderly, but the stern expression of Bourbon's features underwent no change. The duchess, however, would not be discouraged, but said, in a gentle voice which she thought calculated to move him, "Dismiss that frown, Charles de Bourbon, and come and sit nigh me. Nay," she added, playfully, "I will be obeyed."

But Bourbon moved not, and his brow grew yet more sombre.

Presently she arose, and, stepping up to him, laid her hand gently upon his arm.

He shrank from her touch as if a viper had stung him.

Mastering her anger by a great effort, she said,

"Come, let us be friends, Charles de Bourbon. We have been enemies long enough."

"Friends, madame!" exclaimed Bourbon, bitterly. "You can scarcely expect it."

"But you will forgive me, Charles, will you not, when I tell you I still love you?" she rejoined.

"You are too old for love, madame—far too old," he rejoined, with a look almost of loathing. "You may have loved me years ago, though your conduct since would lead me to doubt it. But now the feeling ought to he—must be—a stranger to your breast."

"My love for you is strong as ever, and enables me even to bear this language from you," she said. Hear my explanation before you reproach me so severely."

"I have not reproached you, madame, but I say that your declarations are utterly inconsistent with your conduct. You have pursued me with unceasing animosity. By your instrumentality, madame—for I well know you were the cause of my removal—I was despoiled of my authority in the Milanese, which I had helped to win, and the government given to Lautrec, by whose mismanagement the fruits of the battle of Marignan were lost. Not only did you prevent the reimbursement of the large sums I had expended for the king's use in Italy, but you withheld the payment of my pensions as grand-chamberlain of France, as governor of Languedoc, and as Constable. I deserved better treatment from the king, but I knew from whom the wrongs proceeded, and made no complaint. This was not enough. By your instigation a deeper affront was offered me, I will not vaunt my military skill, though I had proved it sufficiently at Marignan, but I was excluded by you—by you, madame, for you directed the king—from the four grand military commanderships formed by his majesty, and given by him to the Duke d'Alençon, the Duke de Vendôme, Bonnivet, and Lautrec, Still I was patient."

"Why were you patient, Charles? Why did you not complain to me?" cried the duchess.

"Though deeply mortified by the affront," pursued Bourbon, disregarding the question, "I did not hesitate to

obey the king's commands to join the army of Picardy, and brought with me six thousand well-armed fantassins, and three hundred lances. How was I requited? I need not tell you, madame, since the work was yours, that the command of the vanguard, which was mine by right, was given to the incapable D'Alençon. That affront was hard to bear, yet I *did* bear it. Well might the king call me the Prince Mal-endurant!"

"Again I ask you, Charles, why did you not appeal to me?" said the duchess.

"Appeal to you, madame—to the author of my wrongs!" rejoined the Constable, fiercely. "I would have died rather than so humiliate myself. Though profoundly wounded, I remained loyal in heart to the king. No act, no word evinced resentment. But, instead of disarming your animosity, my patience only aggravated it. You had not wreaked your vengeance sufficiently upon me. Disgrace was not enough. I must endure spoliation. You threw off the mask and assailed me in person. In concert with your unscrupulous adviser, Duprat, you contrived a diabolical plan to deprive me of the whole of my possessions. An infamous process was commenced against me, which has filled all France—all Europe—with astonishment. The finishing stroke has only to be put to your work. My property has been sequestered by the Parliament, and may be confiscated. But beware, madame!" he added, in a voice of terrible menace. "Beware! A fearful retribution will follow."

"Threaten me not, Charles de Bourbon," she rejoined. "But listen. I do not deny the charges you have brought against me. Had you submitted to the first blow—had you sued for grace—all the rest would have been spared you."

"Sue for grace, madame! Sue for grace to you!" cried the Constable. "You know little of Charles de Bourbon if you think he would so demean himself."

"Hear me out," said the duchess. "I was determined to conquer your pride—to bring you to my feet—but you compelled me, by your inflexibility, to have recourse to harsher measures than I originally intended. You have to thank yourself, Charles, for the punishment you have endured. But throughout it all, I have suffered more than you—far more."

"I am glad to hear it," remarked Bourbon. "But I doubt it."

"When I have seemed to hate you most, I have loved you best, Charles. My heart was torn by conflicting emotions—rage, grief, love. You had spurned my love, and few women could pardon such an affront. But I could forgive it, and would have forgiven you, if you had returned to me. But you ever held aloof. You forced me to go on. Blow after blow was dealt, in the hope that each might be the last. Oh, how it would have joyed me to restore you to the government of the Milanese!—to have ordered the payment of your pensions!—to have given you the command of the army of Picardy! But all can now be set right."

"Impossible, madame," rejoined Bourbon.

"Say not so, Charles. Since you have been made aware of my motives, you must view my conduct in a different light. Let the past be forgotten. Let all animosity be at an end between us. Henceforth, let us be friends—nay, more than friends. Do you not understand me, Charles?"

"I would fain not do so, madame," rejoined Bourbon, averting his gaze from her.

"Let not resentment blind you to your own interests, Charles," pursued the duchess. "You have felt my power to injure you. Henceforth, you shall find how well I can serve you. I can restore all you have lost—honours, commands, pensions. Nay, I can raise you higher than you have ever risen, and load you with wealth beyond your conception. All this I can do—and will do. Kneel down at my feet, Charles—not to supplicate my pardon, for that you have—but to renew those protestations of love which you once offered me. Kneel, I conjure you."

But Bourbon remained inflexible.

"My knees would refuse their office were I inclined to comply," he said.

"Then I must perforce take on myself the part which of right belongs to you, Charles. By the death of your spouse, Suzanne de Bourbon, you are free to wed again. I offer you my hand. You ought to solicit it on your bended knee—but no matter!—I offer it to you."

"Is the king aware of your design, madame? Does he approve of the step?" demanded Bourbon.

"The king sent for you at my instance to arrange the marriage," rejoined the duchess.

"His majesty's complaisance is carried to the extremest point," said Bourbon. "But he seems to have taken my assent for granted—as you have done, madame."

"We could not doubt it," said the duchess, smiling confidently. "The proposed union offers you too many advantages to be rejected."

"Enumerate them, I pray you?" said Bourbon. "First, then, the marriage will amicably settle the process between us, and will operate like a decree in your favour, for you will retain your possessions. Next, I shall bring you a royal dowry. As my husband, you will be second only in authority to the king. Nay, you will have greater power than he. You will find Louise de Savoie a very different wife from Suzanne de Bourbon. I will enrich you—I will augment your power—I will aggrandise you. You shall be king—all but in name."

"I doubt not your power to accomplish all this, madame," rejoined Bourbon. "I know your unbounded influence over your son. I know you have filled your coffers from the royal treasures—as was proved by the confession of the wretched Semblençay, who gave you the five million ducats he ought to have sent to Italy, and who paid the penalty of his folly with his life. I know that in effect you have already despoiled me of my possessions—"

"Dwell on these matters no longer, Charles," she interrupted. "Forget the past, and look forward to a brilliant future. My offer is accepted?—speak!"

"You deem me so much abased that I must needs accept it, madame," said Bourbon. "But I am not yet fallen so low. I reject it—scornfully reject it."

"Reflect, Charles—reflect before you come to this fatal determination, for fatal it will be to you," she cried. "You are ruined—irretrievably ruined—if you wed me not."

"I would sooner be degraded from my rank—I would sooner mount the scaffold, than wed you, Louise de Savoie, my some time mistress, but now my bitter enemy," said the Constable, fiercely.

"Bourbon, I swear to you I am not your enemy," cried the duchess. "Do not regard me with scorn and hate. Look at me as a loving woman. My heart—my soul is yours. Since you will not stoop to me, I will do what I never yet did to man—I will kneel to you."

And she threw herself before him, and clasped his hands.

"Forgive me, Charles!" she cried, in half suffocated accents. "Forgive me for the great love I have ever borne you."

Notwithstanding the supplications and tears of the duchess, there was no symptom of yielding in Bourbon. With almost rudeness, he said, "Arise, madame. It is useless to prolong this interview. Farewell!"

"Stay, I command you, Charles de Bourbon," she said, rousing all her dignity. "For a moment I had forgotten myself, but your barbarous conduct has restored me. Henceforward I will banish your image from my breast, or only retain it there to animate my vengeance. Your possessions shall be at once confiscated. I will make you a beggar, and then see if you can find a wife among the meanest of my court dames."

"I shall not need to do so, madame," rejoined Bourbon, sternly. "Let it confound you to learn that the Emperor Charles V has offered me in marriage his sister Leanor, widow of the late King of Portugal."

"The Emperor has offered you his sister?" exclaimed the duchess. "It is false—it is false!"

"You will find it true, madame," said Bourbon, with a contemptuous smile.

"You shall never wed her," cried the duchess. "If you reject me, you shall wed no one else."

"These threats are idle, madame," rejoined Bourbon, scornfully. "I laugh at your impotent malice. You have wreaked your vengeance to the utmost. But you will never be able to subdue me to your will."

"Traitor and villain, I see through your designs!" cried the duchess. "You meditate reprisals through the enemies of your country. But I will effectually crush you. If your treasonable practices be proved, I will have your head—ay, your head, Charles de Bourbon."

"I have no fear for my head," laughed Bourbon, disdainfully. "It is safe enough, even though I am in the king's palace at Fontainebleau."

"A moment, Charles!" cried the duchess, suddenly relapsing into tenderness, and making an effort to detain him. "Are we to part thus?"

"How otherwise should we separate, madame, than with threats on your part—defiance on mine?" said Bourbon.

And with a haughty inclination he was about to depart, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and the king, unannounced, entered the cabinet.

IV. WHAT PASSED BETWEEN THE KING AND BOURBON.

Evidently, François had expected a very different termination to the interview from that which had occurred. The smile fled from his countenance as he gazed at the pair.

"I have found him utterly impracticable," whispered the duchess. "But you may have better success."

"We shall see," replied the king, in the same tone. "Leave us alone together."

Casting a look at Bourbon, who haughtily averted his gaze from her, the duchess stepped towards the back of the cabinet and raised the hangings, behind which was a door communicating with her private apartments. Instead of passing through the door, however, she concealed herself behind the arras.

"Come, cousin," said François, approaching the Constable, and leaning good humouredly on his shoulder. "Cast off those moody looks. Have you quarrelled with my mother? If so, I will engage to set the matter right."

"I pray your majesty to let me go," rejoined Bourbon. "I am scarce master of myself, and: may offend you."

"No, you will not do that," replied the king. "I have more command of my temper than you have; and besides, I can make allowances for you. But you must not let your pride interfere with your interests."

"The duchess has told me so already, sire," cried Bourbon, impatiently. "I know what you design to say to me. I know the arguments you would employ. But the match cannot be brought about."

"Answer one question," said the king. "Is it nothing to be father-in-law to the King of France?"

"I am sensible enough of the distinction such an alliance would confer upon me, sire," replied the Constable. "But, for all that, I must decline it."

"Foi de gentilhomme! fair cousin, you are perverse enough to provoke me, but I will be calm," said the king, changing his attitude and tone. "Since argument is useless, I must exert my authority. By Saint Denis! the match *shall* take place. I will have no 'nay' from you. Now you understand."

"I hear what you say, sire," rejoined Bourbon, sternly. "But you cannot enforce compliance with the injunction. Not even at your bidding will I wed the Duchess d'Angoulême."

"You refuse!—ha?" demanded the king, fiercely.

"Absolutely," replied Bourbon. "I am a prince of the blood."

"What of that?" cried François, yet more highly incensed. "Were you a crowned king, you would not bemean yourself by marriage with my mother. It is she who degrades herself by stooping to you. But this," he

added, checking himself, "cannot be your motive."

"No, sire, it is *not* my motive," rejoined Bourbon. "Since you force me to speak, you shall have the truth. I prefer death to dishonour."

"Dishonour!" echoed the king, astounded and enraged. "Dare you breathe such a word in connexion with my mother? What mean you? Speak!"

François looked at him with eyes that seemed to flash lightning. Bourbon, however, did not quail before the fierce looks and gestures of the king, but replied with stern significance:

"A man of my quality, sire, does not marry a wanton."

"Sang Dieu! this to me!" cried the king, transported with rage.

And he struck Bourbon in the face with his hand.

This mortal insult, as may be imagined, produced a fearful effect on the Constable. His first impulse was to slay his assailant, and his hand involuntarily clutched his sword. But he abandoned the insane design almost as soon as formed. In the effort to constrain himself, his frame and features were terribly convulsed, and a cry of rage that was scarcely human escaped him. The king watched him narrowly, prepared for attack, but manifesting no alarm.

"Sire," cried Bourbon, at length, "that was a craven blow, unworthy of one who aspires to be the first knight in Christendom. No other person but yourself, who had thus insulted me, should live. But you are safe. You have dishonoured me for ever. Take back the dignity you have bestowed upon me, and which I am unworthy longer to wear," he added, tearing the jewelled cross of Saint Michael from his breast, and casting it on the ground. "Others may fight for you. My sword shall never again be drawn in your service."

With a heart bursting with rage and grief, he rushed out of the room.

As Bourbon disappeared, the duchess came from behind the hangings.

"So, you have heard what has passed between us, madame?" cried the king.

"I have," she replied. "He is a false traitor and a liar, and has been rightly served. But you will not let him quit the palace? By that blow, which he richly deserved, you have made him your mortal enemy. You have him now in your hands, and you will rue it, if you suffer him to escape. He has many partisans, and may raise a revolt."

"You alarm yourself unnecessarily, madame," rejoined François.

"I have good reason for apprehension," rejoined the duchess. "He has already entered into secret negotiations with the Emperor."

"Foi de gentilhomme! if I thought so, I would order his instant arrest!" exclaimed the king. "But are you sure, madame? Have you any proof of what you assert?"

"He boasted, just now that the Emperor had offered him the widowed Queen of Portugal in marriage," replied the duchess. "Does not that prove that secret overtures have been made him?"

"You are right. He is more dangerous than I thought. I must prevent his defection—by fair means if possible—if not—"

"You have provoked him too far, my son," interrupted the duchess. "He will never forgive the insult you have put upon him. Allow him to depart, and most assuredly he will league with your enemies."

At this moment Bonnavet entered the cabinet.

"Pardon me, sire, and you, gracious madame, if I venture to interrupt you," he said. "But I would know your majesty's commands in regard to the Constable. His demeanour and looks are so infuriated, and his language so full of menace, that I have ordered the guard not to let him quit the palace."

"You have done well, monseigneur," said the duchess. "Where is he now?"

"In the pavillon de Saint Louis," remarked Bonnavet, "with her majesty and the Dame de Beaujeu."

"I did not know the duchess was here," remarked Louise de Savoie, uneasily.

"She only arrived an hour ago from Paris," replied Bonnavet. "Ha! what is this I see?" he added, noticing the cross of Saint Michael, which Bourbon had cast on the ground. "Is it thus your honours are treated, sire? Such insolence deserves severe punishment."

"I would punish the offender—severely punish him—but that I gave him great provocation," returned the king. "You say that the Constable is in the salle de Saint Louis, with the queen and the Dame de Beau-jeu?"...

"He went thither not many minutes ago," replied Bonnavet. "Shall I arrest him as he comes forth?"

"No," said the king. "I will see him again, and then decide. Come with me, madame—and you too, Admiral."

V. THE DAME DE BEAUJEU.

Prevented by the guard from quitting the palace, and nothing doubting that his arrest would speedily follow, Bourbon was slowly pacing the corridor, considering what course he should pursue, when an usher approached him, and, bowing reverently, informed him that the queen desired to speak with him.

The Constable willingly obeyed the summons, and was conducted to a magnificent hall, where he found the queen.

Her majesty was seated in a fauteuil, and beside her was an ancient dame of very striking appearance.

Several court demoiselles and pages were in attendance, but they were stationed at the farther end of the hall.

The amiable qualities of Queen Claude were written in legible characters in her countenance. She was still young, and her features, though not beautiful, were pleasing. Her person was slightly deformed. It is quite clear she must have suffered deeply in secret, but profound as they were, her sorrows were breathed only to the ear of her confessor, or to Heaven. Her manner was singularly gentle, almost humble, and she rarely, if ever, manifested resentment against those who most deeply injured her. So saintly, indeed, was her conduct, that when she was released from her troubles, an event which occurred within a year from the date of our history, miracles were supposed to have been wrought upon her tomb. Claude, we need scarcely add, was the eldest daughter of Louis XII. and Anne of Brittany. Married to François, then Duke de Valois, when she was barely fifteen, she brought him as a dowry Brittany, and the title to the duchy of Milan. On the present occasion she was attired in cloth of gold tissue, raised with pearls of damask silver, and was coiffed in a diamond-shaped head-dress, ornamented with jewels.

The ancient dame whom we have mentioned as seated near her was Anne of France, Duchess de Bourbon-Beaujeu, eldest daughter of Louis XI. A woman of masculine character and understanding, the Dame de Beaujeu, as she was called, possessed many of her sagacious father's qualities, great shrewdness and tenacity of purpose. She had governed the kingdom with firmness and ability during the youth of her brother, Charles VIII., and long maintained her sway, but her credit declined under Louis XII., and when François I. mounted the throne the power she had once possessed fell entirely into the hands of the Duchess d'Angoulême.

At no time had Anne de France been handsome, and perhaps her features were more agreeable in old age than in youth. Her countenance was hard, strongly marked, and entirely devoid of feminine expression. Always meagre of person, she became thinner and more rigid as she advanced in life. Her manner was cold and severe, but her deportment did not lack dignity.

At the time when we discover her, the Dame de Beaujeu seemed utterly prostrated by illness. Her features were wasted and haggard, and all her movements evinced extreme debility. She was attired in black velvet, richly trimmed with sable. Around her throat she wore a gorget, and her venerable locks were partially concealed by a black velvet hood. She had been brought in a litter to the palace, and had to be carried up to the salle de Saint Louis. Her physician, Mathieu Bernard, accompanied her, and was now standing at a little distance, describing her precarious condition to Cornelius Agrippa.

"Is it possible her grace can have journeyed hither from Paris, doctor?" inquired Agrippa.

"She heard that the Constable de Bourbon had been summoned to Fontainebleau by the king, and insisted upon coming hither," replied Mathieu Bernard. "All my efforts to dissuade her grace were vain."

"She will scarce get back again," replied Agrippa.

Making a profound obeisance to Claude, Bourbon knelt reverentially to his mother-in-law, and kissed her withered hand. The old duchess immediately raised him, and embraced him tenderly.

"Your looks bespeak trouble, my son," she said, regarding him anxiously. "Tell me what has happened?"

Bourbon relieved his bursting heart by a full description of his interview with the Duchess d'Angoulême, and the quarrel that had ensued between him and the king. Both Claude and the old duchess listened to his narration with profound interest. At its close, the queen said:

"I sympathise with you deeply, prince, but do not let the injuries you have received make you swerve from your loyalty to the king."

"Justice must and shall be done you, Charles," cried the Dame de Beaujeu. "I will go to the Duchess d'Angoulême at once. Your arm, Charles—give me your arm."

"You are not equal to the effort, madame," said the Constable.

"If it costs me my life, I will see her," cried the resolute old duchess. And she took a few steps, but her strength then utterly failed her, and she would have fallen but for the Constable's support.

Her physician and Cornelius Agrippa, who had been anxiously watching her, flew to her assistance.

"Oh! that; I had but one hour left of my former strength! I should die content," she groaned.

"Drink of this, madame," said Cornelius Agrippa, offering her a phial. "It is a sovereign elixir, and will restore you."

But she had not strength to take the phial, and was evidently sinking.

Bourbon, however, placed the elixir to her lips, and made her swallow a few drops. The effect was instantaneous and almost magical. New strength seemed imparted to her limbs, the hue of health returned to her cadaverous cheeks, and she was able to stand without support.

"You have given me new life," she said to Agrippa.

"Waste not a moment of it, madame," he replied. "It may not be of long duration."

Just then, the great folding-doors at the end of the hall were thrown open, and the king, accompanied by the Duchess d'Angoulême and Bonnivet, entered the salon. Behind them came a crowd of courtiers, amongst whom were Montmorency, Saint-Vallier, and René de Bretagne.

"I have my wish. She is here!" cried the old duchess.

On the entrance of the king, Claude advanced to meet him, and the Dame de Beaujeu followed closely behind her, marching with the firmness and majesty of former years. As he beheld her move along in this way, Mathieu Bernard observed to Agrippa:

"You have performed a miracle."

"I have but restored the vital energies for a moment," replied the other. "It is the last flash of the expiring taper."

The royal party met in the centre of the salon. Bourbon had followed his mother-in-law, and Saint-Vallier and René came over and stationed themselves beside him.

"I am sorry to learn, sire," said Claude, "that our cousin, the Constable de Bourbon, has incurred your

displeasure. Let me intercede for him with your majesty."

"It is true that the Duke de Bourbon has deeply offended me," said the king. "But it is not too late for his restoration to favour."

"You hear that, prince," said Claude to the Constable. "All may yet be well."

"Sire," interposed the Dame de Beaujeu, "I ask for justice to my son-in-law, the Duke de Bourbon. Has he not served you faithfully? Has he not brought you men and treasure? Has he not bled for you in the field? And how has he been rewarded? By slights, by the withdrawal of his pensions, by the spoliation of his property, by disgrace, by dishonour. Sire, wrongs like these are enough to make a traitor of the noblest and most loyal heart in France."

"No wrong, madame, has been done to the Constable de Bourbon," rejoined the king. "But, if I am not misinformed, he has already played the traitor."

Bourbon looked sternly at the king, but took no other notice of the insinuation.

"Believe it not, sire," said the Dame de Beaujeu. "Whoso has told you that has spoken falsely," she added, glancing at the Duchess d'Angoulême. "Charles de Bourbon is no traitor. But goad him not to desperation by wrongs greater than any man can tamely endure."

"Peace, madame. You trouble the king," said the Duchess d'Angoulême.

"What!" exclaimed the Dame de Beaujeu, regarding her with unutterable scorn. "Is Anne of France, daughter of Louis XI., the wisest and the greatest monarch that ever sat on the throne, to hold her peace at the bidding of Louise de Savoie? But I will *not* be silent. I will tell the king, your son, that he has done a flagrant act of injustice in aiding you to avenge yourself upon the Duke de Bourbon. All shall know the cause of your animosity."

"I will hear no more," cried François, impatiently.

"Listen to me, sire, I beseech you," said Queen Claude. "You have done Bourbon grievous wrong. Make him some amends. You know I rarely interfere with your proceedings, but in this case I cannot refrain. I would not have you commit injustice."

"Do you also tax me with injustice?" said the king, frowning.

"I have said it, sire," she replied.

"I should be wanting in duty to your majesty if I remained silent," said Montmorency. "In my opinion, Bourbon has been unjustly treated."

"You, too, against me, marshal?" cried the king.

"I will answer for Bourbon's loyalty with my head, sire," said Saint-Vallier.

"And so will I," added René de Bretagne.

"I take you at your word, messieurs," replied François. "Charles de Bourbon, you are free to depart."

"Sire, you do wrong in granting this permission," said the Duchess d'Angoulême.

"Beware, madame," said the Dame de Beaujeu, stepping towards her. And clutching her hand, she whispered, "Interfere, and I will proclaim your infamy to all around."

Bourbon tarried not a moment. With a haughty obeisance, and with a look of ill-disguised menace at the king, he quitted the salon, followed by Saint-Vallier and René.

This time he experienced no hindrance from the guard, but passing through the vestibule, and descending the great horse-shoe staircase, he mounted his steed, and rode off with his escort.

As Cornelius Agrippa had predicted, the Dame de Beaujeu expired on her litter on the way back to Paris.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK

BOOK II.—THE FLIGHT.

I. THE SECRET TREATY.

At the ancient Château of Moulins, the abode of his illustrious ancestors, the Constable de Bourbon dwelt in princely state, maintaining a vast number of retainers, holding a court little inferior in splendour to that of the king, and exercising all the privileges of a powerful feudal suzerain. A grand and picturesque-looking structure was the château, and from its proud position dominated the town, and the rich vine-covered district around it. Not two leagues from Moulins was the abbey of Souvigny, a venerable Gothic building, which was to the Dukes of Bourbon what Saint Denis was to the Kings of France—a mausoleum.

On his return from Fontainebleau to Moulins, Bourbon allowed no indication to appear from his manner that he was disturbed by the quarrel that had taken place between him and the king, though those in his confidence knew that he meditated revenge, and was making preparations for revolt.

Ere a week had elapsed, he received information through a trusty messenger that the Comte de Beaurain, the ambassador of the Emperor, and Sir John Russell, the envoy of Henry VIII., had arrived at Bourg, in Bresse, where they proposed to await a communication from the Constable. The moment had now arrived when it became necessary for Bourbon to decide whether he would remain faithful to his sovereign, and bear tamely all the injuries he had received, or cast off his allegiance to François, and enter into a league with that monarch's enemies. The Constable was not long in arriving at a determination to adopt the latter course.

As it might excite the king's suspicions if he went to Bourg, and as it would be equally dangerous if the ambassadors attempted to come to Moulins, Bourbon appointed a meeting with them at Montbrison, the capital of the Haut-Forez, the most mountainous and inaccessible portion of his domains.

Under the pretext of a pilgrimage to Notre-Dame du Buy, he forthwith set out for the Chateau de Montbrison, accompanied by a great number of adherents on whose zeal and attachment he could rely, and who were prepared to second his projects, and take up arms in his cause. Chief among these were Saint-Vallier and René de Bretagne. Bourbon was also attended by his confidant, Philibert de Saint-Romain, Seigneur de Lurcy, the Seigneur de Pomperant, his two chamberlains, his two maîtres d'hôtel, Antoine d'Espinat, lieutenant of his company of men-at-arms, the Bishops of Puy and Autun, both of whom had warmly embraced his cause, and a crowd of young seigneurs from the Bourbonnais, Auvergne, Forez, and Beaujolais.

On the third night after his arrival at Montbrison, while he was seated at supper with his retainers in the great banqueting-hall of the château, two strangers, who described themselves as merchants of Lyons, who were travelling to Clermont, claimed his hospitality.

The Constable at once gave them welcome, and assigned them seats at the lower table. Their attire accorded with the account they gave of themselves, but their bearing proclaimed them persons of rank, and Bourbon easily detected in one of them, a handsome, dark-complexioned man, with fine eyes and a very intelligent countenance, the Seigneur de Beaurain; while, though he was wholly unacquainted with the other—a well-made, but somewhat robust personage, with a bright fresh colour and light-brown locks—he judged him to be Sir John Russell, and he was right in the conjecture.

At the close of the meal, the Constable expressed a desire to converse with his new guests, and requested them to follow him to his private cabinet.

As soon as the door was closed, all disguise was thrown aside, and Bourbon cordially welcomed Beaurain, and expressed the highest satisfaction at beholding the English envoy.

"I regret that I could not receive you in a manner befitting your rank, messeigneurs," he said. "I do not think I have any spies amid my household, but it is necessary to be cautious. And now be seated, I pray you, and let us address ourselves to the matter in hand."

"First, let me express the indignation which my royal master the Emperor feels at the infamous treatment experienced by your highness from the King of France," said Beaurain—"treatment as injudicious as unworthy, and which fully justifies any reprisals you may make."

"I have also to convey to your highness the expression of similar sentiments from my sovereign, King Henry VIII.," added Sir John Russell. "His majesty is highly indignant."

"I have not merely my own private wrongs to redress, messeigneurs," replied Bourbon, "but those of my country, which is suffering from bad government and oppression, and half ruined by a luxurious monarch, who ravages the people to enrich his mistresses and favourites. François de Valois is unworthy to occupy the throne of France."

"He shall not occupy it long," replied Beaurain, with a significant smile. "But before proceeding further, let me offer my credentials to your highness. Here is a letter from the Emperor," he added, delivering a despatch to the Constable.

Bourbon took it, broke the seal, and read as follows:

"Cousin,—I send you the Sieur de Beaurain, my second chamberlain. Believe him as you would believe me, and doing so you will find me always your good cousin and friend,

"Charles."

"I am furnished by my august sovereign, King Henry VIII., with full powers to treat with your highness, as this letter will prove," said Sir John Russell, likewise delivering a despatch to the Constable.

"Enough, messires," observed Bourbon, after he had perused the second despatch, which was couched in nearly similar terms to the first. "These letters, though brief, are all I could desire."

"It is scarcely necessary for me to observe to your highness," said Beaurain, "that the Emperor my master, and his Majesty the King of England, are acting conjointly in this matter. As you are aware, they have entered into a league offensive and defensive against France, and in this league they propose to include your highness."

"I am ready to engage in war against François I.," remarked Bourbon; "but, whatever may be the issue of the contest, I cannot consent to recognise Henry VIII. as King of France."

"Such recognition will not be required of your highness," observed Sir John Russell. "France will exist no longer. The realm will be divided between the three allies. The north will fall to the share of my royal master. The centre of the kingdom will be yours. The south will appertain to the Emperor."

"The partition can be discussed hereafter," rejoined Beaurain. "The kingdom must be conquered ere it can be divided. It is proposed that the invasion shall take place in this manner. The Emperor will penetrate France from Narbonne with eighteen thousand Spaniards, ten thousand German lanz-knechts, two thousand men of arms, and four thousand lances. Simultaneously with this attack, Henry VIII. will place fifteen thousand archers and five hundred horsemen in Picardy, and this force will be further augmented by six thousand men from the Low Countries. The invasion will take place when François is occupied with the

expedition to Italy. Not till ten days after the kingdom has been attacked at either extremity by Spain and England shall your highness raise the standard of rebellion, for fear of misadventure. At the expiration of that time you shall declare yourself. You will be aided by ten thousand lanz-knechts, enrolled for you in Germany, who will enter France through Bresse."

"I approve the plan," said Bourbon. "But by whom are the lanz-knechts to be paid?"

"The Emperor and his Majesty King Henry VIII. engage to furnish your highness with two hundred thousand crowns for their payment," returned Beaurain. "And the two monarchs further engage to sustain your highness against all your enemies, and to conclude no truce or treaty in which you are not comprehended."

"I am content," observed Bourbon.

"I trust your highness will be well satisfied with what I have further to propose," pursued Beaurain. "In order to prove the high esteem in which he holds you, the Emperor has commissioned me to offer you in marriage his sister, the widowed Queen of Portugal, with a dower of two hundred thousand crowns, without counting her own rental of twenty thousand crowns, besides jewels for five or six hundred thousand more. Or, if your highness prefer the Emperor's younger sister, the Infanta Catalina, you may have her, with a like dower. All his Imperial Majesty requires in return is, that you shall unite yourself with him against all other persons, without exception."

"I choose the fair Queen of Portugal," replied Bourbon; "and I will give her as a dowry the Beaujolais, which produces twenty thousand crowns of revenue. I take you both to witness," he added, "that I now renounce my fealty to François I. I cast off my allegiance to that false and perfidious king, and transfer it to the Emperor Charles V."

"We attest your highness's renunciation," said both envoys, solemnly.

"And I accept your allegiance in the name of the Emperor," added Beaurain, with a look of satisfaction.

"Nothing now remains but to prepare the treaty," said Bourbon to the Imperial envoy.

Beaurain did not require a second order. Writing materials were on the table beside him, and he rapidly performed his task. The document having been approved by Bourbon and Sir John Russell, two copies were made of it, and when all had been duly signed, as well by the Constable as by the envoys, each retaining a copy, Beaurain observed, with a smile, "Your highness is now pledged to us."

"I am bound to revolt and vengeance," replied Bourbon, "and my kingly allies will aid me in my work. Hitherto, my device has been—*Spes*. Henceforth," he added, unsheathing his sword, and kissing the blade, "it shall be—'*Omnis spes in ferro est.*'"

Perfectly satisfied, the envoys were about to withdraw, when Bourbon detained them.

"Stay a moment, messeigneurs," he said. "I must send a messenger to the Emperor."

With this he sat down and wrote a letter, and, having sealed it, he summoned the Sieur de Bruzon, a gentleman entirely in his confidence, and said to him:

"The Seigneur de Beaurain, whom I here present to you, comes as an ambassador from the Emperor, to offer me the Queen of Portugal in marriage. You will accompany him on his return, and will deliver this letter into the hands of his Imperial Majesty, saying that I recommend myself very humbly to his good grace, and thank him heartily for the signal honour he has shown me in offering me his sister. Add, that he will ever find me his good brother and friend. Say this to him."

"I shall not fail," replied Bruzon.

"Since our errand is completed, we will take leave of your highness," said Beaurain. "We shall start two hours before daybreak, and make the best of our way back to Bourg. Immediately on my arrival there I will despatch a courier to the Arch-Duke Ferdinand, enjoining him, in the Emperor's name, to enrol the ten thousand lanz-knechts who are to be placed under your highness's command. This done, I shall set out for Genoa, and embark thence for Spain."

"And I shall make my way as speedily as may be for England," said Sir John Russell.

"Commend me heartily to your royal master," said the Constable, "and remind him of what passed between us at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Farewell, messeigneurs! Heaven speed you on your journey! A guard shall attend you over the mountains of Forez. See that men are in readiness, Bruzon."

"We thank your highness," said Beaurain. "Heaven prosper the cause in which you have embarked!"

The two envoys then quitted the cabinet, attended by Bruzon.

"Can I hope that Heaven will prosper the cause of treason and rebellion?" exclaimed Bourbon, as soon as he was left alone. "But reflection comes too late. The step is taken. I must on."

At this moment the door opened, and the Comte de Saint-Vallier entered the cabinet.

II. HOW SAINT-VALLIER REMONSTRATED WITH THE CONSTABLE.

Do I disturb you?" said Saint-Vallier. "I would fain have a few words with you in reference to those two merchants from Lyons, who have been so long closeted with you. They are not what they pretend to be."

"You are right, cousin," replied the Constable. "I am glad you are come. I desire to unbosom myself to you of a secret that weighs upon my soul. You know that the affection I bear for you is as great as that which I formerly entertained for my brother, François de Bourbon, Duke de Châtelleraut, who fell by my side at Marignan. I can entirely confide in you. But the secret I am about to disclose is of vast importance, and concerns others besides myself. Swear, therefore, on this fragment of the true cross," he added, holding towards him a reliquary which hung by a gold chain from his neck—"swear upon this, know that the affection I bear for you is as great as that which I formerly entertained for my brother, François de Bourbon, Duke de Châtelleraut, who fell by my side at Marignan. I can entirely confide in you. But the secret I am about to disclose is of vast importance, and concerns others besides myself. Swear, therefore, on this fragment of the true cross," he added, holding towards him a reliquary which hung by a gold chain from his neck—"swear upon this that you will never reveal what I am about to impart."

Saint-Vallier having taken the oath, the Constable proceeded to disclose all that had taken place between him and the two envoys. Saint-Vallier listened in silence, but his countenance showed he was deeply distressed by the recital.

When Bourbon had ended, he said:

"Monseigneur, you have declared that you love me as the brother you bewail. As that brother would have spoken, had he been living, I will now speak to you. The Duke de Châtelleraut followed you in your glorious career, but he would not have followed you in the career in which you are about to embark. He would never have been a traitor and a rebel."

"By Saint Paul! he would not have endured the wrongs I have endured, and which have made me what I am," rejoined the Constable.

"I grant you have had great wrongs," rejoined Saint-Vallier; "but this is not the way to avenge them. You are about to destroy yourself or your country. Weigh well what I say. If the plot is discovered, your doom is certain, and you will die with infamy. If the design succeeds, you will aid the enemies of your country, to whom your name has been hitherto redoubtable, and who seek you, not because they sympathise with your wrongs, but because they believe you can serve them. But pause, I implore you, before the fatal step be irrevocably taken. Pause before you declare yourself a rebel. The king may deprive you of your possessions, but he cannot deprive you of your renown, which ought to be dearer to you than wealth and power. No one can rob you of your glory but yourself. Would you incur the scorn and reproach of the haughty nobles who have made you their model? Would you desert that youthful chivalry who have striven to emulate your valour, and whom you have led on to conquest? Would you turn your arms against those soldiers of whom you have so long been the hero and the idol? Will not your breast be torn with anguish and remorse as you listen to the cries of desolated France, while she shrieks in your ears, 'Bourbon was the defender of his country, and has become its scourge?'"

Bourbon was much moved at this appeal, and Saint-Vallier believed he had made the desired impression upon him, as the Constable remained for some time absorbed in thought. But he was mistaken, for Bourbon suddenly exclaimed, "I cannot renounce my project. It is too late."

"No, it is not too late," rejoined Saint-Vallier. "The envoys have not departed. Send for them. Reclaim the treaty."

At this moment Bruzon entered the cabinet.

"Highness, a messenger has just arrived from the king," he said. "It is the Seigneur Perot de Warthy, and from what I gather he brings good tidings."

"He can scarce bring good tidings from the king; but I will see him," replied the Constable.

Following Bruzon to the door, Saint-Vallier said to him, in a low tone,

"Bid those two merchants from Lyons come hither. His highness desires further speech with them."

A few moments afterwards, the Seigneur Perot de Warthy, a gallant-looking young cavalier, clad in a rich riding-dress, though somewhat travel-stained, was ushered into the cabinet by Bruzon. Close behind them followed the two envoys, whose reappearance excited Bourbon's surprise, though he made no remark.

"What is your errand, Seigneur de Warthy?" demanded the Constable of the messenger.

"I bring this despatch for your highness," replied Warthy. "The king is about to set out on the expedition to Italy—"

"And he has summoned me to attend him—ha?" interrupted Bourbon.

"No, prince," replied Warthy. "His majesty has been pleased to appoint you lieutenant-general of the kingdom, to regulate, in conjunction with the Duchess d'Angoulême, all affairs of state during his absence."

"Lieutenant-general of the kingdom!" exclaimed Bourbon, astonished. "Has his majesty bestowed that appointment upon me? I expected a far different message."

"It is as I have stated to your highness," said Warthy. "There you will find the brevet."

"The king relents towards you, cousin," whispered Saint-Vallier. "He is about to restore you to favour. All that has been done has been merely to try you."

"He has not abandoned the hope of reconciling me to the duchess," rejoined Bourbon, in the same tone. "This is her handiwork. Seigneur Perot de Warthy," he added, turning to him, "I must pray you accept this ring," taking one from his finger and presenting it to him. "I will charge you with my thanks to the king to-morrow. Let all hospitality be shown him," he added to Bruzon, who bowed and withdrew with the messenger.

"Now is the moment," whispered Saint-Vallier. "The envoys are here. Reclaim the treaty."

"Has your highness anything further to say to us?" demanded Beaurain, uneasily.

"No," replied Bourbon, approaching him. "The king has tried to lure me back in vain. I adhere to my resolution. Good night, messeigneurs."

The two envoys bowed and retired.

"He is lost!" exclaimed Saint-Vallier.

III. SHOWING HOW THE PLOT PROGRESSED.

Long before daylight, the two envoys, accompanied by Bruzon and a guard, quitted the Château de Montbrison. On the same day, at a later hour, Perot de Warthy set out on his return to the Palais des Tournelles.

As soon as the king's messenger had departed, Bourbon held a private council in his cabinet, at which were present the Bishops of Puy and Autun, Aymard de Prie, Seigneur de Montpoupon, La Clayette, and Saint-Saphorin, two brave and experienced captains, who had served under him in the Milanese, and the Seigneur de Lurcy. Having bound them to secrecy, he acquainted them with the treaty he had entered into with the Emperor and the King of England. None of his auditors attempted to dissuade him from the design, but, on the contrary, all approved of it, and agreed to lend their aid in its furtherance.

"It behoves your highness to exercise the utmost caution in making your preparations," said Saint-Saphorin.

"Perot de Warthy, who has just left, has been asking many questions concerning your movements, and he appeared to have some suspicion of the real character of the two pretended Lyons merchants."

"Be assured I will act with all due caution," said the Constable. "I was on my guard with Warthy, as I believe him to be a spy. But it is absolutely necessary to ascertain how many partisans I can count upon, and how many men I can raise."

"When so many have to be trusted, some rumours of the plot are sure to reach the ears of the king," observed the Bishop de Puy, "I would advise your highness to wait till his majesty has set out for Italy. It will be time enough to levy your troops when he has crossed the Alps, and cannot return."

"No, no; at all hazards I must prepare," replied Bourbon, impatiently. "You, my lord bishop, have professed your readiness to serve me. I shall now put your zeal to the test, by charging you with a mission to my uncle, the Duke de Savoie, urging him to declare himself in my favour as soon as the rebellion shall occur, and to prepare for that event."

"I will undertake the mission," replied the bishop. "But it is not devoid of danger. If I am taken, my sacred character will not protect me from the king's vengeance."

"You have nothing to fear," said Bourbon. "No letters shall betray your purpose. Tell the Duke de Savoie that I can count upon two thousand gentlemen who have pledged themselves to stand by me in any event, and to bring retainers with them. Tell him also that I can make sure of four thousand fantassins in the Pays de Vaud and Faucigny. Am I not right, captain?" he added, turning to Saint-Saphorin.

"I will answer for the men," replied the other.

"And I will undertake to raise as many more in the Beaujolais and the principality of Dombes," said La Clayette.

"I will undertake to hold Dijon," said Aymard de Prie. "I am in command of the garrison, and will introduce a thousand men into the city."

"Your highness will have men enough, I doubt not," said the Bishop of Autun. "Half France will flock to your standard when it is once displayed. But do not neglect precautionary measures in the interim. If you should be betrayed, and fall into the king's hands, he will show you no mercy."

"I am fully aware of the risk I run, my lord bishop," replied Bourbon; "and, for fear of mishap, I will fortify my two strongholds of Chantelle and Carlat, and furnish them with men and provisions, so as to secure a safe retreat."

"Has your highness any commission for me?" inquired the Seigneur de Lurcy.

"Yes, an important one, which I know you will execute to my satisfaction," replied the Constable. "You shall despatch a messenger to Jacques de Matignon and Jacques d'Argouges, two young Norman seigneurs, who are attached to me, appointing a meeting with them at Vendôme. They will attend the rendezvous, I doubt not, and you will then reveal the plot to them, and engage them to facilitate the disembarkation of the English, and the occupation of the province by the Duke of Suffolk."

"Think you they can be trusted?" said Lurcy.

"Most assuredly," replied Bourbon. "Tempt them with the offer of the government of Normandy. With that inducement they will not hesitate."

"Your highness's instructions shall be carefully fulfilled," replied Lurcy.

"Do you propose to remain here till the outbreak, prince?" inquired the Bishop of Autun.

"No," replied Bourbon. "I shall return forthwith to Moulins, and, in order to avoid a summons to join the king, I shall feign illness, and remain secluded till his majesty has set out for Italy."

"You will do well," observed the bishop. "Such a course will disarm suspicion."

Next morning it was reported throughout the château that the Constable had been seized with fever. His physicians declared that the air of Montbrison disagreed with him, and advised his return to Moulins, as soon as he was able to bear the journey. Before complying with the recommendation, Bourbon despatched a messenger to François, who was then staying at the palace of the Tournelles, excusing himself on the plea of severe indisposition from repairing to Paris.

Meantime, the Bishop de Puy set out on his mission to the Duke de Savoie, Aymard de Prie proceeded with his troops to Dijon, and Lurcy was on his way to keep the rendezvous he had appointed with Matignon and D'Argouges at Vendôme.

Thus it will be seen that some little progress had been made in the plot.

IV. THE COMTE DE MAULEVRIER.

By the time the Constable had returned to the Château de Moulins, François had completed his preparations for the war in Italy. Bonnivet, at the head of a large force, had already crossed the Alps, and Lautrec and Lescun had been sent to defend the frontiers from the Spaniards.

Having paid a visit to the cathedral of Saint Denis, for the purpose of solemnly invoking the aid of the patron saint of France, and offered up his devotions in the Sainte Chapelle; having also publicly appointed his mother Regent of the kingdom during his absence, he set out with a large attendance, comprising the flower of the French chivalry.

His march rather resembled a journey of pleasure than a warlike expedition, inasmuch as he was accompanied by the Comtesse de Chateaubriand and several other beautiful dames. The royal cortège was preceded by the Grand-Master of France at the head of two thousand lansquenets, and followed by the Duke de Longueville, with a large troop of horse.

Proceeding by easy stages, François had reached Saint-Pierre-le-Moutier, which was within half a day's journey of the Château de Moulins, and was passing the evening festively, as was his wont, when he was disturbed by the sudden arrival of Louis de Brézé, Comte de Maulévrier, grand seneschal and lieutenant-general of Normandy, whom we have already mentioned as the husband of the beautiful Diane de Poitiers, daughter of the Comte de Saint-Vallier.

François at once granted him the private interview he desired, and, as soon as they were alone, Maulévrier said, "Sire, prepare yourself for bad tidings. What I have to tell you I fear will arrest your expedition to Italy. I come to warn your majesty of a most formidable conspiracy, the object of which is to deprive you of your kingdom, and perhaps of your life. Fortunately, the discovery has been made before the mine could be sprung. Fortunately, also, for the purposes of justice, the chief contriver of the plot is in your majesty's power."

"There is only one person in the kingdom who could contrive such a plot," replied the king. "But I do not think the Constable de Bourbon capable of a crime so heinous."

"The Constable de Bourbon is guilty of the blackest treason, sire," replied Maulévrier. "He has allied himself to the Emperor and to the King of England, and while an invasion is made upon your kingdom by those two sovereigns, he designs to break out into revolt. This is no idle accusation, sire. I will give proofs of the truth of what I assert. Two young Norman seigneurs of high honour and distinction, Matignon and D'Argouges, with whose names your majesty must be familiar, met Bourbon's confidential agent, Lurcy, by appointment at Vendôme. At this meeting Lurcy disclosed to them the whole conspiracy, and offered them the government of Normandy and other high posts, on the condition that they should assist the disembarkation of the English on our coasts. The treasonable offer filled the two loyal gentlemen with horror, and they indignantly rejected it, but, as they had been sworn to secrecy, they could not reveal it. However, they confessed the conspiracy to the Bishop of Lisieux, who, appalled at its enormity, at once made it known to me, and I have not lost a moment in warning your majesty of the danger with which you and your loyal subjects are threatened. Heaven be praised, you have hitherto escaped!"

Astounded by this terrible communication, to which he would willingly have refused credit, the king remained for some time buried in reflection. At length he said:

"Comte de Maulévrier, I charge you not to let fall a word in regard to this conspiracy. I will give Bourbon a last chance. I will see him to-morrow at the Chateau de Moulins."

Maulévrier would have remonstrated, but perceiving that the king was resolved, he said no more.

François, however, did not neglect needful precautions. Without assigning any reason for the step, he immediately despatched an order to the grand-master, who was a day in advance of the royal cavalcade, enjoining him to return at once, and he directed the Duke de Longueville to scour the country round with his cavalry.

Next day the king rode on to Moulins, where he found the grand-master awaiting him with the two thousand lansquenets. With this force, and with the troop of the Duke de Longueville, François felt no apprehension of outbreak.

After ordering the town to be invested at all points, he entered the château with a numerous guard, and demanded the keys, which were at once delivered to him by Philippe des Escures, Bourbon's chamberlain. François then dismounted, and said, in an angry tone, "Why is not the Lord Constable here to welcome me? Bid him come to me at once."

"Sire," replied the chamberlain, "the Constable is full of grief that he cannot receive your majesty in person. He is confined to his chamber by severe illness, and cannot stir forth without imperilling his life."

"Ha!" exclaimed the king, with an incredulous look. "I may be able to find a more efficacious remedy for his illness than his physicians have employed. Take me to his chamber."

"Let me go with you, I pray you, sire?" said Maulévrier, who was standing near the king.

François, however, declined, and entered the château. Conducted by the chamberlain, whose looks proclaimed his alarm, he then proceeded to the duke's chamber.

V. WHAT PASSED IN THE SICK MAN'S CHAMBER.

The king was ushered into the sick man's chamber. It was large and gloomy, wainscoted with oak as black as ebony, and the panels were adorned with portraits of the Constable's illustrious ancestors, commencing with Robert, Comte de Clermont, sixth son of Saint Louis, and Beatrix de Bourgogne, daughter of John de Bourgogne, and heiress of Bourbon-l'Archambaud, from whom the house of Bourbon derived its name, and concluding with the father of the Constable, Gilbert de Montpensier, slain at Pozzuoli in the war against Naples by Charles VIII., and Clara de Gonzaga, the Constable's mother, a princess remarkable for her beauty.

On a couch, at the farther end of this sombre apartment, lay the sick man, wrapped in a loose gown of quilted silk, trimmed with sable. He had a black taffeta cap on his head, and a furred velvet mantle was thrown over his knees. Beside him, on a table placed within reach, stood a crystal flagon containing a dark-coloured liquid, and several small phials. The only person with him at the moment was his principal physician, Jean de l'Hôpital.

On the entrance of the king, who was ceremoniously announced by the chamberlain, Bourbon, aided by his physician, arose, and bowing, thanked his majesty for his gracious visit.

"I am sorry to find you so unwell, cousin," replied the king, regarding him as closely as the gloom of the chamber would permit, and coming to the conclusion that his illness was simulated.

Bourbon bore the scrutiny without embarrassment.

"The saints be praised that your majesty has come at a time when the fit has just left me," he said, "and when I am secure from the attack for a few hours. But I am greatly prostrated," he added, feebly—"greatly prostrated."

The king bade him be seated, adding, that he desired to confer with him in private, whereupon Bourbon signed to his attendants to withdraw.

Before quitting the chamber, Jean de l'Hôpital observed, in an undertone to the king, "His highness has been dangerously ill, sire, and is not yet out of danger."

Then making an obeisance, he retired.

The chamberlain having placed a chair for the king near Bourbon's couch, likewise bowed and withdrew.

After glancing round to make sure they were quite alone, François said,

"I will deal plainly with you, cousin. Some disclosures have been made to me respecting your practices which I would willingly not believe, and before taking any steps to ascertain the truth of the reports, I have resolved to give you an opportunity of explanation."

"My enemies have been at work, I perceive, sire," said Bourbon, without manifesting the slightest uneasiness. "What has been told your majesty?"

"I have been informed," replied François, "that, forgetful of your allegiance to me, you have entered into a treasonable league with my enemies the Emperor and Henry VIII. This is what I have been told, cousin, but, as I have said, I am unwilling to believe it."

"Sire," replied Bourbon, "you have not been misinformed. Overtures have been made me by the Emperor and the King of England, who thought, not unnaturally, that the treatment I have experienced from your majesty must have deeply dissatisfied me."

"They thought you were prepared to become a traitor," cried François. "Foi de gentilhomme! I scarcely expected you to make so frank an avowal. They knew you to be ready to revolt—ha!"

"They knew I had endured wrongs enough to make me a rebel," rejoined Bourbon. "But they were mistaken, sire—they were mistaken."

"Then you rejected the offers?" said the king.

"I still indulged hopes that your majesty would render me justice."

"Justice you shall have, cousin—strict justice," rejoined the king. "Now listen to me. I suspect—nay, I am certain—that you are engaged in a conspiracy against me, and against the state. The two young Norman seigneurs, Matignon and D'Argouges, have disclosed the treasonable proposition made to them on your part by Lurcy. You look confounded, as well you may. You see I have ample proof of your guilt, but I can obtain plenty more by arresting all your principal adherents who are now assembled in this château. Not one of them can escape me."

"Be not too sure of that, sire," said Bourbon.

"You fancy you can protect them," rejoined the king. "Learn that I am master of your castle. Its courts are filled with my archers—its walls are surrounded by my troops—its keys are in my possession. I have only to give the word to cause your arrest."

"Your majesty will never give that word," rejoined Bourbon, calmly.

"Wherefore not?" cried François, striding towards the door, as if with the design of putting his threat into

execution. "What ho, there!—who waits?"

But the door was shut, and no one answered the summons, though the king repeated it still more lustily.

"What means this?" he cried, glancing furiously at Bourbon, who had risen from his couch, and thrown off his loose robe, showing that he was armed..

"It means, sire," replied the Constable, "that the door will not be opened save at my order. Your majesty may be assured," he added, with stern significance, "that those who enter this chamber will not arrest *me*."

"Ha, traitor! do you mean me mischief?" exclaimed the king.

"Your majesty has come hither alone. I did not invite you. But you are perfectly safe, provided you pledge your royal word that no arrests shall be made."

François hesitated for a moment, and then returned his half-drawn sword to the scabbard.

"Let us understand each other, Bourbon," he said. "I had no design to proceed to extremities with you. Had it been so, I should have ordered your immediate arrest on my arrival at the château. My wish, as you must have perceived, was to confer amicably with you. I do not desire your destruction—on the contrary, I am well disposed towards you—ay, well disposed. Abandon your fatal design—prove to me that you are faithful and loyal as heretofore, and you shall find me forgiving and generous. Be true to your sovereign, and we will be true to you. Whatever may be the decree of the Parliament, you shall keep your possessions. The utmost wish of your soaring ambition shall be gratified. You shall accompany me to Italy, and shall share with me the command of the army. Will this content you?"

"Sire, it is far more than I could expect," replied Bourbon. "I thought I had entirely forfeited your favour.",

"Ingrate!—how could you think so, when I but lately appointed you lieutenant-general of the kingdom? That appointment ought to have convinced you that, in spite of our misunderstanding, I still had the greatest regard for you. I know your merits as a leader, and am certain you will add to your renown in this campaign. You shall help me to re-conquer the Milanese, as you helped me at Marignan to win it."

"I hope to convince your majesty that I am worthy of the distinguished honour you propose to confer upon me," said Bourbon.

"The appointment shall be announced at once, and will set at rest all rumours to your disadvantage," said François. "To-morrow you shall set out with me for Lyons."

"Alas! sire, I am utterly unable to travel in my present state. I could not even enter a litter. My physicians will tell you so."

"'Tis a strange disorder that afflicts you, cousin," observed François, with an incredulous look. "You appear strong enough for service in the field."

"You must not judge me by my looks, sire. When the fit seizes me, I am utterly prostrated. But I shall be better in a few days."

"You think so?" cried the king. "Well, then, I will wait for you at Lyons."

"I would not have your majesty delay the expedition on my account. As soon as I am able to move, I will follow you to Italy."

"No, no, I will not start without you," rejoined the king, suspiciously. "You shall join me at Lyons as speedily as you can."

At this moment a side-door was opened, and a young dame, richly attired, and of surpassing beauty, entered the chamber.

VI. DIANE DE POITIERS.

On seeing the king, she would have instantly retreated, but he commanded her to stay.

"Do not let my presence alarm you, fair lady," he said. "And do not suppose you interrupt me, for I have finished my conference with the Lord Constable."

The young dame, who seemed much embarrassed, made a profound obeisance, but did not advance. As we have said, she was exquisitely beautiful. Her features might have been modelled by Praxiteles, and her figure was tall and admirably proportioned. She was attired in green velvet, embroidered with flowers of damask, gold, and pearls, with the sleeves puffed and quilted, and her head-dress, which was very becomingly fashioned, was ornamented with pearls and other precious stones.

"I am trying to recal your features, fair lady," said the king, approaching her, and regarding her with undisguised admiration, "but I do not think I can have seen you before. Such a lovely face as yours—such lustrous eyes—and such a form—must have made a lasting impression upon me. Yet you must have been at court."

"No, sire, my father, the Comte de Saint-Vallier, never took me to court," she replied.

"How?" exclaimed François, surprised. "Are you the charming Diane de Poitiers, who, by bestowing your hand upon the Comte de Maulévrier, have made him the most enviable of mortals?"

"It is my misfortune, sire, to be the wife of the Comte de Maulévrier," she replied.

"Your misfortune! ha!" exclaimed the king. "Are you aware that your husband is here?"

"Here, sire?" exclaimed Diane, uneasily.

"Nay, be not alarmed," replied François, smiling. "He has not come for the purpose of taking you back to

the Château de Brézé. He brought me some important intelligence from Normandy."

"'Tis Maulévrier, then, who has revealed the plot," mentally ejaculated Bourbon.

"I should not return with him, if he desired it," said Diane, "Your majesty must understand that the comte and I have quarrelled."

"Quarrelled! ah!" exclaimed François. "And so you took refuge from the husband you hate with the Duke de Bourbon—eh?"

"I do not hate my husband, sire, though he has compelled me to leave him. I came to the Château de Moulins with my father."

"And you expected to find your father with the Constable when you entered so suddenly just now, eh?" remarked the king, dryly.

"I did, sire. I came to inform them of your arrival at the château—little expecting to find your majesty here. I trust I may infer from your gracious and kindly aspect that the Constable is restored to favour?"

"He is fully restored," replied the king. "You will be pleased, I am sure, to learn that I have just promised him the command of half my Italian army."

"You have done well, sire," she rejoined. "With Bourbon in joint command with your majesty, victory will be assured. You will accompany the king?" she added to the Constable, with evident anxiety.

"I hope to do so," he replied. "At all events, I will follow as soon as my strength will permit me."

"Nay, I must have you with me," said the king.

"Right, sire—do not leave him behind," she whispered.

"I know the way to enforce obedience on the Constable's part," said the king. "I shall take you with me to Lyons, fair Diane. He will follow quickly then."

"Sire!" exclaimed Bourbon, with ill-concealed vexation, "the countess is here with her father!"

"What of that? I shall not ask his consent," replied the king. "The only person who has any right to object is Maulévrier, and he is not likely to interfere. The Comtesse de Châteaubriand and a large party of court dames are in my train," he added to Diane. "You shall accompany them." He then continued in a low voice: "I cannot doubt the great influence you possess over Bourbon. What you say to him he will obey. Charge him, therefore, to join me a week hence at Lyons."

And he moved towards the other side of the chamber, as if to examine the portrait of the beautiful Clara de Gonzaga.

Diane instantly took advantage of the opportunity, and, approaching Bourbon, said, in a low voice, "You have accepted the king's offer? You will break with the Emperor and Henry VIII., will you not?"

"It is too late," replied the Constable, in the same tone. "I have signed the compact."

"But consider that the king has promised to share the command of the army with you?" she urged.

"Promises made by princes under such circumstances are rarely kept," replied Bourbon. "I can never be really restored to the king's favour."

"You wrong him," she said. "He is the soul of loyalty and honour."

"He loyal!" echoed Bourbon. "He is perfidious as his mother. I will not trust him."

"That is your determination?"

"My fixed determination," he rejoined.

"Then we shall never meet again—never, Charles," she said.

Bourbon made no reply, and his head sank upon his breast. At this moment the king turned round.

"Have you prevailed upon him, fair Diane?" he asked. "Yes, yes, he will come, sire," she answered, hastily. "You will?" she added to Bourbon, with an entreating look that ought to have been irresistible.

"You have said it," he rejoined.

"That is well," observed the king. "I knew you could not resist her persuasion."

Just then the door opened, and Jean de l'Hôpital entered the room.

"I crave your majesty's pardon for this interruption," he said, "but I am compelled to attend to my illustrious patient. It is necessary that his highness should take the draught prepared for him."

"I applaud your zeal, sir," replied François, "and I enjoin you to use all your art to restore the prince your master to health as quickly as may be. Think you he will be able to set out for Lyons in three days' time?"

"I will not answer for it, sire," replied Jean de l'Hôpital, consulting Bourbon by a look.

"In a week, then?" demanded the king.

"Perchance in a week, sire," replied the physician. "But he must travel slowly, for even then he will be very feeble."

"Come hither, sir," said the king, taking Jean de l'Hôpital aside. "Answer me truly, as you value your life. What ails the Constable?"

"His highness is labouring under a severe quotidian ague, caught at Montbrison," replied the physician. "The fever has proved of singular obstinacy, and will not yield to ordinary remedies. We are under great apprehensions," he added, lowering his voice, "that it may be followed by some mortal ailment, as consumption, or the black jaundice. His state is exceedingly critical, and demands the utmost care. Were he to take cold, I would not answer for his life."

"Hark ye, sir," said the king. "I know you *can* speedily cure him, if you will. Within a week I expect to see him at Lyons."

"I cannot perform impossibilities, sire," replied the physician; "but if it be in the power of medical skill to further your majesty's desires, you shall behold him at the time appointed."

Apparently satisfied, François then turned towards the Constable, and said:

"Adieu, cousin. I commend you to the care of your physician. But as I shall naturally be anxious to hear how you progress, I will leave behind me the Seigneur Perot de Warthy, who will send me daily tidings of you."

"That is needless, sire," said Bourbon, impatiently.

"Since you are pleased to express so much anxiety about me, I will despatch frequent messengers to you with the reports of my physicians."

"I prefer leaving Warthy," rejoined the king. "I can depend on him. Once more adieu, cousin. We shall meet again at Lyons."

And, offering his hand to Diane, he led her out of the room.

VII. PEROT DE WARTHY.

Scarcely were they gone, when Bourbon sprang to his feet, and gave vent to an outburst of rage.

"By Heaven! I have had enough to do to play my part!" he exclaimed.

"I pray your highness to calm yourself!" cried Jean de l'Hopital. "His majesty may return."

"I wish he would return!" exclaimed Bourbon. "I was a fool to allow him to depart. But I must take instant counsel with my friends."

So saying, he thrice struck a small bell placed upon the table.

At the summons, a secret door opened, and a dozen young seigneurs, all of whom were armed, issued from a closet where they had been concealed. These persons were Bourbon's most devoted partisans, and comprised the Seigneurs Pomperant, François du Peloux, Tansannes, Espinat, Sainte-Bonnet, Desguières, Brion, and five others. "We have been impatiently awaiting the signal to come forth," said Pomperant. "But it seems our services were not required. I am sorry your highness allowed the king to depart."

"You shall hear what has occurred, and judge whether I have acted wisely," rejoined Bourbon.

And he then proceeded to relate what had passed between him and the monarch.

"I would not trust him!" exclaimed Tansannes. "His promises are worthless. How say you, messeigneurs?" he added to the others. "Are you not of my opinion?" There was a unanimous reply in the affirmative.

"It is not too late," said Pomperant. "We may yet secure his person. Entrust the matter to me. We have force enough to overpower the royal guard."

"The opportunity is tempting, I own," said Bourbon. "But the plan is too hazardous. It occurred to me while the king stood before me—but I rejected it."

"You did well, prince," remarked Saint-Vallier, who had entered the chamber by the same door that had admitted his daughter. "If you had seized the king, your own doom would have been certain."

"Who would have pronounced the sentence?" remarked Pomperant, sternly. "I repeat, it is not too late to secure the king. Your highness has but to say the word, and it shall be done."

"Ay, we are ready to execute your highness's orders, be they what they may," added the others.

"Are you all mad?" exclaimed Saint-Vallier. "Know you not that the archers of the royal guard are in the court of the château?—that the Duke de Longueville has four troops of light horse drawn up outside the gates?—that the town is invested by two thousand lansquenets, under the command of the Grand-Master? Any such attempt must end in discomfiture."

"We can carry off the king before his capture is discovered," said Pomperant.

"Impossible!" cried Saint-Vallier.

"You are lukewarm in the cause, cousin," said Bourbon. "Perhaps you may feel differently when I inform you that his majesty designs to take your daughter, the Comtesse de Maulévrier, with him to Lyons."

"Ha!" exclaimed Saint-Vallier, as if struck by a sharp pang. "Rather than this should be, I would consent to his capture."

"Who is mad now, M. le Comte?" remarked Pomperant. "Will you entrust the beautiful Diane to this profligate monarch?"

"No, I would sooner see her perish," rejoined Saint-Vallier. "I will agree to any plan."

At this moment a warning exclamation was uttered by the physician who was stationed near the door.

At the signal, Bourbon hastily resumed his gown, and flung himself upon the couch.

Scarcely were these preparations completed, when Perot de Warthy and the Comte de Maulévrier entered. They both glanced suspiciously at the band of young seigneurs, who had withdrawn to the back of the chamber.

Saint-Vallier alone remained standing near the couch on which Bourbon was extended.

"What is your business with me, sir?" demanded the Constable of Warthy.

"I am enjoined by his majesty to remain in constant attendance upon your highness," replied the other, bowing.

"This fellow troubles me," muttered Bourbon; "I must get rid of him."

"Louis," said Saint-Vallier to his son-in-law, "I am glad you have come hither. I was about to seek you. You must take back Diane to Normandy."

"I cannot comply with your request," replied Maulévrier. "I return to the Château de Brézé forthwith."

"So much the better," cried Saint-Vallier. "Diane must accompany you."

"Impossible," replied Maulévrier. "She is gone with the Comtesse de Chateaubriand and the king to Lyons."

"Gone!" exclaimed Bourbon, starting up. "Has the king set out? I thought he meant to pass the night here?"

"He has changed his mind, and has just quitted the château with his suite."

"And you have allowed Diane to accompany him?" demanded Saint-Vallier, with a look of agony.

"Mort-Dieu! I could not prevent it," replied Maulévrier—"even if I had the wish," he added to himself.

Saint-Vallier made no remark, but it was easy to perceive his anguish.

Greatly excited by the unlooked-for intelligence, Bourbon could scarcely rest upon the couch.

"I cannot comprehend why the king should depart so suddenly," he said to Warthy. "Has he taken the troops with him?"

"No," replied the other. "He is only attended by the archers of the royal guard, and the young nobles forming his retinue. The Grand-Master and the Duke de Longueville are left behind with their men."

"For what purpose?" demanded Bourbon, sternly.

"To keep guard upon the château and the town," replied Warthy.

Bourbon exchanged a glance with his followers, which did not pass unobserved by Warthy.

"His majesty's parting order," remarked that vigilant personage, "was that no one—not even your highness—should be allowed to quit the château till to-morrow."

"Ha! By Saint Paul, it would seem we are prisoners, messeigneurs!" exclaimed the Constable, fiercely.

An indignant response was made by his adherents.

"No offence is intended to your highness by his majesty," said Warthy. "It is a mere measure of precaution—nothing more." Then, turning to Saint-Vallier, he added: "M. le Comte, it is the king's pleasure that you proceed to Lyons to-morrow."

"I will go now!" cried Saint-Vallier.

"That may not be," replied the other. "As I have just said, no one must quit the château to-day, on any pretext whatever."

"The keys of the château have been entrusted to me," said Maulévrier, "To-morrow I shall return them to the Seigneur des Ecures, your highness's chamberlain. If you have aught to say to me," he added to Saint-Vallier, "you will find me in the great hall."

So saying, he quitted the chamber.

"Why do you not go too, sir?" cried Bourbon, fiercely, to Warthy, finding that the latter remained.

"His majesty's injunctions to me were——"

"Leave me," interrupted Bourbon.

"I cannot disobey the king," cried the pertinacious Warthy.

But his remonstrances were cut short by Pomperant and the others, who forced him out of the room.

"Will no one deliver me from this plague?" exclaimed the Constable, springing from his couch.

"We will," replied several voices.

"Be advised by me, cousin, and do him no mischief, endure—but bear it. By skilful management, aided by your physicians, you may lead this spy to give such reports to the king as may cause him to set out for Italy without you. Hitherto, as you know, I have strenuously opposed the plot, but my opinion is now changed. I would have it succeed. Be prudent, cousin, and our wrongs shall be avenged."

"I will follow your counsel," rejoined Bourbon. "But do you intend to obey the king's order, and proceed to Lyons?"

"'Tis needful I should do so," replied Saint-Vallier. "My first business must be to deliver Diane. It is idle to hope for aid from her base-souled husband; but I will talk to him. Be content to play the sick man a little longer, cousin. It is of the last importance to your cause that the king should set out for Italy without you."

So saying, he left the room, and sought Maulévrier in the great hall. But he produced no impression on his cold-hearted son-in-law.

VIII. HOW BOURBON QUITTED THE CHATEAU DE MOULINS,

Next morning, Maulévrier delivered up the keys of the château to the chamberlain, and, without seeking any further interview with the Constable, set off for Normandy.

By noon both the Grand-Master and the Duke de Longueville had quitted Moulins with their men, and were marching towards La Palisse. Saint-Vallier accompanied them. Warthy, however, remained, and Bourbon submitted to the annoyance of his frequent visits. If Jean de l'Hôpital could be believed, no improvement had taken place in the Constable's health.

Three days passed in this manner, but, on the morning of the fourth, Warthy made his appearance in a riding-dress, booted and spurred, and informed the Constable, who was lying on his couch as usual, and

attended by his physicians, that he was about to set out for Lyons to make a report in person to the king.

"Express my profound regrets to his majesty that I am not able to join him," said Bourbon, secretly overjoyed by the anticipated departure of his tormentor, "As you yourself must have perceived, I am rather worse than better, and my physicians tell me—and indeed I myself perceive—that there is no prospect of immediate improvement, I would pray the king, therefore, not to wait for me longer, but to set out on his expedition."

"I will convey your highness's message," replied Warthy. "But I know the king will be grievously disappointed."

"My own disappointment is greater than his majesty's can be, sir. I pray you assure him so," rejoined Bourbon.

A slightly incredulous smile passed over Warthy's shrewd features at this observation. However, he made no remark, but, taking leave of the Constable, set out on his journey, mounted on a fleet steed, which soon carried him several leagues on his way.

No sooner was Bourbon freed from the restraint imposed upon him by the importunate spy, than he commenced preparations, and despatched a body of men with arms and ammunition, under the command of Captain Saint-Saphorin, to his château of Chantelle, instructing them to put that fortress at once into a state of complete defence.

"I shall be there myself in a few days," he said to Saint-Saphorin. "Moulins, I find, is quite untenable."

This state of repose was not of long continuance. Warthy, who had been provided with relays of the fleetest horses, was back again in an incredibly short time, and Bourbon, to his infinite annoyance, was obliged to resume his couch. He received the spy in a very ill humour, but Warthy did not appear to heed his displeasure.

"Highness," he said, "the king is much offended. He will not believe you are so ill as you represent. And he commands you, on your allegiance, to join him without delay."

"That is wholly impossible, sir," interposed Jean de l'Hôpital. "The Lord Constable is far too ill to travel. I fear you have not explained fully his dangerous condition to the king."

"I have reported all I have seen," replied Warthy. "But his majesty will take no more excuses."

"Excuses, sir!" cried Bourbon, fiercely. "Dare you insinuate——"

"I but repeat the king's message to your highness," replied Warthy. "His majesty, as I have said, is highly offended, and declares he will no longer be trifled with. He peremptorily orders you to join him at Lyons without delay. If you fail to do so——" And he hesitated to proceed.

"Well, sir—what if I fail?" demanded Bourbon, slightly raising himself, and fixing a stern glance on the messenger, "His majesty will send the Grand-Master and Marshal de Chabannes with three thousand lansquenets to fetch you," rejoined Warthy.

"Mort-Dieu! am I to be told this?" cried Bourbon.

And he would have sprung from the couch, if the two physicians had not thrown themselves upon him, and held him forcibly down.

"You will betray yourself if you give way thus," whispered Jean de l'Hôpital. "I pray your highness to be calm."

Yielding to the advice, the Constable controlled himself by a great effort.

There was a pause, during which the spy remained intently watching the Constable.

"What answer shall I return to his majesty?" asked Warthy, at length.

"Say I will come," replied Bourbon.

"Highness, it is not possible that you can travel," said Jean de l'Hôpital. "His majesty cannot desire your death."

"It would seem as though he did," rejoined Bourbon. "But, be the consequences what they may, I will set out to-morrow. Tell his majesty so," he added to Warthy. "When do you return to Lyons?"

"Within an hour," was the reply. "I am charged to come back instantly, and, as I have relays of horses, I shall not be long on the road. His majesty will be well content with your highness's determination."

And, with a profound bow, he quitted the room.

"May the devil go with him!" exclaimed Bourbon, as he sprang from his couch. "If I detain this spy," he thought, "the king will execute his threat, and send the Grand-Master and Chabannes to take me. Here, in this château, I can offer no resistance, but in Chantelle I may stand a siege, and hold up till I can obtain reinforcements. I must proceed thither without delay."

As soon as Warthy had departed, a conference was held between Bourbon and his followers, in which it was agreed on all hands that it would not be safe to remain longer at Moulins, and it was therefore decided to remove to Chantelle, a fortress in Auvergne, which the Constable considered impregnable. This decision being arrived at, preparations for departure were made with all possible despatch.

Determining to take with him all his treasure and valuables, Bourbon emptied his coffers, and caused their contents, amounting to more than thirty thousand golden crowns of the sun, to be sewn up in stout leathern bags. In like manner his jewels and other valuables were removed from their caskets, and packed up in valises. Could he have done so, he would have carried off his silver drinking-vessels and plate as well. These preparations made, the majority of the conspirators, escorted by a troop of three hundred men-at-arms, fully equipped, quitted the chateau at nightfall, and proceeded towards Auvergne. The bags containing the gold pieces were entrusted to veteran soldiers. The young seigneurs took charge of the jewels.

Bourbon's object being to gain time, he did not accompany the troop, but tarried till the following morning, when, pretending that he was about to join the king at Lyons, he entered his litter, and attended by his physicians, and by a small escort commanded by Pomperant, proceeded along the beautiful valley of the Allier towards La Palisse, where he rested for the night.

Next day he continued his journey across a hilly tract of country to a small town, all the time keeping close within his litter. On the third day he reached Changy, and here his physicians gave out that the journey had seriously aggravated his malady, and that it was utterly impossible for him to proceed farther at present. Bourbon's design was to wait at Changy till he could obtain intelligence of the king's movements from secret agents whom he had despatched for the purpose to Lyons.

Before these messengers could return, Warthy made his appearance at Changy, and, being informed of the Constable's increased illness, to which he attached little credence, sought an interview with him. This was granted without difficulty, and the spy found the duke in bed, with his physicians in attendance upon him.

"You see, sir," he remarked to Warthy, "I have made every effort to comply with his majesty's commands, but my strength has entirely failed me. However, I feel somewhat better to-day, and to-morrow I hope to reach Roanne. I pray you return to the king, and tell him how you have found me."

"My orders are not to quit your highness," rejoined Warthy; "and if I return without you, I am persuaded his majesty will put his threats into execution, and order your immediate arrest."

"His majesty will act as he deems best. I must decline further discourse with you," said Bourbon, turning from him.

Worthy felt almost certain he was duped by the Constable and his physicians, but as some doubts still lingered in his mind, he determined to return to Lyons, where he arrived early next morning. From the report given him by the spy, François felt convinced of the Constable's duplicity.

"He is playing me false," he said. "But I will baffle his schemes. Return to him at once, and do not leave him again. If any further difficulties arise, despatch messengers to me, and I will send the Grand-Marshal and the Marshal de Chabannes to seize him."

IX. CHANTELLE.

The indefatigable Warthy departed on his mission. On arriving at Changy his worst suspicions were verified. The sick man and his attendants were no longer there. But instead of pursuing his route towards Lyons, as he had promised, the Constable had turned back towards Moulins.

Despatching a messenger to the king with this information, Warthy rode on to La Palisse, and thence to Varennes, where, it appeared, the Constable had laid aside all disguise, and, abandoning his litter, had mounted a charger, and ridden off with his suite to the Château de la Chantelle, in Auvergne. Disregarding the risk he might incur in following him, Warthy despatched a second messenger to the king, and started in pursuit. He was only a few hours behind the Constable, and being well mounted, hoped to overtake him before he arrived at Chantelle.

Speeding across the wide plain of the Allier, skirted on the east by the mountains of Forez, he soon reached the small town of Saint-Pourçain, where he obtained a fresh horse, and ascertained, at the same time, that the Constable and his attendants were only two or three leagues in advance of him. From Saint-Pourçain he entered the vale of the Sioule, and, pursuing his course by the side of the river, soon found himself among the mountains of Auvergne.

The region he had now gained was highly picturesque, but Warthy noted little of its beauties, being engrossed by the thought of the dangerous errand on which he was bent. But, though fully aware of the risk he incurred, Warthy did not shrink from it.

After tracking the sinuous course of the river through the mountains, whose funnel-shaped cones and rifted sides proclaimed them to be extinct volcanoes, and remarking several ancient strongholds, perched on commanding points, he emerged into a broad plain watered by the Sioule, whose course he had hitherto followed. He now plainly descried the lordly château of Chantelle, about two leagues off situated on a rocky eminence, the base of which was washed by the river. It was a vast and strongly-built fortress, and from its position seemed well capable of standing a siege.

As Warthy's eye ranged over the intervening district he caught sight of a troop of horsemen, whose arms were glittering in the sunbeams, and entertaining no doubt that the cavalcade consisted of Bourbon and his attendants, he set spurs to his charger and galloped on. But swiftly as he speeded, to overtake the Constable was now impossible, and he was still half a league off, when he beheld the train pass through the outer gates of the castle.

As he approached yet nearer to the fortress, he plainly perceived that it had been put into a state of defence, the ramparts and bastions being armed with ordnance of large size, and the towers with culverins and falconets. Sentinels were pacing to and fro on the battlements, and a guard was stationed on the outer gate. From the summit of the donjon floated Bourbon's haughty standard, which had been unfurled immediately after his arrival. The din of martial instruments resounded from the outer court of the castle, and when Warthy, after some little delay, obtained admittance, he found the enclosure full of armed men.

Bourbon had not thrown off his riding-cloak, and was conversing with Tansannes, Saint-Saphorin, and others, in a great hall with a roof supported by rafters of chesnut, and walls adorned with trophies of the chase—huge antlers, skins of bears, wolves, foxes, wild cats, and marmots, with which the adjacent mountains abounded—when the arrival of the king's messenger was announced.

The Constable ordered him to be at once admitted, and on his appearance, said to him, in a jocular tone, "What! here already, Messire de Warthy! You spur me hard, my friend."

"Your highness must have better spurs than mine, since you have got here first," replied Warthy, in the same tone. "I am glad to find you can ride so well. You can now have no reasonable excuse for disobeying the king's injunctions. I hope you will accompany me to Lyons."

"A truce to this, sir!" cried Bourbon, changing his manner. "I have come hither to be free from the persecution to which I have been subjected. Unless I have the king's written promise to restore me my possessions, I will not stir from this castle. If he refuses my just demand, there will be a war in France more dreadful than any the kingdom has yet endured."

"I grieve to hear your highness threaten rebellion, for I can only so construe your words," replied Warthy, courageously. "It is not for me to predict what his majesty's reply will be to your demand, but I fancy it will be conveyed by the Grand-Master and the Marshal de Chabannes, at the head of an overwhelming force."

"I am of opinion that the king will return a very different answer, sir," said Bourbon. "He knows he has treated me unjustly, and when he finds I am in a position to obtain redress, he will offer it. But be his decision what it may, I am prepared."

"I would fain remonstrate with your highness before you take this terrible step," said Warthy. "Powerful as you are, you cannot resist the king."

"That remains to be seen, sir. I am resolved to have justice, which has been so long denied me."

"Then at the hazard of my life I must perform my duty," rejoined Warthy, boldly. "I now proclaim to all your followers that if they shall aid you in holding this castle against their sovereign lord and king, to whom, and not to you, they owe fealty and homage, they will be guilty of lèse-majesté, and will be treated as rebels and traitors."

"Will your highness allow this insolent fellow to brave you thus?" cried Pomperant, furiously. "Order his instant execution."

Worthy did not blench, though he felt he was in a most critical position.

"Remember, I am sent hither by the king," he said.

"The king cannot save you!" cried Tansannes.

"No, but he can avenge me," replied Warthy, resolutely.

"The audacious spy deserves a dog's death," cried François du Peloux. "Let him be hanged at once."

"Or flung from the battlements," said Saint-Saphorin.

"No," said Bourbon; "he has given his tongue unwarrantable license, but he has come hither as the king's messenger, and his person is safe. You must be content to remain here till to-morrow, Messire de Warthy, when you will take a letter from me to the king. The Bishop of Autun, who is here, shall accompany you, in order that he may explain my conduct to his majesty."

"I must perforce remain as long as your highness chooses," replied Warthy.

"You ought to thank me for detaining you," said Bourbon. "You must want rest after your journey. See that all care be taken of him," he added to an attendant.

Upon this Warthy withdrew.

After inspecting the garrison, Bourbon proceeded to examine the defences of the fortress, to make sure of its capability of resisting a siege. The examination was very carefully conducted, and occupied several hours. At its conclusion, he held a private conference with all his chief adherents, at which it was unanimously agreed that the place was not strong enough to hold out against the powerful army which would infallibly be sent to besiege it by the king.

"If it should fall before I can be reinforced, my cause will be ruined," said Bourbon; "and the German lanz-knechts enrolled by the Archduke Ferdinand, though already assembled in the Franche-Comté, will not dare to enter France while the king remains at Lyons. For my own part," he continued, "I am satisfied that his majesty is too much alarmed to quit the kingdom at present, and if he should decide on crossing the Alps, he will assuredly leave behind him an army of six or seven thousand men. The presence of such a force will prevent the contemplated rising, and the nobles of Auvergne, whom I had summoned by the arrière-ban to unite at Roanne, will disperse without striking a blow. What is to be done under these circumstances? Shall we retire to Carlat? Though more inaccessible, that castle is no better able to stand a siege than the fortress we now occupy."

"To be shut up amid the mountains might be fatal," remarked Tansannes. "Let us make the best of our way to the Franche-Comté, where your highness can put yourself at the head of the German lanz-knechts."

"The lanz-knechts are already commanded by two able leaders, the Counts Wilhelm and Felix de Furstenberg," replied Bourbon. "I will not become a fugitive from my own territories while there is a chance of holding them. A few days will now decide. My letter, which will be conveyed to the king by Warthy, will bring the matter to a crisis. If, as I fear, his majesty should abandon his expedition to Italy, nothing will be left for us but flight."

Next day, Warthy left the castle, accompanied by the Bishop of Autun. On the farther side of La Palisse they encountered the Marshal de Chabannes and the Grand Master, who were marching at the head of a large force, consisting of light horsemen and fantassins, to seize the Constable. On discovering this force, the bishop contrived to send off a messenger to warn Bourbon.

The bishop himself was arrested, and sent on to Lyons with a guard, under the charge of Warthy.

X. HOW THE BISHOP OF AUTUN AND THE COMTE DE SAINT-VALLIER WERE

ARRESTED.

On a plain, outside the fair city of Lyons, was encamped the army destined for the expedition to Italy. In the midst of the camp stood the royal tent. Thither the Bishop of Autun was taken by Warthy. François had just returned from inspecting his troops. His towering figure was sheathed in glittering steel, but he had taken off his plumed helm and given it to a page, at the moment when the bishop was brought in.

After glancing at the Constable's letter, which was delivered to him by Warthy, François tore it in pieces, exclaiming furiously, "Does the audacious traitor venture to treat me as an equal, and propose terms to me! Foi de gentilhomme! I will lower his pride. Hitherto I have acted too leniently towards him, but now he shall feel my power. I have striven to save him, but since he is insensible to my kindness, and will rush upon his ruin, e'en let him perish!"

"Your majesty forgets that you have driven the Constable to desperation," said the Bishop of Autun. "Could he have placed faith in your promises, he would be with you now. I implore your majesty to make terms with him, and, by so doing, avoid a most disastrous war."

"My lord bishop," said the king, sternly, "I will not hear a word in the traitor's behalf. He can expect no grace from me, and, by Saint Louis! he shall have none. He thinks himself safe in Chantelle, but I will take it in a week; and if he seeks refuge in the mountains of Auvergne, I will hunt him down like a wild beast. I will proclaim him as a rebel and traitor throughout the realm, and set a price of ten thousand golden crowns upon his head. All who shall harbour him, or assist him or any of His followers, shall be held guilty of treason. And now, my lord bishop, a word with you. You are concerned in this conspiracy, and, if you would obtain grace and restoration to my favour, you will not hesitate to reveal all you know respecting it."

"I have nothing to reveal, sire," replied the bishop.

"You are the depositary of the Constable's secrets, my lord," remarked François, sternly.

"Whatever his highness may have confided to me under the seal of confession, is sacred, sire," rejoined the bishop.

"That excuse will not avail you, my lord. You are bound to disclose a conspiracy against your sovereign. By Saint Louis! I *will* have the truth. All those who are in any way implicated in the plot, or suspected, shall be immediately arrested. One of the chief conspirators is already in my power. I will interrogate him at once. Bring the Comte de Saint-Vallier before me," he added to Warthy. "You will find him in the adjoining tent, with his daughter, the Comtesse de Maulévrier."

"Am I to arrest him, sire?" demanded Warthy.

The king replied in the affirmative, and Warthy departed on his errand, returning presently with Saint-Vallier, who was guarded by two halberdiers.

Just as François was about to interrogate the prisoner, Diane de Poitiers rushed into the tent, and threw herself at the king's feet, exclaiming:

"My father has been unjustly accused, sire. He is no traitor."

"I trust he may be able to clear himself, madame," rejoined the king, raising her gently. "But as it will be painful to you to listen to his examination, I must pray you to retire."

"You have disobeyed my injunctions in coming hither, Diane," said Saint-Vallier, reproachfully. "Your presence adds to my trouble. Go, I implore you!"

"No, no, I will not leave you," she rejoined. "I may be able to plead your cause. I can show his majesty that he has not a more loyal subject than yourself—that you are incapable of the crime with which you are charged—and that if there should be a conspiracy headed by the Duke de Bourbon, which I cannot—will not—believe, you have no part in it."

"Can the Comte de Saint-Vallier himself give me such assurance, madame?" said the king.

"Undoubtedly, sire," replied Diane. "Speak, father! You have no share in any plot?"

"I know of no plot," rejoined Saint-Vallier. "But I am well aware that I have many enemies, who would not hesitate to accuse me falsely. Who charges me with conspiracy against your majesty?" he added to the king.

"I do," replied Warthy. "I charge you with leaguings with the king's enemies, and I will bring proof of what I assert."

"I defy you to do so," replied Saint-Vallier; "and if the combat be permitted me by his majesty, I will force you, at the point of the sword, to confess that you have accused me falsely."

"You must establish your innocence by other means than the combat," rejoined the king. "You have long been Bourbon's confidential friend and adviser. You have been staying with him at the Château de Moulins. Is it not certain, then, that you must be privy to his designs?"

"Presumption is no proof, sire," said Saint-Vallier. "If the Constable de Bourbon has any such designs as your majesty attributes to him, he has carefully concealed them from me."

"You abuse my patience by these idle prevarications," cried the king, angrily. "By an immediate avowal of your guilt, and by a disclosure of all you know respecting this conspiracy, you might merit my forgiveness."

"And think you, sire, that if I were leagued in such a plot, I would purchase safety by betraying my associates?" rejoined Saint-Vallier. "No, I would rather perish on the scaffold."

"Such will be your fate," said the king, sternly. "But torture shall extort the truth from you."

"Oh! sire," exclaimed Diane, again flinging herself at the king's feet, "do not have recourse to such terrible measures. Spare him the torture!—spare him!"

"Let him confess his guilt, then—let him reveal all he knows regarding the plot," rejoined François.

"Torture will not force me to speak," said Saint-Val-lier, resolutely. "I should be unworthy of the name I bear if I could betray my friends. Cease to intercede for me, Diane," he added to his daughter.

"Remove the prisoners," said François to Warthy, "and let them be taken with a strong escort to Paris, and lodged in the Conciergerie, there to be kept till commissioners shall be appointed for their trial by the Parliament."

"Sire," said Diane, "I crave your majesty's permission to attend my unhappy father to Paris. My presence will be some consolation to him."

"I cannot grant your request, madame," replied the king, in an inflexible tone. "You must remain here with the Comtesse de Châteaubriand, Take leave of your father, and let him depart."

Half distracted, Diane flung herself in her father's arms. While straining her to his breast, Saint-Vallier said, in a low voice:

"Stay not here. Depart instantly for Normandy. Promise me this, and I shall die content."

"You shall not die, father," she cried. "I will obtain your pardon. I will not cease to supplicate the king till he yields."

"I forbid it," rejoined Saint-Vallier, authoritatively. "Obey me, as you would know peace hereafter."

Diane made no reply. Overcome by her emotion, she had swooned in his arms.

Female attendants were instantly summoned from the adjoining tent, which was appropriated to the Comtesse de Chateaubriand and her ladies, and Saint-Vallier having committed his daughter to the charge of these women, quitted the tent with the Bishop of Autun and Warthy.

The king's injunctions were promptly carried into effect. While the two prisoners were despatched with a guard strong enough to prevent, any attempt at rescue, to Paris, and lodged in the Conciergerie, there to await, their trial, officers were sent forth to all the principal towns in the Lyonnais, the Bourbonnois, Auvergne, Bourgogne, and Dauphiné, to proclaim by sound of trumpet the Constable de Bourbon a rebel and a traitor, and to offer in the king's name a reward of ten thousand golden crowns of the sun for his capture. Orders were at the same time issued that all the southern frontiers of the kingdom should be strictly guarded, so as to prevent his flight.

By such means the alarm was spread far and wide with inconceivable rapidity, and it seemed scarcely possible that Bourbon could escape.

Meanwhile, the Grand-Master and the Marshal de Chabannes had marched, without opposition, to Chantelle. There was no necessity to summon the fortress to surrender. The gates were thrown open by Saint-Sa-phorin, who was left in command, on the approach of the assailants. But the Constable and his chief adherents were gone, and, as far as could be ascertained, had taken refuge amid the mountains of Auvergne. The two leaders, therefore, having compelled the garrison to lay down their arms, arrested Saint-Saphorin, took possession of the fortress in the king's name, and despatched several bodies of men in pursuit of the fugitives.

Worthy was also on Bourbon's track, having sworn to effect his capture.

XI. MARCELLINE D'HERMENT.

Late at night, the messenger despatched by the Bishop of Autun to warn Bourbon of his danger, reached Chantelle, and before dawn the Constable had quitted the fortress, attended by his principal adherents. His escort comprised a hundred well-armed men, to twelve of whom were entrusted the leathern bags containing the treasure.

After traversing a long mountainous defile, remarkable for its grand and savage scenery, he reached Montaigut, where he dismounted, and entering the church, performed his devotions, and besought Heaven's aid in his difficulties.

Leaving Montaigut, he soon became involved in a range of volcanic mountains, and after a long ride through this extraordinary region, he came to the Château Lafayette—an old feudal stronghold, built on a vast lava current, which had issued in bygone ages from the crater of the Puy de Come.

Riding up to its gates, he was heartily welcomed by the châtelain, who hospitably entertained him and his train, cheering them with a liberal supply of the generous wine for which the district is renowned.

Lafayette would fain have persuaded Bourbon to tarry with him, but the Constable declined, alleging that he intended to pass the night at the Château d'Herment.

Again the fugitive's way led him through mountainous defiles, and night overtook him long before he reached his destination. Harbingers had been sent on to announce his approach, and as he and his followers climbed the steep and dangerous ascent to the fortress, a number of men, carrying blazing pine-wood torches, issued from the gates, and lighted them on their way. At their head was the young châtelain, who greeted Bourbon with profound respect, and placed his castle and all within it at his disposal.

The Seigneur d'Herment was a young man of some two or three-and-twenty—tall, powerfully built, and handsome. He was habited in a green hunting-dress and buff boots, and wore a broad-leaved grey felt hat, ornamented with a white feather, on his head. With him were two large shaggy hounds, which had pulled down many a lordly stag, torn in pieces many a wolf, had engaged more than one bear, and would not have hesitated to attack any other wild animal.

D'Herment dwelt in his lonely castle with his sister Marcelline, whose beauty and courage were the theme of admiration throughout that wild district. Marcelline was nearly five years younger than her brother, whom she strikingly resembled in feature, and even in character. Though her pursuits were masculine, and though her time was passed among horses and hounds, though she could manage a hawk better than her own falconer, though she could tire out the most energetic horseman, though she never missed the mark with arbalest or petronel, there was nothing in Marcelline's manner unbecoming the gentlest damsel. Her features, it is true, had a resolute expression, not often met with in a maiden of eighteen, her mouth and chin being proudly cut, and her fine nostrils often distended like those of a deer. Her complexion was embrowned by the sun, her eyes large, bright, and blue, and her luxuriant tresses of a lovely auburn. Her attire, though savouring little of court fashion, and boasting few ornaments, became her well, and displayed her tall and symmetrical figure to the greatest advantage. Her black velvet toque was adorned with the plume of an eagle which she herself had shot.

Such was the damsel who greeted Bourbon and his companions as they entered the great hall of the castle. Her remarkable beauty could not fail to strike the young nobles who were now presented to her by her brother, but she seemed insensible to the admiration she excited, and entirely occupied in attending to the Duke de Bourbon, whom she conducted to the upper table. She made no apology for the repast which was set before the Constable and his followers, and, indeed, it needed none, for though the viands were homely they were abundant, and the appetites of the guests, sharpened by their long ride, enabled them to do ample justice to the substantial dishes with which the board was loaded. Moreover, the wine was excellent, and plentifully supplied.

At the close of the repast Marcelline arose, and as the Constable led her forth he thanked her for her hospitality, and bade her adieu, stating that he should depart long before daylight.

In consideration of the fatigue they had undergone, and the extraordinarily early hour at which it had been arranged that they were to depart, most of the Constable's attendants now retired to rest; but, before seeking his chamber, Bourbon had an hour's private conference with D'Herment, at which Pomperant and Tansannes were present.

Just as the castle clock struck two, torches flashed in the great court, and showed the enclosure filled with horsemen. Shortly afterwards the chief part of the Constable's adherents made their appearance, and mounted their steeds. Ere many more minutes, Bourbon, attended by the châtelain, descended into the court, muffled in a heavy riding-cloak, doubtless to protect him from the fresh morning air. After taking leave of D'Herment, and casting a hasty glance around to ascertain that the men to whom the bags of treasure had been confided were there, he rode out of the gateway, followed by his train.

On gaining the valley he struck spurs into his steed, and the whole troop proceeded at a quick pace in the direction of the Château de Carlat, whither they were bound. Thus they passed on through a wild district, the volcanic mountains looking singularly fantastic in the gloom. Bourbon rode on in front alone, and seemed buried in thought.

At last, when day began to dawn, and the cones and craters of the mountains became more distinct, the leader of the party checked his horse, and signed to the troop to halt. The order was instantly obeyed. But what was the surprise of the young seigneurs, and indeed of the whole cavalcade, when their chief facing them, and throwing aside his cloak, disclosed the features of Tansannes!

Exclamations of surprise and anger arose on all sides.

"What is the meaning of this? Where is the Lord Constable? Has he deserted us?" cried several voices.

"He is on his way to the Franche-Comté," replied Tansannes. "Instead of retiring to rest, he quitted the Château d'Herment at midnight, disguised, and attended only by Pomperant. His aim is to gain Saint-Claude with as much expedition as possible, and we are to join him there."

This announcement caused great discontent among the young seigneurs, and they gave loud utterance to their anger.

"Pardieu! the Constable has done ill to desert us," cried Peloux, "We would all have shed our last drop of blood for him. He had better have died with his friends than be captured ingloriously."

"The Constable will never be taken alive," said Tansannes.

"But he should not have left us without a word," said Saint-Bonnet. "It looks as if he could not trust us."

"He felt you would refuse to leave him," said Tansannes.

"Why, so we should," rejoined Desguières. "I, for one, would never have left him."

"It was the conviction that a large escort must necessarily increase his risk, that caused him to abandon you," said Tansannes. "But he trusts you will rejoin him at Saint-Claude. He confides his treasure to your charge."

"Nothing, then, is left us but to cry 'Sauve qui peut,' and disperse," said Peloux. "Let each man make the best of his way to the frontier."

"Agreed," replied the others.

"Saint-Claude must be our rendezvous," said Tansannes. "A week hence, if all be well, we will meet there. Vive Bourbon!"

"Vive Bourbon!" exclaimed the others, and the shout was echoed by the whole troop.

The young seigneurs then bade each other adieu, and rode off in different directions, each taking with him a bag of gold, and a guard of a dozen soldiers.

XII. THE CHATEAU DE LALLIÈRES.

Notwithstanding what Tansannes had asserted, Bourbon had not quitted the Château d'Herment, but had remained in his chamber while his followers rode away. The only persons taken into his confidence besides the châtelain, were Pomperant and Tansannes, the former of whom remained to attend his lord and aid his escape, while the latter undertook to personate him. The Constable was loth to separate from his devoted followers, but D'Herment convinced him that if he retained so numerous a suite he would inevitably be tracked and captured. In this opinion Tansannes and Pomperant concurred, and at last Bourbon yielded to their arguments. It was also thought advisable, for greater security, that the Constable should disguise himself as a serving-man, and for this purpose a doublet and hose of russet serge were procured for him. A short mantle of knitted worsted, with a hood attached to it, enabled him partially to conceal his features.

All being arranged, after an early meal D'Herment rode forth from his castle, with the ostensible purpose of trying some newly-manned hawks. He was accompanied by his sister and Pomperant, and the trio were followed by Bourbon, disguised as before mentioned, and by a couple of falconers, each having a hawk upon his wrist.

After more than an hour's ride among the mountains, they came to a lake formed by the damming up of a river by a tremendous stream of lava which had flowed from the side of a lofty volcanic mountain.

The lake was of some extent, and its borders were in places fringed by trees, while the shallower parts were full of reeds, bulrushes, and aquatic plants. Marcelline now took a hawk from one of the falconers, and a heron shortly afterwards rising from the reeds, she quickly unhooded the hawk, and cast it off. On perceiving its danger, the heron flew swiftly upwards, followed with equal swiftness by the hawk, and to such a height did they soar, that they looked like specks, and eventually almost vanished from sight. When they reappeared, the hawk was uppermost, and soon stooped upon her prey, and ere another minute the heron fell dead within a few yards of Marcelline.

A bittern was next roused, but the party were prevented from continuing the sport by the appearance of a troop of horsemen coming from the direction of the chateau. No doubt could be entertained that this troop, which consisted of a dozen men and a captain, were in pursuit of the Constable. There was no time for deliberation, but Marcelline was equal to the emergency.

"Ride on with the prince," she said to her brother. "Let the Seigneur Pomperant go with me. They will take him for the Constable. We can make our way across the mountains to the Château de Lallières. If you can baffle pursuit, you will find us there."

To this bold proposition D'Herment at once agreed, and the courageous damsel, calling upon Pomperant to follow her, dashed up the rugged side of the mountain. At the same moment, D'Herment, followed by Bourbon and the falconers, galloped off along a road which skirted the banks of the lake.

The movements of the parties were of course described by Captain Florae, the leader of the troop. As had been foreseen by Marcelline, he mistook Pomperant for Bourbon, and started in pursuit with a couple of men, despatching the rest of the troop after the other fugitives, while mounting the hill, Marcelline and her companion remained in sight of their pursuers, but soon after gaining the summit they were lost to view.

On reaching the same point, Florae found that they were descending a precipitous road into the valley on the opposite side of the mountain, and, notwithstanding the danger of the course, he unhesitatingly followed with his men, and reached the valley in safety.

The chase continued for more than a league along a narrow defile, when all at once Marcelline and her companion stopped, and, on seeing this, Florae pressed on more vigorously than ever.

The stoppage of the fugitives had been caused by the appearance of a body of armed men riding towards them from the farther end of the defile. Uncertain whether these were friends or foes, but fearing they might prove the latter, Pomperant hesitated to proceed, halting for a brief space to consider what course he should pursue.

Marcelline proposed to take refuge in the fastnesses of the mountains, and undertook to guide him to a secure retreat, and, without waiting for his reply, forced her horse up a steep acclivity. Pomperant followed, but, ere he had climbed half the ascent, Florae and his men came up, and two shots were fired, one of which struck Pomperant's horse, and the wounded animal, after a plunge and a struggle, rolled down the precipice, dragging his rider with him.

Pomperant, though much bruised, tried to disengage himself, but, ere he could do so, Florae had dismounted, and holding him down, presented a poniard at his throat.

"I arrest your highness in the king's name," cried Florae. "You are my prisoner."

"Why do you address me by that title?" demanded Pomperant. "For whom do you take me?"

"For Charles de Bourbon, Constable of France, a rebel and a traitor to the king," rejoined Florae. "Fortune has, indeed, favoured me. I shall obtain the ten thousand gold crowns offered by his majesty for your highness's capture."

"You will obtain no reward for my capture," said Pomperant. "I am not Bourbon."

"This denial will not avail with me, prince," rejoined Florae. "I know you too well. Yield yourself my prisoner, or——"

"Never!" exclaimed Pomperant, seizing his antagonist's wrist, and preventing him from using the poniard.

A desperate struggle then ensued between them. Florae was a very powerful man, and, being uppermost, had a great advantage over Pomperant, who, moreover, could not extricate himself from his horse.

The issue of the conflict could not therefore be doubted especially as the troopers were preparing to aid their leader, when at this juncture a sharp report was heard from above. A well-directed bullet pierced Florae's brain, and he sank an inert mass upon Pomperant's breast.

Looking up, the troopers perceived Marcelline on the edge of a rock, with a smoking petronel in her hand.

The fate of their leader caused a momentary irresolution in the men, and this allowed Pomperant time to free himself from his dead antagonist and spring to his feet. In another moment he had possessed himself of Florae's steed, and, charging the troopers, hewed down one of them. Panic-stricken, the other galloped off, but he did not escape. Pomperant rode after him, and being better mounted, speedily came up with him, and by a tremendous blow cleft him almost to the girdle.

The poor wretch had ridden in the direction of the troop, whom we have described as advancing along the ravine, and who were now not far from the scene of action, hoping they might succour him—but he shouted to them in vain. Had they been so minded, they could not have lent him aid, but they might have avenged him, for the victor did not attempt to fly, but tranquilly awaited their coming up. Pomperant anticipated no molestation, for he had recognised in the leader of the troop a friend—the Seigneur de Lallières.

Meanwhile, Marcelline had descended from the heights and riding up, received Pomperant's congratulations on the courage she had displayed. While thanking her for the important service she had rendered him, he added, with a look that bespoke the depth of his gratitude, "You have saved my life. I shall never forget the debt I owe you."

A greeting then took place between Pomperant and Lallières, and after explanations had been given by the former, Lallières ordered half a dozen of his retainers to convey the bodies of Florae and the two troopers to a monastery in the mountains, and there cause them to be interred, taking care to have masses said for their souls.

The château belonging to Lallières proved to be about three leagues off and on arriving at it, he consigned Marcelline to the care of his wife, and then taking Pomperant to his own private chamber, proceeded to anoint his bruises with a sovereign balsam, which he affirmed would speedily heal them, and which afforded the sufferer almost immediate relief. Lallières then left his guest, but presently returned with his intendant, an old and trusty servant, who brought with him a basket containing cold viands and wine. Having satisfied his hunger, Pomperant threw himself on a couch, and, being much fatigued, slept soundly for several hours, when he was awakened by the opening of the chamber-door, and by the light of a silver lamp burning on the table, beheld his host, who was accompanied by the Constable and D'Herment. Bourbon informed his follower that he and D'Herment had only just reached the château, having been compelled to take a circuitous road among the mountains, in order to elude their pursuers; and he added, that it would be necessary to depart before daybreak, as the château was certain to be visited in the morning by some of the numerous bands of armed men scouring the country.

"I am ready to set out now, for the few hours' sound sleep I have enjoyed have completely restored me," said Pomperant. "But your highness has been in the saddle since early morning, and must need rest."

"I need meat and drink more than rest," replied Bourbon. "D'Herment and I have fasted more rigorously than hermits through out the day."

"In an hour I shall be ready," added D'Herment. "I cannot engage to satisfy my appetite in less than that time. I never felt the pangs of hunger so keenly as now."

"You shall have wherewithal to allay them, I promise you," observed Lallières. "Come with me to the banqueting-hall."

"Nay, there is plenty here," said Bourbon, glancing at the viands left on the table by Pomperant. "Fall to without ceremony, I pray you," he added to D'Herment. "Regard me only as your comrade, not as your prince." They then sat down and attacked the provisions with great vigour. Seeing the havoc they were making, Lallières sought a fresh supply of meat and wine, and it was well he did so, for the appetites of his guests appeared insatiable. At length, however, they declared themselves satisfied, and arose from the table.

"I think your highness need not depart till morning," said Lallières; "but if you are resolved to go, I will order horses for you."

"Do so, my good friend," replied Bourbon. "If I remain, my retreat may be cut off."

Lallières then quitted the chamber to give the necessary orders, and Bourbon was discussing his route with the others, when their host reappeared, his looks proclaiming alarm.

"What has happened?" demanded the Constable.

"The Seigneur Perot de Warthy is at the castle gate and demands admittance in the king's name," replied Lallières. "He has a troop of archers with him."

"Worthy here!" exclaimed Bourbon, turning pale. "Then there is good reason for apprehension."

"How will your highness have me act?" said Lallières. "You have only to command. I am ready to lay down my life for you. Shall I refuse him admittance?"

"No," replied Bourbon, after a moment's reflection. "Escape would then be impossible. I know the man. He will post himself before the castle, and allow no one to pass forth from the gates. Admit him. You can find some place of concealment for us."

"Easily," replied Lallières. And touching a spring in the oak wainscoting a secret panel flew open, disclosing a narrow passage constructed within the wall. "That passage will lead you to a chamber known only to myself and my intendant, where you will be perfectly safe. I will come to you anon."

"Enough," replied Bourbon. And, taking up the lamp, he passed through the secret door with the others.

Lallières then summoned the intendant, and bidding him remove all evidences of the repast, descended to the outer court, and ordered the gates to be thrown open.

Worthy rode into the court-yard at the head of his troop, and dismounting, said, in a stern authoritative voice to the châtelain, "I require the keys of the castle to be delivered to me."

"By what right do you make the demand?" rejoined Lallières.

"As the king's representative," replied Warthy.

The keys were then brought him by the warder, and having seen the gate locked, and placed two of his own men on guard beside it, he thrust the bunch of keys in his girdle, and returned to Lallières, by whom he was conducted to a large hall on the ground floor. The attendants kept at a respectful distance, so that what

passed between them was unheard.

"Seigneur de Lallières," said Warthy, "I have reason to believe that the arch-traitor, Charles de Bourbon, has sought shelter beneath your roof. Those who screen him share his guilt. Deliver him up, and I will save you from all ill consequences. Attempt to shield him from justice, and you will incur the severest displeasure of the king."

"Search the castle, and if you find the prince, take him," replied Lallières, sternly.

"Then you do not deny that he is here?" said Warthy.

"I neither deny it, nor admit it," rejoined Lallières. "Search the castle, I say. I shall not hinder you. I have no other answer to make."

"Your answer is insolent, seigneur, and shall be reported to the king," said Warthy.

"Be it so," rejoined Lallières.

Worthy called the intendant, whom he recognised by his wand, and ordered him to conduct him over the castle. The old man did not dare to refuse compliance. But though the châtelain's private room was visited in the course of the perquisition, no discovery was made.

"Are you satisfied, sir?" inquired Lallières, as Warthy returned to the hall, after his unsuccessful search.

"I am satisfied that Bourbon is hidden somewhere in the château," replied Warthy, "but he shall not escape me. To-morrow I will institute a more rigorous search. I understand you have some guests in the chateau. Where are they?"

"The only person now here is the Demoiselle Marcelline d'Herment," replied Lallières. "The others are gone."

"Who are gone?" demanded Warthy.

"Those you seek. They departed on foot."

"At what time?" said Warthy.

"Scarce half an hour before your arrival," returned Lallières. "I counselled them not to stay, and I am thankful they took my advice."

"Was Bourbon one of them?" demanded Warthy.

Lallières remained silent, and Warthy repeated the question yet more authoritatively.

"I refuse to answer," replied the châtelain. "I have said that the persons who came hither are gone. That is all I choose to tell you. Follow them, if you think proper, or remain here. You do not expect me to put you on their track."

"You are bound to aid in capturing rebels and traitors," rejoined Warthy. "But I will not talk longer with you now. To-morrow I shall have more to say."

"To-morrow I will speak freely," returned Lallières, "for then my friends will be out of your reach. Meantime, it shall not be said that I neglected the rites of hospitality. Will you sup before you retire to rest?—or shall my intendant conduct you at once to a sleeping-chamber?"

"I do not mean to retire to rest," replied Warthy. "I shall visit the guard in person throughout the night, to assure myself that strict watch is kept. Let supper be served here."

Lallières then withdrew. Left alone, Warthy took a few turns in the great hall, and then flung himself into a chair. While doing so, he found that the keys incommoded him, so, removing them from his girdle, he laid them upon the table.

Presently afterwards a chamberlain appeared, followed by four serving-men, charged with the materials of a plentiful repast. While serving the dishes to Warthy, who ate all that was offered him, and emptied several goblets of wine, the chamberlain remarked the keys lying on the table, and it instantly occurred to him that he might be able to secure them.

While replenishing Warthy's goblet he threw a napkin over the keys, and immediately afterwards took it up again so cautiously that no sound was audible, and then quitted the hall, ostensibly for the purpose of fetching another flask of wine.

Worthy was too much engaged with his repast to remark what had taken place, and he was still sedulously occupied when the chamberlain returned, bringing with him another flask of wine, and also a second bunch of keys—somewhat resembling those he had carried off—and while moving about he let them drop on the floor.

"Ha! give me those keys!" cried Warthy, angrily.

And taking them from the chamberlain, who apologised for the inadvertence, he thrust them into his girdle.

Just then Lallières entered the hall, accompanied by Marcelline.

"This lady has desired me to bring her to you, sir," said the châtelain. "She has a favour to ask of you."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Warthy, rising and bowing. "I trust it may be in my power to grant it."

"It is merely that I may be permitted to quit the castle," said Marcelline.

"Alone, fair lady, at this hour?" rejoined Warthy. "I have too much consideration for you to grant the request."

"Were I to depart alone, I should have no fear," she replied, "but I shall have three attendants with me."

"This is a stratagem to get Bourbon out of the castle," thought Warthy. "But I will defeat it and secure my prey at the same time. When do you desire to depart?" he added to Marcelline.

"An hour hence," she replied.

"Well, you have my permission. You have three attendants, you say?"

"Yes, three," she answered. "You can see them before they quit the castle."

"Of course I shall see them," he returned. "They cannot depart till I am satisfied. Go fetch the warder," he added to an attendant.

Presently the personage in question entered the hall, and Warthy told him he had granted permission to the Demoiselle d'Herment to quit the château with three attendants.

"To-night?" asked the warder.

"Ay, to-night, at any hour she pleases," said Warthy.

The warder bowed, and retired.

"I am much beholden to you, messire," said Marcelline.

"Nay, fair lady, I am happy to oblige you," he returned, gallantly.

Marcelline then withdrew, accompanied by Lallières, both looking well pleased.

"I have him now," thought Warthy, as he was left alone. "It is needless to give any further instructions to the warder. He cannot unlock the gate without coming to me," he added, satisfying himself that the keys were safe.

He then resumed his seat and finished his repast, and when the table had been cleared by the serving-men, he reclined back in his chair, and presently fell into a doze.

While thus slumbering, he fancied he heard the trampling of horses in the court, but he did not disturb himself on that account, as he felt certain no one could get out of the castle without his aid. After he had slumbered on for nearly two hours, he was aroused by the entrance of the warder.

"I have brought the keys, monseigneur," said the man.

"You have come for them, you mean, sirrah," rejoined Warthy, ascertaining that the bunch of keys was hanging from his girdle.

"I mean what I say, monseigneur," returned the warder, laying down the keys before him.

"What, then, are these?" cried Warthy, holding up the other bunch.

"Those are not the keys of the castle gate," returned the other.

"Ha! I have been duped!" cried Warthy, the truth beginning to flash upon him. "Answer me, villain," he roared. "You have not allowed the Demoiselle d'Herment and her attendants to depart?"

"Yes, I have. I concluded they had your lordship's full permission," replied the warder, trembling. "They brought the keys with them, and told me to unlock the gate. I am sorry if I have done wrong, but I fully believed they had your sanction, and so did the guard, or we should have stopped them."

"Fool! idiot!" roared Warthy. "You have allowed the Constable de Bourbon to escape. How long have they been gone?"

"Upwards of an hour," replied the warder.

"Time enough to allow him to get fairly off," cried Warthy. "But I must start at once in pursuit. Order my horse instantly—instantly, d'ye hear, sirrah?—and bid twenty archers get ready to attend me. The rest will remain here."

The warder rushed forth to obey the order, and in less than five minutes Warthy had quitted the castle with twenty men.

His last words to the guard were: "Hold this castle for the king, till his majesty's pleasure shall be known, and keep the Seigneur de Lallières a close prisoner."

XIII. THE MOUNTAIN HOSTELRY.

Having got clear of the castle by the stratagem just described, the fugitives, apprehensive of immediate pursuit, dashed down the mountain, and, on reaching the valley, speeded along it as fast as their horses could carry them. Nor did they slacken their pace for more than an hour. They then paused to listen, but hearing nothing behind them, they went on somewhat more leisurely. They were all well mounted, for Lallières had given them the best horses in his stables.

Hitherto no plans had been fixed. Bourbon would fain have persuaded D'Herment and his courageous sister to leave him, but they refused, D'Herment insisting upon acting as the Constable's guide throughout the night, lest he might miss his way among the mountains, and fall into the hands of his enemies.

After some consideration it was decided that they should proceed to the Chateau de Montbrison, which could be reached by daylight, and where Bourbon might halt, if circumstances permitted, for a brief space, and then continue his course towards the south. With this design, the party journeyed throughout the night, and, after crossing a chain of mountains just as day began to dawn, came in sight of the ancient towers of Montbrison.

Bourbon's purpose, however, of sheltering himself in the castle, was at once abandoned as he perceived a large troop of armed men, numbering three or four hundred, riding towards Montbrison through the valley. Evidently, the leader of this troop was about to take possession of the fortress, and it was fortunate for the Constable that he was outside its walls.

Under these circumstances, it would have been dangerous for D'Herment and his sister to proceed thither, so the party still kept together, but as their horses were dead beaten, it was absolutely necessary to give the wearied animals rest. The fugitives were therefore compelled to enter a small village among the mountains, where a hostelry promised them all they required.

The little inn was kept by an old couple and their son, Hugues. The latter took charge of the horses, while

the old man and his wife attended to their guests, and quickly set before them the best their house afforded. Bourbon, having to support the character of a servant, went with Hugues to the stable, and, on entering it, was glad to perceive several strong horses in the stalls.

"My master wants to reach Vienne without delay, friend," he said to Hugues, "and I am sure he would be glad to hire horses from you to proceed thither."

"Your master shall have the horses, sir," replied Hugues, showing by the profound respect of his manner that he had recognised the person who addressed him. "If you desire it," he added, significantly, "I will go with you myself to Vienne."

"I perceive you know me, friend," rejoined Bourbon, "so I will not attempt further concealment with you. You are aware of the peril in which I am placed?"

"I am aware that ten thousand golden crowns of the sun are offered for your highness's capture," replied Hugues; "but were the reward ten times as great, it would not tempt me to betray you. I am sorry to see your highness here. I hoped you were already out of France."

And he then proceeded to explain to the Constable that the whole country was alarmed by the royal proclamations, and that a large body of men had just passed through the valley from Lyons to take possession of Montbrison.

"I saw them," replied Bourbon. "But do you think there is danger in proceeding to Vienne? I want to get across the Rhone."

"I know not how to advise your highness," said Hugues. "The shortest road out of France is the safest you can pursue. By the time you have breakfasted, the horses shall be ready, and you can then go whithersoever you list."

Bourbon then returned to the hostel, and, sitting down at a table apart from the others, a modest repast was set before him by the old dame. Impatient to be gone, as soon as he had despatched his breakfast the Constable went forth again, and found that the horses were in readiness. By this time the old host had learned who was his guest, and professed as much devotion for him as his son had done.

"I only wish I could attend your highness in person," said the old man. "But take my son with you—take my horses—and may Heaven guard you on your way!"

"I shall not forget your zeal, my good friend," replied Bourbon, much moved; "and I trust I shall one day be able to requite you."

During breakfast, it had been arranged that the party should now separate. D'Herment and his sister proposed to return to their château, while the Constable and Pomperant resolved to make the best of their way to Vienne.

Hasty adieux were exchanged at the door of the little hostelry.

"Farewell, prince!" said Marcelline to Bourbon. "May you re-enter France at the head of an army! It will give me new life when I hear you have crossed the frontier."

"Have no fear for me," rejoined Bourbon. "Rest assured that I shall baffle my enemies. But I trust you may not suffer for your zeal in my behalf."

"If the king should imprison me and my brother, your highness must come and deliver us," she replied.

"That I engage to do," replied Bourbon.

The parting between Pomperant and Marcelline was brief, but it was evident that the former felt it deeply. The young seigneur had already become passionately enamoured of the fair damsel who had saved his life.

"Farewell, Marcelline," he said. "We shall meet again."

"I trust so," she replied.

Bourbon did not attempt to mount till Pomperant was in the saddle, but as soon as his supposed master had ridden off, he followed with Hugues.

Often and often did Pomperant turn to gaze at Marcelline, till her figure was lost in the distance.

XIV. THE MILL AT SAINT-SIMPHORIEN.

Compelled to avoid the public roads, the fugitives, on reaching the valley, traversed an extensive marshy plain, which would have been impassable without a guide, forded the Loire about half a league above Montrond, and after a toilsome journey through a wild and mountainous district, drew near Saint-Symphorien about an hour before midnight. As they could not put up at an auberge, Hugues proposed that they should seek a lodging at a mill which he pointed out on an eminence a short distance from the road.

"I think Maître Benoit, the miller, will take us in," he said. "He is kind-hearted and hospitable, and his daughter Madelon is the prettiest girl in Saint-Symphorien, and as good as she is pretty."

"You know her?" said Bourbon.

"I persuade myself I do," replied Hugues, "I have given my heart to her keeping, and hope one day to make her my wife—that is, if we can obtain Benoit's consent to the marriage."

"In that case we will go to the mill," said Bourbon. "You can answer for the miller's daughter, if not for the miller and his wife."

"I can answer for all three," replied Hugues. "I will stake my life that your highness shall be safe at the mill

—provided we can only get in; and what is more, we shall have a good stable for the horses.”

They then rode towards the mill. Close beside it was Benoit's dwelling—a substantial-looking tenement, which showed he must have thriven in his trade. A little to the rear of the house were a large barn and stable.

As the party approached the miller's abode, the alarm was given by the barking of a couple of fierce dogs in the stable-yard, and just as Hugues, who had dismounted for the purpose, was about to knock against the door with his whip, a chamber window was opened, and Benoit, thrusting forth his head, which was adorned with a tall bonnet de nuit, called out in a gruff voice:

“Hola! my masters, what do you mean by disturbing honest folk at this time of night? Go about your business.”

“Our business is to procure a lodging beneath your roof, père Benoit,” rejoined Hugues. “Don't you know me, my good friend?”

“What! is it Hugues?” cried the miller. “What brings you here, boy, and who have you got with you?”

At this juncture, Pomperant thought proper to interpose, declaring he was a captain of the royal guard of archers, on the way to Vienne, to intercept the flight of the Constable de Bourbon.

The explanation did not appear very satisfactory to honest Benoit, for he rejoined in a sullen tone:

“Pardieu! I shan't disturb myself for you, captain. You must go to the auberge. Good night!”

And he was about to shut the casement, when Hugues called out to him:

“Hold! père Benoit. You are mistaken. We are all friends of the Duke de Bourbon.”

“Since you give me that assurance, Hugues, I am content,” said the miller. “But no enemy of Bourbon shall set foot in my dwelling, if I can prevent it.”

“By Saint Louis! I am glad to hear you say so, good Benoit,” cried the Constable. “Admit us without fear. Bourbon has no better friend than myself.”

“That voice!” exclaimed Benoit. “Oh, if it should turn out to be the Constable in person!”

“You have not made a bad guess, père Benoit,” rejoined Hugues. “Come down as quickly as you can, and, meantime, let me have the key of the stable.”

“Here it is,” replied the miller, throwing him the key from the window. “But wait till Madelon can go with you, for the dogs are loose.”

“Oh, I'll wait. I don't want to be torn in pieces,” said Hugues, laughing, as he picked up the key.

Benoit then disappeared, and his voice was subsequently heard from within calling to his wife and daughter to get up immediately. Madelon was already astir, having recognised her lover's voice, and ere many minutes opened the door, and as she held a light in her hand, it could be seen that Hugues had not overrated her beauty. Nothing daunted by the presence in which he stood, her lover clasped her in his arms, and snatched a few hasty kisses. Disengaging herself as quickly as she could from his embrace, the blushing damsel turned to the others, both of whom had dismounted and fastened their horses to a rail, and begging them to enter, ushered them into a large plainly-furnished but comfortable-looking room. At the same moment, the miller and his wife, each carrying a light, came down an oak staircase which communicated with the rooms above.

Feeling that disguise was unnecessary, and that he could safely trust the worthy miller, Bourbon had removed his hood, and no sooner did Benoit look upon him than he exclaimed:

“Ay, there stands the Duke de Bourbon. I knew his voice the moment I heard it. Look, wife, 'tis he!—'tis his highness!”

So saying, he threw himself at the Constable's feet, and his dame followed his example. So demonstrative were they in their devotion, that Bourbon could scarcely persuade them to rise. When they regained their feet, Madelon came forward to pay him like homage.

“No, no, that must not be, my pretty damsel,” said Bourbon, checking her. And he added, with a smile, “Go with Hugues to the stable. He needs your protection from the dogs.”

“Ay, take a lantern and go with him, Madelon,” said her father. “Show him where to find food for the horses.”

As the young couple departed, the miller's wife, Margot, a comely, middle-aged woman, threw a heap of wood on the hearth, and in a few minutes a blazing fire cast a cheerful glow around. While she was thus employed, an active-looking female servant, about Madelon's age, and not without some pretension to good looks, tripped down the staircase, and hastened to spread a snow-white cloth upon the table, and make other preparations for supper. Babet, for so she was named, took Bourbon for a serving-man, and would have assigned him a place at the lower end of the table, but her mistress soon set this matter right, and ere long the two fugitives were seated opposite each other, discussing a very substantial repast.

By this time Madelon and Hugues had returned from the stables, and the young man took his seat at a respectful distance from his superiors. Before he had finished his supper, Babet, who had gone up-stairs with her mistress, came down again, and made the satisfactory announcement that chambers were ready for the guests, whereupon Bourbon and Pomperant immediately arose, and prepared to retire, intimating their intention of departing an hour before dawn.

The females having likewise retired, Benoit and Hugues drew near the fire, and fell fast asleep, but they were speedily roused from their slumbers by the fierce barking of the dogs. Both started to their feet in great alarm, as the trampling of horses, mingled with the clank of arms, was heard outside, and left no doubt that a troop of cavalry was at hand.

Without a moment's delay, Benoit extinguished the lamp which unluckily had been left burning on the table, and rushed up the staircase to warn the fugitives.

In another minute a loud knocking was heard at the door, and an authoritative voice demanded immediate admittance. Hugues, however, made no reply, but reconnoitring the party through the window, perceived that it consisted of some twenty mounted men-at-arms, whose leader was knocking against the door with the handle of his sword.

"Unfasten the door instantly, I say," cried this personage, "or my men shall burst it open. Some one must be astir, for a light has just been extinguished."

"I knew that cursed light had betrayed us," groaned Hugues. "If the saints do not help us now, Bourbon will certainly be captured!"

Just then the creaking of a window on the upper floor was heard, and a voice, which Hugues recognised as that of the miller, called out, "Who are you, and what is the meaning of this disturbance?"

"I am the Seigneur Perot de Warthy," returned the officer. "I am in quest of the traitor and rebel, Charles de Bourbon. I have tracked him to this neighbourhood, and shall search the house to see if he is concealed within it."

"Mercy on us! what is to be done?" ejaculated Hugues.

"You must look for the Constable de Bourbon elsewhere," replied Benoit, in a surly tone. "You won't find him here."

"I am by no means sure of that," rejoined Warthy. "Are you the miller?"

"I am Benoit, the miller, at your service."

"Then listen to me, Maître Benoit," continued Warthy, "and give heed to what I say. By harbouring Bourbon you incur the punishment of death, and if he is concealed within your house, and you do not at once deliver him up, I will hang you at your own threshold."

"I have nothing to fear on that score," returned the miller, resolutely.

"Bravely answered!" exclaimed Hugues. "My father-in-law that is to be is a true man. But I am afraid his courage will be severely tried anon."

"Are you going to open the door, rascal, or must I break it down?" roared Warthy. "I have been trifled with long enough."

"Have a moment's patience and I will let you in," returned Benoit.

"Be speedy, then," said Warthy. "Surround the house," he added to his men, "and see that no one gets out at the back."

The trampling of horses, accompanied by the clanking of arms, proved that this order was promptly obeyed.

"Bourbon's only chance is gone," ejaculated Hugues.

As the exclamation was made, the miller, followed by Bourbon and Pomperant, both with their swords drawn, descended to the room. Madelon came down quickly after them.

"Pass out at this window, monseigneur," said Benoit, in a low voice to the Constable, moving towards the back of the room. "You may gain the wood at the foot of the hill."

"Have a care," whispered Hugues. "The house is surrounded by soldiers."

"Open the window at once," said Bourbon. "I will cut my way through them."

"Give me a sword, père Benoit," said Hugues.

"Here is one," rejoined Madelon, unhooking a weapon from the wall, and presenting it to him.

"Stay a moment, monseigneur," said Benoit. "A plan occurs to me. I should have thought of it before, but I am so bewildered. Underneath this room there is a vault where I store my corn before grinding it. Will it please you to hide there?"

"If the retreat should be discovered, we shall be caught like rats in a trap, and can offer no defence," objected Bourbon.

"My father has not explained that there is a communication between the vault and the mill," interposed Madelon. "Your highness can get out that way, should it be necessary."

"The entrance to the vault is there—under the staircase," urged the miller. "Madelon will conduct your highness. Lift the trap, girl—lift it quickly," he added to his daughter.

The trap-door was soon opened by Madelon, who descended by means of a ladder into the vault, and was instantly followed by the fugitives, the trap-door being shut by Hugues, who went down last.

Scarcely had they disappeared, when the outer door was burst open with a tremendous crash, and Warthy, sword in hand, and followed by four men-at-arms, rushed into the house. Alarmed by the noise, Margot and Babet hurried down the staircase, bearing lights, both screaming loudly as they perceived Benoit upon his knees before Warthy, who held a sword to his throat. Flying towards them, and kneeling to Warthy, Margot besought him, in piteous terms, to spare her husband's life.

"Harm him not, and I will tell all," she cried, almost frightened out of her wits.

"Speak out then at once, woman," said Warthy. "Where is the traitor Bourbon hidden?"

"Hold your tongue, wife, I command you," said the stout-hearted miller.

"But I can't stand by and see your throat cut, Benoit," she rejoined. "I must speak."

"Certainly you must, unless you desire to become a widow," said Warthy. "You may as well confess that Bourbon is here. Your looks betray you. He cannot escape, for the house is surrounded, and I don't mean to leave a hole or corner unvisited. Where is the traitor, I say?"

"Where is he, Benoit?" she cried, appealing to her husband. "For my sake, don't sacrifice yourself."

"Woman, you have lost your senses," said the miller, angrily. "What do I know about the Duke de Bourbon?"

"You know a great deal more than you appear inclined to tell, rascal," rejoined Warthy. "But I will have the truth from you. I give you five minutes for consideration," he added, releasing him, "and if at the end of that time Bourbon be not forthcoming, I will execute my threat, and hang you at your own door."

Without another word, he took the light which Margot had set down upon the table, and, signing to two of his men to follow him, ascended the staircase. In less than five minutes he came down again, his countenance betraying anger and disappointment.

"Well, have you found him?" inquired Benoit, who had not been allowed to exchange a word with his wife

during Warthy's absence.

"Not yet, but I soon shall," replied Warthy. "He has only just left his couch. Now, madame," he continued, in a stern tone, to Margot, "do you desire to see your husband hanged?"

"Oh no, monseigneur! I would rather you hanged me than Benoit."

"Nonsense! I don't hang women. Speak! or my men will take your husband forth. Where is Bourbon hidden?"

"I can't tell," she sobbed. "But if he is hidden anywhere, it must be in—in—the vault."

"A plague upon your mischievous tongue!" cried her husband, reproachfully.

"Don't blame me, Benoit," she cried. "I couldn't bear to see you hanged."

"At last we have got the truth," muttered Warthy. "I knew the woman wouldn't hold out. Show me the Way to the vault, madame."

"I forbid you," said Benoit, authoritatively.

"Take care what you are about, sirrah," cried Warthy; "you will only make your own position worse. Now, madame!"

At this moment the trap-door, which had been elevated a few inches so as to allow the person beneath it to overhear what was going on in the room, suddenly fell with a clap, that attracted the attention of Warthy.

Snatching up the light, he flew in the direction of the noise, and instantly detected the trap-door. "Soh! I have found it!" he exclaimed. "Here is the entrance to the vault. Open this trap-door," he added to his men.

The order being promptly obeyed, Madelon was discovered standing on the upper steps of the ladder.

"A woman!" exclaimed Warthy, surprised. "And, by my faith, a very pretty one, too! Take care, mademoiselle! My men are coming down into the vault to look for your companions."

"Let me come up first," she rejoined, placing herself in the mouth of the trap, so as to obstruct the descent of the soldiers. "It will be useless for you to search the vault. You will find no one there."

"I shan't take your word for that, mademoiselle," rejoined Warthy. "Make way. My men *must* go down."

Madelon was obliged to obey, and the four soldiers instantly descended.

In another minute, Warthy, who was listening anxiously, heard shouts and the noise of a struggle within the vault, and he called to know whether Bourbon had been captured.

"Yes, we've caught him," replied a soldier from below.

"Well done, my brave fellows!" cried Warthy. "You shall be handsomely rewarded. Bring him up at once."

"Fear nothing, father," said Madelon, noticing the miller's consternation. "It is not the Constable."

"Heaven be praised for that!" exclaimed Benoit.

A man-at-arms now ascended from the vault. After him came the captive, and then the three other soldiers.

"Why, this is not Bourbon!" cried Warthy, regarding the prisoner.

"I told your men so, captain," replied Hugues—for it was he—"but they wouldn't believe me."

"Go down again instantly, and make further search," roared Warthy. "He is there."

"There was no one in the vault but this man, whom we took to be Bourbon in disguise," replied one of the soldiers.

"Has the vault an outlet?" demanded Warthy.

"Oh yes," returned the soldier, "there is a door at the farther end, but it is locked."

"Then I have lost my prize," cried Warthy. "He has escaped. You shall be hanged, rascal, for assisting the traitor," he added, furiously, to Hugues.

"Give me my life, captain, and I'll tell you where to find him," rejoined the prisoner.

"If you utter a word, you need think no more of me, Hugues," said Madelon.

"Heed her not, fellow," said Warthy. "Better lose your mistress than your life."

"I am quite of your opinion, captain," rejoined Hugues. "I don't like the thought of a halter. On the understanding, then, that I am to be spared——"

"Recollect what the consequences will be," interrupted Madelon.

"Avoid the rope, if you are wise," said Warthy.

"I mean to do so, captain," replied Hugues. "His highness the Constable and his companion have taken refuge in the mill."

"Miserable craven!" exclaimed Madelon, scornfully. "Hanging is too good for you."

"If you have misinformed me, you know the fate that awaits you," said Warthy to Hugues. "To the mill!"

Just as he was about to quit the house, a sudden glare filled the room, rendering every object as visible as it would have been in broad day. No doubt could exist as to the cause of this illumination.

"Gracious Heavens! the mill is on fire!" exclaimed Benoit.

The shouts of the men-at-arms outside confirmed the truth of the ejaculation, and the guard stationed at the door vociferated, "The mill is on fire, captain!"

"Take care no one escapes from it," roared Warthy, in reply.

"Powers of mercy! what an accident!" exclaimed Hugues, his countenance reflecting the horror depicted on the faces of all around. "The Constable de Bourbon will be burnt to death!"

"No, no, he won't," cried Warthy, who remained perfectly calm, even at this exciting moment. "But he will be forced out of his hiding-place."

On this he quitted the house with his men, leaving a guard outside the door.

No sooner was he gone than Hugues went up to the miller, who looked almost stupified, and clapping him on the shoulder, said, with a grin, "I set the mill on fire, père Benoit."

"You did!" exclaimed the miller; "a nice piece of work you've done. And you make a joke of it, rascal—you laugh."

"Laugh! to be sure. And so will you, père Benoit, when you know why I set it on fire."

"Mother of Heaven! how it burns!" exclaimed Margot, as the glare momentarily increased in brilliancy, and the roaring of the flames and the crackling of the timber could be distinctly heard.

"My poor old mill!" cried Benoit, in a despairing voice. "I shall never behold it again!"

"Cheer up, father," said Madelon. "I told Hugues to set fire to it—indeed, I helped him."

"What! you have assisted to make me a beggar, and then bid me cheer up!" cried the miller.

"The loss of the mill won't make you a beggar, father. I know better than that," she rejoined. "I felt sure you wouldn't mind any sacrifice to save the Duke de Bourbon."

"That I shouldn't!" exclaimed Benoit. "But how will the burning of my mill save him? Mercy on us! how the flames roar!"

"I like to hear them roar," said Madelon. "And I'm glad the fire burns so furiously. It will distract the soldiers, and enable the Constable and the Seigneur Pom-perant to get off unobserved."

"Heavens! they are not in the mill?" exclaimed Margot.

"No, they are at the stable, I hope, by this time," rejoined Madelon. "How lucky it was, Hugues, that I shut up the dogs!"

"If we can only get out the horses, all will be well," he replied. "I must be off to the stable. Good night, père Benoit! I hope soon to bring you good tidings."

"You can get away safely now," said Madelon, cautiously opening the back window. "There is no one here now, and the smoke will hide you."

Despite the danger, Hugues snatched a parting kiss from his charmer's lips, and then sprang through the window.

The burning mill formed a magnificent spectacle, being now wrapped in flames from top to bottom, while blazing flakes fell from the sails. Having highly combustible material to deal with, the fire had made rapid progress. Fortunately the dense volume of smoke that arose from the blazing structure was carried by the wind in the direction of the stable, and the vapour served to screen Hugues from the observation of the men-at-arms, who were all collected round the mill. Amongst them Hugues descried Warthy, and heard him exclaim, in a loud and angry voice, that he was certain Bourbon was not in the mill.

"Had he and his companion been there, they must have come forth," he said. "They would never submit to be roasted alive."

Not a moment was to be lost. Hugues hurried off to the stable, and was rejoiced to find, on reaching it, that Bourbon and Pomperant were already mounted. His own horse was also in readiness, and he was no sooner in the saddle than the party galloped off.

They had not ridden far, however, when a loud shout, proceeding from the scene of the conflagration, proclaimed that their flight was discovered. Warthy and his men were starting in pursuit.

Sounds also arose from the little town of Saint-Simphorien, proving that its inhabitants had been roused from their slumbers by the alarm of fire, while the loud clangour of a church bell, violently rung, broke the stillness of the night.

"Poor Benoit will have plenty of help in case his house should catch fire," remarked Hugues. "All the good folks of Saint-Simphorien will be with him presently."

"Fail not to tell him I will rebuild his mill," said Bourbon.

"Your highness need not trouble yourself on that score," rejoined Hugues. "Benoit is rich enough to rebuild the mill himself. He will think nothing of the loss, provided your highness escapes."

"We must spur our horses sharply, if we would escape," cried Pomperant, looking back. "Worthy and his men are better mounted than we are, and are gaining upon us."

"But they won't catch us," rejoined Hugues. "We shall reach yonder thicket before them, and then we are safe."

"By Saint Denis, it galls me to the quick to fly thus before such caitiffs!" cried Bourbon. "Let us wait for them. That villain Warthy shall pay for his temerity."

"He *shall* pay for it, but not now," rejoined Pomperant. "On—on—for Heaven's sake! I implore your highness not to risk your life in a miserable encounter. Consider that a kingdom is at stake."

"Right," rejoined the Constable. "En avant!"

And dashing his spurs rowel-deep into his horse, he galloped swiftly on, the others keeping close beside him.

In a few minutes more the party reached the thicket in safety, and, guided by Hugues, plunged unhesitatingly into its depths.

XV. VIENNE

All Warthy's efforts to discover the fugitives were fruitless, though he sent half his men into the thicket, and continued himself to skirt it with the others till some hours after daybreak, when he gave up the quest.

He did not return to the mill, deeming that Benoit had been sufficiently punished by the destruction of his property, but shaped his course towards Vienne, under the impression that Bourbon would attempt to cross the bridge over the Rhone at that town, and, if so, he might still be able to intercept him.

In this expectation he rode on to Rive de Gier, where he halted for a while to recruit both men and horses, and at the same time instituted inquiries as to the fugitives, but could learn nothing of them. Then, crossing a mountainous ridge, in the midst of which towered Mont Pilas, he descended, towards evening, through vine-clad slopes to the lovely valley, through which rushes the broad and impetuous Rhone, hurrying on its way to the Mediterranean.

On the farther bank of the river stood the ancient and picturesque town of Vienne—ancient indeed it may well be termed since it existed long before Lyons, and was a flourishing city in the time of the Romans, of whose occupation it still boasts many monuments.

Facing the river, which almost washed the steps leading to its grand portal, stood the Cathedral of Saint Maurice—a vast and stately pile. Behind it was grouped a multitude of buildings, remarkable for their quaint and fantastic architecture, in the midst of which rose many a lofty tower, while here and there could be discerned a Roman arch or temple, proclaiming the great antiquity of the place.

The background of the picture was formed by precipitous hills. On the summit of one of them, known as Mont Salomon, stood a strong fortress, which from its position completely commanded the valley and this part of the river. The castle was of Roman origin, the donjon being built by the first Cæsar, and, according to tradition, Pilate was imprisoned within it.

All was picturesque about Vienne—its fortified walls, its cathedral, its churches, towers, Roman monuments, and overhanging castle. But not the least striking feature was its antique stone bridge, with crenellated parapets and lofty towers. From one of the latter, called the Tour de Mauconseil, it was said that Pilate threw himself into the river, which rushed with overwhelming force through the narrow arches of the bridge. Unluckily for the truth of the legend, the tower was built some centuries later than the event supposed to be connected with it could possibly have occurred. Notwithstanding this, the Tour de Mauconseil had an ill repute. More than once it had been struck by lightning, and no Sentinel would remain on its summit during a storm.

Towards this evil tower Warthy proceeded on arriving at Saint-Colombe—as the little suburb on the right bank of the Rhone is designated. Questioning the guard stationed at the gate, he ascertained that no persons answering to the description of the fugitives had crossed the bridge on that day. Ever since the king's proclamation in regard to Bourbon's treason, strict watch had been kept, and no one allowed to pass without examination—a precautionary measure which Warthy felt certain would prevent the fugitives from attempting to cross the bridge.

On further inquiry, he learnt that lower down the river, at Ampuis, there was a ferry, which might not be guarded, and he determined to proceed thither without loss of time. Accordingly, despatching half his men across the bridge, with orders to proceed along the left bank of the river, until they arrived opposite Ampuis, he set off with the others towards the ferry in question.

Animated by the hope of intercepting Bourbon, and dreading lest he should cross the river before his arrival, Warthy hurried on, regardless of the fatigue he had previously endured. His spirit communicated itself to his men, and they followed him without a murmur; no doubt anticipating a share in the reward.

The road pursued by Warthy was singularly beautiful, and carried him past vine-clad slopes, backed by the chain of mountains which he had just crossed. But he was insensible to the charms of the scenery, and did not even notice a lofty Roman obelisk on the opposite bank of the river. He looked only for his men, and when he saw them issue from the gates of Vienne, he was content.

Now and then he watched the turbid waters of the Rhone as they swept past him, and envied the rapidity of the current, wishing he could speed on as swiftly. But the shades of night had fallen, the mountains were shrouded, and the beauties of the banks were obscured before he approached Ampuis. Still, any object on the darkling river was discernible.

For some little time he had lost sight of the detachment on the opposite bank—the men having been forced to go inland on account of rocks and other obstacles which they encountered in their course—and he looked anxiously for their reappearance.

XVI. THE ROCK. IN THE RHONE.

Having conducted Warthy thus far, we will now see what had become of the fugitives.

Aided by Hugues, whose intimate acquaintance with the country was of the utmost service, Bourbon and his companion had managed to steal out of the thicket in which they had secreted themselves, and passing through a long ravine, had crossed the chain of mountains lying between them and the valley of the Rhone, and had descended the vine-clad slopes bordering the noble river.

They did not, however, make for Vienne—Hugues having ascertained from a peasant that the bridge was strictly guarded—but proceeded at once to Ampuis, where they hoped to cross by the ferry. Bourbon now

proposed that Hugues should leave him, but the faithful fellow begged so earnestly to be allowed to go on, that at last the Constable assented.

At Ampuis, which was then, as now, renowned for its delicious wine, known as Côte Rôtie, they alighted at an auberge close by the river, and obtained some refreshment, of which they stood greatly in need, together with a flask or two of generous wine. Here they left the horses, the poor brutes being too jaded to proceed farther, and renovated by the repast, hastened to the ferry, which was at no great distance from the inn. The ferryboat, it may be mentioned, was not rowed across the river, but being fastened by a rope to a rock in the middle of the stream, swung to and fro, like a flying-bridge.

At this juncture it was chained to a post on the river-side—no passengers just then requiring to cross.

When the party approached the ferryman, it was so dark that he could not distinguish them very dearly. But he looked hard at Bourbon, and showed by his manner that his suspicions were awakened.

"We want to cross the river instantly, friend," said Pomperant.

"What am I to have?" inquired the ferryman.

"A gold crown," replied Pomperant, without hesitation.

"That's not enough," said the ferryman. "I ought to have ten gold crowns at the least."

"Well, you shall have them—but be quick," said Pomperant.

"A moment, and I'll be with you," said the ferryman, running towards the inn.

"We are discovered!" cried Bourbon. "The villain has gone for assistance. Ha! what is that?" he added, as the trampling of horses was heard.

As he looked anxiously in the direction, Warthy and his men came in sight.

"Our pursuers are at hand!" exclaimed Pomperant. "Jump into the boat at once."

In another moment all three had embarked.

The boat was large, heavy, and flat-bottomed, built to transport horses and cattle, as well as passengers, across the river. A minute or so elapsed before Hugues could unchain it, and the delay was sufficient to bring Warthy near enough to distinguish the fugitives, and at once comprehending their designs, he redoubled his speed.

"'Tis Bourbon! I see him!" he vociferated.

No sooner did the ferryman become aware of the approach of the troop, than he turned back to prevent the departure of the fugitives. But he was too late. The boat had been pushed from the strand by means of a pole which Pomperant had seized, and was swinging slowly towards the centre of the stream. But there was another boat of lighter construction and smaller size fastened to a post close by, and the ferryman busied himself in preparing it, and by the time Warthy and his men came up it was ready.

"'Tis he you seek, captain!" he cried—"tis the Constable de Bourbon. A hundred crowns and you shall have him."

"Thou art an extortionate knave; but I agree," replied Warthy.

Dismounting, and commanding six of his men to follow him, he sprang into the boat, which was pushed off by the ferryman. Its load, however, was too great to allow it to move expeditiously, and thus a minute or two was lost. However, there seemed little chance of escape for the fugitives, since at this moment the soldiers, tracking the left bank of the river, made their appearance, and hastened towards the landing-place of the ferry.

Nothing now remained to the fugitives, who were, of course, alive to the imminence of their peril, but to cut the rope and drop down the river. This was done, but not so quickly as could have been desired. The rope was stout, and resisted Pomperant's efforts to sever it with his poniard. While he was thus employed, several shots were fired by the soldiers, who, as we have said, were riding up to the landing-place, but without effect.

As soon as it was set free the boat was carried rapidly down the river, and other shots fired at its occupants fell short of their mark. Warthy instantly followed in pursuit, and now began to regret that his boat was overloaded, her quickness being much impeded from this cause. Nevertheless, he felt confident that his prey could not escape him. His men had their arquebuses with them, but he would not allow them to fire.

"I must take the traitor alive," he said.

Notwithstanding all the ferryman's efforts, he gained very slightly, if at all, upon the fugitives, who were swept on by the impetuous current, and for nearly half a league they kept well ahead. Any attempt to land would have been dangerous, as soldiers were riding after them on either bank, and an occasional shot warned them of their risk. It was an exciting chase, both to pursuers and pursued, and promised to become more so before it was terminated.

Hitherto, the boat containing Bourbon and his fortunes had pursued its course without encountering any obstacle, though the course of the Rhone is beset by numerous sand-banks; and Warthy had been equally lucky. But the channel was now narrowed by high rocks on either side, and thus confined, the river rushed on with the swiftness of a mill-race.

The pass was considered dangerous even by experienced boatmen, as there were many sunken rocks within it. But if the fugitives were here exposed to a fresh peril, they escaped one to which they had hitherto been subjected, for the precipices kept the soldiers away from the river, and the firing of arquebuses ceased.

Another circumstance seemed favourable to the fugitives. Even in daytime the pass was sombre, but now it was buried in gloom. In places where the rocks overhung the river it was almost pitch-dark. Owing to this obscurity, the fugitives could no longer be distinguished, and Warthy becoming apprehensive lest they might contrive to catch at some projecting ledge of rock or overhanging tree, and allow him to shoot past them, stood up in the boat, trying to peer through the gloom, but could discern nothing save the reflexion of the stars on the darkling current. Though he listened intently, no sound met his ear except the rushing of the impetuous river.

He then ordered two of his men to discharge their arquebuses, and, by the momentary illumination thus

afforded, found that his fears were not wholly groundless. But for the precaution he had taken he might have passed the fugitives unobserved. They had struck, it appeared, against a rock, which reared itself above the stream about twenty yards from the left bank, and were now vainly endeavouring to get the boat free.

Warthy instantly directed the ferryman to make for the rock, and at the same time ordered another discharge of arquebuses to guide him, reiterating his injunctions to his men that Bourbon must be taken alive.

The ferryman performed his part of the business successfully. In another moment the boat struck against the rock, and with a violence that shook her from head to stern. Both parties were now close together, and the soldiers immediately attempted to board the ferry-boat, but were beaten back with the loss of one of their number, who was wounded and thrown into the river.

In a second attempt, however, they were more successful, and the ferry-boat became the scene of a desperate conflict, in which personal strength was displayed rather than skill. Indeed, the space was so confined that swords could scarcely be used.

After a furious struggle, which endured for a few minutes, both Pomperant and Hugues were thrown down, and a general attack was made upon Bourbon, who was standing near the head of the boat.

Warthy summoned him to surrender, saying that resistance was useless, but he replied by striking down the foremost of his opponents, and the man fell overboard. Bourbon, being then hard pressed by Warthy and two others, who turned their swords against him, sprang backwards upon the rock, which rose about a couple of feet above the water, presenting a rugged summit, on which not more than two or three persons could find standing room.

"Hold back!" cried Warthy to his men. "If we advance we shall drive him into the river, and I shall lose my prize, and you your reward. Listen to me, Charles de Bourbon," he added to the Constable. "For the last time, I summon you to surrender."

"Not while I can defend myself," rejoined Bourbon. "Come and take me. You dare not come alone."

"You are mistaken, traitor," cried Warthy, courageously. "I can capture you without assistance."

"Make good your vaunt, then," said Bourbon. "Drag me from this rock, and I will yield."

"I accept the challenge," rejoined Warthy, resolutely. "I have no fear of the issue of a conflict with a traitor. Guilt will unnerve your arm—justice will strengthen mine. Move not, I charge you," he added to his men.

"Leave me to fight it out alone."

So saying, he leaped upon the rock.

Bourbon did not oppose him, but drew back slightly to give him room.

They now stood face to face, eyeing each other fiercely—the one thirsting for vengeance, the other animated with the hope of achieving a feat which would ensure him a great reward and endless renown.

"Swords are useless here," said Warthy.

"Use your poniard, then," replied Bourbon, sheathing his sword.

His example was followed by Warthy, and in another moment each held a poniard in his right hand, while with his left he grasped the corresponding hand of his adversary.

"You are a brave man, Warthy," said Bourbon, "and I am loth to kill you, but you have sought your own destruction. You will never leave this rock alive."

"I will leave it alive, and take you with me, traitor," rejoined the other.

No more was said. Each released the hand he had till that moment tightly clutched, and a terrible struggle commenced, either combatant striving, with all his force, to prevent his antagonist from using his weapon. Notwithstanding their leader's injunctions, his men would have come to his assistance, if they could have done so, but Warthy himself was in the way, his back being towards the boat, and Bourbon could not be reached save through him.

For more than a minute the combatants remained locked in each other's embrace, unable to strike a blow. Warthy exerted all his strength to drag the Constable into the boat, but he might as well have striven to uproot an oak, or move the solid rock beneath his feet. At last, exhausted by futile efforts, he sought to extricate himself from the crushing gripe in which he was held, and partially succeeding, tried to use his poniard. But Bourbon caught his wrist as he raised the weapon, and thus had him completely at his mercy.

"Swear to take off your men and trouble me no further," said the Constable, "and I will grant you your life."

"Never!" exclaimed Warthy, again vainly struggling to get free, and calling on his men to succour him.

But, ere assistance could be rendered, Bourbon's poniard pierced his heart, and his body was flung into the rushing Rhone.

Scared by their leader's fate, the two soldiers held back for a moment, and this allowed Bourbon time to draw his sword, and successfully repel the attack made upon him.

One of his assailants was speedily sent to join Warthy, and was swept off by the greedy current. The other retreated towards the farther end of the boat, whither he was pursued by Bourbon. His comrades, who had been occupied in guarding Pomperant and Hugues, instantly joined him, and all three attacked the Constable. But the captives being now free, the soldiers were soon overpowered. Two were slain by Bourbon, and the last was thrown overboard by Pomperant.

All Bourbon's enemies were now disposed of except the ferryman, who had taken no part in the conflict, anticipating a very different result. The man now endeavoured to push off his boat, but was prevented by Hugues, who seized the oars.

Half paralysed by terror, the miserable wretch begged his life in piteous terms, calling upon all the saints to witness that he had been an involuntary agent in the attempt at capturing the Constable, and affirming that he was delighted at its failure. His quavering tones belied his words, and, disgusted by his mendacity, Hugues would have thrown him into the river, but Bourbon interposed, offering the caitiff his life, provided he landed them safely.

All the party having embarked in the boat, it was soon set free, and in another minute the stony mass, which had been the scene of so terrible a conflict, and which was afterwards known as "Bourbon's Rock," was left far behind.

The current bore them swiftly through the narrow pass, the river widened, the precipices disappeared, and gave way to vine-clad slopes.

Bourbon would have now landed, but he was deterred by perceiving some of Warthy's men on the left bank. Luckily, the boat escaped their notice, but mistrusting the ferryman, Hugues threatened to stab him if he made the slightest signal.

This danger avoided, they went on for two leagues farther. In passing Condrieu, then a small village, but now an important town, boasting a suspension-bridge, besides being celebrated for its wine, Hugues again enforced silence upon the ferryman, and the boat swept by unnoticed.

At length a point was reached between Le Roches and Saint-Alban, where Bourbon thought he might safely land, and he accordingly disembarked with his companions.

On leaping ashore, his first impulse was to thank Heaven for a great deliverance.

XVII. THE INN AT SAINT-ANDRE

After his narrow escape from capture by Warthy, Bourbon made his way, as well as he could, across Dauphiné, his intention being either to proceed to Italy, or shape his course to Saint-Claude, in the Franche-Comté, as circumstances might dictate. The journey had to be performed entirely on foot, since he found it impossible to procure horses, and besides undergoing great fatigue, and running constant risks, He had to submit to extraordinary hardships.

On quitting the banks of the Rhone, the fugitives, fearing they might be followed—it being certain the ferryman would give information of their route—did not dare to enter any village where there was an inn, or even seek shelter in a cottage, but avoiding all frequented roads, after a toilsome walk of more than three hours, gained a thick forest, and entering it, passed the rest of the night beneath the trees.

Next morning they quitted the forest, and feeling faint and exhausted from want of food, they were compelled to halt at an auberge, kept by an old woman, in the outskirts of the little town of Saint-André. Astonished at the appetites of her guests, who ate with the voracity of famished wolves, the hostess did not trouble them with any questions, feeling sure she would get no response until they had satisfied their hunger. She then broached the topic on which the whole country was interested, and inquired whether the Constable de Bourbon had been taken.

"I hope not," replied Pomperant, regarding her fixedly.

"Then you are a partisan of the Constable?" rejoined the old woman.

"I won't deny it. I am Bourbon's partisan—his staunch partisan," returned Pomperant. "I hope he may give his enemies the slip—and I think he will, for I hear he is making his way through Languedoc to Narbonne, and if so, he will soon be safe across the Pyrenees."

"You have been misinformed," rejoined the hostess. "Some soldiers who were here late last night declared that Bourbon had crossed the Rhone below Ampuis."

"Diable! this is news!" exclaimed Pomperant, glancing uneasily at the Constable. "Can you tell us which way the soldiers went, dame?"

"Yes, I can satisfy you on that point," she replied. "They divided into two parties—one taking the road to Roussillon, the other to Beaurepaire. It may not please you, who have declared yourself a partisan of the Constable, to hear what I have got to say. But I believe he will soon be taken."

"Before you give a reason for that opinion, let us have some more wine, dame," said Pomperant. "Your wine is sound and wholesome."

"Better wine cannot be had in all Dauphiné," she replied, filling their cups. "Now, then, I'll tell you why I think Bourbon will be caught."

"Ay, tell us that," said the Constable, emptying his flagon.

"I think he will be taken, because he is rash, and exposes himself to needless risk," said the old woman, looking hard at Bourbon as she spoke. "He is beset with dangers on all sides. The roads are guarded, and there are soldiers in every town in Dauphiné on the lookout for him. Where is he to go?"

"If he reaches the mountains, he will be safe," said Bourbon.

"Ah! but he won't reach the mountains if he comes this way," remarked the hostess.

"Why not?—they are close at hand," asked Bourbon.

"Because the provost of Vienne, with a powerful guard, is in the neighbourhood, making active search for him," said the old woman, in a significant tone; "that is why I think he will be captured."

"She warns me of my danger," thought Bourbon.

"The provost is coming hither from Eclose," pursued the hostess. "I wouldn't advise Bourbon to take that road."

"I don't think it likely he will take it, my good dame," said the Constable. "Depend upon it, he will go in quite another direction."

"In which direction can he go?" said the hostess. "I tell you, there are soldiers on every road."

"But there is a cross-road to the mountains," remarked Hugues.

"True, if he could only find it," she rejoined.

"I know it," said Hugues. "Have you any horses, hostess?"

"I have, but I cannot spare them."

"You mean, you dare not let us have them."

"As you will. But you won't get horses in Saint-André, and I advise you not to stay longer than you can help in the neighbourhood."

"We will follow your counsel, good dame," said Pom-perant, as he and Bourbon rose from the table, and prepared for immediate departure. "Thanks for our entertainment," he added, giving her a gold crown.

"This is too much," she said.

"Keep it, it will bring you luck," said the Constable. "If Bourbon comes back, show it to him."

"Ah! I dread his coming back!" she exclaimed. "They say if Bourbon escapes, he will return at the head of an army of English and Spaniards, and slaughter us all, like so many sheep."

"His enemies say that of him," rejoined the Constable. "Hear me. If Bourbon comes back, it will be to liberate the people from oppression, and bring them peace and happiness. He loves France better than the king loves it."

"In that case, I hope he may get away safely, and come back speedily," said the old woman.

"Amen!" cried Bourbon. "Heaven has already delivered him from many dangers, and will not desert him now! Farewell, good dame!"

"A good journey to you, messieurs," she rejoined. "Stay," she added to Hugues; "though I can't furnish you with horses, I can supply you with provisions, and you will need them in the mountains."

So saying, she hastily filled a basket with bread and cold meat, and did not neglect to add a couple of flasks of wine.

Armed with this supply, Hugues followed his leaders out of the house, and the party took their way along a rarely-trodden footpath towards the mountains.

They had not proceeded more than a league, when they found they were pursued by the provost of Vienne and his guard, and again sought shelter in a wood. Nor did they venture forth till nightfall, when they inarched on vigorously, and reached the mountains without further interruption.

Nearly four days, marked by incessant toil and exposure to hardship, difficulties, and dangers of many kinds, elapsed before Bourbon and his companions reached Chambéry.

Often, in the course of the wearisome journey, they lost their way among the mountains, for they did not dare to employ a guide, and only when compelled by absolute necessity did they approach a chalet.

Nevertheless, through all this fatigue and danger, Bourbon never lost heart—never for a moment doubted his ultimate escape. Both he and Pomperant had too often known a soldier's couch to heed sleeping amid the mountains with only the skies above them; and Hugues was not less hardy. Had it not been for the risk to which he was exposed, this kind of life would not have been without a charm to the fugitive prince. Magnificent scenery was presented to him. Mountains, sometimes bare and craggy, sometimes rounded and clothed with trees almost to their summit—while from these heights lovely views were obtained of broad and fertile valleys, watered by rapid streams, and peopled with villages—or a vast plain, spreading out for leagues, giving glimpses here and there of the rushing Rhone, and bounded in the distance by the snowy peaks of the Alps. Such were some of the prospects which cheered Bourbon during his detention amid the Jura mountains.

At last he approached Chambéry, but neither he nor Pomperant ventured into the town, but, tarrying in the environs, sent on Hugues to reconnoitre. Some time elapsed before their emissary returned. He had managed to replenish his basket with wine and provisions, but brought word that the town was full of soldiers, the Comte de Saint-Pol being there with a large force, on his way to Italy to join Bonnivet.

This intelligence caused Bourbon at once to abandon the design he had formed of crossing the Alps and proceeding to Genoa, and decided him, at whatever risk, to prosecute his original design, and make for the Franche-Comté. There was danger in the latter course, but far greater danger from Saint-Pol and his troops.

Without entering the town, Bourbon therefore turned aside from Chambéry, and took the way towards Aix. They walked for a couple of hours, when worn out almost by fatigue, they approached a chalet, and obtained accommodation for the night. The account they gave of themselves satisfied the master of the chalet, and they left early next morning without exciting his suspicion. On reaching the Lac de Bourget, they hired a boat, and were rowed to the farther end of that beautiful lake.

Having reached Seyssel in safety, they crossed the Rhone, and sought shelter in a chalet for the night. Next morning they again began to ascend the Jura, and alter crossing several peaks, and tracking more than one gloomy gorge, they came in sight of the ancient town of Nantua, seated on the borders of a lake. Not daring, however, to enter the town, they again sought the shelter of a chalet. A mountainous ridge now only separated them from the Franche-Comté. This ridge crossed, Bourbon's danger would be over.

At break of day the fugitives again started on their journey. It was a lovely morning, and the beauty of the scenery might have tempted them to linger on their way; but they hurried on, eager to cross the frontier.

On attaining the summit of a mountain commanding the beautiful valley, in which lay the old town of Nantua and its lake, Bourbon paused for a moment to survey the lovely prospect, and then became aware that a small troop of cavalry was ascending the heights. Pointing out the danger to his companions they all three started off, and, after crossing the summit of the mountain, dashed down the opposite side. Near the foot of the acclivity there was a thick dark wood, and into this they plunged, though not unperceived by their pursuers, who by this time had gained the brow of the mountain.

At the sight, the soldiers dashed down the hill, a portion of the troop entering the wood, while the others

rode round it. By this manouvre they hoped to secure their prey; but they were foiled. Three of the men-at-arms, who had penetrated into the thicket, were suddenly set upon by Bourbon and his companions, and compelled to give up their horses. Being thus provided with steeds, the fugitives suddenly burst out of the wood and galloped towards the frontier, which was marked by the river Ain, now only half a league off.

On a mount on the farther side of the river stood a fort garrisoned by the soldiers of the Emperor, and it was towards this point that the fugitives now shaped their course. But they were hotly pursued by their enemies, while another small band of cavalry, sallying from a fort on the French side of the river, sought to cut off their retreat. Before the latter could come up, however, Bourbon and his companions had reached the river, and dashing into it without hesitation, their horses safely across.

When they landed on the opposite hank they were welcomed by a company of German reiters, to whom the Constable immediately announced himself, and on learning his quality the men shook their lances and set up a loud shout of "Vive Bourbon!"

XVIII. SAINT-CLAUDE.

At the Constable's request he was conducted by the reiters to the fort, where he was received with all the honour due to his rank by the governor, who congratulated him most heartily on his escape, and gave him the very satisfactory intelligence that all his adherents whom he had quitted at the Chateau d'Herment—including the Seigneurs Tansannes, Du Peloux, Espinat, and Desguières—together with Lurcy, had already succeeded in reaching the Franche-Comté.

"Your highness will find them at Saint-Claude, where they are anxiously awaiting your arrival," said the governor. "They are guests of Cardinal Labaume, Sovereign Bishop of Geneva, and are sojourning at the episcopal palace. Most of them arrived nearly a week ago, but the Seigneur Lurcy only crossed the frontier yesterday."

"I am rejoiced to learn that Lurcy has escaped," said Bourbon. "I have heard nothing of him, and feared he might have fallen into the hands of the king, who would have shown him no mercy."

"That is quite certain," replied the governor. "Your highness is no doubt aware that the Comte de Saint-Vallier, the Bishops of Autun and Puy, the Seigneurs Aimard de Prie, Pierre de Popillon, Chancellor of the Bourbonnois, Gilbert Baudemanche, and others of your partisans, have been arrested and lodged in the Conciergerie at Paris. It is said, but I know not with what truth, that the Comte de Saint-Vallier has been tortured, to wring confession from him."

"Alas!" exclaimed Bourbon, "he is most unjustly dealt with. Of all my partisans, Saint-Vallier is the last who ought to be punished, for he endeavoured to dissuade me from my design, and yet it is on his devoted head that the tyrant seems bent on wreaking his direst vengeance. But a day of retribution is at hand. For every life sacrificed by François, I will have ten."

"I am sorry to mar your highness's satisfaction at a moment like the present," said the governor, "but I could not withhold this painful news from you."

"I thank you for giving it me, sir," rejoined Bourbon. "The information steels my breast. As I have just said, if I cannot deliver my friends, I can avenge them. But what of the ten thousand lanz-knechts that were to be raised for me by the Comtes Furstenberg?"

"On hearing of your highness's flight," returned the governor, "the Comtes Furstenberg marched with their men towards the west, to join the Anglo-Flemish army in Picardy. They took several castles by the way, but I fear they have encountered serious obstacles. The last tidings received of them were, that they were retreating to Neufchâteau on the Meuse, after heavy losses."

"Would I had been with them!" cried Bourbon. "But where are the four thousand Vaudois promised me?"

"They have returned to their own country, fearing they would get no pay," replied the governor.

"Then I have no army in the Franche-Comté?"

"Your highness will soon raise one. When your escape is known, thousands will flock round your standard."

With this assurance Bourbon was forced to be content. He tarried for a few hours at the fort to rest and refresh himself, and during this time both he and Pomperaut were enabled, by the governor's aid, to make some change in their habiliments, of which they stood greatly in need.

Thus newly equipped, and attended by Hugues, who had likewise obtained fresh habiliments, they started for Saint-Claude, accompanied by an escort of twenty reiters.

As he rode along, Bourbon could not help contrasting his present position with that in which he had been so lately placed. A few hours ago, he was environed by enemies, and in danger of his life. Now he was free, and would soon be able to requite the injuries he had sustained. His exultation was damped by the thought that so many of his partisans were in the king's hands, but this reflection only served to intensify his desire for vengeance.

On arriving at Saint-Claude, he repaired at once to the episcopal palace, and presenting himself to Cardinal Labaume, received a cordial welcome from the prelate, who was a zealous partisan of the Emperor.

After listening with great interest to Bourbon's account of his flight, and the perils he had encountered, the Cardinal sent for Lurcy and the rest of the Constable's adherents, and was much touched by the meeting that took place between them and their fugitive lord.

Bourbon himself was profoundly affected on beholding his devoted friends, and embraced each individually.

"This rewards me for all my suffering," he said. "You must forgive me, my good friends, for quitting you. The step was absolutely necessary for the safety of us all. Had I not taken it, we might not be here now."

"Your highness's escape from so many perils is truly providential," observed Cardinal Labaume. "Thanks should be offered to the Great Power who has so marvellously preserved you. Let us now repair to my chapel, where you can perform your devotions."

Though a stern soldier, Bourbon was devout, and religiously believing that the hand of Heaven had been manifested in his behalf, it was with unwonted fervour that he offered up his grateful prayers at the altar of the small chapel to which he was led by the cardinal.

XIX. IN WHAT MANNER BOURBON ENTERED BESANÇON.

Bourbon remained for three days at Saint-Claude, the guest of Cardinal Labaume, by whom he was entertained with princely hospitality. On the fourth day, he departed for Besançon, accompanied by all his adherents, and attended by a numerous escort of reiters, furnished for him by the cardinal. Among his suite was Hugues, who was now enrolled in his service.

Harbingers had been sent on to announce Bourbon's visit to the ancient capital of the Franche-Comté. Preparations, therefore, for his reception had been made by the municipal authorities, who, in order to please the Emperor and mortify the King of France, had determined to treat Bourbon as a sovereign prince.

The city of Besançon, which existed in the time of the Romans, and which has been described by Cæsar himself, was a place of great strength, built on a hill, almost surrounded by the river Doubs, which here takes the form of a horse-shoe. On a rocky height, the base of which was washed by the Doubs, stood the castle, originally built by the Romans; and in later times, when Besançon was annexed to France after the peace of Nimeguen, was converted into a citadel by Vauban. From its position, this castle looked impregnable, and capable of protecting the city, but it was besieged and taken by Louis XIV. in 1660. On a plain between two branches of the Doubs, where the Roman legions had once been encamped, and which is still known as the Campus Martius, could be seen the tents of a small force of German lanz-knechts, reserved by the Emperor for the defence of the province.

On his arrival at Besançon, Bourbon was met at the foot of the old bridge across the Doubs by the burgomaster and all the civic authorities on horseback, and welcomed by them to the city. After listening to an address from the burgomaster, he was conducted across the bridge, which was lined by German lanz-knechts, into the city, amid the roar of ordnance, the braying of trumpets, the beating of drums, and the acclamations of the spectators. The picturesque old houses were decked with garlands of flowers, and hung with scrolls and banners, houses were decorated with carpets and rich stuffs, the fountains ran with wine, and the capital of the Franche-Comté had not been so festive since the time when the Emperor last visited it.

Bourbon was conducted by the burgomaster and the other magistrates to the cathedral of Saint-Jean, a noble Gothic pile, and as he dismounted at the porch, enthusiastic shouts were raised by the lanz-knechts crowding the enclosure—the interior of the sacred pile being so full that they could not obtain admittance. Thanksgivings were then offered for the deliverance of the fugitive prince from his enemies, and a *Te Deum* sung. At the close of these religious solemnities, Bourbon was taken to the Herrenhaus, where a grand banquet had been prepared.

All honours that could have been bestowed upon the Emperor himself was shown to the illustrious fugitive. A palatial mansion in the midst of the city, which Charles V. himself had occupied, was appropriated to him, and a numerous civic guard assigned him.

Notwithstanding this brilliant reception, Bourbon was greatly disheartened by the intelligence he received of the proceedings of his royal allies. To his mortification he learnt that the Spanish forces had been successfully held in check at Bayonne by Lautrec, while the Duke of Suffolk, who had made a descent upon the coast of Picardy, and had advanced almost within sight of Paris, had been recalled by the King of England. Moreover, a large force had been placed by François upon the frontiers of Burgundy, under the joint command of the Duke d'Alençon and the Duke de Guise, while the king himself still remained at Lyons with the army.

Bourbon had now been more than a fortnight at Besançon, burning with impatience to avenge his injuries, when despatches arrived from Spain and England. Both monarchs attributed the failure of the design to him. Had he performed his promises, the joint invasion must have been successful. But when he fled, Henry recalled his forces, and the Emperor suspended the siege of Bayonne. The King of England refused the supplies of money and artillery which Bourbon had urgently demanded of him, and the Emperor professed himself unable to send him either money or succour. Both declared that the project must be for the present abandoned.

Bourbon's hopes of immediate revenge being thus at an end, he resolved to proceed without delay to Spain, in order to hold a personal interview with the Emperor, and, if possible, plan a campaign for the winter.

His design was to pass into Italy by way of Germany, Switzerland being then allied to France, and he proposed in the first instance to visit his cousin the Duke of Mantua. From Mantua he would proceed to Genoa, and thence embark for Spain.

While he was making preparations for his meditated journey, he was informed, one morning, that the Seigneur d'Imbaut, a gentleman belonging to the household of the King of France, furnished with a sauf conduit, had arrived at Besançon, and sought a private audience of him.

Bourbon refused a private audience, but consented to receive the envoy in the presence of his adherents. Accordingly, D'Imbaut was ushered into a great hall half filled with the civic guard, armed with halberds. At the upper end of the hall, on a chair of state, sat Bourbon, surrounded by his partisans.

After making a profound obeisance, the envoy said:

"I am the bearer of a message from my royal master the King of France. I am sent to offer to your highness a full and complete pardon for all your offences committed against his majesty and against the state, if you will engage to merit clemency by sincere repentance, and unshaken fidelity for the future."

Here D'Imbaut paused, but Bourbon making no reply, he went on:

"As an incitement to your highness to return to your duty, the king my master graciously offers you the immediate restitution of the whole of your possessions, which will otherwise be confiscated, the re-establishment of all the pensions of which you have been deprived, with full assurance that they shall hereafter be paid with exactitude." He then paused for a moment, and added, "What answer shall I take from your highness to his majesty?"

"Tell the king your master," rejoined Bourbon, sternly and haughtily, "that I have thrown off my allegiance to him, and consequently he has no power to pardon me. Tell him that he has already played me false, and that I would not trust his promise to restore me my possessions, or to continue my pensions. Tell him to confiscate my domains if he likes—I will soon have them back again."

"I will repeat word for word what your highness has told me," replied the envoy.

"You may depart, then," said Bourbon.

"I have not yet done," said D'Imbaut, assuming a different and more haughty manner; "since your highness has declared that you have thrown off your allegiance, I must, in the name of the king my master, demand your sword as Constable of France."

Bourbon's eyes blazed with anger at this demand, but he constrained himself.

"The king your master took that sword from me at Fontainebleau," he said. "But I have another sword, which he shall have—when he can take it."

"I have my answer," said D'Imbaut.

Then looking round at the group of gentlemen, he asked:

"Messeigneurs, do you all remain obstinate in rebellion? I am enabled to offer you the king's grace. Will none of you accept it?"

"None," they replied, with one voice.

"A moment, sir," said Bourbon to the envoy. "Tell the king your master, from me, his enemy, that when next we meet we shall have changed places. It will be for him to sue for pardon."

Charged with this defiant message, D'Imbaut departed.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK

BOOK III.—THE CHEVALIER BAYARD.

I. HOW THE COMTE DE SAINT-VALLIER'S PARDON WAS OBTAINED.

On learning that his offer had been scornfully rejected by Bourbon, as related in the preceding chapter, François I. at once ordered the Chancellor Duprat to confiscate the whole of the fugitive's possessions, to degrade him from his rank, and declare his name infamous; to efface his armorial bearings, and his swords as Constable from all his châteaux; to demolish in part his magnificent hôtel in Paris, and strew the ground with salt; and to cause the public executioner to sully with yellow ochre such portion of the building as should be left standing, in order that it might remain as a memento of the duke's treason.

Thus did the infuriated king wreak his vengeance upon the enemy who was beyond his grasp. For a time, François remained at Lyons, fearing that Bourbon might raise an army in the Franche-Comté and march into France, and entirely abandoning his design of proceeding to Italy, began to adopt vigorous measures for the defence of his own kingdom. He despatched the Duc de Vendôme and Chabot to Paris to watch over the

defence of the capital, and ordered the grand seneschal of Normandy, De Brézé, to raise six thousand men in that province. His apprehensions, however, were relieved by the retirement of the English army, and by the withdrawal of the Emperor's forces from before Bayonne.

Tired at last of his sojourn at Lyons, yet indisposed to return to Paris, François proceeded to Blois, and in the magnificent chateau, which he had partially rebuilt in the style of the Renaissance, sought to banish his cares by abandoning himself to pleasurable enjoyment; passing his days in the chase, and his nights in festivity. Amidst all his distractions, he could not banish from his breast the image of the fair Diane de Poitiers. The violent passion he had conceived for her still possessed him, though months had flown by since he had seen her.

The king was at Blois when a messenger arrived from the chief president of the Parliament, De Selve, to acquaint his majesty with the judgment pronounced upon the principal personages connected with Bourbon's conspiracy.

"First in regard to the nineteen accomplices of Charles de Bourbon, who have followed their rebellious lord in his flight from the kingdom," said the messenger. "These contumacious rebels are all condemned to death, and, if taken, that sentence will be immediately carried into effect upon them. In the case of Lurcy, whose guilt is held to be greater than that of the others, the sentence is that his head shall be exposed on the bridge over the Rhone at Lyons."

"Pass on from the fugitives to the traitors who are in our power," said the king. "How have they been dealt with?—with due severity, I trust."

"The Bishop of Puy has been liberated, sire," replied the messenger, "but the Bishop of Autun is to be deprived of his possessions, and detained a prisoner during your majesty's pleasure."

"Why should more clemency be shown to one prelate than to the other?" said François. "Both are equally guilty, methinks! Proceed."

"Desguères and Bertrand Simon are condemned to make amende honorable, and to be imprisoned for three years in any castle your majesty may appoint," said the messenger. "D'Escars is adjudged to the torture; Gilbert de Baudemanche is sentenced to a brief imprisonment; and Sainte-Bonnet is acquitted."

"And what of Saint-Vallier?" demanded the king.

"Sire, he is to be deprived of his possessions, to be degraded from his rank, to be put to the torture, and afterwards beheaded at the Place de Grève."

"A just and proper sentence," remarked François. "All the others should have been served in like manner."

"It rests with your majesty to appoint the day for Saint-Vallier's execution," said the messenger.

"I will think of it," replied François. And the messenger quitted the presence.

Shortly afterwards, another messenger arrived, bringing a letter from the Duchesse d'Angoulême to the king, her son, in which she urged him not to show any clemency to Saint-Vallier. "Be firm on this point," she wrote. "Too much leniency has been shown towards the conspirators by the Parliament, and if a severe example be not made of some of them, it will be an incitement to rebellion. Strong efforts, I know, will be made to induce you to pardon Saint-Vallier, but do not yield to the solicitations. The Chancellor Duprat concurs with me in opinion."

"Shall I take back an answer from your majesty?" said the messenger.

"Say to her highness that I will attend to her counsel," replied the king, dismissing the messenger.

Somewhat later in the day, while the king was still in his chamber he was informed by an usher that the Comtesse de Maulévrier had just arrived at the chateau, and besought an immediate interview with him.

François at once granted the request, and Diane de Poitiers was ushered into his presence. Her lovely features bore traces of profound affliction. At a sign from the king, the usher immediately withdrew, and left them alone.

"You will readily divine my errand, sire," cried Diane, throwing herself on her knees before him, in spite of his efforts to prevent her. "You know that my unfortunate father has been condemned by the Parliament to torture and to death by the headsman's hand. Have compassion on him, sire—spare him—for my sake!"

"Rise, Diane, and listen to me," said François. "My heart prompts me to yield to your solicitations, but, were I to do so, my clemency would be misconstrued. The Comte de Saint-Vallier having been found guilty of lèse-majesté and rebellion by the solemn tribunal at which he has been placed, I am compelled to confirm the sentence passed upon him. Bourbon's revolt has steeled my breast to pity. Your father was the traitor's chief friend and counsellor."

"As such, sire, he strove to dissuade the duke from his design," she cried.

"The Parliament can have had no proof of that beyond your father's affirmation," said the king. "On the contrary, they believe him to be deeper dyed in treason than the rest of the conspirators."

"My father's judges have been unjust, sire," she rejoined; "but I see it is in vain to convince you of his innocence. You are determined to wreak your vengeance upon him, in order that the blow may be felt by Bourbon. The answer you have given me is little in accordance with your former language."

"You ask what I cannot grant, Diane. Why torture me thus?"

"I will torture you no more. Adieu, sire! I quit your presence never to re-enter it."

"Stay, Diane," he cried, detaining her. "I cannot part with you thus. You know how passionately I love you."

"I find it impossible to reconcile your professions with your conduct, sire. As for myself, if I have ever felt love for you, I will tear it from my heart."

"Then you confess that you have loved me, Diane? You never owned as much before. Nay, to speak truth, I fancied from the coldness of your manner that you were insensible to my passion."

"It matters little now what my feelings have been towards you, sire," she rejoined. "But if it will pain you to know the truth, I will not hide it. I *did* love you—love you passionately. But I hate you now—ay, hate you as a tyrant."

"No, no, you do not, cannot hate me," he cried. "It is impossible to resist your influence. You have conquered. I yield," he added, kneeling to her. "Say that you love me still, and I will grant your request."

"Your majesty has already extorted the avowal from me," she rejoined. "I thought you had crushed the feeling, but I find it still survives. Promise me my father's life, and all the love my heart has to bestow shall be yours."

"I do promise it," he replied, clasping her in his arms. "The Comte de Saint-Vallier ought to rejoice that he has so powerful an advocate. None but yourself could have saved him. I had fully determined on his death."

"Mistake not my father, sire," she rejoined. "He would not accept pardon from you if he knew how it was purchased. Dread of dishonour made him join with Bourbon."

"Think no more of that," said François, passionately. "I care not to inquire into his motives for rebellion, since I design to pardon him. But I account it worse than treason that he should forbid you to love me."

"Enough of this, sire. I must crave leave to depart. I shall never feel easy till I know that my father is safe. Let me return to Paris with his pardon."

"A messenger is here from the first president," replied François. "He shall take back the warrant."

"I can trust it to no custody but thy own," said Diane. "You will not refuse me this, sire?"

"I have said that I can refuse you nothing, sweet Diane," he rejoined. "But you will come back soon?"

"As soon as I have set my father free," she rejoined. "Stay, Diane. I must not deceive you," said François, somewhat gravely. "I cannot order your father's immediate liberation. He must remain a prisoner for a time."

"You will not belie your royal word, sire?" she cried. "You do not mean to play me false?"

"I *will* liberate the Comte de Saint-Vallier ere long, and bestow a full pardon on him—*foi de gentilhomme!*" said the king. "For the present, I can merely commute his sentence into imprisonment. But that is tantamount to pardon."

"Since your majesty gives me that assurance, I am content," said Diane. "But let me have the warrant." François at once sat down at a table, and tracing a few lines on a sheet of paper, signed the despatch, and gave it to her. "This letter to the Chancellor Duprat will accomplish all you desire," he said. "Your father is in no danger of torture or the headsman's axe. He will be sent to the Château de Loches. But he will soon be liberated. Are you content?"

"I must be, sire," said Diane, as she took the letter. "I shall fly with the missive to Paris."

"Return as quickly as you can," said François. "Were it possible, you should bring the Comte de Saint-Vallier with you."

"He would rather remain in his dungeon than accompany me," she rejoined. "Adieu, sire."

And, quitting the cabinet, she entered her litter, and proceeded towards Paris.

II. HOW BOURBON WAS APPOINTED TO THE COMMAND OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY.

Accompanied by all his partisans, and attended by a strong escort of reiters, the Duke de Bourbon set out from Besançon for Italy. Shaping his course through Germany, and eventually reaching Coire, he crossed the Alps by the Splügen, which at that time was a difficult and dangerous proceeding, and passing through Bergamo and Brescia, succeeded in reaching Mantua in safety. Here he was cordially welcomed by his cousin, Federico Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua—a prince of great ability, and a staunch partisan of the Emperor, by whom he was subsequently raised to a ducal dignity. Gonzaga was a great patron of arts and letters, and his court was the resort of painters, sculptors, and men of learning and science.

Bourbon and his suite were lodged in the vast Castello di Corte, and several grand entertainments were given in his honour at this palace, and at the magnificent Palazzo del Te. The illustrious fugitive's safe arrival at Mantua was made the occasion of general rejoicings in the city; a tournament was held in the Piazza della Fiera, and a solemn procession was made by Gonzaga and his whole court to the Duomo, where thanksgivings were offered for the duke's deliverance.

Gonzaga did not confine himself to a mere display of hospitality towards his noble kinsman, but voluntarily proffered him all the assistance in his power. Of money Bourbon was not in immediate need, since the whole of the treasure which he had confided to his adherents, after quitting them at the Chateau d'Herment, had been restored to him, and he hoped to be able to obtain supplies from the Emperor for the payment of such forces as he might raise. Having the utmost reliance on the judgment of Gonzaga, Bourbon explained all his plans to him, mentioning that the Emperor had promised him the hand of his sister Leonor, the widowed Queen of Portugal.

"I counsel you not to claim fulfilment of that promise," said Gonzaga. "Most assuredly the Emperor will find a pretext to evade its performance. When the offer was made, you were the most powerful noble in France, and able, it was supposed, to raise all the central provinces in revolt. But your design has been thwarted by the prudent conduct of the king, who, by remaining at Lyons with his army, and, overawing your vassals, has prevented the insurrection, and compelled you to seek safety in flight. Having thus failed to accomplish your part of the compact, and thereby caused the Emperor's plans to miscarry, you cannot expect him to perform his part of the treaty. You are not now in the same position as heretofore."

"I am still Bourbon, and have still a sword," rejoined the duke, proudly. "I have now only twenty men at my

back, but I will soon have twenty thousand."

"I nothing doubt it, cousin," replied Gonzaga. "You will soon regain the position you have lost. But do not go to Spain. Send Lurcy to the Emperor. Ask for the command of a battalion in the Imperial army now opposed to the French in the Milanese, and the request will certainly be granted. An immediate opportunity of distinction will then be afforded you. You will share the command with generals of the highest repute—with Sforza, Duke of Milan—with the valiant Marquis de Pescara—with the skilful Antonio de Leyva—with Lan-roy, the Viceroy of Naples—and Giovanni de' Medici. Drive the French from Italy, secure the Milanese to Spain, and you will have earned the Emperor's gratitude. The utmost of your ambitious hopes may then be realised. The Queen of Portugal may become your consort—and a portion of France may be allotted to you as a dom."

Bourbon at once acted upon Gonzaga's advice, and despatched Lurcy with a letter to Charles V., in which he made no allusion to his Imperial Majesty's promises, but simply asked for a command in the confederate army.

Charged with this despatch, Lurcy proceeded to Genoa, where he embarked for Barcelona, and thence made his way to Madrid.

While awaiting the Emperor's response, Bourbon was condemned to a month's inaction—a sore trial to his patience. At last, Lurcy returned, accompanied by the Comte de Beaurain. Desirous that Gonzaga should hear the Emperor's answer, Bourbon received Beaurain in the presence of the marquis.

"What answer do you bring me from his Imperial Majesty?" he demanded of the envoy.

"This, my lord," replied Beaurain, delivering a warrant. "My master the Emperor has appointed your highness lieutenant-general of his army in Italy, and representative of his person. As such, you will be supreme in command—even above the Viceroy of Naples."

With a look of satisfaction, Bourbon turned to Gonzaga, and said:

"I will soon lower Bonnavet's pride, and drive his army across the Alps. That done, the conquest of France itself will speedily follow."

III. THE TWO ARMIES IN THE MILANESE.

Before proceeding further, it will be necessary to describe the position of the two opposing armies in the Milanese, and to consider their relative strength.

Entrusted by his royal master with supreme command, and persuaded that he could recover the Milanese, which had been lost by Lautrec, the rash and presumptuous Bonnavet descended into the plains of Lombardy at the head of a large army, comprising about forty thousand men, more than half of whom were drawn from the Swiss cantons, Lorraine and Guelders, and some of the smaller Italian states.

Associated with Bonnavet were several brave and experienced leaders, some of them far more fitted for command than himself—namely, the valiant Maréchal de Montmorency, the heroic Chevalier Bayard, Jean de Chabannes, Seigneur de Vandenesse, the Comte de Saint-Pol, the Vidame de Chartres, Annebaut, De Lorges, Beauvais, Jean de Diesbach, a Swiss leader of distinction, and two Italian nobles, Federico da Bozzolo and Renzo da Ceri.

On entering the Milanese, Bonnavet encountered little opposition, and possessed himself without difficulty of a large portion of the duchy. The veteran Prospero Colonna, who then commanded the Imperial army, after ineffectually disputing the French general's passage across the Ticino, withdrew to Lodi, while Antonio de Leyva threw himself with three thousand men into Pavia, and at once prepared for the defence of that city.

Had Bonnavet marched direct upon Milan, in all probability the place would have succumbed, for though the Duke Francisco Sforza possessed a garrison of fifteen thousand infantry, eight hundred lances, and as many light horse, the city was not in a state of defence, the walls which had been partially demolished by Lautrec not having been rebuilt. It soon became evident, however, that a blockade merely was intended by the French commander; whereupon active preparations for the defence of the city were made by Morone, the Duke of Milan's chancellor. The walls were repaired, and the garrison quickly and effectually provisioned.

Meantime, Bonnavet, seizing upon Monza, began to lay waste the country, destroyed the mills, and cut off the canals that supplied Milan with water. He then fixed his camp at Abbiate-Grasso, in which position he could intercept all communications from the south. On the west he was master of the course of the Ticino to Vigevano, and on the north, as we have said, he held Monza. Thus placed, he felt confident of reducing Milan by famine. Besides the capital of Lombardy, only one important city now remained in possession of the Imperialists—namely, Pavia—but its strength and situation rendered it capable of standing a lengthened siege.

As to Milan itself, which was now occupied by Prospero Colonna and Francisco Sforza, it had been put, by the exertions of Morone, into such a state of defence, that it was impossible to take it by assault.

In the midst of these operations, Pope Adrian VI. died, and was succeeded on the Pontifical throne, after a long and severe struggle, by Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, who on his election assumed the name of Clement VII.

In the new Pope the French expected to find an enemy, while the Emperor calculated upon his friendship; but the secret desire of Clement VII., a prelate of great judgment and experience, was to remain neutral, and he proposed that a truce should be agreed upon, during which he might be able to mediate between the conflicting powers. The proposition, however, was indignantly rejected on either side, while the want of zeal

in the Pope excited the anger of the Emperor. To appease him, Clement VII, secretly gave twenty thousand ducats to his ambassador, and compelled the Florentines to furnish a like sum.

Meanwhile, the inhabitants of Milan began to suffer from famine, for although there was plenty of corn in the city, it could not be ground, the mills having been destroyed. During eight days, more than a hundred thousand persons wanted bread, and the city was reduced to the greatest straits, when at last Monza was evacuated by Bonnivet, and provisions were obtained from Bergamo and the Venetian states.

Things were in this posture when the octogenarian general, Prospero Colonna, whose health had been for some time failing, breathed his last. In Colonna the confederates lost a most sagacious and experienced leader, who perfectly understood the art of war. Taking Fabius as his model, he would never fight a battle if it could be avoided, and it was one of his maxims, that "the glory of a general suffers more from rashness than it gains from the éclat of victory."

Charles de Lannoy, who succeeded Prospero Colonna as commander of the confederate forces, was a man of middle age, and distinguished not merely for military skill and bravery, but for profound judgment. His early reputation had been won under the Emperor Maximilian, and his high qualities recommended him to Charles V., by whom he was made governor of Tournay and subsequently viceroy of Naples.

On quitting Naples to assume the command of the Imperial army, Lannoy was accompanied by the Marquis de Pescara, one of the Emperor's most distinguished generals, respecting whom we must say a few words.

Descended from the illustrious house of Avalos of Toledo, Pescara inherited all the pride and arrogance of his ancestors. Though still young, for at the period of which we treat he was only thirty-four, he had passed a long life in arms. He was taken prisoner by the French at the battle of Ravenna, and on his release returned to the army, and was again worsted at Vicenza, but covered himself with glory by driving Lautrec from Milan in 1521—only two years before our history. This achievement won him the greater renown, since the cautious Prospero Colonna declined to attempt the enterprise. In the succeeding campaign the valiant Spanish leader distinguished himself by several brilliant feats of arms. He succoured Pavia when besieged by the French—helped to win the battle of Bicocca—took Lodi and Pizzighettone—and compelled Lescun to surrender Cremona. He subsequently besieged and took Genoa, delivering the city to pillage. These exploits caused him to be regarded as one of the great captains of the age. Fearless, energetic, rash, Pescara derided danger, and would undertake any enterprise, however hazardous. His constant disagreements, however, with Colonna rendered his position in the confederate army unsupportable, and he resigned his command and withdrew to Naples, where he remained till Lannoy was called upon to fill Colonna's post. In obedience to the Emperor's orders, Pescara then returned to Milan to resume his command of the Spanish forces, his place having been temporarily filled by Captain Alarcon.

The haughty marquis was perfectly content to serve under Lannoy; but when he heard of Bourbon's appointment as lieutenant-general of the confederate army, and representative of the Emperor, his jealousy was immediately excited.

Another Spanish general of distinction, of whom we shall have occasion hereafter more fully to speak, was Don Antonio de Leyva. At this juncture he occupied Pavia with a force of six thousand infantry and a thousand horse, and had so strongly fortified the city that he conceived it impregnable. De Leyva had risen to his present eminence after a long and brilliant career.

The command of the Italian division, which consisted of Lombards, Florentines, Romans, Modenese, Lucchese, and Neapolitan soldiers, was entrusted to Francisco Sforza, Duke of Milan. Associated with Sforza was the Duke of Urbino, general of the Venetian forces who had recently joined the confederates.

IV. HOW THE DUKE DE BOURBON ENTERED MILAN.

Immediately on receiving the appointment from the Emperor, Bourbon set out from Mantua to assume the command of the Imperial army. All his suite went with him, and he was accompanied by Gonzaga with a guard of six hundred lances. Tidings of his approach to Milan having preceded him, Francisco Sforza, magnificently accoutred, and attended by a glittering train of three hundred knights, all superbly arrayed, came forth from the gates of the city to meet him. The Duke of Milan was accompanied by his chancellor, Geronimo Morone, who was robed in black velvet, and wore a massive gold chain over his shoulders. Morone was a man of middle age, of grave aspect, and dignified demeanour.

Armed from head to foot in polished steel, and bestriding a powerful black charger, which was sumptuously caparisoned in housings of crimson velvet embroidered with his arms, and having a chanfrin of snowy plumes at its head, Bourbon presented a splendid appearance. All his suite were richly accoutred, and well mounted. Nothing could be more cordial than the greeting that passed between Sforza and Bourbon, and after an exchange of courtesies, they rode side by side into Milan, followed by Morone and Gonzaga.

As the cavalcade approached the gates, Bourbon examined the newly repaired walls and bastions, and cast a glance of approval at Morone. Bourbon himself, after the battle of Marignano, had been governor of Milan, and if his rule over the conquered city had been necessarily severe, he had not, like his successor, the Maréchal de Lautrec, rendered himself personally obnoxious to the citizens. But if any feelings of animosity had formerly existed towards him, they were now forgotten, and he was greeted with smiles and the waving of scarves and kerchiefs from the fair occupants of windows and balconies, and by loud acclamations from the populace thronging the streets as he rode along.

Owing to the crowd and some stoppages, the progress of the cavalcade was somewhat slow, but at last, emerging from a long narrow street, it issued into a broad piazza, and the stately Duomo—the pride of Milan—burst upon them. Often as Bourbon had gazed upon this glorious Gothic fane—often as he had studied its marvellous architectural beauties—it had lost none of its effect upon him, but excited his admiration as powerfully as ever. But he had little time to gaze upon it. The piazza in front of the fane was entirely filled with soldiers, and as the cavalcade crossed it, the place resounded with shouts of “Viva Bourbon!”

Amid such enthusiastic demonstrations, Sforza and those with him proceeded to the ducal palace, and on entering the court, which was half filled with mounted Spanish soldiers, they found three knightly personages, all fully accoutred and on horseback, waiting to receive them. These were Lannoy, Viceroy of Naples, the Marquis de Pescara, and Giovanni de' Medici. From his gorgeous armour and the rich trappings of his charger, Lannoy made a very imposing appearance. He was powerfully built, stern of aspect, and stately in manner, and his looks bespoke wisdom and resolution.

Very different in appearance, but equally martial in aspect, was the haughty Spanish general, Pescara. Possessing a light, active, well-knit frame, he seemed capable of enduring any amount of fatigue, and of executing any enterprise that his daring spirit might conceive. His features were regular and handsome, and the scars on his cheek and brow did not detract from his good looks while communicating a certain grimness to his aspect. His complexion was swarthy, and his beard, which he wore pointed in the Spanish fashion, coal-black. His expression was fierce, and his deportment proud and overbearing. When angry, his dark eyes seemed literally to blaze. Over his lacquered accoutrements he wore a surcoat on which his arms were blazoned, and was mounted on a fiery Andalusian barb, which had borne him through many a fray, and like himself had been often wounded. What with his striking physiognomy, his proud martial deportment, his splendid accoutrements, and his fiery barb, Pescara looked the beau ideal of a warrior.

Younger and handsomer than the redoubted Spanish general was the gallant Giovanni de' Medici, who promised to become one of the most distinguished captains of the age. Like Pescara, Medici was active and enterprising, and was checked by no difficulty; as shrewd in devising a stratagem as resolute in carrying it out. His features were classical in outline, and lighted up large soft blue eyes, which gave little indication of the latent fierceness of his nature. His figure was tall and admirably proportioned, and his deportment commanding. Like the others, he was splendidly arrayed, and his charger richly barded.

As Bourbon entered the court-yard with the Duke of Milan, the three leaders just described advanced to meet him, and saluted him. After an exchange of courteous speeches, the whole party alighted, and entering the palace, were conducted by Sforza to a grand banqueting-chamber, where a sumptuous repast awaited them. Their discourse during the banquet turned chiefly upon certain movements which had just been made by Bonnivet, and in reply to an inquiry from Bourbon, Pescara mentioned that the French general had placed his advanced guard at Robecco, a small town between Pavia and Lodi. “He has done this,” continued Pescara, “to intercept our convoys. I have a plan which, if it meets your highness's approval, I will execute to-night. Before detailing it, I must explain that Robecco is a mere village, without defence of any kind, and is at least a league from the head-quarters of the French army. The vanguard consists of only two hundred horsemen, and the like number of foot soldiers. But it is commanded by Bayard.”

“Then it is in charge of the best captain of the French forces,” remarked Bourbon. “Bonnivet must be mad to place Bayard in such an exposed position.”

“Perhaps he wishes him to incur a defeat,” said Pescara, with a laugh. “If so, his malice will be gratified, for I mean to surprise the post to-night. Had it been held by any other than the invincible chevalier, I should have sent Alarcon; but, as Bayard is there, I shall go myself.”

“I approve of the plan, marquis,” said Bourbon. “But let me give you a piece of counsel. Make your men wear their shirts over their accoutrements, in order that you may recognise them in the darkness.”

“A good suggestion,” said Pescara. “I will act upon it.”

Later on in the day, a council was held by the leaders, during which various plans were discussed. When the assemblage broke up, Bourbon retired to the apartments which had been prepared for himself and his suite in the palace.

Next morning betimes he prepared to start for the camp. His escort was drawn up in the courtyard of the palace, and he was coming forth to mount his charger, when loud shouts were heard outside the gates, and in another moment, Pescara, followed by a band of horse soldiers, laden with baggage and other spoils of war, rode into the court.

The accoutrements of the Spanish general and those of his men showed they had been engaged in a desperate fray. Their horses were covered with dust and blood, and scarcely able to stand—the only one amongst them that did not look thoroughly exhausted was the general's barb. Springing from the saddle, the indefatigable Pescara marched towards Bourbon, and bade him good day.

“What! back already, marquis?” cried Bourbon. “By my faith! you have displayed extraordinary activity. Why, Robecco must be some seven leagues from Milan. I perceive you have succeeded in your nocturnal expedition, and have brought back plenty of spoil. I pray you give me some particulars of the enterprise.”

“Willingly,” replied Pescara, smiling. “I care not ordinarily to talk of my own feats, but I am proud of this achievement, since I have defeated the hitherto invincible Bayard. And now for the affair. At the head of three hundred picked men, scarce half of whom I have brought back, I left Milan an hour before midnight, and by two o'clock was close upon Robecco, which, as your highness has just remarked, is about seven leagues distant. All was still within the little camp and in the village adjoining, and as we listened we could hear the cocks crowing, heralding the approach of dawn. It was very dark, but my men, as your highness had recommended, wore their shirts above their accoutrements. After a brief halt, we moved as silently as we could towards the camp; but, cautious as was our approach, it was detected by the guard, who at once gave the alarm. On this, we dashed into the camp and seized upon the baggage. While we were thus employed, the trumpets sounded, and our foemen sprang to arms, and mounted their horses. But, ere this could be accomplished, we had committed great havoc among them, and had secured the baggage, which, as your highness perceives, we have brought off.”

"Where was Bayard all this while?" demanded Bourbon.

"Ill and in his tent when we came up, as I subsequently learnt from a captive," returned Pescara, "but ere many minutes he was on horseback, and rallying his men. He shouted to De Lorges, who was with him, to get the infantry together and retire with them to Abbiate-Grasso, and he protected their retreat with his lances. Thrice did I charge him—and each time with a considerable loss; but I so thinned his ranks, that he was compelled to follow the infantry. Knowing that assistance would soon arrive, and that I should be overpowered by numbers, I then gave the word to return. Bonnivet chased us for a couple of leagues, when, finding pursuit in vain, he turned back. I have lost more than a hundred brave fellows in the expedition—but what of that? I have vanquished Bayard.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Bourbon. "You may well be proud of the achievement, marquis. Bayard will never forgive Bonnivet for the defeat."

"Never," replied Pescara. "Alarcon, my captain, heard him say to De Lorges that in due time and place he would compel the Admiral to render him an account for the disgrace he had put upon him."

Bourbon then took leave of Pescara, and, mounting his charger, rode out of the city, and put himself at the head of six thousand lanz-knechts and five hundred lances, who were drawn up outside the Porta Ticinese. With this force he proceeded to join the Imperial army, which was encamped near Gambolo, a small town about three leagues distant from the right bank of the Ticino.

V. THE CONTESSA DI CHIERI.

One night, about a week before Bourbon's entrance into Milan, a lady, young and of surpassing loveliness, was seated alone in the principal saloon of a magnificent palace in the Corso Romano. Her looks and rich attire proclaimed that she belonged to the highest rank. The saloon was sumptuously furnished, and adorned with paintings and sculpture, but it was imperfectly illumined by a couple of tapers placed on the table near which the lady sat. She was the Contessa di Chieri, one of the loveliest women in Italy, and had been married long enough to care little for the count her husband, who lived apart from her at Rome.

After a while, the beautiful countess arose, and, walking to the open casement, stepped out upon a balcony overlooking the Corso, and, leaning upon the cushioned balustrade, gazed around. From this place could be seen the marble roof of the Duomo, rising like a snowy mountain above the tops of the adjoining houses. But no object in particular engaged her fancy. It was pleasant to look forth on such a night and breathe the soft and balmy air. Therefore she lingered for some time on the balcony, and did not think of returning to the saloon.

When the Contessa di Chieri first came out, bands of soldiers were traversing the Corso, but the place was now almost deserted. As the night advanced, its beauty seemed to increase, and the perfect stillness added to the charm. She was gazing at the heavens, trying to penetrate their mysterious depths, when all at once a slight sound recalled her to earth, and, looking down, she beheld a tall cavalier wrapped in a long mantle. At this sight she would instantly have retreated, when her own name, pronounced in accents that were familiar to her, and that made the blood rush to her heart, arrested her.

"Tis I, Beata!" cried the cavalier.

"Santa Maria! is it possible?—you here!"

"Hush! not so loud," rejoined the cavalier, "or yonder patrol will overhear us. Since you recognise me, you will not keep me here."

"You shall be admitted instantly," replied the countess. And she disappeared from the balcony.

The cavalier had not to wait long. The gates opening upon the cortile of the palace were closed, but a wicket was presently opened, and a female attendant without saying a word to the cavalier, led him up a grand marble staircase to the saloon where the countess awaited him. As soon as the attendant had retired the cavalier threw off his cloak and hat, and disclosed the noble features and superb person of Bonnivet.

"Ah, what risk you have run to come here!" exclaimed the countess. "I tremble to think of it. If you should be discovered—"

"Reassure yourself, dear Beata, I shall not be discovered," replied Bonnivet, passionately. "Oh, let me gaze at you! Let me satisfy myself that I behold you once more. By Heaven!" he exclaimed, yet more passionately, and pressing her to his bosom, "you look lovelier than ever. Oh, Beata, I would have laid siege to Milan to procure the happiness of this interview. But fortune has been against me, and has baffled all my efforts."

"And you have quitted the camp to come here?" said the countess. "You have risked more than life in doing so."

"But I am now fully repaid," he rejoined.

"You would persuade me that you love me deeply," she said.

"Have I not proved my devotion by this act?" he rejoined. "Lovers, they say, are mad, and those who understand not what love is, and have never felt its pains, would deem me mad. Impelled by this madness, or passion—call it what you please—I have left my army to the care of the Comte de Saint-Pol, and have ventured among my enemies. But he who dares much will be rewarded, as I am."

"How did you contrive to enter the city?" demanded Beata. "I marvel how you could elude the vigilance of the guard."

"I have a safe-conduct from Giovattini de' Medici," replied Bonnivet. "I came hither as Galeazzo Visconti."

"But your return will be attended with even greater risk," said Beata. "If you should be captured, I shall never forgive myself, for I shall feel that I have been the cause of the disaster."

"Have no misgivings, Beata," said Bonnivet, smiling confidently. "I am not destined to be captured. Do not let us mar the happiness of our brief interview by any thoughts of danger. Let us think only of ourselves—of our love. When we are separated—when I am again with the army, and you are alone in this chamber—we shall regret each moment we have wasted."

"I would shake off my fears if I could," said the countess. "But I find it impossible. Had I expected you, it might have been otherwise. But you have taken me so by surprise, that I cannot master my emotion."

"How could I prepare you for my coming, Beata?" said Bonnivet. "I have long nourished the design, but the means of executing it only occurred to-day, when this safe-conduct fell into my hands. Then I resolved—cost what it might!—that I would behold you again. Mounted on a swift steed, I left Abbiate-Grasso at nightfall, attended only by a single esquire, and I hope to be back at the camp before my absence is discovered."

"Heaven grant you may!" she ejaculated.

"My steed seemed to know the errand on which he was bent, and bore me on with wondrous speed; but if he sympathises with his master, he will not have the same spirit on his return. It is strange, Beata—now that the long wished-for moment has arrived—now that I am here—I cannot realise my happiness. It seems like a dream."

"Holy Virgin! what is that?" exclaimed Beata, as the trampling of horses was heard in the Corso.

"Merely the patrol," replied Bonnivet.

"No; it is not the patrol!" she cried. "The troop has stopped at the gates of the palace. Stay where you are! I will see what it means."

So saying, she flew to the balcony, and presently returned with a cheek blanched with terror.

"Heaven preserve us!" she exclaimed. "It is the Duke of Milan, with a large escort."

"The Duke of Milan!" exclaimed Bonnivet. "What can bring him here at this hour?"

As he spoke, a loud knocking was heard at the gate.

"What means this visit?" said Bonnivet.

"I know not," replied the countess, "unless your arrival at Milan has been discovered."

"That is impossible. The guard at the Porta Romana allowed me to pass without question, on seeing my safe-conduct."

"There are spies in your camp, and one of them may have brought information of your departure," said Beata. "But the duke must not find you here. Conceal yourself," she added, opening the door of a closet, "and do not venture forth till I release you."

Scarcely had Bonnivet entered this hiding-place when the Duke of Milan, accompanied by a guard, entered the saloon.

"You must excuse me if I appear abrupt, countess," he said, glancing suspiciously round the room. "My business does not admit of ceremony. You will believe that I have not come hither on any idle errand."

"I am curious to learn the meaning of your highness's visit," remarked Beata, vainly endeavouring to conceal her agitation.

"I will not keep you in suspense, madame," replied Sforza. "Where is the cavalier who entered the palace not half an hour ago, and was shown into this room by your attendant, Eufemia?"

"He is lost!" mentally ejaculated the countess, trembling and not knowing what answer to make.

"Where is the Admiral Bonnivet, madame?" said Sforza, advancing towards her. "I know he is in the palace. Where have you hidden him? Confess. I *will* have him."

"The cavalier who entered just now, and who has since quitted the palace, was not Bonnivet, but Galeazzo Visconti," replied the countess.

"I know better, madame," said Sforza. "To convince you that equivocation is useless, I will tell you what has happened. Little more than an hour ago two well-mounted horsemen arrived at the Porta Romana, and presented a safe-conduct purporting to be for Galeazzo Visconti and his esquire. What was the astonishment of the captain of the guard, while scrutinising the self-styled Visconti—the real Galeazzo being well known to him—to recognise the commander of the French army, the Admiral Bonnivet. He made no remark, however, but allowed the Admiral and his companion to enter the city, feeling it to be of the highest importance to ascertain their design. He therefore followed them with half a dozen men to the Piazza del Duomo, where Bonnivet dismounted, and leaving his horse in charge of his esquire, marched off, fancying himself unobserved—but the captain of the guard and two soldiers were on his track. They saw him pause before this palace. You, countess, were on the balcony. They heard your lover—for such he must be—exchange a few words with you, after which he was admitted. As soon as this took place, the captain of the guard hastened to the ducal palace to acquaint me with the important discovery he had made. I came hither at once."

"You have come quickly, duke, but you have come too late," rejoined Beata. "He you seek is gone."

"Not so, madame," rejoined Sforza, smiling incredulously. "The gates have been closely watched ever since the Admiral entered the palace. No one has come forth. Where is he?"

"If your highness will dismiss your attendants, I will tell you," she replied.

"Withdraw," said Sforza to the guard, "but remain outside. Now, madame?" he added, when they were alone.

Before the countess could make any reply the door of the closet opened, and Bonnivet stepped forth.

"Imprudent!" she exclaimed. "You have betrayed yourself."

"Discovery was certain, madame," remarked Sforza. "I am obliged to the Lord Admiral for saving me further trouble. My lord, you are my prisoner."

"Not yet, duke," rejoined Bonnavet, who did not appear at all uneasy; "I have a proposition to make to your highness, which I think will be agreeable to you. You must be quite certain that I did not come to Milan with any hostile intent."

"I do not ask the motive of your visit, my lord," replied Sforza. "It is sufficient that you are here—and my prisoner."

"Hear me out, duke," said Bonnavet. "I have to propose an exchange of prisoners."

"An exchange!—ha! Whom do you offer?"

"Giovanni de' Medici," replied Bonnavet.

"Giovanni de' Medici!" echoed Sforza, in surprise. "I did not know he was a prisoner."

"I took him this morning," returned Bonnavet. "Let me return to Abbiate-Grasso, and I will set him free."

"You underrate yourself, Admiral," said Sforza. "I shall lose by the exchange."

"I will add ten thousand ducats," said Bonnavet.

"Excuse the doubt, my lord; but have you that sum?" demanded Sforza.

"On my faith I have, duke," replied Bonnavet. "The money ought to be paid to the Swiss—but you shall have it."

"Then I agree. I am sorry to rob the Swiss," said Sforza, laughing, "but all is fair in love and war. I give you an hour with your mistress, Admiral. Then you must depart. I will leave a guard at the gate of the palace who will conduct you and your esquire to the Porta Romana. To-morrow I shall expect Giovanni de' Medici—and the ransom-money. Good night, my lord. I will no longer interrupt your tête-à-tête. You see, fair countess, what a price your lover is willing to pay for an hour of your sweet society."

With this, Sforza retired and gave the necessary orders, so that Bonnavet was enabled to quit Milan without molestation.

Next morning, Giovanni de' Medici returned to Milan, and the ransom-money was paid.

VI. HOW BOURBON ASSUMED THE COMMAND OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY.

The numerical force of the Imperial army at this juncture was computed at forty thousand men, a large proportion of whom were mercenaries. There were seven thousand Spaniards under Pescara; ten thousand Germans under Lannoy; four thousand Italians under Giovanni de' Medici; eight hundred lances, and eight hundred light horse, mixed Italians and Spaniards, under various captains. The Venetian army, under the Duke of Urbino, consisted of upwards of six thousand foot, all well armed, and eleven hundred horse. The Pontifical forces, the leadership of which was given to Gonzaga, numbered a thousand men—five hundred infantry and five hundred horse. Besides these, there was a strong garrison at Pavia, under the command of the renowned Antonio de Leyva, consisting of five thousand infantry and eleven hundred horse, and these were subsequently reinforced by the Pontifical troops. Possessed of such an army, led by generals of such valour and experience as Pescara and Lannoy, and now commanded by Bourbon, who was animated as well by the desire of distinction as by the thirst for vengeance, it could scarcely be doubted that success awaited the Imperialists.

On the other hand, though its numbers had been greatly reduced since his entrance into Italy, Bonnavet could still boast a powerful army. Of the thirty thousand men who had descended with him into the fertile plains of Lombardy, scarce twenty thousand were now left; but he was in expectation of large reinforcements from France, and he also counted upon five thousand Grisons under the command of Dietingen de Salis, and eight thousand Swiss. From his position at Abbiate-Grasso, he was able to obtain abundant supplies from the Lomellino.

Such was the relative position of the two armies when Bourbon assumed the command of the Imperial forces.

On his arrival at the camp he was hailed with enthusiasm, and as he rode along the line, followed by his adherents, he was greeted with shouts by soldiers of all countries—Spaniards, Germans, and Italians. This was a proud moment for the illustrious fugitive, and made amends for all the sufferings he had undergone. His breast beat high with ardour, and visions of conquest flitted before his gaze. With such a host at his command, what could he not achieve?

The camp of the Imperialists occupied a large space of ground, but owing to the remarkable flatness of the plain, could only be fully surveyed from the castle of Garlasco, which was situated at its farthest extremity. In this castle Bourbon was lodged, and as he mounted its keep a splendid view was offered him. Not only was the whole of his own army in sight, but, though some leagues off, he could clearly distinguish the French camp at Abbiate-Grasso. In other respects, the prospect was very striking. League upon league of the fertile plains of Lombardy, intersected with rivers and canals, came within his ken. Numberless cities, towns, and villages could be descried. In the extreme distance could be seen Milan, with its Duomo, towers, and churches; Lodi and Pavia were also distinguishable; and the whole course of the Ticino could be traced from the latter city to Abbiate-Grasso. Looking towards the north, Novara and Vercelli—each important places—could be discerned; and nearer were Vigevano and Mortara. Many other towns could likewise be seen, and the Ticino was not the only river visible. Both the Sesia and the Po could be distinguished. Bounding this vast

plain on the north rose the enormous barrier of the Alps, foremost amid which stood Monte Rosa, while in the far distance on the west could be discerned the range of the Apennines.

From the walls of Garlasco, Bourbon carefully studied

Bonnivet's position, and coming to the conclusion that the French general must infallibly surrender, he resolved not to give him battle at once, as he had intended, but to adopt the Fabian policy of Prospero Colonna, and wait.

To Bourbon a camp life was the pleasantest that could be led. No music was so agreeable to his ear as the sound of warlike instruments; no pastime so pleasant as the practice of military manœuvres. He did not rest till he had satisfied himself by personal scrutiny that every corps of the army was in good order; and such was his affability, that he soon became popular with the soldiers of each nation. At all hours of the night he made his rounds to see that good watch was kept; and on these occasions he was only attended by the faithful Hugues, whom he still retained in his service. Constant nocturnal skirmishes took place between flying bands of the hostile armies; but without material advantage to either side.

Nearly a month had now elapsed since Bourbon had assumed his command, and already Bonnavet, whose position became daily more perilous, had thrice offered him battle; but Bourbon, with the approval of the other leaders, on each occasion refused to fight. During this interval Bourbon, accompanied by Lannoy, Pescara, and the Duke of Urbino, had repeatedly ridden along the right bank of the Ticino, in order to reconnoitre the French forces; and he had also more than once visited Pavia to consult with Antonio de Leyva and Gonzaga, and see that the garrison was in good order.

VII. HOW BONNAVET RESOLVED TO RETREAT FROM NOVARA.

Becoming apprehensive that he should lose his supplies from the Lomellino, whence he chiefly derived them, Bonnavet at length crossed the Ticino with the bulk of his army, placing his vanguard at Vigevano, and the main body of the army at Mortara—a strongly fortified city, and where he could obtain provisions from Montferrat, Vercelli, and Novara.

He did not abandon Abbiate-Grasso, but left a thousand infantry and a hundred horse to guard the place—a very inadequate force, as was speedily shown. Three days afterwards, the town was attacked by Giovanni de' Medici, assisted by Sforza, with five hundred of the élite of the garrison of Milan. The assault began early in the morning, and was conducted with such extraordinary vigour, that, in spite of a gallant defence, the place was taken before night. Fatal consequences, however, attended this bold achievement. The plague at that time existed at Abbiate-Grasso, and the spoils of the town being carried off by the victors, the scourge was conveyed to Milan, and eventually committed dreadful ravages in that city.

The capture of Abbiate-Grasso was not the only success achieved by the Imperialists. Others followed in rapid succession. Sartirano, an important post occupied by the French, was besieged and taken by Bourbon before Bonnavet could succour it from Mortara. As the Imperialists continued to press upon his right, fearing his supplies might be cut off, he retired to Novara, and established himself there, hoping to be reinforced by the Grisons and Swiss. But he was disappointed. Conducted by Dietingen de Salis, the Grisons got as far as Bergamo, where they ought to have been joined by the Prince Federico da Bozzolo. But he was shut up in Lodi. Harassed by Giovanni de' Medici, who was sent with a detachment of light horse to drive them back, unable to obtain their promised pay or an escort of cavalry, the Grisons, disgusted and indignant, returned to their native valleys. Having accomplished this task, the active Medici destroyed the bridge at Buffalora, thus enclosing Bonnavet between the Ticino and the Sesia, and liberating Milan from all chance of attack.

Bonnivet was not more fortunate in regard to his Swiss reinforcements than with the Grisons. Eight thousand of these hardy mountaineers made their way to the neighbourhood of Vercelli, on the right bank of the Sesia, in order to effect a junction with the French army at Novara. But the river was swollen and impassable, and the Swiss, having learned that the Grisons had retired, became greatly discontented, and refused to join the French until they first received their pay. In vain Bonnavet sent Captain Diesbach to remonstrate with them. They remained sullen and inflexible, alleging that the French king had broken faith with them, having failed to send the Duc de Longueville with four hundred lances to Ivry to escort them, and now they were denied their pay.

The Admiral's position had thus become extremely perilous. Deprived of the large reinforcements he had expected, and which alone could enable him successfully to prosecute the campaign; confronted by a hostile army greatly superior to his own in number, and stimulated by constant successes; with his own troops almost decimated by disease and famine; in danger of losing his supplies, owing to the activity of the enemy, his utter defeat or an inglorious surrender seemed inevitable.

Bonnivet determined to retreat, but before putting his design into execution, he summoned the principal leaders of the French army to a council. With the exception of the Maréchal de Montmorency, who had been attacked by the plague, and had already left Novara, they all attended; and the assemblage comprised the Comte de Saint-Pol, the Seigneur de Vandenesse, the Chevalier Bayard, the Vidame de Chartres, De Lorges, Annebaut, Beauvais (surnamed "the Brave"), Renzo da Ceri, and the Swiss captain, Diesbach. All these personages were fully armed, save that they had taken off their helmets and unbuckled their swords, and, as they were grouped around a table placed in the centre of the tent in which they met, they formed a very striking picture.

Conspicuous among them for the richness of his armour, which was damaskeened with gold, and for his splendid person and handsome lineaments, was the Lord Admiral. The Comte de Saint-Pol was also a noble-looking warrior, and gorgeously accoutred. The veteran Vandenesse was cased in black armour, and had a martial and determined aspect. The Vidame de Chartres had a proud and resolute look. Annebaut, De Lorges, and the brave Beauvais were all stalwart captains, whose scarred visages proclaimed the numerous conflicts they had been engaged in. Renzo da Ceri was of slighter frame, and younger than the last-mentioned warriors, and his graceful person, sheathed in lacquered armour, contrasted strongly with the robust frame and rugged physiognomy of the Swiss leader, Diesbach, near whom he sat.

But, although each individual in the group was worthy of notice, the one who would infallibly have fixed the attention of a beholder was the Chevalier Bayard.

Bayard was fashioned in the heroic mould. Above the ordinary height, powerfully built, and possessed of prodigious strength, he wore his ponderous armour, dented by many a blow, as easily as if it had been a silken doublet. His features corresponded with his frame, being massive and nobly sculptured, generally stern in expression, yet sometimes lighted up by a pleasant smile.

The doughty champion was now approaching fifty, and though his mighty arm had lost none of its power, and his features bore few traces of age, his once raven locks were thickly sown with grey. It had been remarked by his soldiers, by whom he was idolised, that since the affair of Robecco their captain had looked sombre and discontented, and they fancied that the thought of the defeat rankled in his breast.

More than human valour seemed to beat in Bayard's broad breast—more than human strength appeared to reside in his herculean frame and powerful arm. No danger ever appalled him—nay, his spirit rose with danger, inciting him to deeds worthy of the heroic ages. Such was his conduct at Garigliano, when, wholly unsupported, he defended the bridge against the entire Spanish host, and saved the French army. Besides the inconceivable daring of all his actions, their grandeur made him the central figure in every conflict in which he engaged, and excited the admiration both of friends and foes.

When only eighteen, Bayard followed Charles VIII. into Italy, and won his spurs at the battle of Fornova, where he performed prodigies of valour, and had two horses killed under him. He was several times made prisoner, and more than once grievously wounded, but while free he was ever with the army. Courts he despised, and hence the neglect he experienced from François I., who placed his favourites over his head. But other monarchs appreciated him at his true worth, and after a signal victory which he had gained at Padua, the Emperor Maximilian said to him, in the presence of the whole army, "Chevalier Bayard, the king my brother is happy in having a knight like you. I would I had a dozen such, even though each cost me a hundred thousand florins a year."

Nor did our own bluff King Hal use less flattering language towards him at the siege of Téroouanne. "Were all French captains as valiant as you, Chevalier Bayard," said Henry, "I must speedily raise the siege of this place."

Bayard, as is well known, after the famous battle of Marignano, which he himself had helped to win, and where he fought side by side with the Constable de Bourbon, was called upon by the victorious king to dub him knight.

Bayard would have declined the honour, but François insisted, and bent the knee before him. Whereupon Bayard, drawing his sword, and touching the king's shoulder with the blade, exclaimed:

"Sire, may it be with you as with Roland or Oliver, Godfrey or Baldwin, his brother. Certes, you are the first king that ever I dubbed knight." Then pressing his lips to the blade, he said, "Happy art thou, my sword, to have performed this office for so brave a monarch! Henceforth, good sword, shalt thou be kept as a holy relic, and honoured above all other weapons!"

But though thus distinguished, Bayard, as we have shown, was afterwards neglected by François I. The bravest and ablest captain in the army; consulted by the leaders on all occasions of difficulty, and adored by the soldiers; far fitter for command than those placed above him, he was never made a general. The only reward he received for his incalculable services was the order of Saint Michel.

Though his loyalty was unshaken by the king's ingratitude, the appointment of Bonnavet to the supreme command of the Italian army gave Bayard great offence. He could not conquer his dislike of the haughty favourite, and, moreover, entertained but a poor opinion of his military qualities. Nevertheless, he served him well and faithfully. In the unlucky affair of Robecco he fancied Bonnavet had wilfully exposed him to certain defeat, and this he could not forgive.

"I have sent for you, messeigneurs, to ask your advice," said Bonnavet, glancing round at the assemblage, all of whom looked grave and anxious, "and I entreat you to give it freely. You are all aware of the critical position in which we are placed. You know that we are shut up between two rivers, the Ticino and the Sesia. You know that the army is greatly reduced by famine, sickness, and desertion, and that the enemy, with a force more than double our own in number, is at Cameriano, only two leagues off. You know that we have lost Abbiate-Grasso, and that the bridge over the Ticino at Buffalora has been destroyed by Giovanni de' Medici. You know that the faithless Grisons have returned to their native valleys with Dietingen de Salis. You know that the eight thousand Swiss, who are at Gattinara, on the opposite bank of the Sesia, have refused to join us. Aware of all these disastrous circumstances, what counsel do you give?"

All were silent, none liking to recommend retreat or surrender. At last Bayard spoke.

"You ask our advice, Lord Admiral," he said. "Will you be guided by it if we offer it?"

"I cannot pledge myself to that, but I will give your counsel due consideration," rejoined Bonnavet. "Speak freely."

"Were I in your place," said Bayard, "I would compel the enemy to give me battle, and by a grand masterstroke retrieve my former reverses, or perish in the effort."

"It would be madness," rejoined Bonnavet. "As I have said, the enemy's forces are double our own, and in better condition."

"Then shut yourself up in Novara, and stand a siege. The city is well fortified, and will hold out till we

receive reinforcements."

"I doubt it," remarked the Comte de Saint-Pol. "Our supplies from the Lomellino will be cut off, and the country around Novara, as you know, has been laid waste."

"Tête-Dieu! we will get supplies from the foe," cried Bayard. "Our condition is not so desperate as you suppose. If the enemy are two to one, what matters it?"

"If we were all Bayards it would matter little if they were ten to one," rejoined Saint-Pol. "But our men are disheartened. Of late, we have had nothing but ill success. You yourself have been worsted."

"True," replied Bayard, in a sombre tone, as he thought of the affair of Robecco.

"You have seen your countrymen, Captain Diesbach," said De Lorges to that officer. "Do they refuse to join us?"

"Absolutely," replied Diesbach, "unless they receive their pay. They are inflexible. They declare the King of France has broken faith with them in not sending the Duc de Longueville with an escort of cavalry to meet them at Ivry, and that they will not fight for him."

"Let the vile mercenaries go! We can do without them," cried Beauvais.

"Mercenaries they may be, but they have good ground of complaint," rejoined Diesbach, angrily. "They have been brought hither by promises that have not been kept. My own men declare that, unless they receive their pay, they will at once disband, and return with their countrymen who are waiting for them at Gattinara. The Swiss will not fight for mere glory."

"But you have sufficient influence over your men to quiet their murmurs, and prevent them from disbanding, Captain Diesbach," said Bonnavet. "Give them the positive assurance from me that they *shall* be paid—speedily paid."

"Promises will not content them, my lord," replied Diesbach. "I must have something in hand."

"You ask an impossibility, captain," replied Bonnavet. "My coffers are quite empty."

"Quite empty!" exclaimed Diesbach. "A month ago you promised me ten thousand ducats."

"Very true, captain. But the whole of the money is gone. I have had a heavy ransom to pay."

"Whose ransom, my lord, may I make bold to inquire?" said Diesbach.

"Ask the Duke of Milan," replied Bonnavet. "My coffers are empty, I repeat. But all arrears shall be fully paid—as soon as I receive the expected supplies from France."

"I will tell my soldiers what you say, my lord," returned Diesbach. "But I know what their answer will be. They will laugh in my face, disband, and cross the Sesia to join their comrades. If such should be the case, I must perforce accompany them."

"I shall not hinder you, captain," said Bonnavet. "Dissuade them, if you can—if not, adieu!"

"It pains me to separate from you thus, my brave companions in arms, but there is no help for it," rejoined Diesbach. And bowing to the Admiral and the assembled leaders, who returned his salutation coldly, he quitted the tent.

"By this desertion of the Swiss we shall lose five thousand auxiliaries," said Bonnavet. "Nothing is left but retreat."

"Tête-Dieu! we are not yet come to that pass," cried Bayard. "Again I say, let us provoke the enemy to battle. If we do not conquer, we shall die with honour."

"How say you, messeigneurs?" demanded Bonnavet. "I have every faith in the Chevalier Bayard, but he is sometimes too rash. I will be governed by the general voice. Shall we risk an engagement?"

"No," replied the leaders, unanimously. "It is too hazardous."

"You are overruled, you see, Chevalier Bayard," said Bonnavet.

"You will regret your determination, my lord," rejoined Bayard, chafing fiercely. "If you retreat, Bourbon will say you are afraid of him."

"I shall not be turned from my purpose by a taunt," said Bonnavet. "I will not sacrifice my men."

"Then you decide upon immediate retreat?" demanded the Comte de Saint-Pol.

"Such is my decision," replied Bonnavet. "To-morrow night I shall quit Novara and march to Romagnano. If I can get the army safely across the Sesia, all will be well."

"Think not to elude Bourbon," remarked Bayard. "The thirst of vengeance will make him doubly vigilant. He will assuredly cut off our retreat."

"The design must be kept so secret that no intelligence can be conveyed to him," said Bonnavet. "To you, De Lorges," he added to that captain, "I confide the construction of the bridge of boats across the Sesia. Set out for Romagnano to-night."

"Your commands shall be obeyed, general," returned De Lorges. "On your arrival at Romagnano, you shall find the bridge ready for the passage of the army."

"Use all possible caution," said Vandenesse. "If Bourbon hears of the bridge, he will guess the design."

"He shall *not* hear of it," returned De Lorges. "Not a soul shall quit Romagnano."

"Then all is settled," said Bonnavet. "We will meet again at noon to-morrow, when the order of march can be finally arranged."

"At what hour do you propose to set out?" demanded Saint-Pol.

"At dusk," replied Bonnavet. "Each leader will have his corps in readiness. You, Saint-Pol, will take charge of the first battalion. To you, Vandenesse, I confide the artillery. Chevalier Bayard, you will bring up the rear-guard. I shall be with you."

On this the council broke up, and the leaders quitted the tent.

VIII. IN WHICH BAYARD RELATES HIS DREAM TO DE LORGES.

Bonnivet quitted Novara as agreed upon, and marched throughout the night, but he did not reach Romagnano until late in the afternoon of the following day, the progress of the troops being much impeded by the bad state of the roads; but as the men were greatly fatigued by their hurried march, he determined to give them a few hours' repose, and to defer the passage of the river until the following morning at daybreak. In this decision he acted against the opinion of Bayard, who advised him to cross at once (the bridge of boats having been completed by De Lorges), and take up his quarters on the opposite bank of the Sesia, but Bonnivet would not be turned from his purpose.

"We are better here than at Gattinara, which is full of mutinous Swiss," he said. "I have no apprehension of attack. Long before the enemy can come up, we shall have crossed the river and destroyed the bridge."

Bayard said no more. But he could not shake off his misgivings.

That evening the valiant knight rode through the camp alone. It was still early, but the greater part of the soldiers, fatigued by their long march, and knowing they must be astir soon after midnight, had already sought a couch, and were buried in slumber. Some few were awake, and were furbishing their arms and accoutrements. Having ascertained that good watch was kept by the advanced guard, Bayard quitted the camp and rode towards the river to view the bridge of boats.

It was an enchanting evening—such as only can be seen in a southern clime. The deep dark vault of heaven was without a cloud, and not a breath of wind was stirring. The sounds customarily heard in a camp alone broke the stillness.

Before he approached the river, Bayard halted to gaze on the lovely and peaceful scene—for peaceful it looked, though a large army was nigh at hand. From the spot where the knight had halted a magnificent view of the Alps was obtained, and his eye wandered along the mighty range till it rested upon the snow-clad peaks of Monte Rosa. Strange to say, even at that moment, when the rest of the ridge looked white and spectral, a warm radiance tinged the summit of this superb mountain.

Never in his eyes had the eternal Alps looked so grand and solemn as they did on that evening—the last he was destined to witness. He could not remove his gaze from them, and the contemplation of the magnificent picture insensibly lifted his thoughts towards Heaven, and drew from him a heartfelt prayer. He then rode slowly on towards the river. On either side his view was obstructed by trees, and by the luxuriant vegetation of the country. The Sesia, which took its course through the broad plains of Lombardy to mingle its waters with those of the classic Po, was here of no great width, and could ordinarily be forded, but heavy rains had rendered it for the time impassable. The banks of the river were skirted by tall poplars.

Adjoining the picturesque little town of Romagnano, which was built on the near bank of the river, were the ruins of an old bridge, which had been destroyed by Lautrec during the late campaign, and it was close to these broken arches and piers that De Lorges had constructed the bridge of boats.

Farther down the river, about half a league off, could be seen Gattinara, a town about the same size as Romagnano. As we have intimated, the whole country was one flat fertile plain, extending almost over the whole of Lombardy to the foot of the Alps. A strong mounted guard was stationed near the bridge, and as Bayard drew near, the leader of the guard, who was no other than De Lorges, rode towards him.

"Good even, noble captain," said De Lorges. "What think you of the bridge?"

"It will answer its purpose," rejoined Bayard. "But I would it were destroyed."

"That is, were you with the army on the other side of the river. So do I. We ought to have crossed tonight. Why wait till morning?"

"Ay, why?" cried Bayard, angrily. "Simply because the Admiral has so decided. He says the men are worn out, and must have repose. Methinks they could have rested at Gattinara. To-morrow may be too late."

"Let us hope not," said De Lorges. "I do not think the enemy can have divined purpose."

"I think differently," rejoined Bayard. "I believe that Bourbon is in hot pursuit of us."

"But you have no grounds for such belief?" said De Lorges, inquiringly.

"None save the conviction that he will not let Bonnivet escape. Well, if the Admiral chooses to indulge in false security, we cannot help it. For my own part, I am full of apprehension."

"It is not like you to feel uneasiness," said De Lorges. "We shall laugh at such fears at this hour to-morrow."

"Who knows that either of us may be then alive!" ejaculated Bayard, gravely. "I do not think I shall. Not many minutes ago, as I was gazing at yon mighty mountains, a presentiment crossed me that I should never behold another evening."

"Shake off these melancholy thoughts!" cried De Lorges. "A long and glorious career awaits you."

"Alas! no," replied Bayard. "I am prepared to meet the blow whenever it may come; but I cannot quit this fair world without some regret. Listen to me, De Lorges, and recollect what I am about to say to you. My uncle, Georges du Terrail, Bishop of Grenoble, who took charge of me during my infancy, thus admonished me: 'My child,' he said, in a tone and with a look which I can well remember, 'be worthy of your ancestors. Be noble, like the founder of our race, who fell at the feet of King John at the battle of Poitiers. Be valiant like your great-grandsire and your grandsire, both of whom died in arms—the first at Agincourt, the other at Montlhéry. Prove yourself the true son of your intrepid father, and my beloved brother, who fell covered with honourable wounds while defending his country.' Thus spake the pious and good Bishop of Grenoble, who

loved me as a son. I have striven to follow his injunctions. I have sought to emulate the glorious deeds of my ancestors, and I have done no act that could be deemed unworthy of their name, I have prayed that I might not die on a bed of sickness, but on the battle-field, and I trust that Heaven will grant my prayer."

"I nothing doubt it, noble captain," said De Lorges, deeply moved. "But may the day be far hence!"

"It is close at hand, De Lorges. I am sure of it," said Bayard, in a tone that startled his hearer. "I dreamed last night that all my valiant ancestors appeared to me. I knew them, though I had seen none of them before, except my father, and his features had faded from my recollection. But I knew them all. Warlike phantoms they were. The Bishop of Grenoble, who has long been laid in the tomb, was with them. Their lips moved, but I could hear no words, and I vainly essayed to address them, for my tongue clove to my palate. But I could not mistake the meaning of their looks and gestures. The ghostly warriors gave me welcome, and the good bishop smiled upon me. I shall soon join them."

There was a pause. De Lorges was too much impressed by what he had heard to make a remark.

"I have lived long enough," pursued Bayard, breaking the silence—"too long, perhaps, for I ought to have died at Robecco. My chief regret in quitting the world is, that I have not done enough for my country."

"Then live!" cried De Lorges. "France can ill spare you."...

"My life is in the hands of my Maker," rejoined Bayard, humbly. "I shall resign it cheerfully to Him who gave it—but I shall not throw it away. And now a word to you, my friend and companion-in-arms. I am the last of my line. I have no son to whom I can say, 'Live worthily of your ancestors,' but I can say to you, De Lorges, whom I love as a brother, Live, so that your name may be without reproach."

"I will try to do so," replied the valiant captain, earnestly.

"I am poor, as you know," pursued Bayard, "for such money as I have won I have bestowed upon my soldiers, but if I fall, I bequeath you my sword—the sword with which I bestowed knighthood upon the king. Take it, and may it serve you as well as it has served me. Adieu!"

And, without another word, he rode back to the camp, while De Lorges returned to his post.

IX. THE RETREAT OF ROMAGNANO.

As Bayard had conjectured, Bonnavet's departure from Novara had not escaped the vigilance of Bourbon, who immediately started in pursuit with the whole of the Imperial army. The march endured from early morn till late at night, when men and horses became so much fatigued, that a few hours' rest appeared indispensable. But Bourbon would not consent to a halt.

"We are only a few leagues from Romagnano," he said. "We must on."

"The enemy cannot cross the Sesia," urged Pescara. "The river is flooded, and there is no bridge."

"A bridge of boats will enable them to cross," said Bourbon. "I am certain Bonnavet will make the attempt to-night—or at daybreak, at latest. If we halt, we shall lose him."

"But the men need repose. They are dropping with fatigue," urged the Duke of Urbino.

"They shall rest after the battle," rejoined Bourbon, peremptorily. "On! on!"

So the army continued its march.

At cock-crow, the trumpets of the French army sounded a loud *réveillé*, and the whole host arose. Then were heard the loud calls of the officers mustering their men, the clatter of arms, the neighing of steeds, and all the stirring sounds that proclaim a camp in motion.

While the tents were being struck, and the various companies forming, Bonnavet, fully armed, and attended by the leaders, rode along the line, and, having completed his inspection, issued his final orders. Each leader returned to his respective corps; the first battalion, under the command of the Comte de Saint-Pol, began to move towards Romagnano; and the remainder of the army followed; Bonnavet himself bringing up the rearguard.

Day broke just as the first column neared the bridge, the rosy clouds in the eastern sky giving promise of a glorious day. The Alps stood out in all their majesty, not a single cloud resting upon their snowy peaks. Monte Rosa had already caught the first rays of the sun. Ere long the whole scene was flooded with light. Casques and corslets glittered in the sunbeams, lances and bills seemed tipped with fire, and pennons, banners, and plumes fluttered in the fresh morning breeze. Even the swollen waters of the Sesia looked bright and beautiful. The bridge of boats resounded with the trampling of horse and the regular tread of the foot soldiers, as band after band crossed it in close array. It was a gay and glorious sight. Two battalions had gained the opposite bank, and the Vidame de Chartres was about to pass over with his cross-bowmen, when De Lorges galloped up.

"The enemy is at hand!" he exclaimed. "The main body of the army must be got over the bridge as rapidly as possible. The Lord Admiral will cover its passage with the rear-guard."

"Bourbon must have marched all night to come up with us," said De Chartres. "In another hour we should have been safe."

"Not a moment must be lost!" cried De Lorges. "Take your men across at once."

While the Vidame de Chartres hurried his cross-bowmen over the bridge, De Lorges clapped spurs to his steed and galloped back to the rear of the army.

Bonnavet had been taken by surprise by his implacable foe. Just as he had put the last battalion in motion, three or four scouts galloped up, shouting that the enemy was at hand; and he had only just time to form his men into line of battle when Bourbon appeared at the head of a squadron of reiters, and at once attacked him. Impetuous as was the onset, the French gendarmerie sustained it firmly. A general conflict then ensued, during which Bourbon pressed on; and though the French disputed the ground valiantly, they were compelled slowly to retire.

Learning that Pescara was coming up with his host, the Admiral made a desperate charge, and while

leading on his men he was struck by a heavy shot, which shattered his right arm, and caused a great effusion of blood. Feeling he could no longer sit his horse, he rode to the rear and dismounted, and was soon afterwards joined by Bayard, who had succeeded in driving back the enemy.

"You are not much hurt, I trust, Admiral?" said Bayard.

"Sufficiently to place me hors de combat," replied Bonnivet, faintly. "Would to Heaven I had listened to your counsel, and crossed the river last night! But the army must not be lost through my imprudence. You perceive that I am not in a condition either to fight or lead. I confide the command to you. Save the army if possible."

"'Tis late—very late," rejoined Bayard. "But no matter. I will save the army, but it will cost me my life to do so."

"I trust not," said Bonnivet. "I hope we shall meet again, when I may thank you for the service."

"We never *shall* meet again in this world," said Bayard.

"Then let us part in friendship," said Bonnivet. "You have not forgiven me for the affair of Robecco."

"I forgive you now, my lord," rejoined Bayard. "Farewell! You may rely on me."

Bonnivet would have spoken, but he became suddenly faint, and if the surgeon, who had come up to dress his wound, had not caught him, he would have fallen.

"Tarry not to dress the Lord Admiral's wound," said Bayard. "Let him be conveyed across the bridge with all possible despatch. He must not fall into Bourbon's hands."

"It shall be done," replied the surgeon. And placing Bonnivet upon a litter, which was brought up at the moment, and throwing a cloak over him, he caused him to be borne quickly away.

Meantime, Bayard dashed into the thickest of the fight, hewing down all before him, while his soldiers, reanimated by his appearance, followed him, shouting, "A Bayard!—a Bayard!"

The battle now raged furiously, and many noble feats of arms were performed on both sides. Bayard's aim was to enable the main body of the French army to cross the bridge, and he succeeded, by making repeated and resistless charges upon the foe. Anon driving back Bourbon's forces—anon retreating before them:—the dauntless knight at last reached the bridge, where he made a stand with the remnant of his men-at-arms.

As the Imperialists came up, a destructive fire was poured upon them by the French arquebusiers, who were drawn up, under the command of Vandenesse, on the opposite side of the Sesia, and in another moment the artillery began to open fire, and did terrible execution. Notwithstanding this, Bourbon steadily advanced, and the German and Spanish musqueteers returned the fire of their foemen. In spite of his almost superhuman efforts, it was impossible that Bayard could long maintain his position. He therefore ordered his men to cross the bridge, and, while they obeyed, he disputed, singlehanded, the advance of the opposing host.

Twenty lances were pointed at him—bullets rattled against his armour—but without doing injury to himself or his steed. Thus he retired across the bridge—ever keeping his face to the foe. A troop of horsemen followed him, but could not effect his capture.

Ere many minutes, the French artillerymen were driven from their guns, and both horse and foot forced back in confusion. It was while rallying his men that the glorious career of Bayard was cut short. A bolt from a cross-bow struck him, and penetrating his armour at a point where it was weakest, lodged deeply in his side. He felt at once that the wound was mortal, and exclaimed, "Holy Jesus! I am slain!"

Hearing the exclamation, De Lorges, who was nigh at hand, flew towards him, and prevented him from falling from his steed. With the assistance of some of the soldiers the wounded knight was borne from the scene of conflict, and as he was being thus removed, De Lorges inquired anxiously if he was much hurt.

"Mortally," replied Bayard. "I knew it would be so. But I have fulfilled my promise to Bonnivet. I have saved the army. It is useless to carry me farther. Lay me at the foot of yonder tree—with my face towards the foe."

It was done as he directed.

"I have no priest to shrive me," he murmured—"no crucifix to clasp—but lay my sword upon my breast. It must serve for a cross. Stay not with me," he added to De Lorges and the soldiers. "You are needed elsewhere."

In this position he watched the conflict, and saw with anguish, greater than that of his wound, which did not extort a groan from him, that his soldiers were driven back. At the head of the victorious Imperialists rode Bourbon, sword in hand, and with his face flushed with triumph. No sooner did the conquering general perceive the wounded knight than he galloped towards him.

"How fares it with you, noble chevalier?" cried Bourbon, in accents of deep commiseration. "I trust you are not badly hurt. I grieve to see you in this piteous case."

"Waste not your pity on me," replied Bayard, sternly. "Grieve for yourself—you have more reason. I would not change places with you. I die for my country—you triumph as a rebel and a traitor."

"Beshrew your tongue, Bayard!" exclaimed Bourbon, impatiently. "I cannot listen to such language even from you. I am no more to be charged with disloyalty than was the Duke of Burgundy when fighting against Charles VII. and Louis XI. I have cast off my allegiance to your perfidious sovereign."

"But you are fighting against your country," rejoined Bayard. "Whose blood reddens your sword? You are elated with triumph, but it were better for your soul's welfare that you were laid low like me. Your success is deplorable,—the end will be terrible."

"Hear me, Bayard!" cried Bourbon. "To none other but yourself would I deign to justify myself. But we have been brothers-in-arms—we fought together at Marignano. You know the wrongs I have endured."

"Wrongs are no justification of treason," rejoined Bayard. "I myself have been wronged, but I have continued faithful. You should have died at Marignano. France might then have mourned your loss."

"Can I do aught for your comfort?" demanded Bourbon.

"No," replied Bayard, "save to rid me of your presence. I would fix my thoughts on Heaven."

"Farewell! then," rejoined Bourbon, galloping off in pursuit of the retreating foe.

Scarcely was he gone, than Pescara came up at the head of his battalion. On recognising Bayard, he hurried towards him, and, dismounting, knelt beside him, expressing his deep concern at his condition.

"This mischance saddens our victory," he said. "You must not die thus. I will send a surgeon to you, and my men shall erect a tent over you."

"No surgeon will avail me, noble marquis, I am sped," rejoined Bayard; "and I need no tent to over me. I shall sleep soundly enough anon. If you would show me favour, all I ask is this. Should my esquire fall into your hands, I pray you send him to me. And let not my sword be taken from me, but cause it to be delivered to De Lorges, to whom I have bequeathed it."

"It shall be done as you desire. Aught more?"

"Nothing," replied Bayard.

Pescara then placed a guard around the dying hero, and departed full of grief.

Not many minutes afterwards, Bayard's esquire came up and knelt beside his dying master.

The presence of this faithful attendant was a sensible satisfaction to the wounded knight. Since no priest was nigh, he confessed to him. Finding his end approaching, he besought his esquire to hold his sword towards him, and pressing his lips to the hilt, fell back.

So fled the spirit of the fearless and reproachless Bayard.

END OF THE THIRD BOOK

BOOK IV.—THE SIEGE OF MARSEILLES.

I. MONCALIERI.

Had it rested with Bourbon, after the victory of Romagnano he would have followed Bonnavet across the Alps, and invaded France. But the ambitious design was frustrated by the jealousy of Lannoy and Pescara, while Sforza and the other chiefs of the Italian league, perfectly content with the expulsion of the French from Lombardy, declined to engage in a war from which they could derive little advantage, and at once withdrew from the Imperial army.

After pursuing the flying French as far as Susa, Bourbon took the army to Turin, where he was well received by Carlo III., Duke of Savoy. This sovereign, who was nearly related to both the contending powers, being brother-in-law of the Emperor and uncle to François I., endeavoured, though with imperfect success, to preserve a strict neutrality. He generally inclined towards the winning side, and since at this juncture fortune had declared herself in favour of the Emperor, he veered round in the same direction, and not only allowed the victorious army to encamp near his capital, but gave its leader a most distinguished reception.

Meanwhile, efforts were made by the Pope to bring about peace, and with this view he despatched envoys to Charles V., to François I., and to Henry VIII., proposing a truce for a year, and offering to act as mediator. But the proposition was rejected by the three monarchs. Elated by the success of his army, the Emperor was bent upon fresh conquests, and felt more disposed to invade France than to make peace with its ruler. Henry VIII. was of the same opinion; while François I., exasperated rather than intimidated by the defeat he had just sustained in the Milanese, peremptorily refused to enter into any treaty in which Bourbon should be included.

In Lannoy and Pescara, as we have intimated, Bourbon had secret enemies, and it was owing to their representations that the invasion of France was delayed. At the instance of the Viceroy of Naples, who had proceeded to Madrid to hold a conference with his Imperial master, Charles V. consented to suspend the execution of his enterprise until the determination of the King of England could be ascertained, and some time elapsed, owing to the intrigues of Wolsey, before Henry VIII. gave his adhesion sented to suspend the execution of his enterprise until the determination of the King of England could be ascertained, and some time elapsed, owing to the intrigues of Wolsey, before Henry VIII. gave his adhesion to the project.

During this long interval, Bourbon remained at Turin, impatiently awaiting the Emperor's decision.

The Imperial army, which now consisted mainly of Spanish soldiers and German lanz-knechts, with some few Italian and Swiss mercenaries, was encamped at Moncalieri, a charming village situated on the declivity of a hill, forming part of the beautiful Collina di Torino. A princely habitation, belonging to the Duke of Savoy, crowned the summit of the hill, and here Bourbon resided. From the terraces of the palace of Moncalieri a splendid view was commanded of the Alps, of the rich plains of Lombardy traversed by the Po, and of the fair city of Turin. The sides of the hill were covered with vineyards, in the midst of which rose a few flat-roofed habitations, with a church and a campanile.

At the foot of the hill, and extending to the right bank of the river Po, which flowed past it, lay the camp. Its supplies were derived from the numerous villages around it, as well as from the adjacent capital.

Nothing could be more enchanting than the palace of Moncalieri, with its superb saloons, its stately terrace, and exquisite gardens. Yet its delights could not lure Bourbon from the camp, and he spent the greater part of each day in inspecting the troops and practising military manœuvres. His aim was to win the regard of the soldiers, and in this he completely succeeded. They idolised him, as Bayard had been idolised by the French army.

Of late, the Imperial army had been joined by three leaders of distinction, the Marquis del Vasto, the Comte de Hohenzollern, and the Comte de Lodron. The two latter had been appointed by the Emperor to the command of the *lanz-knechts*. Of the former we must say a few words. Don Alonso Avalos, Marquis del Vasto, was a nephew of the renowned Pescara, and, though barely twenty-one, had already acquired a brilliant military reputation. He deeply regretted that he had not been a sharer in the campaign which had just terminated so gloriously for the Imperialists in the victory of Romagnano. Bourbon, who felt a genuine admiration for the high military qualities of the young marquis, would fain have attached him to his side, but Del Vasto, influenced by Pescara, held himself haughtily aloof. De Hohenzollern and De Lodron, however, manifested no such jealous feelings.

Though considerably reduced by the withdrawal of the Italian troops, the Imperial army still formed a large force, comprising nineteen thousand foot, eleven hundred lances, and fifteen hundred light horse. Of this force the greater part were experienced soldiers, fond of warfare, and ready for any enterprise.

One morning, in the early part of June, Bourbon took a solitary walk upon the terrace of the palace, occasionally glancing down upon the camp, and noting with interest the movements of the soldiers. The atmosphere was so soft and balmy, that it might have tranquillised any breast less troubled than his own. But Nature failed to soothe him then. All her charms were displayed in vain. The glorious picture stretched out before him caught his eye, but did not fix his attention. The mighty Alps were unheeded. Unheeded also was Turin, with its *Duomo*, churches, palaces, and convents, encircled by the *Dora* and the *Po*. His thoughts were elsewhere, and his mental gaze was directed towards distant scenes.

He had been some time on the terrace, pacing to and fro, and had just made up his mind to ride down to the camp, when he perceived a party of horsemen ascending the hill. As they came from the direction of Turin, the hope was instantly awakened within his breast that these horsemen might be the long-expected envoys. And so it proved. Presently, a chamberlain came forth and informed him that the ambassadors from the Emperor and from the King of England had arrived, and besought an immediate audience.

Instantly re-entering the palace, Bourbon proceeded to a cabinet, and caused the ambassadors to be brought into his presence. They were announced as the Comte de Beaurain and Doctor Pace. The latter was a man of middle age, and possessed a handsome countenance, marked by great quickness and intelligence, a tall, commanding figure, and a dignified and courteous manner. He was attired in a gown of black velvet, and wore a close coif of the same material on his head. Long residence in Italy had given him something of the look and manner of a native of the country—a resemblance which was heightened by his dark complexion and dark eyes.

Doctor Pace had studied at Padua under the learned Bombasius, and on his return to his own country, being recommended to Cardinal Bainbridge, Archbishop of Canterbury, he accompanied that dignitary to Rome. Subsequently, Doctor Pace was made secretary of state by Henry VIII., and enjoyed in an eminent degree the favour of that capricious monarch. Some few years prior to our history, Pace had been created Dean of Saint Paul's, but he had little opportunity of discharging his ecclesiastical functions, since the chief part of his time was spent abroad. Shortly before Bourbon's defection he had been sent to Venice to negotiate between Charles V. and François I., and his conduct on that occasion established him in the good opinion of his own sovereign. From Venice he proceeded, by Wolsey's directions, to Rome, with the secret object of ensuring the elevation of the ambitious Cardinal to the Papacy. In this he failed, and consequently incurred Wolsey's displeasure. He still, however, retained the king's favour, and was employed by him on the present mission to Bourbon.

Well aware of his distinguished abilities. Bourbon received the English envoy with great consideration, and expressed a lively satisfaction at seeing him as well as the Comte de Beaurain.

"I hope you bring me good tidings, messeigneurs," he said. "But I shall deem nothing good unless you tell me it is agreed that I shall immediately cross the Alps with the army. By Saint Louis! I have tarried here long enough."

"Your highness can scarce complain that you are indifferently lodged," remarked Doctor Pace. "For my own part, I could be content to remain for ever in this delightful palace."

"I will surrender it to you with pleasure," said Bourbon. "But keep me not in suspense. Am I to cross the Alps? Have My royal allies decided to invade France?"

"Such is their determination," replied Beaurain. "And they entrust the command of the enterprise to your highness."

"Thank Heaven for that!" exclaimed Bourbon, joyfully. "Now I can listen patiently to details."

"We have come to propose a new treaty to your highness," pursued Beaurain, "having the same object as the last, which, unfortunately, miscarried—namely, an invasion of France, and a division of the kingdom among the conquerors."

"That is all I desire," replied Bourbon; "but, to ensure entire success, France ought to be simultaneously invaded through Provence, Languedoc, and Picardy. By attacking François at these three points we shall compel him to divide his forces, so that he can offer no effectual resistance. Nevertheless, if it be desired that I should undertake the invasion single-handed, I am ready to do so. Two roads are open to me—one by the *Lyonnais*, the other by Provence. Lyons is only fortified on one side, and with an adequate force may be easily taken. All the nobles of Dauphiné, Auvergne, and the *Bourbonnais* will rally round me. Of that I am well assured. But it will be as easy to reach Lyons through Provence as by Dauphiné. The Duke of Savoy will give

me a free passage through his states, and supply the army with necessary provisions. In less than a week I can cross the mountains, and then, skirting the sea, make my way to Provence. The Imperial fleet, under the command of the Admiral Ugo de Monçada, is now in the Mediterranean, and will support me during my march along the coast, and furnish reinforcements in case of need. But I do not think I shall require much help. The castle of Monaco, which, as you are aware, is very strong, and favourably situated for the disembarkation of troops and artillery, will be opened to me by the Bishop of Grasse. From Monaco I will march on along the coast to Marseilles, which I will besiege and take."

"If your highness can take Marseilles, the Emperor will be well content," remarked Beaurain. "He desires to have a port in Provence, as the King of England has a port in Picardy. With Marseilles, Genoa, and Barcelona, he would have the command of the Mediterranean."

"His desire shall be gratified," returned Bourbon. "Marseilles will not long hold out when I appear before it. Three cannon-shot from the heights will bring forth the timorous citizens, key in hand, and cord round the neck—suppliant for mercy, and willing to accept any terms."

"Your highness makes light of the matter," observed Beaurain, smiling. "I trust I may be wrong, but I do not think Marseilles will be easily taken. It has been put in a perfect state of defence by Renzo da Ceri, who has been there ever since he surrendered Lodi. The Imperial fleet, under Admiral Monçada, will render you all possible assistance, and will transport your artillery from Genoa to Monaco, but you must not forget that our bitter enemy, Andrea Doria, with his galleys, has recently joined the French squadron, now cruising in the Mediterranean, and may give us much trouble. Tidings have just reached me that the valiant young Prince of Orange, who had sailed in a brigantine from Barcelona to Genoa to join our army, has been captured by Dona.

"What do I hear? the Prince of Orange captured!" exclaimed Bourbon. "That is a heavy loss indeed. No braver or better captain than Philibert de Challon can be found. He would have been my right hand in the proposed expedition."

"Are we to understand that your highness agrees to the terms of the new treaty?" demanded Beaurain.

"Let me hear them once more, and you shall have an answer," said the duke.

"First then, as regards your highness," rejoined Beaurain. "It is agreed that, on the conquest of France, if haply such shall be the result of the expedition, you shall be put in possession, not only of the provinces heretofore belonging to you, and of which you have been unjustly deprived by François I., but of those to which you lay claim—namely, Provence and Dauphiné. And the Emperor undertakes to erect these provinces into a kingdom, of which your highness shall be sovereign."

"So far good," said Bourbon, well pleased.

"The remainder of France," pursued Beaurain, "is to be divided between the Emperor and the King of England."

"To that I raise no objection," remarked Bourbon.

"I have now an observation to make," said Doctor Pace. "It is expressly stipulated by my royal master that he shall assume the title of King of France, to which realm he has all along laid claim, and shall be so recognised by your highness."

"Henry become King of France!—that cannot be!" cried Bourbon. "The stipulation was proposed to me at Montbrison, and I then refused it."

"Things have greatly changed since then," said Pace. "My royal master peremptorily requires that your highness shall swear fidelity to him, and pay him homage as King of France."

"Were I to take the oath you propose," rejoined Bourbon, "the Pope would infallibly declare himself against us, and I should alienate all the French nobility, who would shrink from me, and join the hostile standard. If the oath of fealty must be taken, let it be deferred till the conquest has been achieved."

"It cannot be deferred," said Doctor Pace. "The king my master is obstinate, as you know. Unless your highness consents, he will assuredly take no part in the invasion."

"Nay, then, I must yield," said Bourbon. "But I do so with great reluctance."

"I do not discern the dangers which your highness seems to apprehend," remarked Beaurain. "After all it is a small price to pay for a kingdom."

"What assistance will the king render me?" asked Bourbon of the English envoy.

"He will contribute a hundred thousand ducats towards the payment of the army as soon as your highness shall have crossed the Alps," replied Pace, "and thenceforward will continue to furnish a like sum monthly, till the object of the expedition be accomplished. His majesty is making active preparations for a descent upon Picardy, and is sending a prodigious number of soldiers, both horse and foot, to Dover, to be transported thence to Calais, where they will join the Burgundian cavalry and the Flemish lansquenets. When required, this army will march into the heart of France."

"On the part of the Emperor," added Beaurain, "I am empowered to furnish you with two hundred thousand ducats, to be employed in payment of the arrears due to the troops. The expedition, therefore, can be undertaken without delay."

"I will set forth at once," said Bourbon, joyfully. "Preparations shall be made for our immediate departure. Come with me to the camp. Your presence will be desirable while I lay the plan before the generals."

The party then quitted the cabinet, and, mounting their steeds, rode down the hill to the camp. On arriving there, Bourbon summoned all the principal leaders to his tent, and informed them that an immediate invasion of France had been determined upon. The announcement, which was confirmed by the two ambassadors, was received with enthusiasm by the Counts de Hohenzollern and De Lodron, but very coldly by Pescara and the young Marquis del Vasto.

"Let those go who list," said Pescara, haughtily. "I have no desire to take part in the expedition."

"Neither have I," added Del Vasto.

"I counsel you to think twice ere you withdraw from it, my lords," said Beaurain. "The Emperor will be highly displeased."

"They will scarcely withdraw from an expedition which must infallibly cover them with glory," said Bourbon. "Hear me, marquis," he added to Pescara. "The supreme command of the army rests with me, but as I desire to have the full benefit of your great military skill, I appoint you captain-general of the entire forces."

"Nay, my lord, this is more than I merit," said Pescara.

"Not so, marquis," said Bourbon. "I am rejoiced to be able to evince my sense of your valour and skill. It gratifies me also that I can prove the estimation in which I hold the military talents of your distinguished nephew. Marquis del Vasto," he added, turning to the young nobleman, "I appoint you captain-general of the Spanish forces. You will be next in command to your renowned uncle."

"I trust I shall not disgrace the appointment, my lord," said Del Vasto, bowing.

"No fear of that," rejoined Bourbon. "And now, messeigneurs," he added to the assemblage, "give heed, I pray you, to what I am about to say. With your aid, and with the aid of the brave army under my command, I will strive to wrest the crown of France from the unworthy monarch who now wears it, and place it on the head of Henry VIII. of England, to whom, in your presence, I solemnly plight fealty and homage."

All bowed as the words were uttered, and immediately afterwards the assemblage broke up.

Orders were then issued by sound of trumpet throughout the camp that the army would march towards France on the morrow.

II. THE CASTLE OF MONACO.

ACCUSTOMED to active warfare, and delighting in it, the soldiers of the Imperial army were well pleased to learn that they were to start on a fresh expedition, and their satisfaction was by no means diminished when they received their arrears of pay. On all hands, preparations were made for the march. The artillery, which would have greatly impeded the passage of the troops over the Alps, was sent on to Genoa, to be conveyed thence by the Spanish fleet to Monaco.

Next morning, tents were struck, and shortly afterwards the whole of the well-disciplined host was in motion. Bourbon, with the two ambassadors, remained for a day at Turin, to take leave of the Duke of Savoy, and then following the army, overtook it at Cunea.

The Alps were crossed by the Col di Tenda, and the passage being at that time free from snow, no difficulty was experienced. Making his way by Giandola and Sospello, Bourbon arrived at the little village of Turbia, situated in the mountains, behind Monaco, with his army in excellent condition and in high spirits, on the eighth day after leaving Moncalieri.

A magnificent prospect was offered to the soldiers as they quitted Turbia, where they had halted for the night, and descended towards the coast. Before them lay the whole of that superb bay, extending from Mentone to Cape Sant' Ospizio, in the midst of which stood Monaco, with its haughty castle. Smooth almost as a mirror on that beautiful summer morning, the blue Mediterranean spread out like a lake, with a few small vessels becalmed in the offing. If Bourbon and his host contemplated this striking picture with admiration, they themselves were regarded with equal interest by the inhabitants of the town of Monaco, and by the soldiers of the garrison. The descent of the army from the mountains formed a very striking spectacle, and as battalion after battalion came in sight, their burnished arms glittering in the sun, the admiration of the beholders rose to enthusiasm.

Situated on a lofty headland jutting into the sea, the Castle of Monaco reared its proud towers as if in defiance of any foe. So strongly was it built, and so well fortified, that it was deemed impregnable. Whether facing sea or land, its battlements bristled with ordnance of formidable size. A lovely bay formed a safe and commodious harbour for friendly shipping. Though of no great size, Monaco was the capital of a small sovereignty, and was nominally ruled over by Prince Onorio Grimaldi, the descendant of an illustrious Genoese family. Nominally ruled over, we say, because Onorio was still of tender years, and the government of the petty principality was entrusted to his uncle, the Bishop of Grasse, between whom and Bourbon a very friendly feeling subsisted.

As Bourbon approached Monaco, the Bishop of Grasse, accompanied by his nephew, the young Prince Onorio Grimaldi, a very handsome stripling of some thirteen or fourteen years, came forth with a large attendance of richly-attired esquires and gentlemen to meet him. Courteously greeting the duke, the bishop placed the castle at his disposal, and the young prince gracefully seconded his uncle's proposition.

Bourbon gladly accepted the proffered hospitality, and he and all the principal leaders of the army were lodged within the castle, and sumptuously entertained. The camp was pitched on the farther side of the Bay of Monaco, about a league from the town.

Nearly a week had elapsed since Bourbon's arrival at Monaco, and no tidings having been heard of the Spanish fleet, which was to bring the artillery from Genoa, he began to fear that some disaster had happened, especially as it was known that Andrea Doria and the French fleet under La Fayette had left Marseilles, and were cruising about in the Mediterranean. However, as for several days a dead calm had prevailed, the slow progress of the ships could be easily accounted for.

At last the wished-for breeze sprang up. The smooth blue expanse became ruffled, and the wind being

favourable, the fleet might be speedily expected.

One morning, Bourbon, accompanied by Pescara and Del Vasto, and followed by a troop of two hundred mounted Spanish arquebusiers, was riding from the Castle of Monaco to the camp, when, perceiving several vessels in the distance, he halted to look at them, feeling sure they must be the expected squadron. He was right in the supposition; but his satisfaction was speedily damped, when it became manifest that the ships were being chased by a hostile fleet far their superior in number, and were making all possible sail to place themselves under the protection of the guns of the Castle of Monaco. But it was doubtful whether they could accomplish their object. Clearly they were pursued by Andrea Doria, and in him, as Bourbon and Pescara well knew, they had to deal with one of the most resolute and skilful naval captains of the age.

For a short time, the ships on either side, pursued and pursuers, seemed to maintain their relative distances, being more than half a league apart, and a strong hope was felt by the beholders that the former would escape. But this impression was shaken when it became manifest that the French were gaining upon the fugitives, the still freshening breeze aiding their efforts.

It was with indescribable rage and mortification that Bourbon witnessed this scene. Though he felt that Moncada was unable to cope successfully with a fleet greatly superior to his own in number, and that he therefore acted prudently in avoiding an engagement which might probably result in his own discomfiture, and in the loss of the artillery and stores he was bringing for the Imperial army, Bourbon could not constrain himself, but gave loud utterance to his wrath, and Pescara was scarcely less indignant.

The foremost of the French fleet had now got so much nearer the Spaniards, that deeming they were within range they fired a few guns at the latter, but the shots fell short, and the discharge was not replied to by the fugitives, who pressed on as swiftly as they could. All the ships were now dashing quickly through the waves, and the chase was watched with the keenest interest, not only by Bourbon and those with him, but by hundreds of spectators collected on the walls of the city, along the harbour, and on the battlements of the castle.

On the towers and ramparts the cannoniers were at their post, match in hand, and with shotted guns, ready to fire upon the French fleet should they venture within range.

The chase had now reached its highest point of excitement, and in a few minutes more the fate of the Spanish fleet must be decided. More guns were fired at them by the foe, but though some of the shots struck, little mischief was done, and the fugitives still held on their way. The French, however, continued to gain upon them, and so critical had become their position, that Bourbon, and almost all the others who looked on, had given them up for lost, when, contrary to all expectation, their escape was ensured by a manouvre of Doria, whose galley, as could be discerned from the broad flag floating at its stern, was foremost in pursuit.

Having come up with the fleet, Doria dashed among them, and turning three galleys out of their course, got between them and Monaco. Feeling sure that these luckless galleys would be captured, Doria directed his attention to the other ships, and poured a broadside into the vessel nearest him. But he failed to disable her, and with her companions she got safe under the castle guns, which were instantly opened upon her pursuer with such effect as to check his further advance. Ere many minutes more the Spanish fleet, which had sustained little damage, entered the harbour amid the shouts and congratulations of the beholders, while the hostile squadron was kept aloof by the guns of the fortress.

Meanwhile, the three galleys intercepted by Doria did their best to escape, and giving up all idea of gaining the harbour, made for the nearest point that could be reached. This was on the farther side of the bay, near Roccabruna, and too far off to be protected by the castle guns. Though closely pursued by the French fleet, the three galleys were here run ashore, and abandoned by their officers and crews.

Bourbon was infuriated at the sight.

"It were a shame and dishonour to the Emperor, as well as a grievous loss to the army, if those galleys should fall into the hands of the enemy!" he exclaimed. "Their capture must be prevented. Come with me. Not a moment must be lost."

Followed by Pescara and Del Vasto and the troop of arquebusiers, Bourbon galloped as fast as his charger could carry him towards the spot where the galleys had been run ashore. It was not far distant, and he reached it before the boats sent by Doria to take possession of their prizes could come up. Instantly dismounting, he ordered a third of the arquebusiers to follow him, and springing on board the most exposed of the galleys, prepared for its defence. His example was followed by Pescara and Del Vasto, each of whom took possession of a galley, accompanied by a party of arquebusiers.

Ere long an attempt was made by three large boats, each containing twenty well-armed men, to seize the galley on which Bourbon was stationed; but so murderous was the fire of the arquebusiers, and such havoc was made by Bourbon himself, that, after sustaining heavy loss, the assailants were compelled to desist. An equally gallant resistance was made by Pescara and Del Vasto, and after a sharp conflict, which endured for nearly an hour, several boats were sunk and the others driven off, with the loss of the greater part of their crews.

During this conflict, the French fleet had not used their guns, fearing to injure their own men, but as soon as the boats moved off they opened fire. However, they failed to dislodge Bourbon and the other generals, and at last, finding the attempt to capture the galleys hopeless, Doria and La Fayette sailed off.

III. HOW BOURBON WAS PROCLAIMED

COMTE DE PROVENCE.

Owing to this bold achievement, Bourbon lost none of his artillery and stores, and quitting Monaco, where he had sojourned for nearly three weeks, commenced his march along the coast. He was still accompanied by the Comte de Beaurain and Doctor Pace. The route now taken by the army offered enchanting views of the Mediterranean. Gigantic aloes, cactuses, and pomegranates, skirted the road. Orange-groves, vineyards, and well-stocked orchards, everywhere delighted the eye.

The heat being excessive, the men rested during the middle of the day in some well-chosen spot where they could find shelter from the blazing sun beneath the plane-trees, and refresh themselves with good wine and delicious fruits.

It was at early dawn when Bourbon, after quitting Villa-Franca, stationed himself on a rocky point to gaze at the lovely bay which spread out before him, with the fair city of Nice in its centre. The view both on land and sea was magnificent. The surface of the Mediterranean was dyed with a thousand lovely hues, borrowed from the blushing sky. Forests of olives covered the whole face of the country, while nearer the coast, on the sides of the hills, were vineyards and orange-groves. Lemon-trees and carob-trees likewise abounded. It was literally a land flowing with oil and wine.

But Bourbon's view did not rest either upon the glowing sea or on the teeming country, but passed over the rapid Var into the delicious region beyond it. There lay the garden of France, rich in vineyards and olive-groves, and boasting cities and villages as beauteous as those he now gazed upon. There lay Provence, the land of the troubadour and the minstrel, and whose charms of scenery and climate even poets could not overrate. There lay the choicest portion of his future kingdom, and the moment was at hand when he was to take possession of it.

He was recalled from the reverie into which he had fallen by the approach of Pomperant and Lurcy, who rode up to him. For some time we have not found occasion to allude to these faithful adherents, but we may mention that not only the two young seigneurs in question, but all the other noble gentlemen who had accompanied Bourbon in his flight from France, had attended him throughout the campaign in the Milanese, and shared with him the dangers and glories of the battle of Romagnano.

Neither did they shrink from the present expedition. The period had not arrived when their leader could fully requite their devotion, but he hoped ere long to do so. Let us also mention that Bourbon still retained in his service the faithful Hugues.

"I see whither your gaze is directed, my lord, and can guess the thoughts that occupy your mind," remarked Pomperant, as he rode up. "'Tis a lovely region, that of Provence—an earthly paradise—and it will pain François to lose it."

"Yet he makes not an effort to check the invasion," remarked Bourbon. "There is no army to oppose our progress. The conquest will be too easy. By-and-by I will rouse him from his dreams of pleasure, and force him to give me battle. But let us on. I am impatient to set foot in France."

After halting at the charming city of Nice, and crossing the headlong Var, Bourbon entered Provence with his army. His progress was wholly unimpeded. Marching on through a delightful district to Antibes, he took possession of that little seaport, and proceeded to Grasse.

As he advanced, the country seemed to increase in beauty. The hills were clothed with groves of ilex, arbutus, and myrtle, and the cork-tree flourished in more exposed places. Aloes and cactuses fringed the shore, and olives and vines, figs and mulberries, struggled for mastery on the plains.

Bourbon prevented his army from committing any kind of excess, and though the purpose of his invasion was well understood, the peasants and the inhabitants of the towns did not fly at his approach, but received him joyfully. From Grasse he proceeded to Cannes, with its beautiful bay, and the lovely group of islands, with fort, convent, and church, that face it.

Again marching along a coast of almost unrivalled beauty, and boasting an aqueduct and many other Roman remains, he reached Frejus, and then turning inland, summoned the important town of Draguignan to surrender. The mandate was instantly obeyed, and he entered the town without striking a blow, and was received with all honour by the authorities.

Having taken Hyères, Brignolles, and Tourves, he pursued his march towards Aix, the ancient capital of Provence, and renowned for its fêtes and tournaments in the days of Raimond Beranger and the good René d'Anjou.

As Aix was occupied by a considerable force under the Maréchal de la Palisse, it might have been thought that he would here experience a check, especially as the ancient city was strongly fortified; but as he advanced towards it from Trets, whence he had despatched Pomperant with a guard to summon it to surrender, La Palisse, unwilling to hazard a siege, withdrew his forces, and retired to Avignon.

When Bourbon, therefore, came within a couple of leagues of the capital of Provence, he encountered a large band of citizens, who had come thus far to meet him.

At the head of the troop were the Sire de Prat, viguier, or provost of the city, and all the chief magistrates.

Dismounting from their steeds, these important personages, who were attired in their robes of office, bent the knee humbly before Bourbon, and the viguier presented him with the keys of the city.

Bourbon received their submission very graciously, assured them that their city should be respected, and that he came as a liberator and not as an oppressor. This welcome announcement was received with acclamations by the troop of citizens, who shouted loudly, "Vive Bourbon!"

Attended by the viguier and the magistrates, Bourbon rode on through plantations of almond-trees, olive-groves, and vineyards, to the beautiful city of Aix.

As he approached, the bells were rung joyously, peals of ordnance were fired from the walls, and from the gates, which were thrown wide open, issued crowds to give him welcome.

Bourbon, of course, took possession of the city, and placed a strong force in its garrison, and on its towers

and fortifications, but the army was encamped outside the walls.

Next day, mass was celebrated in the noble old cathedral of Saint Sauveur, at which Bourbon, Pescara, and all the other generals, with the two ambassadors, assisted. The duke then proceeded to the ancient palace of King René, and, in the presence of the viguier and the magistrates, assumed the title of Comte de Provence, and received their homage.

Proclamation of the title was subsequently made by sound of trumpet in all the principal places of the city, and the announcement was received with enthusiastic cries of "Vive Bourbon! Vive le Comte de Provence!"

For three days great rejoicings were held in Aix, and the good old times of Raimond Beranger and King René seemed to be revived. Banquets and fêtes were given in the palace in honour of the new Comte de Provence. Jousts and floral games were held in a plain outside the walls, at which the fair dames of Aix assisted. Troubadours sang their lays; and merry dances were executed by sprightly youths and dark-eyed damsels. In all the neighbouring villages there was revelry and rejoicing—

Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth.

IV. SHOWING HOW MARSEILLES WAS FORTIFIED,

Bourbon was still at Aix, when a messenger arrived from Charles V. enjoining him to lay immediate siege to Marseilles. Thus compelled to forego his design of marching upon Lyons, he summoned a council of the leaders of the army, and acquainted them with the message he had just received from the Emperor. "I once affirmed to the Comte de Beaurain," he said, "that three cannon-shot would suffice to bring the citizens of Marseilles to my feet. But I have seen cause to change my opinion. The Seigneurs Pomperant and Lurcy have examined the city carefully, and they report that its defences are exceedingly strong, and are rapidly being augmented by Renzo da Ceri and Chabot de Brion, to whom the command of the garrison has been entrusted. Aided by the chief commissary, Mirandel, Renzo da Ceri has made immense preparations for the defence. Two convents and three churches, which might have assisted the assault, have been pulled down; and the faubourgs and all the pleasure-houses built outside the city on the east and north have likewise been levelled."

"And do the inhabitants second these efforts?" demanded Pescara. "If so, they resemble not the good citizens of Aix, who have declared themselves so heartily in our favour."

"The citizens of Marseilles are determinately hostile both to the Emperor and myself, and have vowed to burn the place rather than surrender it," replied Bourbon. "They boast of their attachment to the crown of France, though Provence has only been forty years annexed to the kingdom. The whole population, it appears, assisted in the demolition of the convents, churches, and bastides, and they all seem animated by a spirit of patriotic enthusiasm. I have not been able to ascertain the precise strength of the garrison, but I know it amounts to full four thousand men, a fourth of which consists of cavalry, and the rest of foot soldiers. Renzo da Ceri brought all his best men-at-arms from Lodi, and Chabot de Brion was accompanied by three hundred arquebusiers. In addition to these, eight thousand of the citizens, inflamed by patriotic ardour, have formed themselves into trainbands. Thus you see what we have to expect. The defenders of Marseilles are well supplied with artillery and munitions of war, and possess some cannon of large size. As to supplies, they can easily obtain them, since the port is defended by the French fleet under Doria and La Fayette. Notwithstanding all these obstacles, I make no doubt we shall speedily reduce the city. To-morrow I will go and reconnoitre it, and I will pray you, my lords," he added to Pescara and Del Vasto, "to accompany me. We will take a sufficient force with us, and the main body of the army will follow."

This plan being agreed upon, the council broke up.

Next morning Bourbon, at the head of two thousand Spanish soldiers, attended by Pescara and Del Vasto, together with Pomperant and Lurcy, quitted Aix and proceeded towards Marseilles.

Night had fallen as the generals drew near the beautiful city they intended to besiege, and quitting their escort, they mounted to the summit of the steep rocky hill, called the Montagne de la Vierge-de-la-Garde, crowned by a small chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. A full moon shed down her radiance on the city, enabling them to survey it almost as perfectly as by daylight.

To those unacquainted with Marseilles, it may be proper to mention that it is surrounded by hills, which rise behind it in the form of an amphitheatre. A large natural basin, capable of holding a vast number of ships of the largest size, and from its position perfectly sheltered, forms the harbour, the entrance being so narrow, that, at the period of our history, it was secured by a thick chain, suspended from rock to rock. Further protection was afforded by the guns of the Castle of Saint Jean, placed on a rock on the north of the harbour. Outside is a small group of islands, on one of which, stood a fort. Between these islands and the harbour lay the French fleet.

Very beautiful was the appearance of the city on that bright moonlight night—the vine-clad hills—the old walls and towers encircling the quaint houses—the noble basin with its shipping—the rocks so nearly approaching each other that they seemed almost to shut in the harbour—the group of islands outside, with the fleet at anchor near them—the beautiful curves of the coast—the wide expanse of the sea glittering like

silver—all formed a ravishing picture. But the attention of those who gazed upon it was solely directed to the defences of the city, and to the discovery of its weak points. They saw where the churches and convents had been demolished by Mirandel, and where the faubourgs and bastides had been pulled down, and acknowledged the wisdom of the proceeding. They also perceived to what extent the walls and fortifications had been strengthened, and the moat widened by Renzo da Ceri.

Little is left of the Marseilles of the sixteenth century. The boast and pride of the existing city, the unequalled Rue de la Cannebière, was then unbuilt, and its site was little better than a marsh. The ancient city was defended on the land side by high walls, flanked by bastions, and garnished with eight towers, the chief of which, called the Tower of Saint Paul, protected the Porte de la Joliette. The walls were surrounded by a wide deep ditch, supplied from the sea, and the gates were approached by drawbridges. All the more exposed of these gates were now filled up with masonry, and the others rendered unassailable by external and internal works. Towers, bastions, and battlements bristled with ordnance. On a mound in the midst of the city, crowned by three windmills, cannon of large size were placed. Cannon also had been hoisted on the steeple of the Cathedral de la Major, on a tower constructed on the hill overlooking the city on the north, and on the clock-tower near the fountains of the Accoules.

All these formidable preparations were carefully noted by Bourbon and Pescara, who consumed the whole night in the inspection. Both agreed that if those in command were vigorously seconded by the inhabitants, the city might hold out for a long period.

The result of the examination of the defences was that they were least strong at an angle where the ramparts were flanked by the old tower of Saint Paul, which did not appear in very good condition, while within the walls stood the palace of the Bishop of Marseilles and the old church of Saint Cannat. It was towards this weak point, which occupied a space of some thousand yards, that Bourbon resolved to direct the main attack.

Dawn was at hand by the time the two generals had completed their survey. Just then the sudden and violent ringing of alarm-bells from tower and steeple, followed by the sound of trumpet and drum, proclaimed that the guardians of the city had become aware that the foe was at hand.

Heedless of these sounds, Bourbon and Pescara, and those with them, remained on the heights until a sortie was made from the Porte d'Aix by a large force of cavalry, numbering about fifteen hundred men, and headed by Renzo da Ceri. They then descended to their escort, whom they had left on the farther side of the hill on the road from Aix.

When Renzo da Ceri came in sight of Bourbon and his troop, and found that the force was greater than his own, he hesitated to make the attack, and eventually galloped back to the city.

He was hotly pursued by Bourbon and Pescara, who, despite the cannonade directed against them from the towers, bastions, and battlements, followed him to the gate whence he had issued, and only withdrew because the drawbridge was raised.

V. IN WHAT MANNER POMPERANT ENTERED MARSEILLES.

Two days afterwards Marseilles was invested by Bourbon. The main body of the Imperial army occupied the heights overlooking the city from east to west. The lanz-knechts, under the Counts de Hohenzollern and De Lodron, were placed near the shore, and a division of the Spanish infantry, under Del Vasto, was stationed on the plain of Saint Michel, on the road to Aubagne.

On the side of a hill on the north, about four hundred toises from the walls, stood the chapel and hospital of Saint Lazare, and it was under their shelter that Bourbon and Pescara fixed their tents. From this point operations were commenced against the beleaguered city, and trenches opened in the direction of that part of the walls which had been judged to be weakest. The pioneers laboured during the night, and were protected by gabions and mantelets, but they suffered severely from the fire of the besieged. Frequent sorties were made by Renzo da Ceri, and many a bloody conflict took place near the trenches; but these engagements uniformly resulted in the discomfiture of the besieged, and consequently the works advanced slowly but steadily.

At length Bourbon had drawn sufficiently near to use his artillery with effect, and having erected his batteries, he opened a tremendous fire upon the portion of the walls extending from the Porte d'Aix to an old Franciscan convent. The besieged immediately replied, and every cannon garnishing the ramparts, bastions, and towers that could be rendered available against the assailants was brought into play. Even a monstrous piece of ordnance, appropriately enough called "The Basilisk," thundered from the hill surmounted by the clock-tower. This huge cannon, supposed to be the largest then fabricated, projected shot of a hundred-weight, and required sixty men to replace it after each discharge. But its unwieldy size prevented good aim from being taken, and the ponderous shot, discharged at long intervals, could be easily avoided. The smaller guns, however, were better served and directed, and caused considerable destruction among the assailants. Ere many hours, however, a breach had been made in the walls, but Bourbon hesitated to order an immediate assault, deeming the aperture not wide enough.

"I would it were possible to obtain exact information of the state of the city," he remarked to Pomperant, as he entered his tent with the latter.

"Leave that to me, my lord," said Pomperant. "I will bring you the information you require."

"You!" exclaimed Bourbon, in surprise. "How will you get into the city?"

"The task is not easy, I admit," replied Pomperant. "I do not mean to swim across the moat, and attempt to scale the walls in the face of the arquebusiers, but I think I can manage to enter the city from the sea-side, where it is less guarded."

"But to do this you must escape the fleet—elude the vigilance of the sentinels on the walls of the Chateau de Saint Jean—and lastly, you must raise the chain that protects the entrance to the harbour. It cannot be done. It were easier to penetrate the city by the breach made by my guns."

"Difficult as the task may be, I am ready to undertake it," rejoined Pomperant.

"Will you go alone?"

"No; I will take Hugues with me. I can trust him."

Bourbon did not attempt to dissuade him, and at nightfall Pomperant, attended by Hugues, started on the expedition, and rode to that part of the coast where the German lanz-knechts were encamped. The night was dark and favourable for the enterprise. As he was accompanied by the Comte de Hohenzollern and a guard, no interruption was offered him by the sentinels stationed at various points, and he soon reached the shore, and proceeded to a little creek in which a fishing-boat was moored.

Instantly dismounting, and consigning his horse to one of De Hohenzollern's soldiers, Pomperant embarked in the boat with Hugues, who took the oars and rowed cautiously along the coast, making for a rocky headland, which screened the entrance of the harbour.

In a few minutes the boat had got under cover of the rock, and escaped the notice of the sentinels stationed on the ramparts of the fort above. No wind was stirring, and only a slight undulation was perceptible on the surface of the tideless sea.

While Hugues kept the little vessel moving, Pomperant, who was seated in the stern, peered through the gloom to see whether any danger was at hand. He could just discern the French fleet lying between the group of islands and the mouth of the harbour, and concluded from the sounds that reached him that several boats, were leaving the ships. At once determining on the course to be pursued, he ordered Hugues to move noiselessly on, and keep close to the rock until he gained the entrance of the harbour. This was done, and ere long the boats, upwards of a dozen in number, came up. They were filled with armed men, doubtless sent by Doria or La Fayette to strengthen the garrison of the city.

As soon as the boats had passed, Hugues followed in their wake, and speeded between the rocky heights guarding the narrow channel. The boats were of course challenged by the sentinels stationed on the forts on either side, but the answers being satisfactory, they were allowed to pass. Hugues also passed without exciting suspicion.

It has already been mentioned that a heavy chain was drawn across the mouth of the harbour, and a short delay occurred while this obstacle was removed. Several men were standing with torches on the rocky steps aiding those who were engaged in lowering the ponderous chain, while higher up stood a guard of arquebusiers.

At length, the chain being dropped and the passage free, the throng of boats pushed into the harbour, and close behind them came Hugues, hoping in the confusion to elude observation. But the manœuvre, though skilfully managed, did not escape detection. The torchlight revealed the intruders, and an authoritative voice from the steps called out, "Hola! who goes there? What boat is that? Stay, and give an account of yourselves."

Hugues paid no attention to the summons, which was reiterated by other voices, but hurrying on more rapidly than before, contrived to place some of the other boats between him and the arquebusiers, so that the latter could not fire, and in another minute he had disappeared in the gloom. Luckily, the soldiers in the boats, though they heard the shouts, disregarded them, and pursued their course without stopping.

As soon as it was practicable, Hugues disengaged himself from his dangerous companions, and while they made their way to a wharf on the left of the basin, he struck across to the opposite side, where a landing was effected without molestation. At this time the harbour was entirely destitute of ships, as any vessels lying there would, of course, have been exposed to the guns of the hostile batteries. Hence the wharf at which Pomperant and Hugues landed was wholly deserted. In fact, there were very few buildings near the spot, for the city had not as yet extended to this side of the harbour.

The walls, however, which surrounded the basin were not far off, but the place was gloomy, and the attention of the sentinels was elsewhere directed. After securing the boat to the wharf, Pomperant and Hugues made their way as quickly as they could round the head of the basin, which, as we have before stated, was then little better than a swamp, and, reaching the city, plunged into a narrow street communicating with the principal quay.

Just as they had entered this street, which was only lighted by an occasional lantern hung before a door, the sound of martial footsteps warned them that a patrol was approaching, and fearing they might be stopped and questioned, they withdrew into an archway till the guard had passed by. They then pursued their way along the street, which gradually mounted a hill, until they came to an open space, in the midst of which a troop of cavalry was drawn up. This band was surrounded by a crowd of citizens, some of whom carried torches, and in its leader, who was arrayed in a complete suit of armour, but whose beaver was raised, Pomperant instantly recognised the stern dark countenance of Renzo da Ceri. He was haranguing the assemblage, and Pomperant, closely followed by Hugues, mingled with the crowd to hear what he said.

"Be of good cheer, my friends," he cried. "The danger is past. In a few hours the breach will be repaired, and the measures I have taken for the defence of the city are so complete that we may laugh at the threats of the foe. The traitor Bourbon boasted that he would be master of the city this night, and it is well for you that he did not dare to make good his threat."

The mention of Bourbon's name was received with a perfect storm of yells and execrations, and when this had subsided Renzo went on.

"We have an enemy who will show us no mercy," he said. "Were he to take the city, it would be sacked by his soldiery."

"That is false!" shouted Pomperant.

"Who spoke?" demanded Renzo, fiercely. "Let him show himself, that I may see who dares gainsay my assertion."

There was a moment's pause, during which glances were turned in the direction of the imprudent speaker, but he could not be discovered.

"Whoever uttered those words must be a friend of Bourbon," pursued Renzo. "I repeat, that it is the traitor's intention to deliver this city to his savage host, and I therefore exhort you to fight to the last in defence of those dear to you. Save your wives and daughters from dishonour. None will be spared."

"Again I say it is false!" vociferated Pomperant.

"Seize the traitor, and bring him before me," roared Renzo.

An attempt was made to obey the injunction. Several persons were seized, and, amid the confusion that prevailed, Pomperant and Hugues extricated themselves from the throng, and passed into a side-street, just as dark and narrow as that they had recently traversed. From the noise and shouts which reached them, it was clear the assemblage had just broken up, and presently Renzo, with his mounted guard, rode down the street, followed by a number of men, evidently part of the assemblage who had been listening to his harangue.

Pomperant and Hugues allowed themselves to be borne on by the stream, and at length issued forth into a wide esplanade ornamented with plane-trees, which here intervened between the city and the walls. On the left of this open space, and within a short distance of the ramparts, stood the bishop's palace, a large and monastic-looking structure. Close beside it was the venerable church of Saint Cannat. The palace and the church were the only two buildings near this angle of the walls, and it was quite evident to Pomperant that if Bourbon could once obtain possession of them, the city must fall. The marvel was, that experienced engineers like Renzo da Ceri and Chabot de Brion should allow them to remain. Close to the walls where the breach had been made a large body of lansquenets were collected, and with them was a band of armed citizens. The ramparts also were thronged with arquebusiers, and the canonniers remained standing near their guns.

Within a few yards of the breach a battery had been reared, on which three large cannon were planted, ready for service in case the assault should be made. But already the repairs were more than half accomplished. The gap was filled up with huge stones, pieces of timber, fascines, and other matters, and banked up with earth. A hundred men at a time were engaged on the operations, and a hundred others stood by ready to relieve them, so there was no pause. Officers were stationed on the walls on either side of the breach, giving orders and superintending the work.

After watching the proceedings for some time with an interest such as a soldier only can feel, and satisfying himself that the breach would infallibly be repaired before daybreak, Pomperant moved away. Following the course of the walls, he examined them as well as he could in the gloom.

Proceeding in this manner, he made the circuit of the city; and the result of his scrutiny was, that it was in a perfect state of defence. He remarked that the gates exposed to attack were blocked up, and protected on the inside by parapets and batteries. He also noticed that all the ramparts were garnished with cannon, and that the sentinels everywhere were doubled. The bastions, indeed, were thronged with armed men, and it was evident that the whole garrison was on the alert. Officers, accompanied by a mounted guard, were continually riding from gate to gate, while others made their round on the battlements to see that good watch was kept. Patrols, both horse and foot, were likewise moving about in every direction. Enough was seen by Pomperant to convince him that a most energetic defence would be made, and that it would be long before the place could be taken.

Having completed his examination of the walls, he re-entered the city, and shaped his course, as well as he could, in the direction of the mound, on the summit of which stood the clock-tower. As both he and Hugues were unacquainted with Marseilles, they more than once lost their way; and though there were plenty of people abroad they did not dare to question them, lest it should be found out that they were strangers. Pomperant had begun to despair of reaching the mound, when he unexpectedly came upon it.

VI. "THE BASILISK."

Dawn was now at hand, and by the time Pomperant; and his attendant had climbed the summit of the mound it had become quite light.

Very striking was the view presented from this eminence. Pomperant had stationed himself on a point of the hill not far from the battery, whereon was placed the monstrous cannon called "The Basilisk," of which mention has previously been made; and he and his companion were screened from the observation of the artillerymen by the clock-tower.

Immediately beneath him lay the city of Marseilles, with its picturesque habitations, its noble mansions, convents, and churches, encircled by fortifications, which in their turn were encircled by a broad, deep moat. On the right lay the harbour, almost enclosed by rocks; and Pomperant looked with interest at the narrow inlet by which he had gained admittance overnight. Outside, and near the islands, lay the French fleet; while far as the eye could range spread out the placid sea, now tinged with the roseate hues of morning.

The heights surrounding the city were crowned with the camp of the besieging army, At that still hour the trumpets were heard sounding a réveill , and the men could be distinguished mustering at the call. The

German lanz-knechts were concealed from view by the intervening hills, but the division of the Spanish troops under Del Vasto were in sight. The hills seemed peopled with armed men, and the rays of the sun were reflected upon thousands of steel caps and corslets, and upon forests of pikes and lances.

Though Bourbon's tent was concealed from view, its position was marked by the proud banner floating above the walls of the little chapel of Saint Lazare. Pescara's tent was likewise hidden by the sacred edifice, but his banner was as conspicuous as that of Bourbon. The course of the trenches, which advanced in zig-zags towards the walls, could be readily traced. The men were at the battery, waiting orders to open fire. From the battery Pomperant naturally turned to the ramparts which it faced, and he saw that the breach had been completely repaired, and was defended by a parapet, behind which cannon were planted. The work was a marvel of industry, and showed the spirit that animated the besieged.

If all were thus early astir in the camp of the Imperial army; if the men were mustering and preparing for action; if the artillerymen were at their posts at the various batteries, and both horse and foot in readiness—so also were the besieged. Bastions, ramparts, and towers were thronged with soldiers. A troop of cavalry, commanded by Chabot de Brion, was drawn up near the bishop's palace. Close beside them was a company of pikemen. Detachments of horse and foot were likewise stationed near the Porte d'Aix, and all the other gates not blocked up. In short, every possible preparation for energetic defence was made.

As yet not a gun had been fired by the besiegers, and Pomperant waited with breathless impatience for the commencement of hostilities. There was something ominous in the silence that now prevailed. All the martial sounds recently saluting the ear had ceased.

Drums and trumpets were mute. The stillness was undisturbed, for the morning was calm, and the numerous banners on walls and towers hung motionless.

After running his eye along the ramparts, crowded with arquebusiers and pikemen, Pomperant once more turned his gaze towards the little chapel on the hillside. At that moment came forth a troop of knights, sheathed in polished armour. At their head rode Bourbon and Pescara, both distinguishable, even at that distance, from the splendour of their accoutrements and the rich housings of their steeds. Each had a short battle-axe at his saddle-bow—each carried a bâton, in token of command. As the knightly troop rode slowly down the hill towards the battery, its movements were watched with keenest interest by thousands of soldiers from the ramparts and towers of the city. Still, not a gun was fired.

At this moment, Pomperant, whose attention had been for some time diverted by other objects from the battery near which he stood, was reminded of its proximity by a bustle among the artillerymen who had charge of the monster cannon, and, looking in that direction, he saw they were about to fire; and the match being applied, he was almost stunned by the tremendous detonation that ensued.

The sound was echoed from the heights, and reverberated like thunder from the rocks near the harbour. The course of the huge shot could be distinctly traced, and was watched by thousands of eyes. Bourbon and Pescara, with their knightly retinue, had been the mark against which "The Basilisk" was pointed. But the ball passed over the heads of the troop, without causing them to swerve from their course, and fell on the farther side of the lazaret-house.

Ineffectual as this discharge proved, it served as the signal for commencing the day's work. The battery at the head of the trenches immediately opened fire, and was replied to from the ramparts and bastions of the city, and the stillness of the lovely morning was broken by the incessant roar of artillery, and the balmy air filled with clouds of sulphurous smoke.

It was some time before "The Basilisk" could be restored to its place, and more than half a hundred men were required for the task; but their labour was quite thrown away, for the second shot was no better aimed than the first—and, indeed, alarmed the besiegers, for it fell into the moat.

Meantime, the roar of ordnance was uninterrupted, and Pomperant looked curiously at the walls; but though some destruction was caused among the defenders, little damage was done to the ramparts.

The conflict had endured for more than an hour, during which Pomperant, enchained by the exciting spectacle, had remained on the same spot, when the sound of a trumpet called his attention to the Porte d'Aix, and he perceived that a large troop of cavalry had been collected at this point. The leader of this troop was Chabot de Brion, who was fully armed, and mounted on a powerful charger. Pomperant at once comprehended that a sortie was about to be made by the commander of the garrison.

In another minute the gate was thrown open, the drawbridge lowered, and Brion dashed out at the head of his men, and, sword in hand, galloped up the hill towards the battery. But ere he got half way thither he was encountered by Bourbon, who had just been joined by a detachment of horse, and a sharp conflict ensued, resulting in the defeat of Brion and his party, who were driven back, with considerable loss, to the city. So hard pressed were the fugitives, that, although their leader escaped, several officers were captured.

During this skirmish, which seemed like an interlude in the terrible drama, the cannonading went on as furiously as ever.

No other incident occurred to relieve the monotony of the siege, and, satisfied that little impression would be made upon the walls, Pompeiant quitted the mound, and went in search of some house of entertainment where he might break his fast. He was not long in discovering a tavern; but it was not without some trepidation that he entered it.

VII. THE AMAZONS.

SOME cold viands, flanked by a bottle of good wine, were soon set before him by the tavernkeeper, who talked about the siege, and seemed full of uneasiness lest the city should be taken.

"I am told that Bourbon means to allow three days' pillage to his soldiers if he takes the city," he remarked; "and as to the poor women, not even the holy sisters will be respected."

"You alarm yourself without reason, my good host," said Pomperant. "The city will not be sacked, and no outrages will be committed."

"How know you that?" demanded the tavern-keeper, staring at him in surprise.

"Because such severities would be wholly inconsistent with Bourbon's previous conduct," returned Pomperant. "Ever since he has been in Provence he has checked all licence on the part of the soldiery. Only those who resist will be slaughtered."

"Then I shan't be one of them. I wish this city had surrendered like Aix. Folks may talk as they please about patriotism and loyalty, and so forth, but I don't like fighting. Ever since the siege began I haven't been able to sleep in my bed. So you don't believe Bourbon to be the bloodthirsty monster he is represented, eh?"

"On the contrary, I am persuaded he would offer very advantageous terms to the garrison if they would surrender," said Pomperant.

"Why don't they surrender?" groaned the host. "Don't betray me, sir," he hastened to add. "Renzo da Ceri would hang me if he heard I had expressed such an unpatriotic sentiment."

"Fear nothing, my good fellow," said Pomperant, laughing. "I am quite as unpatriotic as yourself, for I concur with you in opinion. I belong to Andrew Doria's fleet, and only landed last night, so I don't know much about the state of the city. Answer me frankly. How long do you think it can hold out?"

"Perhaps a month—perhaps longer. They say it can hold out till the king comes to relieve it."

"But if the king shouldn't come—what then?" remarked Pomperant.

"Nay, then we *must* yield. But we shall have some dreadful fighting. When women turn soldiers, it looks as if mischief were meant."

"Women turn soldiers! What mean you, my good host?" inquired Pomperant.

"I mean what I say," replied the tavern-keeper. "Some of the noblest dames of Marseilles have formed themselves into a military corps, and have determined, if called upon, to fight the foe. The lady who commands this company of Amazons is young and beautiful. Mademoiselle Marphise—for so is she named—is the daughter of M. de Vaudreuil, one of our richest merchants. The second in command is likewise young and beautiful, and quite as high-spirited as Marphise. Her name is Marcelline d'Herment."

"Marcelline d'Herment! Impossible!" cried Pomperant. "Why, if I am not misinformed, her brother, the Seigneur d'Herment, assisted the Constable de Bourbon in his flight."

"Very true," replied the host. "But Marphise has great influence over her, and has caused her to change her opinions. Whatever she may have been before, Mademoiselle Marcelline is now violently opposed to the Duke de Bourbon. Sire is staying with M. de Vaudreuil, and she and Marphise are inseparable. Their tastes are too masculine for me. They are marching about all day long. If you go to the Esplanade de la Tourette, or the Place de Linehe, you cannot fail to see them exercising their corps. Some folks think it a very pretty sight."

"I should like to see them," said Pomperant. "I will go at once to the Esplanade de la Tourette."

"You are more likely to find them in the Place de Linehe at this hour," said the host. "Pursue this street, and you will come to it."

Pomperant then paid his reckoning, and quitting the inn with Hugues, went in the direction indicated by the tavern-keeper.

The Place de Linehe, a large square, in which there was an agreeable promenade shaded by plane-trees, was now almost wholly deserted, most of the inhabitants having gone to points whence they could witness the progress of the siege, and only a few old people and children were to be seen. Pomperant was about to depart, when the sound of military music, proceeding from a street on the opposite side, arrested him, and immediately afterwards the corps of Amazons marched into the square.

At the head of this company rode a damsel who might have been taken as a representative of Hippolita, or Thalestris, or any other Amazonian queen. Of unusually large stature, she was still admirably proportioned, and her features were rigorously classical in outline. She was armed in a glittering corslet, and her casque was surmounted with white and red plumes. In her hand she carried a javelin, and a small shield hung at her saddle-bow.

Though it could not be denied that Matphise was handsome, her expression and bearing were too masculine to be altogether pleasing. The rest of the corps, which numbered about three hundred, were on foot, and as the majority of them were young, and possessed of considerable personal attractions, they formed a very striking appearance. They were all arrayed in burnished breastplates, and had plumed helmets on their heads, and javelins in their hands. Some of these damsels, as their cast of countenance proclaimed, were of Catalonian origin. They marched six abreast, with light quick footsteps, and in good order, towards the centre of the square, where they formed in line. The second in command was Marcelline. Her accoutrements were precisely like those of the rest of the corps, but she was armed with a drawn sword instead of a javelin.

Nearly an hour was spent by the troop in the practice of various military exercises, all of which were very cleverly performed, and during the whole of that time Pomperant and Hugues remained standing by, screened from observation by the trees.

The practice being ended, the troop formed in order of march, and began to move off the ground, taking a direction which brought them close to the spot where Pomperant was stationed with Hugues. He might have easily retired, but instead of doing so he made a sign to attract Marcelline's attention, and on beholding him she uttered a cry of surprise. The exclamation reached the ears of Marphise, who was riding in front of her, and, looking round, she was struck with the other's agitation, and inquired the cause. Marcelline made no

reply; but as she looked very faint, the Amazonian leader immediately ordered a halt.

"What ails you?" she said to Marcelline.

"It is nothing—it will pass," replied the other. "Leave me here. I will follow anon."

"The sight of that man troubles you," said Marphisc, noticing the direction of her friend's gaze. "Who is he? I must know."

Instead of making any reply to the question, Marcelline sprang forward, and called out to Pomperant, "Away, or you are lost!"

But before he could move a step, even if he intended to depart, Marphise was by his side.

"You are a stranger in Marseilles!" she cried. "I arrest you as a spy."

"No, let him go; he is no spy," interposed Marcelline. "Imprudent that you are to come here," she added, in an under tone, to her lover.

"It is as I suspected!" cried Marphise. "I am certain he is from the enemy's camp. This man is also with him," she added, pointing to Hugues.

"If I tell you who he is, Marphise, will you allow him to depart?" whispered Marcelline.

"I know not that," rejoined the other. "But speak!"

"It is the Seigneur Pomperant," replied Marcelline.

"What! the friend of the traitor Bourbon!" exclaimed the Amazon. "Do you imagine I will let *him* go? Never! I will rather hang him. Let thirty of the corps step forward and take charge of these men," she shouted.

The order was obeyed with surprising celerity, and Pomperant and Hugues were environed by a double row of spears.

"Take the prisoners before Renzo da Ceri," said the Amazon. "He will dispose of them."

"Marphise!" cried Marcelline, "if you have any love for me do not act thus. You need have no fear of the Seigneur Pomperant. I will answer for him with my life."

The Amazon reflected for a moment.

"Is he content to remain a prisoner on parole?" she demanded.

"Most assuredly," replied Marcelline.

"Let him answer for himself," cried the Amazon. "Will you pledge your word that you will not attempt to quit Marseilles without permission?" she added to Pomperant.

"Do not hesitate," whispered Marcelline. "If you are taken before Renzo or Chabot de Brion, you are lost."

"Now, your answer?" cried Marphise.

"I accept the conditions," he replied. "I will not attempt to escape, and I will be answerable for my attendant."

"Enough," replied Marphise. "You are at liberty. But be careful, or you may fall into the hands of those who will not deal with you as leniently as I have done." Ordering the party around her to fall into rank, the Amazon put her steed in motion, and the troop marched out of the Place de Linche.

VIII. SHOWING HOW THE BISHOP'S PALACE AND THE CHURCH OF SAINT CANNAT

WERE DEMOLISHED.

Left to his reflections, Pomperant was not altogether satisfied with what he had done. He was now a prisoner on parole, and could not return to the camp, or communicate in any way with Bourbon.

Had he yielded to the dictates of prudence, he would have sought some secure retreat for the day, and none appeared so eligible for the purpose as the tavern where he had breakfasted, but the temptation to witness the progress of the siege was too strong to be resisted, and on quitting the Place de Linche he proceeded to a point whence a view of the ramparts could be obtained.

The cannonade was still going on as furiously as ever. A portion of the ramparts had been destroyed, and anew breach made in the walls. Still it was not yet large enough to allow a successful attack to be made. But it was evident that the besiegers were making every preparation for a speedy assault.

Supported by a tremendous fire from the batteries, and protected by mantelets, which they pushed on before them, a party of men advanced towards the fosse, and endeavoured to form a traverse by throwing into it a vast quantity of fascines, made of large boughs of trees tied together, fagots, hurdles, and bags and gabions full of earth and stones.

These operations could not be carried on without great loss on the part of the besiegers. A terrific fire was directed against them by the arquebusiers from the ramparts and bastions. Notwithstanding this, the work proceeded. A detachment of arquebusiers, marching down from the camp, fixed palisades within thirty toises of the walls, whence they fired upon the defenders of the ramparts.

At this juncture another sortie was made by Chabot de Brion, and with better effect than that which he had undertaken earlier in the day. Not only did he force the arquebusiers to retire in disorder, causing great havoc among them, but he slaughtered most of the engineers engaged on the traverse. Such as escaped the

sword were drowned in the fosse.

So rapidly was this achievement executed, that ere Pescara could reach the scene of action with his cavalry, Brion had re-entered the city.

Infuriated by the losses they had sustained, the besiegers redoubled their efforts. Fresh engineers supplied the places of those who had perished, and the arquebusiers returned to their post. But success had heightened the ardour of the besieged, and stimulated them to greater exertions. Though the cannonade was continued without intermission throughout the day, the breach was not sufficiently enlarged for the assault.

Towards evening, however, the traverse was completed, though several parties of engineers had been destroyed in the task, and preparations were made to erect a gallery upon it. In spite of the constant severe fire from the ramparts and bastions—in spite of the stones and missiles hurled upon them—the engineers persisted in their work, and laboured with such resolution and assiduity, that, in less than an hour, a gallery, eight feet high and twelve wide, was put together. The sides were formed of double planks, the intervals being filled up with earth, and the pointed roof was covered externally with raw hides, so as to prevent it from being set on fire.

A critical juncture had now arrived for the besieged. Had the breach been sufficiently large, the assault would inevitably have taken place, for Bourbon was fully prepared; but not only was the aperture insufficient, but it could be seen that a rear rampart had been erected, which would have to be stormed when the outer wall was carried.

Once more, therefore, the assault had to be deferred, and in consequence of this delay all the works which it had cost so many lives to execute were thrown away. Heavy cannon, placed on the bastions commanding this angle of the walls, were brought to bear upon the gallery, and the damage done by the shot enabled the besieged to set fire to it by means of burning barrels of pitch, which they hurled upon it. The whole fabric was soon in flames, and the conflagration, which was witnessed by the whole of the Imperial army, produced a very striking effect, as it illuminated all the ramparts, towers, and structures in its vicinity. Bourbon had thus the mortification of seeing the work, on which so much labour had been expended, utterly destroyed.

As soon as the gallery was consumed, and the blackened beams had fallen into the moat, the energetic commanders of the garrison ordered ladders to be brought, and a large party of men descended for the purpose of destroying the traverse. Before they could accomplish this, they were attacked by a strong detachment of Spanish infantry, and a desperate conflict took place. The Spaniards were driven back with great loss, but, as they were speedily reinforced, the besiegers were compelled to abandon the work and remount the walls.

Shortly after this occurrence, a council of war was held by Renzo da Ceri and Chabot de Brion in a large hall in the episcopal palace.

Ever since the commencement of the siege this splendid structure had been abandoned by the bishop, who had taken up his abode in a less exposed part of the city, and the palace was now occupied by troops. All the principal officers of the garrison were present, and Renzo announced to the meeting that it would be necessary to demolish the palace in which they stood, as well as the venerable church of Saint Cannot adjoining it, lest the besiegers should obtain possession of them.

"It grieves me sorely," he said, "to order the destruction of these noble edifices, endeared to the citizens of Marseilles by so many recollections. But there is no help for it. With the aid of Heaven, I trust, we may keep off the foe. But should he pass the walls, we must afford him no shelter. The work must be commenced without delay."

Not a single dissentient voice was raised, but the proposition was received with sadness. After a pause, Renzo added, "I perceive from your silence that you are all of my opinion. Let us now repair to the church of Saint Cannat, where mass will be celebrated for the last time."

The edifice which had thus been doomed to destruction was a fine old Gothic church, and, as we have just intimated, was held in especial veneration by the citizens. It was soon known that it was about to be demolished, and thousands flocked towards it to join in the sacred rites which were to be performed within it for the last time.

The interior of the church presented a very striking spectacle, the interest of which was heightened by the circumstances that had brought together such an assemblage. The aisles were filled with soldiers and armed citizens; and among the former were many whose grim visages showed they had been actively engaged in the recent strife. In the nave was drawn up the corps of Amazons, with Marphise and Marcelline at their head. Within the choir stood Renzo da Ceri, Chabot de Brion, Mirandel, and all the principal officers, in their full accoutrements. The viguier and the chief magistrates of the city were likewise present. The Bishop of Marseilles, assisted by other ecclesiastical dignitaries, officiated at the altar, and never before in that fabric had mass been solemnised with such fervour and devotion as on that night.

The occasion, indeed, was one that could not fail to excite the profoundest interest in all who witnessed the ceremonial. Never more within those hallowed walls, which were so firmly built that they might have lasted for ages, would holy rites be performed. All those reverend objects, all those tombs and monuments, would be destroyed—all those shrines desecrated. It was a sad reflection, but it weighed upon every breast.

Among those gathered in the church were Pomperant and Hugues. They were stationed near one of the pillars that lined the north aisle within a few paces of Marcelline, who was aware of the proximity of her lover. An address was pronounced by the bishop, in which he deeply lamented the necessary destruction of this temple of the Most High, denouncing Bourbon as the cause of the sacrilege, and invoking Heaven's vengeance upon his head. It was not without a shudder that Pomperant listened to these awful words, and perceived the effect they produced on Marcelline.

Just as the bishop concluded his discourse, the thunder of artillery was heard, and Renzo da Ceri and some of the other leaders quitted the church, but the service was not otherwise interrupted. The corps of Amazons remained to the last, and Marcelline allowed her companions to march forth without her. She lingered behind to exchange a few words with her lover. By this time the church was almost deserted, and they moved to a

part of the aisle where the tapers, having been extinguished, left them almost in darkness.

"I ought to regard you as an enemy," she said. "I fear you are included in the denunciation which the good bishop has just pronounced upon Bourbon."

"Listen to me, Marcelline, and believe what I tell you," he rejoined. "The obstinacy of the citizens of Marseilles has rendered this siege necessary. They have brought all the calamities of war upon themselves. Why could they not act like the inhabitants of Aix and other towns of Provence?"

"Because they are loyal subjects of the king," she replied.

"These were not your sentiments when we first met," rejoined Pomperant. "You and your brother were then devoted to Bourbon."

"My brother is still devoted to him," she said. "Nay more, he is condemned to death by the Parliament of Paris for the share he has taken in the conspiracy, and if he had not fled, the sentence would have been executed. But I have changed. Since I have been in Marseilles, and have discoursed with these loyal and patriotic citizens, I have imbibed their opinions."

"You are wrong," rejoined Pomperant. "Marseilles will be far happier and more prosperous under Bourbon's rule than under that of François de Valois. A day will come—and that shortly—when Bourbon's name will be as much honoured in this city as it is now execrated."

"Heaven grant he may never enter Marseilles as a conqueror!" exclaimed Marcelline, fervently.

"Be not deceived, Mareelline. He will never retire till he has taken the city, and it cannot hold out long."

"You are mistaken," she cried, energetically. "It will hold out till it is relieved by the king. But if its fall should be inevitable, it is the fixed determination of the citizens to burn it to the ground rather than Bourbon shall possess it, I have vowed to kill myself rather than fall into the hands of his ruthless soldiery."

"Your fears are groundless, I repeat," said Pomperant; "but if you have such apprehensions, why do you not leave the city? The port is open. You can easily gain the fleet."

"I have promised Marphise to remain here to the last, and I shall keep my word," she rejoined.

"Then I will stay and guard you," he said. "Oh, Marcelline! let not these differences separate us. I love you not the less devotedly because of your loyalty to François de Valois, Do not hate me for my attachment to Bourbon."

"But I am bound to regard you as a traitor," she rejoined.

"Not as a traitor to you," he replied. "I have never swerved, even in thought, from my fidelity to you."

"Talk to me no more of love," she cried. "I have steeled my breast against all the softer emotions. But we must separate. Those who are engaged to demolish this saintly pile are about to commence their task. Farewell!"

And she quitted the church by a side-door.

A number of priests and friars now entered the fane, and proceeded to remove all the sacred vessels, reliques, and other objects from the sacristy and from the various shrines. The great silver crucifix, and the tall silver candlesticks, were carried away from the altar.

While this was going on, a large band of workmen, armed with pickaxes, shovels, and bars of iron, had set to work to pull down the monuments and open the tombs, and the church resounded with the noise of their implements.

Ere long a great number of ancient coffins were disinterred—some of stone and some of mouldering wood, and from the former the dead were taken. Coffins and corpses were then laid upon litters, and taken out of the church, to be deposited in a more secure spot—the bearers being headed by a procession of priests and monks.

As soon as they were gone, the church, which had thus been despoiled of its treasures and its dead, was given up to the destroyer.

The work of demolition immediately commenced, hundreds being employed in the task, which was superintended by experienced engineers. Gunpowder was used to accelerate the operations, and before morning the reverend and beautiful fabric was little better than a heap of ruins, the roof gone, the pillars in the aisles undermined and thrown down, and the walls demolished. The most determined enemy could not have done the work quicker than it was executed by the patriotic citizens, and they ceased not in their task till the holy pile was razed to the ground. The stones and beams that had composed it were employed in barricading the streets.

As Pomperant and Hugues were in the church when the work of demolition commenced, they were compelled to join in it, and they both laboured as industriously as the rest, till relieved by a fresh party.

When Pomperant escaped from the irksome task imposed upon him by necessity, he found that a multitude of citizens and soldiers were employed in pulling down the bishop's palace. Explosion after explosion shook the house to its foundations, and the walls fell with a tremendous crash.

The good bishop stood by, watching the destruction of his palace, and expressed no regret, but encouraged the soldiers and citizens in their task. But when the entire fabric fell to the ground, his looks expressed the deepest emotion, and he turned away and quitted the spot.

So complete was the destruction, that it seemed as if it had been caused by an earthquake. But again the active soldiers were at work, and the remains of the late noble edifice were expeditiously removed.

Much had been accomplished during that night—more than Pomperant, who could not tear himself from the scene, supposed possible. A stately palace, embellished by charming gardens, and a large church had been utterly destroyed, and a great portion of the wreck of both buildings carried away, and employed, as we have said, in barricading the streets, and in the construction of other defensive works.

"If Bourbon should carry yon walls by assault to-day, he will find no shelter here," remarked Pomperant to Hugues.

"And the barricades must be taken before he can get into the city," rejoined Hugues. "These citizens of

Marseilles, it must be owned, are good workmen."

IX. LES TRANCHERS DES DAMES.

Greatly to the surprise of the citizens, who expected a renewal of the tremendous cannonade which had been carried on during the two previous days, the firing on the part of the besiegers now ceased. As this complete cessation of hostilities endured throughout the day, and as the night passed without disturbance, the general opinion prevailed that Bourbon, admonished by his recent failure, was about to raise the siege and retire.

But this opinion was not shared by Renzo da Ceri and the leaders of the garrison. They felt certain that a new plan of action was about to be adopted by the besiegers; and the supposition was soon shown to be correct. It was found that Bourbon was approaching the walls by sap, and had already made considerable advance before the discovery of his plan was made. It was now evident that, despairing of making a sufficient breach with his cannon, he was proceeding to undermine the walls, and level them with gunpowder.

As soon as Renzo da Ceri discovered the enemy's design, which was revealed to him during a sortie made with that object, he set to work to defeat it, and immediately ordered trenches to be cut near the walls, so as to enable him to prepare counter-mines. These works were at once commenced, and were carried on with the same zeal and spirit that had been displayed during the previous operations. But as these trenches and subterranean galleries were to be of great depth as well as length, and must be completed within a short space of time, extraordinary exertions were required. Thousands of active citizens offered their services, and worked like regular pioneers.

On hearing what was to be done, Marphisc and Marcelline, accompanied by the corps of Amazons, sought an interview with the commander, who received them somewhat ungraciously.

"What would you with me?" he said. "This is no time for trifling. I want men, not women."

"We can work as well as men," replied Marphise, boldly. "We ask to be employed in digging the trenches."

"I admire your spirit, and thank you for the offer," said Kenzo; "but such rough work as this is unfit for your delicate hands."

"We will show you what women can do, if you deign to employ us," urged Marphise. "Our example will serve to animate the citizens, and will teach the enemy what they have to expect."

"Again I say, you overrate your own powers," rejoined Renzo. "The work is such as would tax the strength of the stoutest pioneer. You will soon be compelled to abandon it."

"Have no such fear," cried Marcelline, resolutely. "I speak in the name of the whole corps. If we commence the work, we will carry it through. Will we not?" she added, appealing to them.

All the Amazons shouted an affirmative.

"We demand to be employed," said Marphise, warmly. "We will take no refusal."

"Well, since you are resolved, I will not attempt to dissuade you further," said Renzo, smiling. "You have my full permission to work at the trenches."

This response was received by a loud and ringing shout from the whole body of the Amazons.

"You will not regret granting us permission, monseigneur," said Marcelline. "But we must further stipulate that none but women be allowed to work at our trench."

"That is but fair," replied the commandant. "I unhesitatingly agree to the condition. The whole honour of the work shall be yours; and if you achieve it, your names will ever occupy the proudest page in the annals of your city."

This speech was received with another shout from the female corps.

"Conduct us to the spot where the trench is to be opened, and we will begin at once," said Marphise.

Yielding to the request, Renzo proceeded with the gallant little band towards the Tour de Saint Paul, where he marked out a spot adjoining the walls. Experienced pioneers explained to the Amazons the nature of the work they would have to perform, and supplied them with the necessary implements. This done they retired, and the resolute damsels having divested themselves of their helmets and breastplates, immediately set to work, their operations being watched with great curiosity by the soldiers stationed on the adjacent tower, and by those on the ramparts.

They pursued their task with an unflagging energy that excited the admiration of all who beheld them, and in a few hours the trenches were fairly opened. Marphise and Marcelline were foremost in the work, and as they came forth from the excavation to rest for a short time from their toil, and allow others to take their place, they perceived Pomperant watching them from a distance.

This undertaking caused a great sensation throughout the city, and before long dames and damsels of all ranks flocked to the trenches, and zealously assisted in the operations, which were continued night and day without interruption—one band being immediately relieved by another.

Marphise and Marcelline passed three entire days and as many nights in the trenches, and during that interval allowed themselves but little repose.

On the morning of the fourth day the work was complete. A long subterranean gallery, about five feet square, had been excavated, having chambers at intervals, carried below the foundation of the walls, in which powder could be deposited. As Renzo da Ceri examined the work, he was struck with astonishment.

"I could not have believed this could have been done had I not seen it," he exclaimed. "These trenches are marvellously executed. If this siege is memorable for nothing else, it will be for this unparalleled achievement. While Marseilles shall endure, these trenches will never be forgotten."

Renzo's words have come to pass. The Boulevard des Dames of the modern city of Marseilles is so designated because it occupies the site of the famous Ladies' Trenches.

X. HOW POMPERANT FURNISHED A SAFE-CONDUCT TO THE DEPUTIES TO THE KING.

In less than a week Renzo da Ceri had completed his vast defensive operations.

In this interval a fosse of great depth had been cut behind that part of the walls most exposed to the fire of the enemy. Not only was it intended that this fosse should be filled with powder, petards, and caltrops, but it was flanked by high ramparts, so that in reality a second line of fortifications would have to be taken if the outer walls should be carried. But though Renzo was firmly persuaded he could hold out, he felt that the king ought to be made acquainted with the exact condition of the city, so that his majesty might take such measures as he should deem necessary for its relief.

Intelligence had been received through the fleet that François was at Avignon with his army, but the difficulty was how to communicate with him. At last the commander bethought him of Pierre Cépède and Jean Bègue, two citizens distinguished for their courage and loyalty, and proposed the errand to them, and they at once agreed to undertake it.

"I thank you, messieurs, for your ready compliance with my request," said Renzo. "If you should be taken, I do not think any harm will befall you. I can compel Bourbon to set you free. You look surprised, but I will explain my meaning. Last night I made a prisoner of great importance. The Seigneur Pomperant, Bourbon's favourite, has had the foolhardiness to venture within the city, and I should have ordered him for immediate execution, had not the idea occurred to me that I could turn him to account. What ho, there!" he added to the guard. "Bring in the prisoners."

Presently Pomperant and Hugues were brought in, guarded by halberdiers. Both maintained an undaunted demeanour.

"Seigneur Pomperant," said Renzo, sternly, "I know you are Bourbon's chief favourite, and that he will gladly purchase your safety. I shall therefore keep you as a hostage for these two gentlemen, who are going as deputies to the king. You must furnish them with a safe-conduct."

"Even if I were inclined to do so, monseigneur, I lack the power," rejoined Pomperant.

"I will show you how to do it," said Renzo. "Sit down at that table, and write a letter to Charles de Bourbon, telling him you are my prisoner, and that you have engaged to protect Pierre Cépède and Jean Bègue from all harm and interruption. Add, that if they return to Marseilles in safety, I will set you free, but if they are detained or molested, I will hang you in the sight of the whole Imperial army."

"If I write as you desire, the Duke de Bourbon will not respect my letter," said Pomperant. "But if you carry out your threat, I warn you that terrible retribution will follow."

"I will take my chance of that," rejoined Renzo. "If you are wise, you will save yourself from an ignominious death. Refuse to write as I have dictated, and I will forthwith hang you as a spy."

"Methinks you had better agree to these conditions, monseigneur," said Hugues. "If you decline, they will doubtless hang me at the same time."

"You judge rightly, fellow," remarked Renzo. "You will share the same fate as your master."

"Then, in Heaven's name, comply, monseigneur," implored Hugues.

Pomperant sat down and wrote the required letter. When he had done so, he gave it to Renzo, who, after scanning it, delivered it to the deputies.

"There is your safe-conduct, messieurs," he said. "You will start on your expedition to-night."

Then, turning to Pomperant, he added, "Fear not that I will act loyally towards you, Seigneur Pomperant. You have been condemned to death as a traitor by the Parliament of Paris, but I shall not regard the decree. I look upon you only as a prisoner of war. On the return of these gentlemen, I will liberate you and your attendant. Meantime, you will both remain close prisoners."

Pomperant and Hugues were then removed by the guard, and were conducted to the tower of Saint Paul, where they were locked up in separate dungeons.

XI. HOW TOULON WAS BESIEGED AND TAKEN BY THE MARQUIS DEL VASTO.

More powder and larger cannon must be had, or a sufficiently wide breach in the walls cannot be made," remarked Pescara to Bourbon, as they sat together in the tent of the latter. "But where are these requisites to be procured?"

"In Toulon. In that fortress there are plenty of cannon of far larger calibre than ours, together with abundance of powder and ball."

"But Toulon has yet to be taken. That may be a work of some time, since the fortress is strong."

"The siege ought not to occupy more than a week," rejoined Bourbon. "I shall send your valiant nephew, the Marquis del Vasto, to besiege the place by land. He will be supported by Monçada, who is lying off the coast, as you know, and no interference is to be apprehended from the French fleet, as La Fayette and Andrea Doria are fully occupied in guarding the port of Marseilles. The capture of Toulon may therefore be regarded as certain."

"The plan appears practicable," said Pescara, after some reflection; "and since you are resolved upon it, the sooner it is executed the better. Del Vasto will like the enterprise."

"I am sure of it," replied Bourbon. "I will ride down at once to his camp and give him instructions. It is but a day's march to Toulon, and he will appear before the fortress ere any tidings can be given of his approach."

As had been anticipated, the gallant young marquis received the command with delight, and at once prepared for the expedition.

Taking with him a large detachment of the Spanish forces, he marched throughout the night, and appeared at dawn on the crest of the hills overlooking Toulon. At the same time, the Spanish fleet under Admiral Monçada, who had received instructions from Bourbon, entered the roadstead, and took up a position opposite the fortress, which immediately opened fire upon the enemy.

At this epoch the Castle of Toulon was a place of great strength, and its ramparts mounted a considerable number of guns of large size. Notwithstanding this, the combined attack by land and sea was successful, and on the fourth day from the commencement of the siege, Del Vasto became master of the fortress. Irritated by the obstinate defence he had encountered, and the heavy losses he had sustained, the young Spanish general put the garrison to the sword.

All the large cannon found within the fort, together with an immense stock of the munitions of war, were placed on board the fleet, and, after being safely landed, were conveyed to the Imperial camp; thus providing Bourbon with abundant materials for prosecuting the siege of Marseilles with vigour. As may be supposed, Del Vasto received high commendations from the duke for his brilliant achievement.

Meanwhile, despatches from his royal allies had reached Bourbon. The Emperor informed him, by a letter brought by the Comte de Montfort, that the army of Catalonia would speedily enter France.

"Tell the Emperor," said Bourbon, well pleased by the intelligence, "that I hope to send him in a few days the good news of the fall of Marseilles. In anticipation of that event, entreat him to hasten as much as possible the march of the auxiliary army, and entreat him also to strengthen his fleet, which is inferior to that commanded by La Fayette and Andrea Doria. Things could not go better than they do at present. I shall soon be in a condition to give battle to François de Valois—and if I win it—and by Sainte Barbe I *shall* win it!—his Imperial Majesty will be the greatest monarch that ever reigned, and able to give law to all Christendom."

Charged with this message, the Comte de Montfort departed.

From Henry VIII. Bourbon received the sum of a hundred thousand ducats, which was brought by Sir John Russell.

"Tell your royal master," he said to Russell, "that the time has now arrived when it will be needful to march his army into Picardy. Fifteen days hence, at the latest, I trust to be joined by the auxiliary forces about to be despatched by the Emperor from Catalonia. By that time Marseilles will have fallen."

"Your highness feels sure of that?" remarked the English envoy, with an incredulous smile.

"I am certain of it," said Bourbon, confidently. "The besieged have made a gallant defence, but they cannot hold out much longer. My approaches are now within a few toises of the moat. I have plenty of cannon of the largest calibre, which will soon make a breach in the walls."

"But I am told by Pescara that there is an inner fosse of great depth, filled with combustibles, and a second line of ramparts with cannon mounted on the embrasures," remarked Sir John Russell.

"No matter," rejoined Bourbon. "I will take the city in spite of its defences, and, having done so, I shall withdraw to Aix, where I shall await the arrival of the Catalonian army. On being joined by it, I shall at once march to Avignon, and compel François to give me battle. If I am victorious, your royal master will be King of France."

"It will rejoice his majesty and the Lord Cardinal to learn that your highness is so confident of success," replied Russell. "I now take my leave, and shall return at once to England."

Sir John Russell had not long been gone, when a great noise was heard outside the tent, and, surprised at the disturbance, Bourbon rushed out to ascertain the cause of it.

"What means this noise?" he demanded of several arquebusiers, who were standing around, and whose countenances manifested alarm. "Is the enemy upon us?"

"Worse than that, general," replied one of the men. "A great shot from the accursed 'Basilisk' has just fallen upon the Marquis of Pescara's tent," pointing in that direction. "Your highness may see the rent it has made."

"Great Heavens!" ejaculated Bourbon. "But the marquis!—is he safe?"

"Alas, general, I much fear he is killed," replied the arquebusier. "He was at mass at the time with his confessor, Padre Hilario."

Bourbon heard no more, but flew to the tent. On entering it, a terrible spectacle met his gaze. On the ground lay the mangled body of Padre Hilario, and near the unfortunate priest lay two Spanish officers, one of whom had been beheaded by the huge shot. Pescara was standing near the ghastly group, so bespattered with blood that Bourbon fancied he must be grievously wounded. A strange laugh, however, from the Spanish

general convinced him to the contrary.

"I have had a very narrow escape," said Pescara. "If I had not knelt on this side of poor Padre Hilario, I should have shared his fate. The besieged have learned to take better aim with 'The Basilisk' than they did at first. Your highness sees what messengers they send us," he added, in a tone of bitter raillery. "I suppose you thought the shouts were caused by the timorous magistrates of Marseilles bringing you the keys of the city—ha! ha!"

Bourbon made no reply to this ill-timed jest, but instantly quitted the tent.

Next day, the Marquis del Vasto was sent to propose terms of surrender to the garrison. He was accompanied by twenty lances, and preceded by a herald and a trumpeter, and the errand of this little troupe being evidently pacific, it was allowed to approach the Porte d'Aix without molestation.

On arriving before the gate, the trumpeter thrice sounded his clarion, and when the bruit ceased, an officer from the battlements, addressing the herald, demanded his business.

"The most noble Marquis del Vasto desires an audience of the commanders of the garrison, to lay before them a proposition from his Highness the Duke de Bourbon, general-in-chief of the Imperial army."

"Tarry till I ascertain the pleasure of the commanders," rejoined the officer.

After a time the officer reappeared on the battlements, and announced that the Marquis del Vasto could alone be admitted.

"His lordship may enter without fear," said the officer. "I am authorised by the commanders of the garrison to guarantee his safety."

On this the drawbridge was lowered, and the gate being thrown open, a strong guard of halberdiers issued forth, and lined the bridge.

Del Vasto then dismounted, and, crossing the bridge, was met at the gate by the officer, who conducted him to a chamber on the basement floor of the tower, ordinarily used as a guard-room. Here he found two knightly personages, both completely cased in steel, whom he recognised as the commanders of the garrison.

"I am sent to you, messeigneurs," said Del Vasto, after formal salutations had passed, "to make a proposition which I trust may be entertained. Conceiving himself to be in a position to take this city, which you have so long and so ably defended, his Highness the Duke de Bourbon, influenced by feelings of humanity, before making the assault, has determined to afford you the opportunity of capitulating on terms, consistent with your own honour, and highly advantageous to the city."

"It is needless to state the terms, my lord marquis," replied Chabot de Brion, haughtily. "We cannot listen to them."

"Do not reject the proposal unheard, messeigneurs," said Del Vasto. "Have some consideration for the citizens."

"You have taught us what to expect, marquis, by your treatment of the garrison of Toulon," rejoined Renzo, sternly. "But we are not to be terrified. Tell your leader, Charles de Bourbon to take Marseilles—if he can. We will only treat with him at the cannon's mouth."

"You will have reason to repent your bold determination, messeigneurs," rejoined Del Vasto. "Before departing, I would say a word in regard to the Seigneur Pomperant, who has fallen into your hands. Are you willing to make an exchange of prisoners? You shall have a dozen of your own officers for him."

"Offer us twenty, and add twenty to those, and we will not part with him," rejoined Renzo. "Tell Bourbon so."

With a proud salutation Del Vasto then departed. Conducted to the gate by the officer, he passed through the guard lining the drawbridge, mounted his charger, and rode back to the camp, where he related what had occurred to Bourbon and Pescara.

"I felt sure the garrison would not capitulate," said the latter.

"What of Pomperant?" demanded Bourbon, eagerly. "Will they exchange him?"

"No, your highness, they absolutely refuse," replied Del Vasto. "But I do not imagine he is in any danger. They have some motive for detaining him."

"Possibly," said Bourbon. "We shall learn what it is in time."

XII. AVIGNON.

Roused to exertion by the danger that menaced his kingdom, François I. hastened to reinforce his army, which had been greatly reduced by Bonnavet's reverses in the Milanese, and in a few weeks after Bourbon's irruption into Provence, he had succeeded in augmenting it by fourteen thousand Swiss mercenaries, six thousand lansquenets, and fifteen hundred light horse.

Placing himself at the head of this force, he marched to Lyons, where he was joined by the King of Navarre and several foreign princes. Almost all the nobles, on whose aid Bourbon had counted, flocked round the king's standard, bringing with them large companies of horse, so that he had now a very numerous army—the three divisions which were placed under the command of Marshals Chabannes, Foix, and Montmorency.

Continuing his march along the left bank of the Rhone, François pitched his camp at Avignon, and again surrendered himself to pleasure, passing his time in such festivities as he was wont to indulge in at Blois and Fontainebleau. In the old Papal palace of Avignon—an enormous structure, part convent and part castle—he

held his court, and its gloomy halls and chambers were enlivened by the presence of troops of young nobles decked out in gay attire, and echoed to the light laugh of the numerous frolic dames who ever accompanied the luxurious monarch.

Bonnivet was with his royal master at Avignon. In spite of the favourite's reverses in the Milanese, he had lost none of his influence, and easily persuaded the king that it was necessary to his glory to recover possession of the lost duchy of Milan, and that if he appeared at the head of an army in Italy, this object would infallibly be accomplished. François therefore determined upon a new expedition as soon as he should have driven Bourbon out of Provence.

Subjugated by the charms of the resistless Diane de Poitiers, who had now completely supplanted the Comtesse de Chateaubriand, unable to tear himself from her, encouraged in his luxurious idleness by Bonnavet, Saint-Marsault, and others of his courtiers, the king wasted his time in the pleasant city of Avignon, dreaming of conquests which he meant to achieve, and allowing Bourbon to prosecute the siege of Marseilles unmolested.

Attended by a mirthful train, Diane and the king made a pilgrimage to Vaucluse, and, after quaffing of the classic fountain, François carved the name of his mistress, linked with his own, on the walls of the grotto.

One day it chanced that François and Diane were stationed on the balcony over the gate of the Papal palace—an elevated spot whence the sovereign-pontiffs who had inhabited the palace were accustomed to pronounce their benediction upon the people, as they would have done from the windows of the Vatican had Rome been free to them. Chance had brought the amorous pair to the balcony. For the last hour they had been strolling round the lofty walls of the palace. Vainly had Diane essayed to count the spires that rose around her—nowhere are there so many churches as in Avignon—and as if to confuse her still further, their bells all rang out at once. Half distracted by the deafening clamour, she turned to the towering cathedral, where Popes were enthroned, and where Popes lie buried. From the contemplation of Notre-Dame des Dons, as the mighty edifice is designated, she turned to gaze upon the camp, which occupied the whole of the plain lying between the junction of the rapid Durance and the rushing Rhone. The long rows of tents, mingled with pavilions decorated with pennons and banners, formed a picture of surpassing beauty.

By this time the bells had ceased ringing, and François was able to resume the tender converse which the clamour had interrupted.

Thus beguiling the time, now gazing at one point of the ancient city, now at another; sometimes looking at the cathedral, at the fortifications, at the vast tract of country traversed by the Rhone, at the mountains, or at the camp, they found themselves in the balcony overlooking the gateway. Here, seated on a marble bench, which had been once used by the Popes, they continued their discourse, while the young nobles and dames in attendance ranged themselves behind them.

The balcony where the king and Diane sat commanded a wide open space in front of the gateway, which was defended by a dry moat and drawbridge. Perceiving two horsemen, escorted by an officer and half a dozen mounted men-at-arms, approach the gateway, and being struck by their appearance, François despatched Bonnavet, who was standing among the group of courtiers, to make inquiries concerning them.

After the lapse of a few minutes Bonnavet reappeared, accompanied by the two strangers, both of whom were men of middle age, grave deportment, and plain attire, and presented them to the king as Messieurs Pierre Cépède and Jean Bègue, deputies from Marseilles.

"I have not waited for permission to bring these brave and loyal citizens before your majesty," said Bonnavet, "because I felt certain you would grant them an immediate audience."

"You did right," rejoined François. "Rise, messieurs," he added to the kneeling deputies. "You are welcome. You must have run great risk in coming hither. How did you contrive to elude the vigilance of the foe?"

"Heaven has aided us, sire," replied Pierre Cépède. "All the approaches to the city, on the land side, are so strictly guarded, that certain destruction would have attended any attempt at exit in that direction. We were, therefore, compelled to pass out at the port; and not without much difficulty and danger reached the mouth of the Rhône. We came up the river to Arles, and thence, with as little delay as possible, to this city."

"You have done well," replied François, approvingly. "What tidings do you bring me of my faithful city of Marseilles?"

"The city still holds out, sire," said Pierre Cépède; "and its defences have been so greatly strengthened, that no uneasiness whatever was felt by the commanders until the enemy obtained possession of the heavy artillery from Toulon."

"Ha!" exclaimed François, surprised and angry. "How is this? I did not know that Toulon had fallen."

"The news only arrived this morning, sire," interposed Bonnavet. "I was unwilling to trouble your majesty by mentioning it."

"It should not have been kept from me for a single moment," cried the king, sharply. "By Saint Denis! this is a great disaster. Where was my fleet at the time? How came La Fayette and Doria to let Toulon be taken?"

"Sire, they could not leave the port of Marseilles," returned Jean Bègue. "The fall of Toulon is a heavy blow, but the fall of Marseilles would be still heavier. Listen to the prayers of the citizens, sire, and come to their relief. You do not know what exertions they have made for the defence of the city—what heroism they have displayed. No sacrifices have been too great. Our noblest and fairest dames have formed themselves into bands, and have worked at the trenches like pioneers. Oh, madame!" he continued, addressing Diane, "if you could only behold what they have done, you would be filled with admiration. For three days and three nights they laboured incessantly. We are proud of our women, madame."

"And with good reason," rejoined Diane. "Oh, sire! you must fly to the rescue of this devoted city. You will ever reproach yourself if it should fall."

Both the deputies looked gratefully at her as these words were uttered.

"Is there immediate danger, messieurs?" demanded the king.

"No, sire," replied Pierre Cépède. "We have endeavoured to explain to your majesty the exact condition of

the city. Its defences are as complete as they can be made. We have brave and experienced commanders, and our citizens are animated by loyalty and devotion. But we have an enemy opposed to us, skilful, daring, and confident of success. If Marseilles *can* be taken, Charles de Bourbon will take it."

"It never shall be taken," cried François. "Return to your fellow-citizens, messieurs. Tell them how highly I estimate their courage and loyalty. Say that I will forthwith send them from Martigues a reinforcement of fifteen hundred men-at-arms, with good store of wine, cattle, and provender. Bid them persevere in their valiant defence of the city. They may rest assured that I will come to their succour. Farewell, messieurs! In good time I will adequately requite the important service you have rendered me."

Well satisfied with these assurances, the deputies withdrew.

Next day, the king marched with his whole army towards Aix. On learning that he was approaching, the viguier and the magistrates, dreading his resentment, rode forth from the city to meet him, and strove to excuse themselves for the welcome they had given to Bourbon. François fiercely interrupted them, calling out, "Ha, knaves! ha, traitors! You have opened your fates to a rebel in arms against us and our kingdom. You received him with all honour, allowed him to usurp the title of Comte de Provence, which belongs to us, and took the oath of fidelity to him, in violation of your allegiance to us your lawful sovereign. You deserve death, and you shall die."

"Spare us, sire! spare us!" cried the viguier and the others, throwing themselves at his feet. "We now see the enormity of our offence."

"Repentance comes too late. I will have no pity upon you, vile traitors," rejoined the king, sternly. "From your fate your misguided fellow-citizens shall learn what it is to incur our displeasure. Away with them!" he added to the guard. "Let them be taken back to the city, and decapitated in the place in front of the Cathedral of Saint Sauveur. Set their heads on the gates, so that all may see how treason is punished."

This severe sentence was carried into effect. As the king entered Aix, he looked up at the gates, and beheld the heads of the unfortunate viguier and his brother-magistrates.

Not content with punishing the chief offenders, François compelled all the principal citizens and all public officers to renew their oaths of allegiance to him, and imprisoned several who were proved to have displayed zeal for the rebel chief.

Diane de Poitiers accompanied the king to Aix, and it was arranged that she should occupy the old palace of René d'Anjou, while her royal lover moved on to succour Marseilles.

XIII. HOW POMPERANT WAS ORDERED FOR, EXECUTION.

Ever since the departure of the two deputies to Avignon, Pomperant had been kept in strict confinement in the Tour de Saint Paul. One morning the door of his dungeon was opened by an officer, whose sombre looks proclaimed his errand.

"You are come to bid me prepare for death, I perceive, captain," said Pomperant, with as much composure as he could command.

"You have guessed rightly, monseigneur," replied the officer. "The two deputies have been captured, and unless they are liberated before noon you will be executed. A message has been sent to that effect to the Duke de Bourbon."

"At least the commanders will let me die as becomes a gentleman—not as a common malefactor?" said Pomperant.

"I cannot give you that consolation, monseigneur," rejoined the officer. "You are to be hanged from the summit of this tower in face of the hostile army. The execution will take place precisely at noon. You have yet an hour to live."

"An hour! Is that all?" mentally ejaculated Pomperant.

"Send a priest to me, I pray you, captain," he said, with forced calmness. "I would fain make my peace with Heaven."

The officer then withdrew, and shortly afterwards a priest entered, who received the prisoner's confession, and gave him absolution.

"I will leave you now, my son," said the holy man, "but I shall remain without, and will attend you at the last."

Pomperant had not been long alone, when the door of the cell again opened, and gave admittance to Marcelline. A sad greeting passed between them.

"I have striven to save you," she said, in a voice half suffocated by emotion. "I have been to Renzo da Ceri, and have implored him, on my bended knees, to spare your life—but in vain. He will not even grant you the respite of an hour. All I could obtain was permission to hold this brief interview with you."

"I thank him for the grace—it is more than I expected," replied Pomperant, gazing at her with the deepest affection. "Oh! Marcelline, you have made life so dear to me that I grieve to lose it. But the thought that you love me will soothe the pangs of death."

"It may console you to be assured that I will wed no other," she rejoined. "I will be true to your memory—doubt it not. As soon as this siege is ended, I will enter a convent, and devote myself to Heaven."

At this moment the priest entered the cell.

"Daughter," said the good man, looking compassionately at her, "you must bid your lover an eternal farewell."

"Oh no, no—do not say so, father!" she rejoined. "Grant me a few more minutes."

"Alas, daughter, I have no power to comply with your request."

"Nay, you must go, dear Mareelline," said Pomperant. "Your presence will only unman me. Farewell for ever!"

Mareelline continued gazing passionately at her lover, while the priest drew her gently from the well.

Overcome by emotion, Pomperant sank down on a seat, and he had scarcely regained his firmness, when the door of the cell was thrown suddenly open. Nothing doubting that it was the guard come to conduct him to execution, he arose and prepared for departure.

What was his surprise, when Mareelline, half frenzied with joy, again burst into the dungeon, exclaiming, "Saved! saved! They are come!"

The sudden revulsion of feeling was almost too much for Pomperant, and he could scarcely sustain Marcelline as she flung herself into his arms.

"Is this a dream?" he said, gazing at her, as if doubting the evidence of his senses. "Methought we had parted for ever."

"No, I have come to tell you you are saved," she rejoined. "The deputies have returned. You are free!"

As the words were uttered, Renzo da Ceri, accompanied by the two deputies, and followed by the officer, entered the cell.

"I have come to perform my promise, Seigneur Pomperant," said Renzo. "These gentlemen having been released, you are free to return to your camp. You may congratulate yourself on your escape. A few minutes more and it would have been too late. The escort that brought the two deputies from the camp galloped all the way, and has only just reached the gates."

"We also have reason to congratulate ourselves," remarked Pierre Cépède. "Had we arrived too late, we should have been taken back for instant execution."

"Conduct the Seigneur Pomperant to the Porte d'Aix, where the escort awaits him," said Renzo to the officer. "Let his attendant go with him."

"The orders shall be obeyed," said the officer.

Bidding a tender adieu to Marcelline, and expressing a fervent hope that they might meet again, Pomperant thanked the commander for his honourable conduct, and quitted the cell with the officer.

On issuing from the tower, he found Hugues standing in the midst of a guard of halberdiers, and the faithful fellow expressed the liveliest satisfaction at beholding him. But not a moment was allowed for explanation. They were hurried to the gate through a crowd of soldiers and armed citizens.

On the farther side of the drawbridge, which was strongly guarded, stood the escort. Joining it without delay, they mounted the steeds provided for them, and the whole party then galloped off to the camp.

XVI. THE MINE.

Within an hour after Pomperant's return to the camp, all the batteries on which the heavy cannon brought from Toulon had been mounted, opened fire upon that part of the ramparts where the breach had formerly been made. By nightfall a wide gap was made, and the cannonade then ceased.

At the same time the sappers, who had carried their works under the fosse after incredible toil, had reached the foundations of the walls. Before midnight the chamber of the mine was completed, and the barrels of gunpowder deposited within it; and Lurcy, who had been entrusted with the superintendence of this dangerous operation, brought word to Bourbon that all was ready.

"Let the mine be sprung, then," replied Bourbon. "It will save some hours' work in the morning."

On returning to execute this order, Lurcy was accompanied by Pomperant. After tracking the windings of the long gallery, which was lighted by torches fixed at various points, and crowded by soldiers, they at length reached the chamber of the mine. Having seen that all the arrangements were carefully made, and that the casks of powder were so placed that they could be simultaneously exploded, they were about to retire, when the stroke of a pickaxe was heard on one side of the excavation. They listened intently, and the sound was again plainly distinguished.

"The enemy are making a counter-mine," said one of the sappers who was with them. "They are close upon us."

As he spoke, the strokes grew quicker and louder.

"They are working hard," remarked another sapper, with a grim smile. "But we shall soon check them."

While this took place, a third sapper, who had been engaged in laying a train of powder communicating with the barrels, got up and said to Lurcy and Pomperant, "Retire, I pray you, messeigneurs. The train shall be fired as soon as you are out of danger."

On this intimation, Lurcy and Pomperant hastily retreated to the first epaulment, which was placed on the outer side of the moat, and in which they could take refuge during the explosion. All the sappers accompanied

them, except one man, whose business it was to fire the train.

On reaching the mouth of the epaulment, Lurcy called out to the man who was left behind—"Fire!"

On this the sapper knelt down and applied a lighted tow-match to the long train of powder. Both Lurcy and Pomperant watched the proceeding from the entrance of their place of refuge. In an instant the fiery line started on its terrible errand, and the sapper hurried off to the shelter of the epaulment.

Just at this moment, however, and while Pomperant was still watching the course of the burning train, he was startled by an unexpected occurrence. The whole of the wall of earth at the end of the chamber of the mine suddenly gave way, disclosing those who were engaged in making the counter-mine.

What was Pomperant's horror on discovering that the foremost of the party were no other than Marphise and Marcelline! Torches held by the Amazons in the rear fully revealed them to view. There they stood, pickaxe in hand, preparing to leap over the mass of earth into the chamber.

Horrified at the sight, Pomperant would have rushed towards them had he not been forcibly held back by Lurcy. The two Amazons seemed paralysed by terror, and unable to retreat.

"Back, on your lives!" shouted Pomperant, in extremity of anguish.

A giddiness seized him, and, unable to offer any further resistance, he was dragged into the epaulment by Lurcy.

At this moment the explosion took place with a terrific sound, and a shock like that of an earthquake. From the noises that succeeded, it was evident that a large portion of the wall, under which the mine had been laid, was overthrown.

In another minute all these appalling sounds ceased, and a silence like that of death succeeded.

Lurcy and Pomperant, with the sappers, rushed out of the epaulment. But they could not proceed many paces. The torch held by one of the men flashed on a terrible scene, and revealed the work of destruction. The farther end of the passage beneath the moat was blocked up with huge stones and rubbish, and rents having been made in the sides, the water from the moat was pouring in, the place being already half flooded.

"I have lost her!" exclaimed Pomperant, in accents of despair. "They must all have perished in that terrible explosion. Why did you not let me extinguish the train?"

"Had you made the attempt, you would only have thrown away your own life," rejoined Lurcy. "But come away. You can do no good here."

"I will not go till I have ascertained what has become of her," cried Pomperant.

"Give yourself no further trouble, monseigneur," remarked the sapper who had fired the mine. "Not one of those brave young women can have escaped. They are all crushed beneath those stones."

"I would I had perished with her!" ejaculated Pomperant. And he reeled back, half fainting, against the side of the gallery.

Giving some hasty directions to the men, Lurcy took the arm of his friend, and led him away from the scene of destruction.

As they threaded the winding passages, their progress was impeded by parties of soldiers who were hastening from the place of arms to the farther end of the mine; but at last they issued forth into the open air.

As soon as Pomperant reached his tent, he threw himself on a couch in a state of complete exhaustion, while Lurcy hastened to inform Bourbon that the mine had been sprung.

XV. HOW THE SIEGE OF MARSEILLES WAS RAISED.

NEXT morning, at an early hour, Del Vasto entered Pescara's tent, and found his redoubted relative alone and fully armed.

"What commands have you for me?" said the younger general. "Of course the assault will be made to-day. What with the long cannonade and the damage done by the mine, the breach must be wide enough."

"Ay, the breach is wide enough, undoubtedly," rejoined Pescara; "but the besieged are too well prepared. I shall not counsel the assault."

"You are not wont to be so cautious," said Del Vasto, surprised. "Doubtless a large number of men will be sacrificed. But what of that? The city will be taken."

"No, my good nephew," rejoined Pescara. "I find I must speak more plainly. Bourbon shall never take Marseilles."

"But you cannot prevent him. He will lead the assault, and we must follow."

"I forbid you," rejoined Pescara, authoritatively. "Listen to me, nephew. You know the full extent of Bourbon's ambitious designs, and that he hopes to carve a kingdom for himself out of France. You know that he aspires to the hand of the Emperor's sister Leonor, the widowed Queen of Portugal. Lannoy and I have resolved to thwart his plans, We do not mean to be supplanted by this proscribed prince. With this end, Lannoy has delayed the march of the Catalonian array, and I shall prevent the capture of Marseilles. If Bourbon is compelled to raise the siege, he will forfeit the Emperor's favour, and will also lose credit with his other royal ally, King Henry VIII."

"Why not let the assault be made?" said Del Vasto. "Bourbon may fall, and then all the glory will be yours."

"But what if he should *not* fall?" rejoined Pescara. "What if the assault should prove resistless and he should become master of Marseilles? Then his power would be confirmed, and it would be idle to oppose him. That must not be. I will snatch the prize from him at the very moment he deems he has secured it. But do not remain longer here. Get your men ready, and leave the rest to me."

Upon this, Del Vasto quitted the tent.

Meantime, orders having been issued that the assault would be made on that day, all the troops were got under arms.

Attended by Pomperant, Lurcy, and others of his suite, Bourbon rode along the lines, and addressed a few words to the men calculated to incite their courage. Much to his surprise, however, and vexation, these addresses were sullenly received, and in some cases responded to by murmurs.

"What can it mean?" remarked Bourbon to his attendants, as, having completed the inspection, he rode back towards his tent. "Officers and men seem unwilling to fight. Did I not know them better—had not their courage been proved in many a conflict—I should think they were alarmed at the task before them."

"They have heard too much of the reception they are likely to meet with," replied Lurcy. "They have seen how it has fared with hundreds of their comrades who have gone before them, and fear to share their fate. Besides? they have been discouraged."

"Discouraged!" exclaimed Bourbon, fiercely. "By whom?"

"By their leaders," rejoined Lurcy. "Pescara has said openly that the city cannot be taken, and that the assault, when made, will fail. This opinion delivered to the officers, has been repeated to the men, and has produced the effect which your highness has just observed. The whole army is discouraged."

"By Sainte Barbe! I will speedily rouse its spirit," cried Bourbon. "I have long distrusted Pescara. He has thwarted me secretly at every turn, but I have hitherto defeated his machinations, and I shall defeat them now. But for him, I should have taken the city when the first breach was made in the walls; and I have ever since reproached myself for yielding to his perfidious counsel. The garrison is now far better prepared for resistance than it was then."

"Pescara's opinion may proceed from jealousy, but I confess I share it," said Pomperant. "If your highness had carefully examined the defences of the city as I have done—if you had witnessed the spirit displayed by the soldiers and by the people, and which presents a strong contrast to the sullenness and want of zeal of our own men, you would have come to the conclusion that Marseilles cannot be taken."

"Be the result what it may, the assault shall now be made," rejoined Bourbon. "By Sainte Barbe! I long for the moment of attack, when, amidst the roar of cannon and the rattle of arquebuses, we shall force our way through the breach, and hew down all who oppose us."

"You will then have a second ditch to cross, full of powder and combustibles," said Pomperant, "and another rampart, bristling with cannon, to scale."

"Were there a third ditch and a third rampart, they would not daunt me," cried Bourbon. "With this good blade, which has never yet failed me, I will cut a passage through the foe. Where I go, the men must follow."

"That is all I fear," said Lurcy. "I have no faith in these treacherous Spaniards."

"They cannot, dare not fall back now!" cried Bourbon.

"I hope not," replied Lurcy. But his looks belied his words.

On entering his tent with his suite, Bourbon found his confessor awaiting him, and the whole party knelt down reverently and performed their devotions. After partaking of a hasty meal, they donned their plumed casques, and buckling on their swords, issued forth, and mounted their steeds. By this time, the whole side of the hill, down which Bourbon now rode with his attendants, was covered with troops.

Glancing towards the city, Bourbon saw that ramparts, bastions, and towers were crowded with armed men. Extraordinary efforts had been made by the indefatigable Renzo da Ceri to repair the damage done by the cannonade and by the mine, but the breach was too considerable to be filled up in the short time allowed for the task. The gap, however, was occupied by a living wall of pikemen.

"Your highness sees that the garrison are in good heart," remarked Pomperant. "They will assuredly make an obstinate defence."

"You overrate their courage," rejoined Bourbon. "Our attack will strike terror into them. You will keep near me, Pomperant."

"Doubt it not, monseigneur," replied the other. "I care not if I perish in the breach. She I loved lies buried there."

At this moment Bourbon came to a halt, and shortly afterwards the Marquis del Vasto, accompanied by the Counts de Hohenzollern and De Lodron, with the principal leaders of the army, joined him. All these martial personages were fully accoutred and well mounted, and made a gallant show. But there was something in their looks and manner that convinced Bourbon and those with him that they were disinclined to the attack. However, he made no remark, but, saluting them with his wonted cordiality, said to Del Vasto, "Where is the Marquis of Pescara? I wish to consult with him before ordering the assault."

"He will be here anon," replied the young general. "He has ridden down to examine the breach more nearly."

"Close inspection is not required to ascertain its width," cried Bourbon, impatiently. "I shall not wait for his return. To your posts, messeigneurs!—to your posts!"

But, to his surprise and vexation, none of them stirred.

"Do you not hear me?" he exclaimed. "To your posts, I say!"

"A few minutes' delay can matter little, highness," remarked the Count de Hohenzollern. "We wish to hear Pescara's report. He may have some suggestions to offer."

"I can listen to no suggestions now," said Bourbon, imperiously. "My plans are fixed."

"Perhaps your highness has not been informed that the garrison has just been reinforced by fifteen hundred

lansquenets and three hundred horse sent by the king," remarked De Lodron.

"I care not for the reinforcements," rejoined Bourbon. "Were the garrison doubled I would not delay the assault. What means this hesitation, messeigneurs? Away with you!"

"Highness," said De Hohenzollern, respectfully, "I pray you pardon our seeming disobedience but it is necessary we should hear what the Marquis of Pescara has to say."

"Well, be it as you will," said Bourbon, with difficulty restraining his anger.

"Here he comes!" cried Del Vasto, as Pescara galloped towards them, attended by a score of mail-clad knights.

"So, you are come at last, marquis," said Bourbon, as Pescara rode up. "You have kept us waiting long. What discovery have you made?"

"I have seen enough to satisfy me of the inutility of the attack," rejoined the other. "These citizens of Marseilles have spread a well-covered table for our reception. Those who desire to sup in Paradise may go there. I shall not."

"A truce to this ill-timed jesting, my lord," said Bourbon, sternly. "Be serious for a moment, if you can, and let us arrange the attack."

"I have had enough of this siege," rejoined Pescara, "and shall return at once to Italy, which is stripped of soldiers, and threatened by the King of France."

"If you withdraw now, my lord, it will be in express defiance of my commands," said Bourbon. "You will answer to the Emperor for your conduct."

"His Imperial Majesty knows me too well to suppose that I would turn back from danger," replied Pescara. "But I will not attempt impossibilities. I am not alone in my opinion. Put the question to the other generals. How say you, messeigneurs?" he added to them. "Ought the assault to be made?"

"We are all against it," said Del Vasto, speaking for the others, who bowed assent.

"You are all in league to thwart me," cried Bourbon, furiously. "But I will put you to shame. I will show you that the assault *can* be made successfully. Go, my lord, if you will," he added to Pescara. "Your soldiers will follow me."

"Your highness is mistaken," returned the other. "They will inarch with me to Italy."

Suppressing his rage, Bourbon turned to the German generals.

"I shall not, I am sure, lack your aid, messeigneurs," he said. "You and your brave lanz-knechts will follow me?"

"Your highness must hold us excused," they replied.

"Where the Marquis of Pescara declines to go, we are not foolhardy enough to venture."

"You find that I am right," remarked Pescara, with a mocking laugh. "There is nothing left for it but to raise the siege and depart."

"Depart!—never!" cried Bourbon. "Why, if the assault be not made, the meanest burgess of Marseilles will laugh us to scorn. Let the charge be sounded," he added to Pomperant. "We shall soon see who will follow me."

"None but your own attendants will follow," said Pescara.

At this moment an esquire approached, and stated that a messenger had just arrived from Aix, bringing most important intelligence. Bourbon immediately ordered the man into his presence.

"Highness," said the messenger, "I have speeded hither to inform you that the king arrived last evening at Aix with the army."

"The king arrived at Aix!" exclaimed Bourbon. "By Sainte Barbe! this is important news indeed, if true."

"It will be speedily confirmed, monseigneur," said the messenger. "The Marshal de Chabannes is marching with the vanguard of the army to the relief of Marseilles."

Bourbon made no remark, but signed to the messenger to retire.

"Your highness must now admit that I gave you good counsel in advising you to abandon the siege," remarked Pescara.

"Out upon your counsel!—it has been ruinous," cried Bourbon. "The city might have been taken ere Chabannes could come up. But I will forgive you all, if you will march with me at once to meet the king, and compel him to give us battle. A victory will retrieve the disgrace we shall incur by abandoning the siege, and satisfy both the Emperor and the King of England."

"I am against the plan," rejoined Pescara, coldly. "The king's army is far superior to our own in number and we shall have the forces of the garrison in our rear! No, we must evacuate Provence."

"Not when a kingdom is to be won," cried Bourbon. "My lord! my lord! what change has come over you? Be yourself. François de Valois will now give us the opportunity we have so long sought. He cannot refuse a battle. We shall conquer. France lies before us, and invites us on!"

"Let those who will, go on," said Pescara, in a cold sarcastic tone. "I shall take the road to Italy. I will not risk a battle the result of which must be disastrous. Our army would be utterly destroyed. We must retreat while we can do so with safety."

"Never!" exclaimed Bourbon. "I will never retreat before François de Valois. The command of the army has been entrusted to me by the Emperor, and I call upon you to obey me."

"I refuse, monseigneur—peremptorily refuse," said Pescara.

For a few moments Bourbon was well-nigh choked with passion. When he could speak, he said, in hoarse accents, "Since you are resolved upon this disgraceful course, I cannot prevent it. But let not the retreat be conducted with undue haste, and with disorder. Our munitions of war must not fall into the hands of the enemy. Bury the heavy cannon brought from Toulon. The lighter ordnance can be carried by mules. Throw all the great shot into the sea. Leave nothing behind that can be serviceable to the foe."

Then casting one look at the city, the brave defenders of which thronged its walls and towers, utterly ignorant of their deliverance, and momentarily expecting the assault, he rode back to his tent, where he remained during the rest of the day, a prey to indescribable mental anguish.

By nightfall, all preparations for the retreat had been completed, and, as soon as it became dark, the tents were struck, and the whole army got into order of march, and set off in the direction of Toulon.

By midnight, the heights around Marseilles were entirely abandoned, and the city, which for five weeks had been completely environed by enemies, was once more free.

Cautiously as the retreat of the Imperial army was conducted, it could not be accomplished without being discovered by the garrison. Indeed, the inaction of the besiegers throughout the day had caused their design to be suspected. A sortie, for the purpose of investigation, was made by Renzo da Ceri at the head of a troop of cavalry, and when he returned with the joyful intelligence that the heights were evacuated and the enemy gone, nothing could exceed the delight of the citizens. All those who had retired to rest were roused from slumber by shouts and the ringing of bells. The populace were half frenzied with joy. Wherever Renzo da Ceri and Chabot de Brion appeared they were greeted with the most enthusiastic demonstrations of regard, and hailed as deliverers of the city. A torchlight procession, headed by the two commanders, was made through the principal streets, and when this was over, Renzo addressed a vast crowd in the Place de Linche. After extolling the courage and patriotic spirit displayed by the citizens, he said, "The only circumstance that mars my satisfaction at this moment of triumph is the loss of our brave Amazons, Marphise and Marcelline."

"Let not that thought afflict you, monseigneur," said Pierre Cépède, who was standing near him. "They live. They have been rescued from the ruins of the wall beneath which they were supposed to be buried. Heaven has preserved them."

When this joyful intelligence was communicated to the assemblage, a loud and long-continued shout rent the air.

While the citizens passed the night in rejoicing, Renzo da Ceri put himself at the head of a strong detachment of cavalry, and started in pursuit of the retreating enemy, for the purpose of harassing their march and cutting off stragglers.

He soon found they had taken the direction of Toulon, and had not proceeded far when he was joined by the Marshal de Chabannes with three hundred light horse. Together they hovered about the rear of the Imperial army until it had passed the Var, when they retired.

The Imperialists then pursued their course without further molestation, crossed the Maritime Alps, and entering Piedmont, proceeded to Alba, where they came to a halt.

Thus ended Bourbon's invasion of France. All the dreams of conquest he had indulged had vanished. The crown he had hoped to grasp had escaped him. His plans had been thwarted by the jealousy of his generals, who had deserted him at the critical moment, when success seemed certain. Deep and bitter was the mortification he endured. But though disheartened, he did not despair. He felt sure that the theatre of war would be soon transferred to Italy, well knowing that François I. would never relinquish his pretensions to the Duchy of Milan.

"We shall meet on these plains, if not in France," he said to Pomperant, "and then I will requite him for the injuries he has done me. I will forgive Fortune all the scurvy tricks she has played me of late if she will grant me that day."

END OF THE FOURTH BOOK

BOOK V.-THE BATTLE OF PAVIA

I. HOW FRANÇOIS I. SET OUT FOR ITALY, AND HOW HE ENTERED MILAN.

There is now no hindrance to my proposed campaign in Italy," remarked François I. to Bonnavet, when tidings of Bourbon's retreat were brought him. "Milan will speedily be regained, Genoa will follow, and then let the Emperor look well to Naples, if he would keep it. By Saint Louis! I will pluck that jewel from his crown, and place it on my own. I sent word to the Pope, that before the autumn was over I would cross the Alps at the head of thirty thousand men. His holiness was incredulous, but he will find it was no rash assertion. I will be in Milan within a month."

"Your majesty overlooks one impediment," remarked Bonnavet. "Your gracious mother, the Duchess d'Angoulême, is averse to the expedition, and may prevent it. She is now at Lyons, and will start for Aix as

soon as she learns that Bourbon has evacuated Provence. If you desire to execute your project, avoid an interview with her."

"The advice is good," said François. "My plan is fixed, but I do not wish to be importuned. I will despatch a messenger to the duchess with a letter, bidding her adieu, and at the same time appointing her Regent during my absence in Italy. Let immediate preparations be made for the march. Two days hence we will set out for Lombardy."

"Well resolved, sire," rejoined Bonnavet. "I am convinced that you have but to appear before Milan to compel its surrender."

"We shall see," said the king. "At all events, I do not think it will hold out as long as Marseilles."

"A propos of Marseilles, sire," said Bonnavet, "you must not forget that the principal citizens will be here tomorrow. No doubt they expect to receive your majesty's thanks for their gallant defence of the city."

"They shall have a worthy reception," returned François. "A grand fête shall be given in their honour. Give orders to that effect at once, and see that all is done to gratify these loyal citizens."

Next day, as had been anticipated, a numerous company arrived from Marseilles. The cavalcade was headed by the viguier, the magistrates, and many of the principal citizens, and was, moreover, accompanied by the band of Amazons. Peals of ordnance were fired, bells rung and trumpets brayed, as the procession entered Aix. The houses were hung with banners, and the streets filled with people eager to give them welcome. The Amazons were everywhere greeted with acclamations.

François received the party in the great hall of the palace. He was surrounded by a brilliant assemblage, comprising the chief personages of his army, and including, among others, the young King Henri de Navarre, the Duc d'Alençon, the Grand Master of France, the Comte de Saint-Paul, the Marshal de Montmorency, the Marshal de Foix, and the Seneschal d'Armagnac. Near to the king, on the left, stood the lovely Diane de Poitiers, and close behind them was a train of demoiselles and pages.

The viguier and the magistrates were presented to the king by Bonnavet, who, with a band of young nobles, had met them at the gates, and conducted them to the palace. François gave them a most cordial reception, thanking them in the warmest terms for the courage and zeal they had displayed. But his chief commendations were bestowed upon the Amazons; and he presented two gems to Marphise and Marcelline, bidding them wear them as tokens of his approval.

"I trust that my faithful city of Marseilles will never be placed in the like strait again, so that it may need the defence of its dames," he said; "but should it be so, I doubt not your noble example will be followed."

"We have shown our fellow-citizens what women can do in the hour of need, sire," said Marphise; "but now that our services are no longer required, we shall lay aside the arms we have borne, and resume our customary avocations. This is the last occasion on which we shall appear in these accoutrements—unless your majesty should think fit to call upon us again. In that case, we shall be ready to resume them."

"Foi de gentilhomme!" exclaimed François, smiling. "I am half inclined to take you with me to Italy, where you would earn as much distinction as you have done at Marseilles. How say you, fair damsels? Will you go with us? Such a corps would prove irresistible."

"Nay, sire," interposed Diane. "They have done enough. Marseilles cannot spare its heroines."

"You are right," said François. "I was but jesting. Women are not like our ruder sex. They do not love war for its own sake. Our camp would be no place for them."

"The Amazons of old fought as well as men, sire—better, if all reports be true," said Marphise, boldly. "We have something of their spirit."

"You ought to be soldiers' wives," said François, smiling, "and on my return from Italy—if you be not meanwhile wedded—I must find you husbands among my bravest captains. It greatly rejoices me to see you here to-day, for I had heard—much to my grief—that you perished during the explosion of a mine."

"We narrowly escaped being crushed to death, sire," replied Marcelline. "But after lying beneath the ruins for some hours, we were fortunately extricated."

"Heaven designed you for a better fate," said the king. "I have but imperfectly discharged my obligations to you. Whenever you have a favour to solicit, hesitate not to come to me. Foi de gentilhomme! the request shall be granted."

"At some future time I may claim fulfilment of your royal promise, sire," returned Marcelline.

The whole party then retired, charmed with their gracious reception. A sumptuous repast awaited them in the banqueting-chamber, and the rest of the day was spent in festivity and rejoicing.

"Are you prepared to brave the difficulties of the march and accompany me to Italy?" said François to Diane, as the Amazons withdrew.

"No, sire," she replied; "and I would fain dissuade you from the expedition. You have now an opportunity of making an advantageous peace with the Emperor. Why not profit by it?"

"Honour forbids me," he rejoined. "My own inclinations prompt me to remain here. But I must requite the affront offered me by Bourbon. I must win back the duchy I have lost."

"And for this you will quit France—you will quit me?" she added, in a lower tone.

"I must," he replied. "I have been attacked, and I owe it to myself to chastise the insolent aggressor."

At this moment a letter was handed to him by Bonnavet.

"From the Duchess d'Angoulême, sire," he said, in a significant tone, as he delivered it.

"What says your royal mother, sire?" demanded Diane, who had watched his countenance as he perused the letter. "I will wager she is of my mind, and urges you to abandon the expedition."

"You are right, ma mie," replied the king. "She tells me she is coming in all haste to Aix, having a secret of great importance to reveal to me, and she entreats me to delay my departure till her arrival."

"And you will comply with the request, sire?" said Diane. "No doubt she has some state secret to

communicate. You will wait?"

"I shall rather hasten my departure," rejoined the king. "I can guess the nature of her secret. It is a pretext to detain me—but I will not yield. Make ready, messeigneurs," he added to the leaders near him. "We shall set forth to Italy to-morrow."

"Why do you not dissuade his majesty from this expedition, messeigneurs?" said Diane to Saint-Paul and Montmorency. "I know you disapprove of it."

"If your majesty would listen to me," said Saint-Paul, "I would urge you to delay the campaign till the spring. The season is too far advanced. You will have to pass the winter in your tent, in the midst of snow and water."

"On the contrary, I shall pass the winter in the ducal palace at Milan, which is as large and pleasant as the Château de Blois," replied François. "What think you of the expedition, Montmorency?" he added to the marshal.

"Since you ask me, sire, I must say frankly that I am opposed to it," he replied. "I look upon the plains of Lombardy with dread. They are rife with all ailments. Agues and fever abound there, and pestilence reigns in the cities. I regard Lombardy as one vast sepulchre in which we are all to be engulfed."

"You had the plague at Abbiate-Grasso, and have not forgotten the attack," remarked the king.

"Ay, and the plague is now raging at Milan," said Montmorency. "Beware of it, sire. 'Tis a more deadly enemy than Bourbon."

"Oh, do not venture into that infected city, sire," implored Diane. "I have a presentiment that this expedition will be disastrous."

"Bah! I go to win another Marignan," rejoined François.

"We have more than a month of fine weather before us now," remarked Bonnavet to Diane. "Long before winter has set in his majesty will be master of Milan."

"But the plague!—the plague!" cried Diane. "How is he to avoid that? Be advised by me, sire, and stay in France, where you incur no risk."

"I laugh at all danger," rejoined the king. "My sole regret is that I must perforce leave you behind. To those who cannot brave the rigours of winter, or who are afraid of the pestilence," he added, glancing at Montmorency and Saint-Paul, "the roads of France will be open."

"Nay, sire, as long as you remain in Italy I shall stay—even if I find a tomb there," said Montmorency.

"It is well," rejoined François. "To-morrow we start on the expedition."

Seeing that her royal lover was inflexible, Diane made no further effort to turn him from his purpose. Her only hope was that the Duchess d'Angoulême might arrive before his departure. But in this she was disappointed. François had taken his measures too well. A messenger met the duchess on the way, and telling her the king was on the eve of departure, she turned back.

It was a glorious day on which François, after taking a tender farewell of Diane, set forth with his host from Aix—and it was a gallant sight to see the king, arrayed in his splendid armour, and mounted on his war-horse, issue from the gates accompanied by the flower of the French chivalry. Proceeding by forced marches along the valley of the Durance to Briançon, he crossed the Alps without difficulty by the Pass of Susa.

Enthusiastic was his delight at finding himself once more in Italy at the head of an army which he deemed irresistible. Without encountering any obstruction he pressed on to Vercelli, where he ascertained the movements of the enemy.

The Imperial army, it appeared, had been greatly reduced by the forced march from Marseilles, and had also sustained heavy losses of baggage and artillery. Two thousand men had been thrown into Alexandria. Lodi, Pizzighettone, and Como were also strongly garrisoned, but by far the most formidable preparations had been made at Pavia, the defence of which had been committed, as during Bonnavet's campaign in the previous year, to Antonio de Leyva. The garrison of Pavia was now augmented by five thousand German lanzknechts under De Hohenzollern, five hundred Spanish soldiers, and three hundred lances.

Bourbon and Pescara, accompanied by Lannoy, had marched with the rest of the army to Milan, and thither François determined to follow them.

Two days after quitting Vercelli the king appeared before the city. His approach could not, of course, be concealed from the Imperialists, and a long counsel was held by Bourbon and the other chiefs as to the possibility or prudence of holding the place against him. It was decided that, considering the enfeebled condition of the troops and the infected state of the city, there was no alternative but to abandon it. Defence under such circumstances was, indeed, impossible, and had the Imperial generals attempted to sustain a siege, the whole army would probably have been destroyed by the pestilence.

Accompanied by Sforza, Pescara, and the others, Bourbon therefore quitted the city, and proceeded to Lodi. Just as the last of the Imperialists marched out of Milan by the Porta Romana, a detachment of the French army, under La Trémouille, entered the city by the Porta Vercellina.

The satisfaction which François would have felt at this easy conquest was marred by the dismal aspect of the plague-stricken city. Ghastly evidences of the presence of the Destroyer met his eye at every turn. The deserted streets, the closed houses, the mournful air of the populace—all conspired to cast a gloom over him.

Just then the pestilence was at its height. On the very day on which he entered Milan with his host, several hundreds of persons had died, and as many more were sick. The hospitals and lazar-houses were filled to overflowing, and the pits surcharged with dead. No remedies could be found to arrest the progress of the scourge. Almost all who were seized by it perished, and the city was more than half depopulated.

No wonder that François blamed himself for his rashness in exposing his army to so much peril. But he resolved that his stay in Milan should be brief—no longer than was absolutely necessary to resume his authority—and that all possible precautions should be taken against contagion. With this view he secluded himself within the ducal palace, and ordered the army to encamp without the walls.

II. BONNIVET'S LAST INTERVIEW WITH THE COMTESSA DI CHERI.

There was a fair dame in Milan, to behold whom Bonnavet had urged the king, at all risks, to march on to the city. This was the Comtessa di Chieri. Had it been possible, he would have flown to her immediately on his arrival. But he was detained throughout the day at the ducal palace, partly in immediate attendance upon the king, and partly in the discharge of other duties that devolved upon him, for he was obliged to confer with the civic officials and others whom François would not admit to his presence. But he had despatched a messenger to the countess, with a letter informing her that he would visit her in the evening, and had received an answer saying she expected him.

When night came, and he was free, he flew to her palace in the Corso Romano, and was instantly admitted. He found her in the superb saloon where he had last seen her, surrounded with objects of luxury, and looking beautiful as ever. But her appearance was somewhat changed. There was a flush in her cheeks, and a preternatural brilliancy in her dark eyes. A rapturous meeting took place between them, and the pain of their long separation seemed forgotten in the bliss of the moment.

"I did not think I should ever behold you again," she murmured.

"You doubted my love for you, or you could never have entertained that notion," he replied, passionately, "Hear what I have done to obtain this interview. To pass an hour with you, Beata, I have prevailed upon the king to undertake a new campaign in Italy. To throw myself at your feet, I have induced him to march on Milan."

"You should not have come now," she rejoined. "Had I been able to do so, I would have warned you to avoid this infected city."

"I have no fear of the pestilence," said Bonnavet. "And I would brave any danger to be near you. But why have you exposed yourself to so much risk? Why have you remained here?"

"I could not leave," she rejoined. "And I have an excellent physician, Doctor Nardi, who watches over me. Ah! here he is," she added, as a grave-looking personage, attired in a black silk doublet and hose, and wearing a black silk skull-cap, entered the saloon.

After respectfully saluting Bonnavet, Doctor Nardi seated himself beside the countess, and kept his eyes upon her for some moments. Bonnavet, who watched him closely, thought he detected anxiety in his looks.

"You have not been quite well to-day, I think, countess?" remarked Doctor Nardi.

"I had a severe headache this morning," she replied. "But it has passed."

"Any feverish symptoms?" inquired the doctor.

"Yes," she replied. "About an hour ago, I felt stifled with heat, and then had a shivering fit. But there is nothing to be alarmed at?" she added, nervously.

"Nothing—nothing," he replied. "But you must retire to rest immediately. The fever has not quite left you, and may return."

"But why should I retire to rest, dear doctor?" appealed the countess. "I do not feel ill. Ah! I see you are alarmed about me," she continued, gazing eagerly at him. "Tell me what is the matter?"

"Do not agitate yourself, signora," he returned. "You will soon be better—but you must attend to my directions. I will send you a febrifuge presently, and will see you in the morning. Good night, countess."

He then bowed and departed, and Bonnavet, feeling very uneasy, followed him out of the room.

"I trust the countess is not seriously ill, doctor?" inquired Bonnavet.

"A passing indisposition," replied Nardi, evasively. "But you must not stay, monseigneur. Take leave of the countess. At this awful season there is no security that they who part at night may meet again on the morrow."

The last words were uttered with a significance that increased Bonnavet's uneasiness.

"Do not conceal the truth from me, doctor," he said. "The certainty, however dreadful, would be more tolerable than suspense."

"What purpose will it answer to tell you what I think?" rejoined Nardi. "Be advised by me, and leave the palace without delay. Every moment you remain here increases the risk."

"Ha!" ejaculated Bonnavet, horror-stricken. "I now understand. But I will not leave her."

"As you please, monseigneur," said Nardi. "I have warned you."

"Stay, I implore of you," cried Bonnavet, detaining him. "Is there any means of saving her?"

"Alas! none," replied Nardi. "She is beyond the power of medicine. I have seen too many fatal cases lately to be mistaken. She has all the worst symptoms about her. Before to-morrow morning she will be a corpse."

"Oh! say not so, doctor!" cried Bonnavet, distractedly.

"You are never content," rejoined Nardi, petulantly, "You try to extract the truth from me, and when I yield to your importunities, you are dissatisfied. You now know the worst. Act as you think proper; but if you would not yourself fall a victim to the pestilence, you will leave the palace as expeditiously as possible. I will send a nurse to attend upon the countess, and a priest to minister to her soul's welfare."

"I cannot, will not, leave her," rejoined Bonnavet, rushing back to the saloon.

"Then share her fate," muttered Nardi, shrugging his shoulders as he departed.

Even in this brief interval a marked change had taken place in the countess's looks. The flush in her cheeks had given way to deathly pallor, but the fire in her large black eyes burnt yet more fiercely. As Bonnavet returned, she started up from the couch on which she had sunk, and caught hold of his arm.

"What has he told you?" she demanded, gazing at him as if to search into his soul. "I know he thinks me ill—very ill—but he does not suspect—ha!" And she paused.

"No, no; calm yourself," rejoined Bonnavet, endeavouring to reassure her. "There is no danger. But he charged me to reiterate his order that you should retire to rest immediately."

"But I do not choose to obey him," she rejoined. "I do not want to part with you. I feel better—much better. Come and sit beside me," she added, returning to the couch, "and let us renew the discourse which the doctor interrupted. I will leave Milan to-morrow. If you march to Lodi or Pavia, I may accompany you—may I not?"

Bonnavet made no reply.

"You do not seem pleased by the proposition," she continued. "Do you not wish to have me near you?"

"Oh! this is more than I can bear!" exclaimed Bonnavet, unable to repress his emotion.

The countess gazed at him bewildered,

"Your looks affright me," she said, "I am sure Doctor Nardi has told you more about me than you are—"

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—authority over the garrison, which consists almost exclusively of German lanz-knechts, who have been badly paid, and are known to be discontented."

"That may be true," remarked Montmorency, "but De Leyva is a very skilful commander, full of energy and resources, and will make a long and vigorous defence. When the Imperial army quitted Milan on our approach it was in a state of great disorder. The men had suffered greatly by their march, and were in many cases without arms, and almost without accoutrements. Again, the plague has thinned their ranks, and those who are left are disheartened. They can soon be starved out at Lodi, where provisions are scanty. Lodi ours—Bourbon, Pescara, Lannoy, and Sforza captives—Pavia and all the other cities and fortresses of the duchy must inevitably surrender. From these considerations, I counsel your majesty to march on the Adda and not to encamp on the Ticino."

All the other leaders, except Saint-Marsault, concurred with Montmorency; but Bonnavet would not give up his point.

"The king's honour is concerned in the matter," he said. "A war waged by his majesty in person ought not to be conducted according to the ordinary rules of military tactics."

"No successful war can be conducted otherwise," remarked Montmorency, contemptuously. "Such advice would not have been tendered by Bayard, were he alive."

"It comports not with the king's dignity to attack a small fortress while an important city holds out," restarted Bonnavet. "Pavia captured, his majesty will be master of the Milanese, and can then proceed to the invasion of Naples."

"Foi de gentilhomme! you are right," exclaimed the king. "Honour calls us to Pavia and not to Lodi, and we will obey the summons. Seigneur de la Trémouille," he added to that general, "I entrust to you the defence of this city of Milan. I will leave with you eight thousand fantassins and three hundred lances—a force amply sufficient in the event of an attack on the part of the Imperialists. As to you, messeigneurs," he continued to the others, "you will make ready. Tomorrow we set out for Pavia."

Towards evening, on the following day, François appeared before Pavia with the whole of his army, excepting that portion of it which had been left with La Trémouille for the defence of Milan.

The king was in excellent spirits, confident in his army, which was in splendid condition, and well supplied with cavalry and artillery, and he had entire faith in Bonnavet's representations that Pavia would be an easy conquest, and its possession ensure him the mastery of the duchy.

It was therefore in a blithe mood that he approached the ancient capital of the Longobardi kingdom, and gazed at its numerous towers and spires, its proud Duomo and stern castello, rising from out its walls, and now empurpled by the rays of the setting sun.

"Is not yon city better worth fighting for than Lodi, sire?" remarked Bonnavet, who was riding near him, and saw what was passing in his breast.

"Ay, marry is it," rejoined the king. "I should almost be sorry if it were to surrender. A week's siege will be pleasant pastime."

"I do not think your majesty will be disappointed," replied Bonnavet. "De Leyva is obstinate, and will not yield without giving us some trouble. But the city *must* fall when you choose to take it, and you can therefore proceed as leisurely as you will. As I have already explained to your majesty, the garrison, which consists almost entirely of German lanz-knechts, under the command of the Comte de Hohenzollern, is discontented and even mutinous, and, if need be, can be easily corrupted."

"I would rather conquer with steel than gold," rejoined François, laughing. "But let us consider where I shall establish my quarters. I must have access to yon charming park of Montibello, which, with its woods and glades, reminds me of the forest of Fontainebleau."

And, as he spoke, he pointed to a vast park, several miles in extent, and very thickly wooded, lying to the north of the city. In the midst of this park, which, extensive as it was, was completely surrounded by strong and lofty walls, stood a large palace, which had been built as a hunting-seat by Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan.

The palace, though merely designed to enable its princely owner to pursue the pleasures of the chase, was strongly fortified, moated, and approached by a drawbridge. As may well be imagined, the close vicinity of this vast and noble park to the city was a great embellishment to its appearance. But, in truth, Pavia was extremely beautiful and picturesque, full of splendid edifices, and boasting numerous churches, convents, and stately mansions.

At the same time, the extraordinary number of strong and lofty towers by which it was guarded, together with its huge and frowning citadel, gave it a very formidable appearance, which was further increased by its walls and bastions, now abundantly garnished with ordnance. But it was not merely to its walls and towers that Pavia owed its strength. On the side on which it was weakest it was protected by a deep and rapid river, which formed an impassable moat.

About a league above Pavia the Ticino divides itself into two arms, one of which bathes the walls in the manner just described, while the lesser arm, after describing a wide curve, rejoins the main stream below the city, forming an island near its point of junction, on which the suburb of Sant Antonio was built. A stone bridge, erected by Gian Galeazzo Visconti, covered by a gallery and defended by a strong tower, connected this suburb with the city.

Between the banks of the lesser arm of the Ticino and the walls, and contiguous to the park of Mirabello, stood the stately abbey of San Lanfranco and the church of San Salvator, and it was towards these structures that Bonnivet now directed the king's attention.

"Your majesty observes yonder abbey and church," he said, pointing them out. "There you can conveniently establish your quarters during the siege. Openings can easily be made in the walls so as to give you access to the park of Mirabello, and, if you are so minded, you can occupy the chateau of Gian Galeazzo Visconti."

"I like the situation of the abbey best, and will take up my quarters near it," said the king. "I will have you and the Grand Master with me, and the main part of the army shall encamp there. The Marshal de la Palisse shall post himself on yon hills on the east of the city," pointing in that direction. "The Duke d'Alençon shall occupy the park of Mirabello, and take possession of the chateau of Gian Galeazzo."

"Possession of the little island on which stands the suburb of Sant Antonio is important," said Bonnivet. "If your majesty will allow me, I will take it."

"No, that shall be Montmorency's task," rejoined François. "He is angry that we have come hither in preference to Lodi. I must find him employment."

These arrangements were carried out. Next morning François fixed his quarters near the abbey of San Lanfranco, while his generals posted themselves as he had directed.

On the same day, the Marshal de Montmorency with a large force, consisting of more than five thousand men, crossed the lesser arm of the Ticino by a bridge of boats, and took possession of the island. Then turning to the tower, at the head of the bridge communicating with the city, he summoned the little garrison to surrender, and meeting with a determined refusal from the officer in command, immediately attacked the tower and took it. Most of the garrison had fallen during the assault, but the survivors—amongst whom was the captain, a valiant man-at-arms—were brought before the marshal.

"How dared you resist the king's army in a paltry shed like that?" he demanded.

"It was our duty to guard the bridge, monseigneur," replied the captain, boldly.

"You are false traitors, and shall serve as an example to your fellows, who will learn the fate they may expect if they hold out," rejoined Montmorency, furiously. "Away with them!" he added to the guard. "Hang them at once from the summit of the tower, in face of the city, so that the whole garrison may behold them."

The ruthless mandate was immediately carried into effect, and the brave soldiers were ignominiously put to death.

Unable to stay the execution, which he witnessed from the walls of the city, De Leyva vowed to make terrible reprisals on the first prisoners he should take, and he kept his word. By partially destroying the bridge, he prevented Montmorency from following up his success in that direction.

Pavia being now invested at all points, François determined to commence the assault without delay, and his batteries being placed and mounted with powerful artillery, he opened fire simultaneously on the eastern and western sides of the city, continuing the cannonade for three days, when a sufficient breach in either portion of the walls was effected.

Next day, the assault was made on both points at the same time, and at each encountered a vigorous resistance.

One party of the besiegers was led on by Bonnivet, who gallantly mounted the breach, but on gaining its summit he was checked by the pikes of the Spanish soldiers, and discovered, at the same time, that within the walls there was a deep trench, of the existence of which he had been ignorant, while from its parapets a company of arquebusiers, commanded by De Leyva, poured a murderous fire upon him. His armour alone saved him—all those near him being struck down. As it was impossible to force the breach under such circumstances, he was compelled to retire.

Nor did better success attend the Marshal de la Palisse, by whom the assault was made on the other side of the city. He was repulsed with heavy loss by the Comte de Hohenzollern.

It was then found that such preparations had been made by De Leyva that it was impossible to take the place by assault, and that recourse must be had to the tedious operations of sap and mine. However, the king reconciled himself without difficulty to the delay, and his troops, so far from being dissatisfied, were well pleased. There was plenty of good cheer in the camp, abundance of provisions were brought from the country round, and a market was held in the park of Mirabello, where these were sold.

Thus the besiegers led a joyous life, interrupted only by an occasional skirmish. As to François, he amused himself by hunting daily in the vast park, and while engaged in the chase almost forgot the object that had brought him thither. His nights were spent in festivity, and the attraction of female society was not wanting, for bands of fair dames came over from Piacenza. A bridge of boats across the Ticino connected the king's

camp with the island on which Montmorency was stationed, and a similar bridge at another part of the river made communication easy with La Palisse. The Duke d'Alençon, as we have mentioned, was quartered in the Castle of Mirabello.

IV. OF THE STRATAGEM PRACTISED BY ANTONIO DE LEYVA.

But while abundance was to be found in the camp of the besiegers, and while the French army was contented and even joyous, severe privation was already experienced in Pavia.

Disappointed in the succours he expected to receive from Lodi, De Leyva had already put the garrison on short allowance, and provisions had become so scarce, that the horrors of famine began to be anticipated. Occasionally supplies were obtained by skirmishing parties, but these were inefficient for a populous city like Pavia, and were speedily exhausted.

But De Leyva appeared wholly unconcerned by the distress he saw around him. Harsh and inflexible, resolute in the performance of his duty, and callous to the sufferings of others, he looked on the people around him with a cold, un pitying eye. So long as the garrison could be fed, he cared not what became of the citizens.

His worst apprehensions were caused by the mutinous spirit which on several occasions of late had been evinced by the German lanz-knechts under De Hohenzollern.

He had tried to allay their discontent by promising them their pay, but as he could not make good his word, his assurances were treated with derision, and the men even threatened, if not paid, to deliver the city to the enemy.

That this would be carried out, De Leyva became convinced by discovering that a secret correspondence existed between the Comte d'Azarnes, one of the German leaders, and Bonnivet. The knowledge of the secret thus obtained he prudently kept to himself, resolving to punish the treachery of Azarnes at a fitting season. As gold, however, must be obtained at whatever risk, he carefully thought over the matter, and at last conceived a stratagem by which he hoped that a supply of money might be safely passed through the French army. During a sortie which he made for the purpose into the park of Mirabello, he despatched an emissary in whom he could confide, with instructions to Lannoy and Pescara, both of whom were at Lodi.

While François, unable to take the city by assault, was proceeding by slower means, a plan was suggested to him by an officer belonging to the Duke d'Alençon, which promised success, and gave great uneasiness to the besieged. This was no less than to divert the main arm of the Ticino, which flowed past Pavia, into the lesser channel. If the plan could be accomplished, the city, being entirely undefended on this side, must necessarily fall.

Every exertion, therefore, was used by the king to carry the scheme into effect. An enormous number of men were employed in damming up the main arm of the river, and in deepening and widening the channel of the lesser arm so as to receive its waters, and as the work progressed François was greatly elated by the prospect of success, while De Leyva attempted, though vainly, to fortify the exposed part of the city, which, when the bed of the river was laid dry, would be open to attack.

On both sides the opinion now prevailed that Pavia was doomed, but its resolute commander held stoutly on, and would not listen to any terms of capitulation.

Another day, and all would have been over, when just at the critical moment, while prayers were offered in the Duomo for the preservation of the city, torrents of rain began to fall, and continued to pour down without intermission for several hours, until the swollen waters of the Ticino could no longer be restrained, but, bursting the embankments reared against them, returned to their original channel.

Pavia was saved. Fervent thanksgivings were offered up by the citizens, who regarded the occurrence as providential, and a *Te Deum* was chanted in the Duomo. Discouraged by the ill success of the scheme, François made no attempt to renew it.

Just after this event, which Antonio de Leyva looked upon as a good omen, another incident of a very different nature occurred.

We have said that a large market was held in the park of Mirabello, at which provisions of all kinds were sold by country-folk to the soldiers. One morning, two tall and robust young men, with handsome and sunburnt visages, and clad like peasants, were allowed to pass through the French camp, there being nothing either in their looks or deportment calculated to excite suspicion. Each led a mule charged with a couple of large casks, apparently filled with wine, and as the two young peasants strode along they laughed and jested with the soldiers.

On arriving at the place where the market was held, they were speedily surrounded by eager customers, and while chaffering with them moved gradually nearer and nearer to the city walls, until it became evident that they had attracted the notice of the sentinels, and they were cautioned by the soldiers with them not to go any farther. The peasants, however, treated the warning as a joke, and went on.

All at once, a troop of cavalry, headed by De Leyva, issued from a sallyport, and dashing at the party, seized the peasants and their mules, and carried them off into the city before any attempt at rescue could be made by the troops of the Duke d'Alençon, who had witnessed the affair.

As soon as De Leyva was safe within the walls of the city, he gave vent to a hearty fit of laughter, and the

two peasants joined in his merriment.

"Admirably executed, by my fay!" exclaimed the governor. "The stratagem has succeeded to a miracle, little do the enemy dream what rare wine they have allowed to escape them. 'Tis a vintage fit for the king's table—ha! ha! But whom have I to thank for the important service thus rendered me?" he added to the foremost of the peasants. "Unless I am mistaken, it is the Seigneur Pomperant."

"Your excellency is right," replied the other. "Lan-roy and Pescara could find no better messenger than myself, so I have come hither disguised, as you see, with my attendant Hugues. Each of those casks contains a thousand golden ducats—a rich prize for the king, if it had fallen into his hands."

"A good sum, in truth, and if it will not pay the lanz-knechts in full, it will at least stop their mouths for a time," rejoined De Leyva, laughing. "Again I thank you for the service, though I am sorry you will have to remain in this city. There is plenty of revelry, I am told, each night in the king's camp, but there is none here. All we do in Pavia is to fast, pray, and fight."

"I am familiar with beleaguered cities," said Pomperant. "I was in Marseilles during the siege."

"Marseilles endured no privations," rejoined De Leyva. "The port was open, and supplies could be sent in by the fleet. But here we are cut off from everything. May I count on speedy succour from Lannoy and Pescara?"

"I fear not," replied Pomperant. "They are not in a condition to march upon the king's army. But they expect reinforcements."

"Where is the Duke de Bourbon?" demanded De Leyva.

"In Suabia collecting an army," replied Pomperant. "From what I have heard from his highness he will get together a large force, and, when he returns, I doubt not he will fly to your succour."

"I hope he may not come too late," remarked De Leyva.

"Before setting out, the duke told me that he knew full well your excellency would hold out, and that most assuredly he would be back in time to relieve you."

"Well, I suppose I must be content," said De Leyva. "But I am eager to examine the treasure."

By the governor's orders the casks were then taken to the castello, and on being opened were found full of golden pieces, which De Leyva immediately distributed among the German lanz-lanechts, telling them the remainder of their pay was safe in the hands of the Viceroy of Naples, at Lodi, and should be given to them as soon as it could be sent with safety. By this means confidence was restored, and the tendency to mutiny checked.

The time had now arrived for the punishment of the traitor. On the day after the gold had been distributed as above mentioned, De Leyva sent for Azarnes to the castello, and after conversing with him for some time in a friendly manner, called for wine. A cup of Cyprus was filled, and Azarnes drank it unsuspectingly. Another goblet was offered to De Leyva, but, though he raised it to his lips, he took care not to taste it. After a while, De Leyva drew from his breast the letter addressed to Bonnivet which he had intercepted, and, showing it to Azarnes, asked him sternly if it was his writing. With such evidence against him, the unfortunate man did not dare to attempt denial.

"Your silence proclaims your guilt," said De Leyva. "You deserve death, but act as I enjoin, and I will pardon you."

"I am ready to obey your excellency," rejoined Azarnes.

"Write, then, to Bonnivet that the men are firm, and refuse to deliver up the city," said De Leyva. "Add that pay has been sent them by the Viceroy of Naples, and that succour is daily expected."

Azarnes wrote as commanded, and when the letter was finished, De Leyva took it.

"I will send the letter off at once," he said. "Remain here till I return. I shall not be long absent. I have more to say to you."

And, with a singular look at Azarnes, he quitted the room.

De Leyva had not been gone many minutes, when the unfortunate man was seized with a mortal sickness, and a frightful suspicion crossing him, he examined the other goblet, and found it untouched. He then knew that he was poisoned, and made for the door, but ere he could reach it his strength utterly forsook him, and he fell on the ground. At this moment De Leyva entered the chamber.

"What! my wine is too potent for you—ha?" he exclaimed.

"You have poisoned me," groaned the dying man.

"I have been compelled to become your executioner," rejoined De Leyva. "I would rather have put you to death publicly, but since justice might have been defeated, I have elected this plan."

The action of the terrible poison was so swift, that ere many minutes Azarnes had ceased to exist.

V. GEORGE VON FRUNDSBERG.

On quitting Milan on the approach of François I., Bourbon proceeded with Lannoy and Pescara to Lodi, where he remained for a few days, and then announced his intention of proceeding to Germany to raise a fresh army for the Emperor.

"Your highness has my best wishes for the success of your project, but I fear you will fail," said Lannoy.

"If we have to wait till you bring back an army from Germany, we shall wait long enough," remarked

Pescara, sarcastically.

"In less than two months I will be back, and will bring with me ten or twelve thousand men," said Bourbon, confidently.

Counting upon the friendship always professed for him by the Duke of Savoy, and upon the disposition lately shown by that potentate to attach himself zealously to the Imperial cause, Bourbon first directed his course to Turin, and was received as cordially by the prince as he had been after the victory of Romagnano.

Bourbon told the prince his design, frankly explaining to him the enfeebled condition of the Imperial army, and the absolute necessity that existed for its prompt reinforcement.

"I am now going to Suabia," he said, "and with the assistance of the Archduke Ferdinand, I hope to be able to get together a sufficient number of men, but to do this I must have money, for the Germans will not fight without pay. Herein lies the grand difficulty, and I know not where to turn for aid, unless to your highness. It is in vain to apply to the Emperor. Apparently he has no money to send, for he is terribly in arrear with his own army. Time will not allow application to be made to Henry VIII., even if he should be disposed to yield further subsidies. How say you, prince? Will you generously help me in my need? It will be an incalculable favour to the Emperor as well as to myself, for, unless you aid him at this juncture, he will lose Lombardy, and possibly Naples."

"You shall not sue in vain, prince," returned the Duke of Savoy, graciously. "I will aid you as much for your own sake as for that of the Emperor. Not merely will I empty my treasure for you, but you shall have all my jewels. It shall not be my fault if you do not raise an army."

"By Sainte Barbe!" cried Bourbon, overjoyed, "I did right to come to your highness. You are a true friend. If François de Valois is compelled to leave Italy, it will be you who will drive him out."

Next day, Bourbon quitted Turin loaded with gold and jewels, and shaped his course at once towards Germany. After visiting the Archduke Ferdinand, by whose aid he was enabled, in an incredibly short space of time, to raise five hundred Burgundian lances and six thousand lanz-knechts, he proceeded to Memmingen, for the purpose of obtaining the assistance of the renowned George von Frundsberg.

Of this remarkable personage, who claims a place in our history, it will be necessary to offer a brief preliminary description.

Of gigantic stature, endowed with prodigious strength, truculent in aspect, ferocious in manner and disposition, George von Frundsberg, lord of Mindelheim, more resembled a robber-chief than a military leader. His appearance was at once formidable and grotesque. His features were large, bloated and inflamed by intemperance, his nose aquiline, his eyes fierce and bloodshot, and overshadowed by black beetling brows. His hair was grizzled, and shorn close to the skull; but his beard was shaggy, and his immense moustaches stuck out like the whiskers of a tiger, imparting an extraordinarily savage character to his physiognomy. His powerful frame had been originally well proportioned, but he had now acquired an ungainly corpulence, which his armour could not conceal.

Von Frundsberg was a furious Lutheran, and, in his zeal for propagating the new doctrines, had perpetuated the Romish priesthood without being seized by an access of rage; and bore at his girdle a gold chain, with which he had vowed to strangle the Sovereign Pontiff with his own hands.

Having at his command an army of four or five thousand men, Von Frundsberg was a very important ally to gain.

Accompanied by Marx Sittich d'Ems, whom he had appointed to the command of his Burgundian lances, Bourbon visited Von Frundsberg at his castle of Mindelheim, and was entertained by him with rude but profuse hospitality. The fierce Lutheran chief astounded his guests by his capacity for drinking, and he emptied stoup after stoup of Rhenish during the repast, but though frightful atrocities. He never spoke of the Pope or they did not follow his example, they laughed at his terrible and impious jests, and Bourbon gained him over by promising that as soon as the French were driven out of Italy he would march with him to Rome, and allow his men to sack the city.

"On that understanding I will join your highness," said Von Frundsberg, "and will bring with me five thousand of the bravest reiters and lanz-knechts in Suabia—such soldiers as are not to be found in the French camp. They will go wherever I choose to take them, because they know that, if ill paid, they are certain of plunder, and that if they starve one day they will feast the next. Like myself, they are staunch Lutherans, all excommunicated by the Pope, and their great delight is to torture and slay the priests of Baal, to break their idols, and plunder their temples of their gold and silver ornaments. By my father's bones! what sanctuaries we have stripped. What tall candlesticks! what weighty chalices! what splendid cups we have carried off! At Rome there will be no end of plunder. Every church contains a mine of wealth, and if the priests hide their plate and vessels we will soon force them to bring them out—ho! ho! There is no better amusement than torturing a priest. It is the height of my ambition to plunder Saint Peter's, to rifle the temple of Antichrist of its treasures, to destroy its altars, and wash out its abominations in the blood of its priests; and if the arch-pontiff himself falls into my hands, I have sworn to hang him with a chain fabricated for the purpose. Here it is," he added, displaying it. "One must show respect even to the Pope—à tout seigneur tout honneur!—ho! ho!"

Though disgusted by the sacrilegious wretch, Bourbon constrained himself, and led him to believe that he shared his opinions, and was so lavish in his promises of plunder, that, before the repast was concluded, Von Frundsberg had engaged to share his fortunes.

"Promise to take me to Rome," he cried. "Promise me the treasures of Saint Peter's and the Vatican for my soldiers. Promise me Antichrist for myself," he cried, with a ferocious and stunning laugh, "and I am yours, body and soul."

"I promise you all you ask," rejoined Bourbon.

"Then the compact is made," said Von Frundsberg, striking the table with his tremendous fist, and making all the goblets upon it rattle. "We will march for Lombardy to-morrow. Meanwhile, we will drink confusion to François de Valois. You will pledge me in that toast?" he added, draining his capacious cup.

Bourbon and Marx Sittich did him reason, and the carouse was continued to a late hour.

Bourbon did not allow the ardour of his newly-acquired ally to cool, but held him to his promise to march without delay. When Von Frundsberg ordered his men to get ready, and told them whither they were going, they shouted enthusiastically, feeling sure that if they once entered Italy they would find their way to Rome, whither their leader had engaged to take them.

Proceeding by forced marches, Bourbon conducted his newly-acquired army by Lindau and Feldkirch to Coire, and thence, across the Splugen, into Italy.

When he reappeared at Lodi at the head of this force, Lannoy and Pescara were filled with amazement, and though they congratulated him on his extraordinary success with feigned heartiness, it was easy to perceive they were greatly mortified.

Bourbon laughed secretly at their chagrin. His position was now totally changed in regard to them, for the army he had raised was his own, and only recognised him as general.

"I told you I would bring back twelve thousand men with me," he said to Pescara. "I have kept my word, as you see."

"I did not think it possible, I own," rejoined the other. "You have employed your time well, whereas we have done little during your absence. But De Leyva still holds out."

"I know it," said Bourbon, "We must march instantly to his relief."

"With the reinforcement you have brought, we need not hesitate to attack the king," rejoined Pescara. "I have carefully prepared a plan of action, which I feel assured will be crowned with success. I will submit it to you, and if you approve it, we will act upon it."

"'Tis a good plan, and well considered," observed Lannoy.

"Then I will adopt it," said Bourbon. "Let us fly to victory."

VI. HOW FRANÇOIS I. REFUSED TO RAISE THE SIEGE OF PAVIA.

While Bourbon was occupied in collecting a fresh army in Suabia, renewed efforts were made by Clement VII. to bring about a peace between the contending powers. The conduct of the negotiations was confided by the Pope to his datary, Giovan Mattheo Gilberto, and this personage first addressed himself to Lannoy, proposing a truce of five years, the terms of which should be arranged by the Supreme Pontiff. But Lannoy haughtily rejected the proposal, declaring he would never treat with the King of France so long as that monarch retained a foot of ground in Italy.

Though foiled in the onset, Giber to did not despair of accomplishing his object, and, proceeding to the French camp, obtained an interview with the king. Having heard what he had to say, François replied:

"The moment is ill chosen to make this offer to me. Tell his Holiness that I did not cross the Alps with an army of thirty thousand men to make a profitless peace with the Emperor. I brought my troops into Lombardy to retake the duchy of Milan, and I shall not be deterred from my purpose by promises or threats. I shall speedily be master of Pavia, and shall then pursue my conquests. You shall hear my plans, for I calculate upon the Pope's assistance in carrying them out. I am about to send the Duke of Albany to Naples with six thousand fantassins and six hundred lances, to be detached from my own army. At Leghorn, Albany will be reinforced by three thousand men brought thither by my fleet, and commanded by the valiant Renzo da Ceri. Thus augmented, the army will march on through the Roman States, where it will be further increased by four thousand Italian soldiers promised me by Orsini."

"Sire," returned the datary, "although I do not approve of the proposed expedition, I venture to engage that it will not be opposed by his Holiness, who will, I make no doubt, allow the Duke of Albany a free passage through the Roman States, and render him other assistance. But have you well considered the prudence of the step you are about to take? It is known that the Duke de Bourbon is levying a vast number of troops in Suabia, and will probably collect together a large army. Is it wise to reduce your own forces to this extent?"

"My object is to create a diversion, and so weaken the strength of the Imperial army," rejoined François. "When Lannoy finds that I have despatched a force to attack Naples, he will necessarily send back all the best of the Spanish troops for the defence of the city, and will thus leave Lombardy unprotected. As soon as the bulk of his forces is withdrawn, the whole of the Milanese will fall into my hands, and having garrisoned the chief cities, I shall march on to Naples."

"It is a bold but hazardous manouvre, sire," replied Giberto, "and I trust success may attend it. I grieve to find that my efforts to bring about a peace, which might be even more advantageous than conquest to your majesty, have proved ineffectual. But let me assure you that his Holiness loves you as a son, and will certainly aid you, so far as he can, without offending the Emperor."

The plan thus propounded by François to the datary was carried into effect. When Lannoy was informed that the Duke of Albany had marched with a large force to Naples, he became seriously alarmed, and his first impulse, as François had anticipated, was to send baek all his soldiers tor the defence of the city; but he was earnestly dissuaded from the step by Peseara.

"The fate of Naples will be decided in Lombardy," said this astute general. "If François is victorious, he will march off instantly to the south of Italy to complete his conquest. If we win, we have nothing to fear from

Albany's expedition."

Governed by this reasoning, the force of which he acknowledged, Lannoy remained with his troops at Lodi, thus defeating the king's manœuvre, while Albany was allowed to pursue his march through Italy unmolested.

The army of the King of France was still further diminished by the loss of six thousand Grisons, of whose assistance he was deprived in a very singular manner, as we shall proceed to relate.

Among the many adventurers brought to the surface during this troublous time in Italy, one of the most remarkable was Gian Giacomo Medequin. He had filled the office of secretary to Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, and while in that capacity betrayed the duke's secrets to the French. Discovering his treachery, Sforza determined to get rid of him, and, with this view, charged him with a letter to the governor of Musso, a small fortified town situated in a remote part of the duchy at the north of the Lake of Como. Suspecting mischief, the unscrupulous Medequin opened the letter, and found that it was an order to the governor to throw him into the lake.

On making this discovery, instead of seeking safety in flight, Medequin formed a plan of vengeance, and, proceeding to Musso, sought the lieutenant of the fort, to whom he delivered a letter which he had forged, purporting to come from Sforza, ordering the lieutenant to arrest the governor, and commit the custody of the fort to Medequin. The forged order was obeyed, and Medequin became master of the garrison. To screen himself from the consequences of this audacious act, it was necessary that he should render some important service to the Imperial army. He resolved, therefore, to obtain possession of the Castle of Chiavenna, an important stronghold belonging to the Grisons, and lying in ambush with a sufficient force, he succeeded at last in seizing upon the governor of the place. No sooner had he secured his prey than he rode towards Chiavenna with a strong escort, and demanded to speak with the châtelaine. When she appeared on the walls, she beheld her husband, bound hand and foot, and kneeling before Medequin, who held an executioner's sword in his hand, ready to smite off the unfortunate man's head.

"If you would save your husband's life, madame, you will instantly deliver up the city," he shouted to her.

"Heed not the threat," said the captive; "I am ready to die."

"Be speedy in your decision, madame, or I strike," cried Medequin, raising the sword.

"Hold!" exclaimed the affrighted châtelaine. "I cannot see my husband perish thus. Open the gates."

So Chiavenna was delivered up.

The loss of this stronghold caused great alarm to the Grisons, who were not without apprehension of further disasters, as their country was almost defenceless, the élite of their army being with François I. before Pavia. Peremptory orders were instantly sent to these men to return without delay, and in spite of all the efforts made by the king and his generals to detain them, they at once quitted the French camp.

By this bold device, François was unexpectedly deprived of the services of six thousand of his troops, and at a moment when he could least spare them, while Medequin secured the protection of Pescara and Lannoy.

Ill fortune seemed to attend the king at this juncture. The important and strongly garrisoned fort of Sant Angelo was taken by Pescara. A Milanese captain, named Palavicini, in the service of the King of France, had advanced with a strong force towards Cremona, with the intention of cutting off the communication between that city and Lodi, when Francesco Sforza, who had retired thither, sallied forth at the head of fourteen hundred men, attacked Palavicini, and put his troops to flight.

This disaster was vexatious to François, but he shortly afterwards sustained a far heavier blow. The valiant Giovanni de' Medici, who, it will be remembered, had distinguished himself so greatly on the side of the Imperialists in the previous campaign, had now passed over with his band, consisting of four thousand men, to the French camp, his motive for the step being inability to obtain pay for his men from the Emperor. The defection of so daring and skilful a leader as Medici was sensibly felt by the Imperialists, but his services were quickly lost by François.

While engaged in a skirmish with Antonio de Leyva, who had sallied forth to attack him, and whom he had forced to retreat with heavy loss, the brave young Italian leader was wounded in the heel by a bullet from an arquebuss, and was conveyed to Piacenza. On this, his troop immediately disbanded, refusing to serve under any other leader.

These losses, following each other in rapid succession, were not without effect upon the king, but he continued firm in his resolution to reduce Pavia, and would not listen to any suggestion to raise the siege.

When intelligence was brought him that Bourbon had returned from Suabia at the head of twelve thousand men, and that the Imperial army, thus powerfully reinforced, was about to march to succour the beleaguered city, and compel him to give them battle, François held a council of war, rather for the purpose of acquainting his generals with his designs than of asking their opinion.

Though the king's sentiments were well known to all the leaders, several of them gave their opinion stoutly in opposition to his majesty, and the Marshal de Cha-bannes urged him strongly to raise the siege, avoid a battle, and retire to the Castle of Binasco.

"It is the interest of the Imperialists to fight," said the marshal, "because they cannot afford to wait. They have not wherewithal to pay their troops, and can only keep them together by promise of a battle. Your majesty's interest is to avoid an engagement, since by delay you can accomplish all you desire, without risk and without loss. I will not venture to point out the disastrous consequences that must ensue, if the issue of the battle should be adverse to us; but I beseech you to weigh them before coming to a decision which you may hereafter rue. My counsel, I know, will be distasteful to your majesty, but it is my duty to offer it."

Several of the other leaders concurred with the veteran marshal in opinion, and recommended delay.

"Were I to follow your advice, marshal," cried François—"were I to raise the siege of Pavia, and retire to Binasco, as you suggest, Bourbon would say I retreated before him."

"And with reason, sire," cried Bonnavet, indignantly. "I give you no such timid counsel, but advise you to remain where you are. Let the foe attack you if he dares—the inevitable result will be his own discomfiture. What shameful counsel is this you give to the king, messeigneurs? Would you have him belie his glorious

career? Would you have him forfeit the laurels won at Marignan? Shall a base soldier like De Leyva have it in his power to boast that he has compelled our valiant king to retreat? Shall the traitor Bourbon be allowed to say—as he *will* say—that his royal master has fled before him?”

“Never!” exclaimed François. “By Saint Louis! he shall never say that!”

“You overrate our difficulties and dangers,” continued Bonnivet, addressing the marshals: “but you do not take into account our resources. Bethink you that the flower of the French chivalry is here, with the king at its head. Do not let us dishonour ourselves by precautions unworthy of his majesty and of us. It is upon the plains of Pavia, and not under shelter of the walls of Binasco, that we must seek for safety. Such caution is out of place. The king’s glory is in our keeping. Europe will demand a strict account of our charge. We must answer by victory or death.”

“You have misapprehended me, Bonnivet,” said Cha-bannes. “No one is more anxious than myself for the glory of the king. But I would not have him give undue advantage to the foe. Our army is much reduced in number, and discouraged by this lengthened siege, whereas the enemy is newly recruited by troops who have endured no hardship, but are stimulated to fight by promises of plunder. My opinion is shared by all the elder leaders.”

“You have the wisdom of Nestor, marshal,” rejoined Bonnivet, sarcastically, “and I listen to every word that falls from you with respect. But I cannot suffer the king to be guided by your counsel. His majesty has more need of the valour of his chiefs, at this juncture, than of their advice. As to yourself, marshal, were you to lose this chance of distinction, you would ever after regret it. It would be the first time you have sought to avoid a meeting with the enemy.”

“Enough, Bonnivet,” cried François. “I do not discern the dangers pointed out to me; but if they exist, I remain unmoved. I will await the foe in these intrenchments. When the battle comes, despite his age and prudence, no one, I am well assured, will display more ardour than Chabannes. Never shall it be said that the King of France fled before a rebellious subject. Here, on these plains of Pavia, I will punish the traitor, and I call on you, messeigneurs, to aid me in the task.”

“Your majesty shall not call in vain,” was the general reply.

VII. IN WHAT MANNER POMERRANT PROCURED A SUPPLY OF POWDER FOR THE GOVERNOR OF PAVIA.

By this time Pavia was almost reduced to the last extremity. Such was the vigilance of the besiegers, that no supplies whatever, unless obtained during a skirmish made by the active governor, could be introduced.

The horrors of famine were aggravated by the rigours of an unusually severe winter. Many persons perished from cold, as from inanition. Pieces of costly furniture and carved wood were broken up, and numerous habitations were half destroyed in the attempt to procure fuel. But Antonio de Leyva remained firm as ever—deaf to prayers and supplications, unmoved by menaces.

Once more the lanz-knechts had begun to clamour for pay, when at last the governor, driven to his wits’ end, resorted to a course often practised by the Lutheran leaders. Seizing all the gold and silver cups, vessels, images, and reliquaries belonging to the churches, he caused them to be melted down and coined into money, which he distributed among the mutinous lanz-knechts. De Leyva sought to mitigate the wrath of the priests by solemnly vowing to indemnify them for the loss of their plate; but he afterwards excused himself by declaring that he had made the promise in the Emperor’s name, and that it was for his majesty, not for him, to replace the treasures of which the churches had been despoiled.

But not only did the governor of Pavia want food and money, but his stock of powder was well-nigh exhausted, and it seemed impossible to obtain a fresh supply. Pomperant, however, who had remained within the city, enduring all the privations and hardships to which the garrison was exposed, undertook to remedy this difficulty.

Having fully explained his design to De Leyva, who approved of it and engaged to have all in readiness for his return, Pomperant set out at night-time on the expedition, accompanied only by the faithful Hugues. They were both fully armed and mounted on the fleetest horses that could be found in the garrison, and, issuing suddenly from the sallyport, contrived to gain a wood skirting the wall of the park of Mirabello, and thence, after narrowly escaping capture, made their way to the Castle of Sant Angelo, which they knew to be in possession of the Imperialists.

Here Pomperant found Bourbon, and a joyful meeting took place between the duke and his devoted partisan, who had not met for nearly three months. On learning Pomperant’s errand, Bourbon at once gave him a band of forty reiters, each of whom was furnished with a large bag of powder. Attended by this troop, and accompanied by Hugues, who likewise carried a bag of powder at his saddle-bow, Pomperant quitted Sant Angelo when it grew dark, and got within a league of Pavia without encountering any material obstacle.

But danger was now at hand. So completely was Pavia surrounded, that it was impossible to enter the city without passing through the enemy’s lines. Avoiding the intrenchments thrown around the main body of the French army, Pomperant approached a point where there were fewest difficulties in the way, and, dashing

past the sentinels, succeeded in gaining the wood bordering the park.

But the alarm was instantly given, and a mounted picket at once started in pursuit. The horses of these troopers being fresh, they soon gained upon the reiters, and a conflict appeared unavoidable.

While Pomperant was straining every nerve to reach Pavia, the horse of one of the reiters stumbled and fell, and, ere the man could disengage himself, he was surrounded by the French troopers, several of whom fired at him as he lay on the ground. During the fray the bag of powder exploded. Amid the confusion and dismay caused by this incident Pomperant and his band escaped, and entering the city through the sallyport, were warmly welcomed by the governor.

VIII. HOW MARCELLINE D'HERMENT CAME TO PAVIA TO SOLICIT HER BROTHER'S

PARDON FROM THE KING.

A FEW days afterwards, Pomperant, attended by the reiters, made a sortie from Pavia, and as he was returning, after an unsuccessful quest for provisions, he descried some half-dozen French men-at-arms advancing towards him at a rapid pace. No sooner, however, did this little troop discern their danger, than they galloped back towards the French camp. It then appeared that they were merely acting as an escort to a lady, who refused to return with them. Seeing this, Pomperant ordered the reiters to halt, and rode towards her alone.

The lady was young, attired in a riding-dress of green velvet, and there was something in her appearance that reminded him of Marcelline. As he drew nearer, the resemblance seemed to increase, till at last Pomperant, who scarcely dared to trust the evidence of his senses, could no longer doubt. It was Marcelline herself. Uttering a cry of surprise and delight, he pressed towards her, and the next moment was by her side.

"Do my eyes deceive me?" he exclaimed, gazing rapturously at her. "Do I indeed behold Marcelline d'Herment, whom I have so long mourned as lost! Speak, and reassure me. I thought you had perished beneath the walls of Marseilles."

"Yes, 'tis I, in good truth, Pomperant," she rejoined. "I was not even injured by the explosion which you supposed had caused my death, I have been most anxious to inform you of my escape, but could find no means of communicating with you."

"Had you done so, you would have saved me months of grief," he cried. "But I will not reproach you. My delight at meeting you again is too great to allow the presence of any other sentiment. I care not even to ask by what strange and fortunate chance you are here. Enough that I behold you."

"We meet only to part," she rejoined. "But you shall hear what has brought me to Pavia. When I explain to you the motive of my journey your wonder will cease. My brother, the Seigneur d'Herment, has been condemned to death by the Parliament of Paris, and is now in the Conciergerie waiting the execution of the sentence. At Aix, where I had an interview with his majesty after the siege of Marseilles, he graciously promised that if I had any favour to ask from him, he would grant it. When I heard that my unfortunate brother had been doomed to death, I bethought me of the promise. By my entreaties I obtained a respite from the Chancellor Duprat, and immediately set out for Italy, and, undeterred by all difficulties and dangers from which one less resolute than myself might have shrunk, crossed the Alps, and, after some unavoidable delays, reached the French camp before Pavia yesterday. I easily obtained an audience of the king, who was in his tent, and when I threw myself on my knees before him, he said, 'I recollect you well. You are one of the heroines of Marseilles. I have not forgotten my promise to you.' 'I have come to claim fulfilment of that promise, sire,' I replied. But when I explained my errand, he looked very grave, and said, coldly, 'You ask more than I can perform. I cannot pardon your brother. As an accomplice of the traitor Bourbon he must die.' 'Sire,' I rejoined, 'I am equally guilty with my brother, since I accompanied the Constable de Bourbon in his flight.'"

"You have made amends by your conduct at Marseilles," he replied; "but your brother's case is different. You too loyal to ask me to spare a traitor, even though he should be of your own blood." "Your royal word has never yet been broken, sire," I rejoined. "I hold you to your promise." For a few moments he looked displeased, and I trembled, for I expected a refusal. Without making a remark, however, he signed a warrant, which was lying on a table near him, and gave it to me, saying, as he did so, "There is the pardon. Deliver that to the Chancellor Duprat, and your brother will be set free."

"Nobly done!" exclaimed Pomperant.

"Nobly done indeed!" cried Marcelline. "And I shall ever bless him for his clemency. Oh! Pomperant, how could you draw sword against such a king?"

"Because I have sworn to follow Bourbon, and shall stand by him to the last," he rejoined. "Hear me, Marcelline. We are now on the eve of a decisive battle, which will either result in the downfall of François de Valois, or in the utter destruction of Bourbon and his followers. Have I not your good wishes for success?"

"Pomperant, I have told you that I am loyal to the king. After his great generosity towards me, can I nourish any treasonable sentiments against him? My prayer will be that you may escape, but I shall also pray that the king may be the victor."

"If you so pray, you will pray for my death, Marcelline. Bourbon has told me that if François should ever

give him battle, he will conquer or die on the field. If he falls, I shall not survive."

"You have done wrong in thus attaching yourself to a rebel, Pomperant. If you persist in your treason, I must tear you from my heart, whatever the effort may cost me."

"Oh! say not so, Marcelline! Better we had never met than you should use such cruel language towards me. Better I should have thought you lost for ever than find you changed."

"I am not changed, Pomperant. But I will not continue to love a traitor and rebel. Quit the service of the king's enemies. Seek some place of safety, and when I have obtained my brother's pardon, I will return and join you. Will you do this? Will you fly with me now? Come! come! you shall have all my love. But if you stay here, you will behold me no more."

"You tempt me sorely, Marcelline. But I cannot—must not—yield. I cannot sacrifice my honour even to my love. I am vowed to Bourbon, as I have told you, and shall follow him to the last. Think you I could desert him now?"

"Then you must forget me, for I shall hold you unworthy of my love, and tear you from my heart. Farewell!"

"We have not yet parted," cried Pomperant. "Fortune has placed you in my hands. You must go with me to Pavia."

"To Pavia!" she exclaimed. "Never!"

And she turned with the intention of galloping back to the French camp, but Pomperant seized her bridle and detained her.

"You are my prisoner," he said.

"You cannot mean this, Pomperant?" she rejoined, in alarm. "You will not detain me against my will. My brother's life is at stake. You will be answerable for his fate should he be put to death."

"Have no fears about your brother," said Pomperant. "I will find a faithful messenger to take the warrant to Duprat."

"Pomperant," said Marcelline, "you will not dishonour your knightly character by detaining me against my will?"

"No," he replied, after a great effort, "I will not hinder you. You are free. But do not return to the French camp," he added, perceiving she was about to ride in that direction. "I will send Hugues with you. He is amongst your troop of reiters. Take him with you to France."

"I have a servant at Novara, and shall be safe when I arrive there," she rejoined. "This conduct is worthy of you, Pomperant."

"It has been a misfortune to me that I have ever loved you, Marcelline," he rejoined, sadly. "I must try to banish all thoughts of you in the strife. If I fall, bestow a tear on me. If I escape, we may meet again."

"Perhaps so," she replied. "Heaven only knows what is in store for us."

Without a word more, Pomperant called to Hugues, who instantly obeyed the summons and rode towards them.

"Attend this lady to Novara," he said, "and then return as best you can to Pavia."

Hugues bowed assent, and Pomperant, drawing near to Marcelline, said, in a low, deep voice, "Are we to part thus?"

"We must," she rejoined in the same tone. "Farewell!—forget me!"

"Would I could forget her!" ejaculated Pomperant, as he rode back with the reiters to Pavia.

IX. HOW PESCARA CAUSED A BREACH TO BE MADE IN THE WALLS OF THE PARK. OF

MIRABELLO.

On quitting Lodi, the Imperial army consisted of upwards of twenty-one thousand men, more than half of whom had been raised by Bourbon. The lanz-knechts were commanded by Von Frundsberg, the reiters by Marx Sittich d'Ems, and the Burgundian light horse by the Comte de Salms.

Pescara's chief reliance was upon a corps of Basque arquebussiers, whom he had trained to rush upon the enemy, discharge their pieces, and retreat with extraordinary rapidity. These Basques formed a corps fifteen hundred strong, and were all unerring marksmen. Moreover, they were armed with short sharp swords, which they could fix on the top of their arquebusses, and use with terrible effect against cavalry.

During its march the army extended for nearly three leagues. The vanguard was commanded by Pescara, with whom were the best of the Spanish cavalry, and the before-mentioned Basque arquebussiers. Then came the Marquis del Vasto with his battalion, and after him Lannoy with the Neapolitan soldiers. Then came five hundred light horse under Castrioto, then the lanz-knechts under Von Frundsberg, and lastly the reiters and Burgundian cavalry. The rear-guard was commanded by Bourbon. The whole of the army was in excellent condition, and though the men were unpaid, they were content with the promises of plunder held out to them by their leaders. Under such circumstances, however, it was incumbent that a battle should take place with as little delay as possible, and on this point both Bourbon and Pescara were agreed.

Instead of marching direct upon Pavia, the Imperial generals proceeded towards Milan, as if designing to

attack that city, hoping by the device to draw François from his intrenched camp, but the king was either too well informed of their design or too wary, for he would not quit his position.

Finding he did not move, they altered their course and gradually approached Pavia, and as they drew near to the French camp frequent skirmishes took place between troops of cavalry on either side, in which, owing to the address and daring of Pescara and Del Vasto, the advantage generally remained with the Imperialists.

By the king's command Bonnivet had been despatched with four hundred light horse to watch the movements of the enemy, and while thus employed in the neighbourhood of Belgiojoso, he was surprised by Pescara, and after a sharp skirmish compelled to retreat.

On learning that the enemy were now close at hand, the king quitted his quarters at San Lanfranco, and removed to the neighbourhood of the Certosa, a magnificent convent situated at the northern extremity of the park of Mirabello.

By this time the whole of the Imperial army had come up, and was encamped upon a plain, between two canals, on the east of Pavia, about a league from the walls of the city, and about half a league from the advanced guard of the French army. The hostile camps were separated by the Vernacula, a small but deep river, with steep banks. The spot chosen for their camp by the Imperialists was protected by a rising ground from the French artillery, while the Vernacula served them as a trench.

After carefully studying the position of the French army, Pescara became convinced that it would be impossible to force them in their intrenchments, and as all attempts to draw them forth had proved ineffectual, some new expedient must be adopted. At last he hit upon a plan, which he proposed to Bourbon.

"Since all other means have failed," he said, "I propose to proceed in this manner. The attack must be made to-night. My design is to make a breach in the walls of the park of Mirabello sufficiently large to allow the passage of our whole army. This can be readily accomplished in a few hours, and without artillery, if we are undiscovered. The walls can be battered down by rams and other engines, and while the operations are going on, false attacks must be made at two or three different points of the French camp, so as to distract their attention. Once within the park, we shall have nothing between us and the king, whose quarters are now near the Certosa. If we cannot compel him to give us battle, we can at least succour Pavia."

"I like the plan, and doubt not it will succeed," remarked Bourbon. "But De Leyva must be informed of it, that he may hold himself in readiness to sally forth with the garrison."

"I will engage to take a message to him," said Pomperant, who was standing by.

"Tell him go make ready to-night," said Pescara; "and when he hears cannon fired in the park to come forth with his men."

"It shall be done," replied Pomperant. "It is well you have resolved to execute your plan without delay, for Pavia is reduced almost to the last extremity."

About an hour before midnight Pescara put his battalion in motion, and after making a wide circuit, so as to avoid the French pickets, he approached the farther side of the park of Mirabello. Del Vasto followed. Next came Castrioto, with his squadron of five hundred light horse. Then came Lannoy, with his Neapolitan soldiers. Then the Burgundian cavalry under the Comte de Salms; and lastly Bourbon, Von Frundsberg, and Marx Sittich d'Ems, with the German lanz-knechts and reiters. The night was so dark, and the movement so noiselessly executed, that no suspicion was entertained by the French.

As the mighty host thus silently collected upon a plain on the north side of the park, they were concealed from the French sentinels by a thick intervening wood. From this plain the dark outline of Pavia, with its numerous lofty towers, its Duomo and castle, could be discerned, and the sounds that disturbed the silence of the night proclaimed that the garrison were astir.

No sooner did Pescara reach that portion of the walls which he had selected for his purpose, than a large body of pioneers set to work to batter them down with rams, huge beams of wood, and other engines. But the walls had been very solidly built by Gian Galeazzo Visconti, and offered a more obstinate resistance than had been expected. Dawn was at hand before a sufficiently large breach could be made.

While this operation was proceeding, two false attacks, as preconcerted, had been made upon the French camp, accompanied by a constant discharge of artillery; but in spite of this precaution the plan was discovered, and communicated to François.

As soon as the breach was practicable, the Marquis del Vasto, in obedience to Pescara's injunctions, dashed into the park with his battalion, and hastened to the Castle of Mirabello, which he attacked and took without difficulty, dispersing the troops by whom it was garrisoned.

So far success had crowned the attempt. But a sudden check was now experienced.

X. THE BATTLE.

As we have just mentioned, intelligence of the movements of the Imperialists, and of their probable plans, had been conveyed to the king. Overjoyed by the tidings—for he was all eagerness for the fray—François, who was sleeping in his tent, immediately arose, and caused his esquires to array him in a magnificent suit of mail, that had lately been fabricated for him at Milan. Then donning his glittering casque, with its long white plumes, which drooped down his back, and buckling on his sword, he mounted his stoutest war-horse—a powerful black charger—and rode forth.

As soon as he appeared he was joined by the Duke d'Alençon and the Marshal de Chabannes, both of whom

were fully armed and accoutred, and mounted on barded steeds. With them was a throng of knightly personages, composed of the chief officers of the crown, the young nobles ordinarily in attendance upon the king, and the guard.

By this time it had become light, and as François galloped forward with the brilliant cortege we have described into the park, he could see the fugitives from the Castle of Mirabello, pursued by the cavalry of Del Vasto. He could also distinguish Pescara's battalion pouring in through the breach.

"Call forth my men-at-arms, and let the Seneschal d'Armagnac fire upon the insolent foe," he cried.

Scarcely was the order issued, when D'Armagnac, who had already posted his artillery on a rising ground in the park, opened a terrible fire upon the Spaniards who were passing through the breach, and not only caused great destruction among them, but threw them into such disorder, that they fled for shelter to a hollow where they were safe from the murderous fire.

"Ha! by Saint Denis, they are routed already!" exclaimed the king, laughing. "Charge them!" he added to the Duke d'Alençon, who, on receiving the order, immediately put himself at the head of two companies of horse, and rode towards the hollow, whither the fugitives had retreated.

Meantime, D'Armagnac had kept up such an incessant and well-directed fire, that the entrance of Pescara's battalion through the breach was effectually checked.

Thus the plan of the Spanish general seemed to be foiled, and if the king had contented himself with crushing the troops of Del Vasto, who were now lodged in the Castle of Mirabello, while the breach was rendered impracticable by the artillery, he might have gained the day. But his valorous and impetuous disposition caused him to reject the counsels of prudence. He burned to mingle with the fight.

"By Saint Louis!" he cried to Bonnivet, who was sheathed from head to foot in glittering mail, and bestrode a powerful charger, "I cannot look tamely on and allow the cannon to do the work for me. I must give battle to the foe. I must punish Bourbon's presumption."

"The enemy is half beaten already, sire," rejoined Bonnivet. "Pescara's plan has utterly failed. Your majesty has only to strike the blow to complete the victory."

"I will do it!" exclaimed the chivalrous king. "I should be unworthy of victory if I neglected to ensure it. Bid the army advance. I will give battle to the enemy outside the park."

"Be advised by me, sire, and remain where you are," said the Marshal de Chabannes. "Victory is certain. Leave nothing to hazard."

"By Heaven! I will not remain here another instant!—Montjoye! Saint Denis!—en avant, messeigneurs!—en avant!"

The trumpets sounded loudly, and the king, attended by all his train of knights, nobles, and esquires, moved with the main body of the army towards the breach.

When he perceived this unlucky movement, D'Armagnac, much to his grief, was compelled to cease firing, and the Spaniards, now freed from the murderous discharges he had poured upon them, rallied and prepared to return to the plain.

It was a glorious sight as François, with all his host, passed through the breach and confronted the Imperialists, who were drawn out in battle array on the plain. All his foes were before him. Bourbon was there with his lanz-knechts, reiters, and Burgundian lances—Pescara with his Spaniards and Basques—Castrियो with his light horse—Lannoy with his Neapolitan cavalry.

Bourbon watched the brilliant host as it deployed upon the plain, and as he followed the movements of the king, whose lofty stature and magnificent armour revealed him to all eyes, he thought that the hour of vengeance had come. On either side there was confident anticipation of victory. François made sure of overthrowing his enemies, and punishing the audacious rebel who had invaded his kingdom, while Bourbon felt equally certain of vengeance.

No sooner had the king so imprudently quitted the park with his host, than Del Vasto abandoned the Castle of Mirabello, of which he had taken possession, and, hurrying after them with his three thousand Spanish fantassins, attacked the French rear.

At the same time De Leyva issued from the gates of Pavia with the whole of the garrison and engaged with Chabot de Brion, who had been left to oppose him with a very inferior force.

When drawn up for battle, the French army formed a very extended line, the right wing being commanded by the Marshal de Chabannes, and the left by the Duke d'Alençon. Between the right wing and the main body, with whom was the king, were the Black Bands, commanded by the Duke of Suffolk. On the left was a corps of ten thousand Swiss, commanded by Diesbach.

The Imperial army likewise formed a long line, but was divided into a great number of squadrons all ready to act together, or separately, as circumstances might dictate.

No sooner was his line formed than the fiery French king, who was all impatience for action, bade the trumpets sound, and called to his gendarmes to charge.

Couching his long lance, and closely attended by Bonnivet and all his young nobles and esquires, François hurled himself against Castrियो, who, with his squadron of light horse drawn up in a close square, awaited his attack. The shock was terrific and irresistible. Down went horse and man before the French chivalry, and Castrियो was transfixed by the king's own lance.

Their leader gone, the horsemen could not rally, but were quickly dispersed, while the victorious king, without pausing, turned his arms against Lannoy and his Neapolitans, almost as speedily routing them as he had done the horse of Castrियो.

"Your majesty seems to have decided the battle with a blow," remarked Bonnivet, as they stopped to breathe their horses, while the men-at-arms pursued the fugitives.

"At last, I am Duke of Milan," said François, laughing, and fully persuaded he had gained the victory.

But he was speedily undeceived. Pescara had chosen this moment, when the squadrons of Castrियो and

Lannoy were routed, to bring up his Basque arquebussiers. Advancing rapidly within a short distance of the French gendarmes, these unerring marksmen fired with deadly effect, retreating before their opponents, encumbered by their heavy armour, could touch them.

These attacks were renewed till most serious damage was done to the king's squadron, and many of his brave captains shot, for the aim of the Basques was taken at the leaders.

It was in this terrible conflict with the Basques that the valiant Seigneur de la Trémouille, who had been recalled by the king from Milan, was shot through the head and heart. Galeazzo de San Severino, chief equerry of the king, was slain at the same time. Louis d'Ars was dismounted and trampled to death amid the press, and the Comte de Tonnerre was so hacked to pieces that he could scarcely be recognised. Many other nobles and valiant knights were slain.

Meanwhile, Del Vasto, who had brought his three thousand fantassins into action, profiting by the disorder into which the gendarmes had been thrown, attacked the battalion of Swiss commanded by Jean Diesbach, with whom were the Marshals Montmorency and Fleuranges. But the Swiss did not maintain their former character for bravery on this occasion, and, in spite of the efforts of Montmorency and Fleuranges, both of whom were taken prisoners, they fled, while Diesbach, unable to restrain them, and overcome by shame, sought death amid the enemy.

An important movement was now made by Bourbon. Ordering Von Frundsberg and Sittich to lengthen their battalion, he enveloped the Black Bands under the Duke of Suffolk, and completely exterminated them. Both Suffolk and the Comte de Vaudemont were now slain.

Bourbon next directed his victorious lanz-knechts against the right wing of the French, which had become detached from the main body of the army and enveloped it, as he had done the Black Bands.

In this conflict the brave Clermont d'Amboise was slain, and the veteran Marshal de Chabannes, while rallying his men, had his horse killed under him, and was taken prisoner by a Spanish captain named Castaldo. Chabannes, who was wounded, declared his name and rank to his captor, and desired to be taken to a place of safety. Castaldo agreed, and was removing him from the conflict, when they encountered another Spanish soldier, named Buzarto.

"Hold!" exclaimed the new comer, fiercely. "I claim a share in the prize."

"Pass on," rejoined Castaldo. "The prisoner is mine by right of war. I have taken him."

"You refuse to share him with me?" demanded Buzarto, in a threatening tone.

"I do," rejoined the other, sternly. "And I counsel you not to meddle with me."

"And you expect a large ransom—eh?" said Buzarto. "A princely ransom," rejoined Castaldo, glancing at his prisoner. "I have to do with a marshal of France."

"A marshal of France!" exclaimed Buzarto, furiously. "Then he shall belong to neither of us."

And levelling his arquebuss at the noble veteran, who had fought in a hundred battles, he shot him dead—an infamous act, which doomed its perpetrator to general execration.

Meanwhile, the king had thrown himself into the thickest of the fight. His lance having long since been broken, he had drawn his trenchant sword, and, like a paladin of old, dealt blows right and left, and did not refuse a hand-to-hand combat when offered him.

Already, as we have shown, he had slain Castrioto, and now several others fell by his hand. Among them was a knight from the Franche Comté, named Andelot, with whom François had a long conflict.

While drawing breath after this encounter, he heard shouts on the right, and, turning at the sound, beheld the flying bands of the Swiss mercenaries.

"Great Heavens!" he exclaimed, in mingled amazement and indignation, "what means that rush of men?"

"The Swiss are retreating, sire—shamefully retreating—almost without a blow," rejoined Bonnivet, who was near him.

"Ha, dastards! ha, traitors! do they desert me thus!" cried the king, furiously. "Come with me, Bonnivet."

And spurring his steed, he dashed after the flying Swiss, striving to rally them, but his efforts were in vain.

At the same juncture, the Duke d'Alençon, alarmed by the destruction of the Black Bands, the rout of the right wing, and the disorder of the main body, sounded a retreat, and withdrew ingloriously from the field.

Vainly did La Roche du Maine, his lieutenant, and the Baron de Trans, try to turn him from his fatal resolution. Finding him immovable, they threw themselves into the main body, towards which the efforts of the enemy were now directed.

Once more the lion-hearted king made a tremendous charge against the Spanish cavalry, led on by Pescara. For a moment it seemed as if this charge would turn the tide of victory, so great was the havoc it occasioned. Pescara himself was wounded by a sword-cut in the cheek, stricken from his steed, and trampled under foot by the enemy. With difficulty he was rescued by his men, and dragged out of the way. Lannoy again brought on his Neapolitans, and was repulsed with heavy loss.

The battle now raged furiously, and the din of arms was as if a thousand smiths were at work, mingled with the rattle of arquebusses, the shrieks of wounded horses, and the shouts, curses, and groans of the combatants. Terrible was the carnage. On all sides could be seen the bravest and noblest of the French chivalry flocking towards the king's standard, resolved to win the day or perish with him, for his actions showed that he would never retire.

But the decisive moment had come. Pescara was down, and severely wounded as we have seen, and his squadron shattered by the last charge of the king. Lannoy, who had advanced to sustain him, was likewise repulsed. For a brief space the heroic king persuaded himself that he could retrieve his losses, but his exultation was speedily quelled. He saw a dense dark mass gathering in front that threatened to overwhelm him.

Bourbon was there with his lanz-knechts, his German reiters, and his Burgundian lances. At his right and left wing were Von Frundsberg and Sittich. Fierce and terrible was the joy that lighted up the duke's haughty

features at that moment. He saw the king, who had so deeply wronged him. He saw him surrounded with his peerless knights and nobles. Chaumont was there, the Marshal de Foix, Lambese, Lavedan, the Grand Master of France, and a hundred other noble knights. There also was the hated Bonnivet. He could crush them all.

After gazing at them as the eagle gazes ere swooping upon its prey, Bourbon gave word to charge. The trumpets sounded, and the Burgundian lances and German reiters dashed on, shouting loudly, "Vive Bourbon!"

Clearing the ground between them and the foe, they burst like a thunder-cloud upon the French men-at-arms and knights. Tremendous was the splintering of lances—loud the rattle of musketry—sharp the clash of swords. But the squadron gathered round the king was broken in six places, and could not rally. In the terrific mêlée that ensued, half the gallant knights whom Bourbon had seen were slain. Chaumont was transfixed in the charge—Lavedan cut down—the Grand Master buried beneath a heap of dead.

Vainly the king and those near him essayed to rally the men. They were panic-stricken, and could not be got together again.

If the strife was not yet over, the victory was won, and the decisive blow had been given by Bourbon.

XI. HOW BONNIVET WAS SLAIN BY BOURBON.

The lanz-knechts and Burgundians were now wholly occupied in making prisoners and slaughtering the foe. Heaps of slain lay thick on all sides, the plain was deluged in blood, and the knights rode over the dead and dying.

It was at this terrible crisis that the king's eye, ranging over the field, caught Bonnivet, who instantly rode up to him.

"What orders, sire?" he demanded.

"Hence!" cried François. "Quit my sight for ever. This is your work."

"Sire," rejoined Bonnivet, "if I have done wrong it has been unwittingly. Let me die by your side."

"No, I will not have you near me," cried François. "Away, false traitor, away!"

"Sire, by Heaven I am no traitor!" rejoined Bonnivet. "But I will not long survive your displeasure."

And, without a word more, he dashed into the thick of the enemy.

He had not been gone more than a minute, when the Marshal de Foix rode up, his left arm shattered, his armour sullied, and his steed covered with gore. From his ghastly looks it was evident he was mortally wounded, but he had still strength enough to sit his horse.

"Where is Bonnivet, sire?" he demanded. "I thought I saw him with you."

"He is gone," rejoined the king. "What would you with him?"

"Slay him—slay him with this sword dyed in the blood of our enemies," rejoined De Foix. "It is he who has brought this dire calamity on France. But for him this disastrous battle would not have been fought. If I can slay him, I shall die content. Where is he, sire? Show him to me."

"Ride from the battle while you can, and seek a surgeon—'twere best," said the king.

"No, I will first slay Bonnivet," rejoined De Foix.

"Then seek him yonder," said the king, pointing to the thickest part of the strife.

And while De Foix rode off, he himself renewed the combat. Scarcely knowing whither he was going, De Foix was quickly surrounded by several Burgundian lances, when he found himself confronted by a knight in black armour.

"Yield you, De Foix?" said this knight. And, raising his visor, he disclosed the features of Bourbon.

"I yield," replied the other. "But you had better let your men finish me. There is not an hour's life in me."

"Nay, I trust you are not so badly hurt as that," said Bourbon. "Let him be taken at once to Pavia and carefully tended. Captain Castaldo, I give him in your charge."

"Bourbon," said De Foix, "I will forgive you all the wrong you have done to France, if you will slay Bonnivet."

"'Tis he I seek," rejoined Bourbon. "Is he with the king?"

"No," replied De Foix. "He has gone in that direction," pointing to another part of the field.

"Then I will find him, if he be not slain," said Bourbon. "Heaven grant he may be reserved for my hand!"

And, renewing his orders to Castaldo, he rode off.

Casting his eyes round the field of battle, and glancing at the numerous groups of combatants, he discerned a French noble engaged in a conflict with three or four lanz-knechts. From the richness of his armour he knew it to be Bonnivet, and spurred towards him. Before he came up the Admiral had slain one of his assailants, and put the others to flight, and was about to ride off. When Bourbon called out to him, he immediately wheeled round.

"At last I have found you," cried the duke, with a fierce laugh. "You cannot escape me now."

"What! is it Bourbon?" cried Bonnivet, glancing at him.

"Ay," replied the other. "Your mortal enemy. Back on your lives!" he added to the Burgundian lances. "I must settle this matter alone. You see that the victory is won," he added to Bonnivet, "and you know what that means. François has lost the Milanese, and will lose his kingdom."

"France will never be yours, vile traitor and rebel," cried Bonnivet, in an access of rage. "You shall never boast of your triumph over the king. I will avenge him!"

And animated with the deadliest fury of hate, he attacked Bourbon.

The conflict was terrible, but brief. By a tremendous downward blow Bourbon struck his adversary's weapon from his grasp, and then, seizing his arm thrust the point of his sword into his throat above the gorget.

Bonnivet fell to the ground at the feet of the victor. As Bourbon gazed at his noble lineaments, now disfigured and sullied with gore, a slight sentiment of compassion touched his breast.

"Alas! unhappy man," he exclaimed. "Your destiny was fatal—fatal to France and to me."

And he rode back towards the scene of strife and slaughter.

XII. HOW THE KING SURRENDERED TO THE VICEROY OF NAPLES.

All the king's bravest nobles were now gone—slain or made prisoners. Already have we particularised the slain. Among the captives were the valiant Montmorency, Saint Pol, De Lorges, Laval, Ambricourt, Fleuranges, and many other illustrious personages. François alone confronted the enemy. He was wounded in three places, and his armour was hacked with many blows and stained with blood. But his prodigious strength seemed undiminished—nay, the very rage by which he was excited lent force to his arm. His blows were delivered with such fury and rapidity that his assailants seemed to fall around him on all sides.

After sustaining this conflict for some time, finding his foes pressing around him he cut his way through them, and pushed his steed towards a bridge over the little river Vernacula. But ere he could reach it a shot from an arquebuss pierced the brain of his charger, and the noble animal, who had borne him so well, and who, like his master, was wounded in several places, fell to the ground.

The king's assailants now made certain of capturing him alive. They were led on by a Spanish captain, Diego Avila, and Giovanni d'Urbietta, an Italian, neither of whom, however, recognised François, owing to a gash in his face, but they knew from the richness of his armour that he was a personage of the highest rank, and hoped to obtain a large ransom. Thus they now shouted loudly to him to yield, but he replied by striking at them with his sword, and as soon as he could liberate himself from his charger he renewed the attack, killing and slaying several more of his foes, among whom were Avila and Urbietta.

But almost superhuman as was his force, it was impossible that he could long sustain himself against such tremendous odds. His enemies were closing around him, heavy blows were ringing against his armour, when Pomperant, who was riding near, caught sight of his towering figure amid the throng, and seeing the peril in which he stood, forced his way through the band of soldiers, shouting in a loud voice, "Hold! on your lives! It is the king!"

"The king!" exclaimed the soldiers, falling back at the announcement.

Most opportune was the rescue. In another minute François, who disdained to save his life by proclaiming himself, would have been laid low.

Taking advantage of the pause, Pomperant flung himself from his steed, and prostrating himself before the king, who, with his reeking sword in hand, fiercely confronted his assailants.

"Sire," cried Pomperant, in the most earnest tones he could command, "I conjure you not to struggle against fate. The battle is utterly lost, and all your valour can only end in your own destruction."

"I do not desire to survive this fatal day," rejoined the king, fiercely. "I will not yield. If you would boast that you have slain the King of France, draw your sword and attack me."

"No, sire. I will never lift my arm against your person," said Pomperant, respectfully. "But since you have done all that valour can achieve—since you have fought as monarch of France never fought before—since further resistance is in vain, let me implore you to yield to my master, the Duke de Bourbon."

"Yield to Bourbon! Yield to that rebel and traitor!—never!" exclaimed the king, furiously. "Wert thou not kneeling before me, villain, I would strike thee dead for daring to make the proposition to me. If I surrender to any one, it shall be to the Marquis of Pescara. He is a valiant captain, and loyal to his sovereign."

"Pescara is wounded, sire, and unable to protect you," rejoined Pomperant. "But the Viceroy of Naples is at hand."

"Let him come to me, then," said François.

Some soldiers were instantly despatched on this errand by Pomperant, who remained standing near the king to protect him. Though smarting from his wounds, François refused all assistance; but feeling faint from loss of blood, he sat down upon the breathless body of his charger, and took off his helmet.

"Fill this with water for me," he said, giving the casque to a soldier. "I am sore athirst."

The man hurried to the river, filled the helmet, and brought it to him. François drank eagerly, and breaking

off an ornament, bestowed it upon the soldier.

At this moment Lannoy rode up, and, dismounting, knelt before the king, who had risen at his approach, and now assumed a dignified and majestic demeanour. When he spoke, his accents were firm, but full of sadness.

"Here is my sword," he said, delivering the bloodstained weapon to the Viceroy. "I yield myself prisoner to the Emperor your master. I might have saved myself by flight, but I would have died rather than quit the field dishonourably."

"Your majesty has held out to the latest moment," rejoined Lannoy. "Scarce one of your soldiers but has thrown down his arms. Doubt not that you will be worthily treated by the Emperor."

Lannoy then kissed the hand graciously extended towards him, and drawing his own sword presented it to the king.

"I will take the weapon, though I cannot use it," said François.

"Your wounds must be tended without delay, sire," said the Viceroy. "You shall be transported at once to Pavia, where skilful chirurgians can be obtained."

"No, not to Pavia," said François, uneasily. "The inhabitants of that miserable city hate me, and with good reason, for I have shown them scant pity. Let me be taken to the Certosa, where my wounds can be dressed by the monks. They have good chirurgians among them."

"Your majesty's wishes shall be obeyed," said Lannoy.

A litter was then made with crossed halberds, covered by a cloak, on which the wounded king was placed, and in this manner he was borne on the shoulders of the lanz-knechts towards the Certosa.

On the way thither, many frightful scenes met his gaze. De Leyva and a squadron of cavalry, infuriated against the French, were careering over the battle-field, putting to death all who had survived the fight. Hundreds were thus massacred in this way—hundreds of others, flying for their lives, plunged into the Ticino, and being unable to swim across the rapid stream, were drowned. The shouts of the victors and the cries of the vanquished rang in the monarch's ear, and filled his breast with anguish.

At one time the progress of the bearers was arrested by a pile of slain, and the soldiers were obliged to turn aside to avoid the obstruction. François remarked that the heap of bodies was caused by the destruction of the Black Bands, and he involuntarily exclaimed, "Ah! if all my soldiers had fought like those brave men, the day would not have gone against me."

Other interruptions of a like nature occurred. Dead and dying were strewed so thickly on the ground that it was impossible to avoid them. It was utterly impossible, also, to shut the ears to the dismal sounds that smote them.

Presently the king was taken past a spot where the dead lay thickest, and here it was evident, from the rich accoutrements of the slain, that the flower of his young nobility had fallen while fighting so valiantly in his defence. The spoilers were already at work stripping them of their valuables. It was a sad sight to François, and lacerated his heart so severely, that he wished he were lying amongst them.

As he averted his gaze from this painful spectacle, his eye alighted upon a knight accoutred in black armour, who had just ridden up. As this warrior had his visor down, François could not distinguish his features.

"Halt!" exclaimed the knight, authoritatively. And the soldiers immediately obeyed.

The knight then raised his beaver, and disclosed the dark lineaments of Bourbon, now flushed with triumph.

"Ha! by Saint Denis! I felt that a traitor was nigh!" exclaimed the wounded king, raising himself, and gazing fiercely at the other. "Are you come to insult me?"

"No, sire," replied Bourbon. "I have no such design. This is not the moment, when we have changed positions, that I would exult in your defeat. Were it possible, I would soothe the bitterness of your feelings."

"You would soothe them by telling me I have lost my kingdom," cried François, fiercely. "You would soothe them by reminding me that I am a captive. You would soothe them by pointing out all those valiant nobles and captains who have died for me. You would soothe them by telling me how many you yourself have slain. Whose blood dyes your sword?"

"The blood of one who has brought all these misfortunes upon you, sire," rejoined Bourbon.

"You would have me understand that Bonnivet has died by your hand? ha!" demanded François.

"Even so, sire," rejoined Bourbon. "His guilty soul has just gone to its account. In avenging my own wrongs upon his head, I have avenged you."

"He has much to answer for," exclaimed the king. "But Heaven forgive him, even as I forgive him."

"I will not trouble you with my presence further, sire," said Bourbon. "I have only intruded upon you now to give you the assurance that we shall never forget what is due to your exalted rank, and that our victory will be used with moderation and generosity."

"What generosity can I expect from the Emperor, or from you?" cried François, bitterly. "Answer me one question ere you go. How many men have you lost in the battle?"

"Our total losses, as far as we can estimate them, are under seven hundred men, sire," replied Bourbon.

"And mine! how many have I lost?" demanded the king. "Fear not to speak," he added, seeing Bourbon hesitate; "I would know the exact truth."

"Sire," replied Bourbon, in a sombre tone, "it is impossible to compute your losses at this moment, but I shall not overstate them in saying that eight thousand of your soldiers have fallen upon this plain. Twenty of your proudest nobles are lying within a few paces of us."

Groaning as if his heart would burst, François sank backwards.

Bourbon signed to the soldiers to proceed with their burden, and then rode off with his Burgundian lances.

François did not again unclothe his eyes, and scarcely, indeed, manifested any signs of consciousness, until

he was taken into the court of the Certosa.

When he was there set down, the prior with the principal monks came forth to meet him, and would have conveyed him to the interior of the convent, but François refused to have his wounds dressed till he had prayed to Heaven, and desired the prior to conduct him at once to the church.

His injunctions were complied with, and the prior gave him his arm, for he could not walk without assistance. On entering the magnificent fabric, he was taken to the nearest chapel, and ere he knelt down his eye fell upon this inscription on the wall:

***BONUM MIHI QUIA HUMILIA STI ME, UT DISCAM
JUSTIFICATIONES TUAS.***

The unfortunate king could not fail to apply these Words to his own situation. Profoundly touched, he humbled himself before Heaven, acknowledging his manifold and great offences, and imploring forgiveness.

His devotions ended, he was taken to the principal chamber of the monastery, where his wounds were carefully dressed.

For three days he remained at the Certosa, the monastery being strictly guarded by the Spanish soldiery, and during his detention there he was visited by the Viceroy of Naples, the Marquis del Vasto, and Pescara, who had only partially recovered from the wounds he had received in the battle.

The king was then removed to the fortress of Pizzighettone, under the charge of the vigilant Captain Alarcon, with a guard of two hundred cavalry and twelve hundred fantassins, there to be kept a close prisoner till the Emperor's pleasure concerning him could be ascertained.

Before his departure from the Certosa, François announced his defeat to his mother in these memorable words:

“Madame, tout est perdu, fors l'honneur.”

END OF THE FIFTH BOOK.

BOOK VI.—CHARLES V.

**I. HOW FRANÇOIS I. WAS TAKEN TO
MADRID, AND CONFINED IN A MOORISH**

CASTLE.

Had the Duke de Bourbon been able to follow up the great and decisive victory won at Pavia by an immediate invasion of France, he must inevitably have become master of the destinies of that kingdom.

His march to Paris could scarcely have been opposed. The king was a captive—many of his best leaders were slain—others were prisoners—the flower of the French chivalry was destroyed—the gendarmerie annihilated. All that was needed was an army. But this Bourbon could not obtain.

At no previous time was the Imperial army less under the control of its leaders than after the battle of Pavia. Though enriched by the immense booty they had acquired, the insatiate Spaniards absolutely refused to proceed upon any fresh campaign until they received their arrears of pay; while the German lanz-knechts and reiters, fully satisfied with their share of the plunder, disbanded, and returned to their own country.

Thus Bourbon was again prevented from reaping the fruits of his victory. The crown of France was within reach, if he could have grasped it. But this was impossible without an army. He had counted upon the aid of Von Frundsberg, but that bold commander, though devoted to him, and ready to accompany him, could not keep together his men, who were determined to place their plunder in the care of their families.

Time was thus given to the Duchess d'Angoulême, Regent of France, who displayed extraordinary courage and activity in the emergency, to prepare for the defence of the kingdom by levying fresh forces in Switzerland, by entering into an alliance with England, and by negotiating with the different Italian states.

Immediately after the battle of Pavia the whole of the Milanese was evacuated by the French troops, who made their way across the Alps with the utmost expedition, and the different cities were at once taken possession of by the Imperialists. Francesco Sforza returned to Milan, and ostensibly resumed his former sway, but being now little better than a vassal of the Emperor, he exercised no real authority in the duchy.

Hence he naturally became anxious to throw off the yoke imposed upon him, and entered into a league with the rest of the Italian states for protection against their common enemy.

Meanwhile François I. had been detained a close prisoner within the fortress of Pizzighettone, strictly guarded by the harsh and incorruptible Alarcon. But as it was not unlikely that rescue might be attempted, or that the illustrious captive, though ever so carefully watched, might contrive to effect his escape, it was judged prudent to remove him to Spain, and he was accordingly conducted to Madrid by Alarcon and Lannoy—contrary to the wishes of Bourbon, who desired to keep him in Italy.

On his arrival at Madrid, the unfortunate king was placed in an old Moorish castle, and treated with unbecoming severity. Charles V. refused to see him, hoping that the tediousness of captivity would make him yield to the hard conditions he had proposed to him.

Bourbon followed the royal prisoner to Madrid, and was received with the greatest distinction by the Emperor, but neither his brilliant achievements nor his princely rank could reconcile the haughty Castilian nobles to his presence at the court. They regarded him as a rebel and a traitor, and could scarcely refrain from manifesting their scorn and aversion. He came attended by a large retinue, and as the Emperor did not desire to assign him apartments in the royal palace, he begged the Marquis de Villena to lend him his mansion—one of the largest and most magnificent in Madrid.

“Sire,” replied the proud marquis, “I can refuse you nothing. But I declare that as soon as the Duke de Bourbon has quitted my house I will burn it to the ground as a place infected with treason, and unworthy to be inhabited by men of honour.”

“As you please, my lord,” said Charles V., smiling sternly. “But as I have instigated the duke to his treason, I must share the reproach, and since you will not lend him your house, I must perforce lodge him in the Alcazar.”

Bourbon expected that the treaty for the liberation of the captive monarch would be speedily concluded, but such was not the Emperor's policy. Months elapsed, and François still languished in confinement. On one point only the Emperor relaxed his severity. He permitted the Duchess d'Alençon to enter Spain, and soothe her royal brother in his captivity.

33?

Marguerite de Valois was now a widow, the Duke d'Alençon having died shortly after his ignominious flight from the battle of Pavia, and it was the hope of the intriguing Duchess d'Angoulême that the charms of her daughter might captivate the Emperor, who was still unmarried. The death of Queen Claude, which occurred immediately after his departure for Italy, had likewise set François I. free, and he intimated his willingness to espouse the Emperor's sister, Leonor of Austria; the princess, it will be remembered, who had already been promised to the Duke de Bourbon. To this alliance Charles V. was favourably inclined—he had long since manifested his disinclination to fulfil his promise to Bourbon—but he had not yet given his assent to the proposal. In fact, he intended that the marriage between François I. and Leonor should form one of the conditions of the king's liberation.

To the charms of the lovely Marguerite de Valois, who produced a great effect at the Court of Madrid, and enchanted the grandees by her beauty and accomplishments, the Emperor was insensible, his choice being already fixed upon the fair Isabella of Portugal—a princess to whom he was subsequently united.

At this time Charles V., whose power and successes alarmed all the sovereigns of Europe, was still in the prime of early manhood, not having completed his twenty-fifth year, but the gravity of his deportment and the sternness of his aspect made him look much older. Young as he was, however, he had already crowded the events of a long life into his term of existence, and had all the sagacity, prudence, and caution which years alone are generally supposed to confer. His mode of life offered a perfect contrast to that of François I. Little addicted to pleasure, he devoted himself laboriously to affairs of state. Bigoted in religion, he was ever ready to manifest his zeal for the Catholic Church by the persecution of heresy. In manner he was serious and reserved—in disposition obstinate and inflexible. He was a profound hypocrite, as was exemplified by his conduct after the battle of Pavia, when he feigned the greatest humility, and forbade any public demonstrations of joy at so important a victory. “It seems,” says Voltaire, “that at this juncture he was wanting to his fortune. Instead of entering France, and profiting by the victory gained by his generals in Italy, he remained inactive in Spain.” But he could not follow up his success. Lacking the means of carrying on the war, he resolved to impose the hardest conditions possible upon his royal captive, and extort a heavy ransom from him. With this view, the unfortunate king was treated with the unjustifiable severity we have described.

A more remarkable countenance than that of Charles V has seldom been seen. At the period in question, his physiognomy had not acquired the sternness, almost grimness, which characterised it in later life, but even then it was cold and severe. His eyes were grey, searching in expression, and seemed to read the thoughts of those he gazed upon. His brow was lofty, and indeed the upper part of his face was extremely handsome. The nose was well formed, though not set quite straight, but the main defect of the countenance was the chin, the lower jaw protruding so much beyond the upper that the teeth could not meet properly. Notwithstanding this drawback, which was transmitted to all his descendants, and formed a characteristic of the House of Austria, his face was cast in a noble mould, and power, inflexibility, and wisdom could be read in every lineament.

In stature Charles V was not above the middle height, but his port was erect and stately. His limbs were strong and well proportioned, and if his movements lacked lightness and grace, they were never deficient in majesty.

Nearly a year had elapsed since the unfortunate François had been brought to Madrid, and he was still kept a close prisoner in the Moorish castle, when one morning the Duke de Bourbon solicited an audience of the Emperor, which was immediately granted. Charles V. was in his cabinet at the time, and with him were the Viceroy of Naples and his chancellor, Gattinara.

The Emperor was attired, as usual, in habiliments of a sombre hue. His doublet and hose were of black taffety, His black damask mantle was trimmed with sable, and embroidered with the cross of Santiago. Over

his shoulders he wore the collar of the Toison d'Or, and his black velvet cap was simply ornamented with a golden chain.

To the Emperor's surprise, Bourbon was accompanied by the Duchess d'Alençon, and a look of displeasure crossed the monarch's brow on beholding her. From his manner he appeared disinclined to receive her.

"Sire," said Bourbon, approaching him, "I beseech you not to dismiss the duchess unheard." Then lowering his voice, he added, "I have it on the physician's authority that the king's life is in imminent danger. He cannot survive many days unless he is allowed more freedom. If he dies, your majesty will lose your ransom."

The Emperor appeared much struck with what was said, and he inquired somewhat anxiously, "Have you seen him?"

"No, sire," replied Bourbon, "but I have conversed with the physician. I pray you listen to the Duchess d'Alençon. Approach, madame," he added to her, "his majesty will hear you."

Thus invited, the beautiful princess, whose countenance bespoke her affliction, came forward and threw herself at the Emperor's feet. Charles endeavoured to raise her, but she would not move from her suppliant posture till she had spoken.

"Sire," she said, in accents well calculated to move the Emperor, "if your majesty has any compassion for your unfortunate prisoner you will see him without delay. You alone have power to cure his malady, which is caused by grief, and aggravated by mental irritation. That he cannot long survive if he continues in this state is quite certain, for his disease is beyond the reach of medicine. His physicians can do no more for him, and leave him to your majesty. If you abandon him, he will die, and then you will have a perpetual reproach upon your conscience. Save him, sire!—save him, while there is yet time!"

"Rest easy, madame, I will save him," said the Emperor, raising her. "I had no idea it had come to such a pass with your royal brother. I would not have him die for all my dominions. Haste and tell him so, madame. I will come to him speedily."

"The message will give him new life, sire," rejoined Marguerite. "I will prepare him for the visit."

And with a grateful obeisance to the Emperor she retired, and, quitting the palace, hastened to the old Moorish castle in which François was confined.

As soon as the duchess was gone, Gattinara said to the Emperor, "Sire, permit me to observe, that if you visit the king at this juncture, you must grant him his liberty unconditionally. Otherwise, your visit will be attributed to unworthy motives."

"Would you have the king die, as he infallibly will do, unless his Imperial Majesty sees him?" cried Bourbon.

"I have deemed it my duty to point out to his majesty the construction that will be put upon his visit," rejoined Gattinara, gravely.

"The solid advantages of the victory are not to be sacrificed to an over-strained sense of honour," remarked Lannoy. "If the king dies, all will be lost."

"Humanity dictates the course to be pursued," said Bourbon. "To refuse to see the king would be to condemn him to death."

"By Santiago! I *will* see him," said the Emperor; "and, what is more, I will conclude the treaty with him. Bring it with you, Gattinara. Now to the prison."

II. HOW THE TREATY OF MADRID WAS SIGNED.

When Marguerite was admitted by the guard into the chamber in which her royal brother was confined, he was alone, and stretched upon a couch.

"I have good tidings for your majesty," she cried, flying towards him, and taking his hand. "The Emperor is coming to see you."

"It is too late," said François. "He can do me no good now. I have lost all hope. Look here," he added, taking a paper from beneath the cushion on which he was reclining, "this is an act by which I renounce the crown of France, and place it in the hands of the Dauphin, exhorting my family and my people to regard me as dead—and most likely I shall be dead ere this act can be delivered to my son."

"I shall not need to take it," she rejoined. "I am persuaded you will now be able to make terms with the Emperor."

"I will rather die than submit to his conditions," rejoined the king.

"Hear me, François," she said, "and do not think the course I am about to suggest unworthy of you. You must be delivered from this prison at any price."

"Not at the price of my honour, Marguerite," he cried. "You cannot counsel that?"

"You must dissemble with the tyrant, brother," she rejoined. "You must beat him with his own weapons. A treaty signed in prison cannot be binding on you. The circumstances render it invalid. Promise all the Emperor asks—but perform only what is reasonable and just."

"I must perform all I promise," said François,

"No," she rejoined. "You are justified in deceiving a pitiless conqueror who abuses his position. France will absolve you."

At this moment, the door was thrown open and gave admittance to the Emperor, who was attended by Bourbon, Lannoy, and Gattinara.

Charles V. paused near the door to look at his prisoner, and was sensibly touched by his altered appearance.

"Can this be the magnificent François de Valois?" he muttered to Bourbon. "Mother of Heaven! how he is changed!"

"Sadly changed, indeed, sire," rejoined Bourbon. "Even I can pity him."

On beholding the Emperor, François raised himself with his sister's support, and said, in accents of mingled bitterness and reproach, "Your majesty has come to see your prisoner die."

"No, I have come to bid you live," rejoined Charles V., hastening towards him, "You are no longer my prisoner, but my friend and brother. From this moment you are free."

As these gracious words were uttered, François withdrew from his sister, and flung his arms round the Emperor's neck. On recovering from his emotion, he said, "I thank your majesty from the bottom of my heart for your goodness towards me. You have performed a magical cure. In giving me freedom you have instantly restored me to health and strength."

"I am rejoiced to hear it, my good brother," rejoined Charles V. "I should never have forgiven myself if aught had befallen you, You shall be liberated this very day—that is, as soon as we have arranged the terms of the treaty," he hastened to add, "That is a necessary preliminary step, as you know."

"Of course, sire," rejoined the king. "We can settle the treaty now. I am well enough to attend to it."

And, assisted by the Emperor and Marguerite, he rose from the couch, and seated himself near the table, on which writing materials were placed.

"You have indeed recovered in a marvellous manner, my good brother," remarked Charles V., smiling.

"It is all your doing, sire," rejoined François. "But let us proceed to business. I repeat, I am quite equal to it."

"'Twill be best that the matter should be concluded at once, brother," said Charles V., seating himself opposite the king. "The treaty has already been drawn out by the grand-chancellor, and shall be read to you."

"The treaty drawn out!" exclaimed François, frowning. "Then we cannot discuss the terms."

"If we discuss the terms it may prolong your captivity, brother," rejoined Charles V.

"Agree," whispered Marguerite, who was standing near the king.

"Well, let me hear the conditions," said François to Gattinara, who had unfolded a large parchment, and was preparing to-read it. "Give the substance of the treaty, my lord. I care not for the formalities."

"By this treaty, sire," said Gattinara, "you will cede to his Imperial Majesty all your pretensions to the kingdom of Naples, the duchy of Milan, Genoa, and Asti—in a word, all your rights in Italy."

He then paused for a moment, but as François made no observation, he went on:

"You will also cede the duchy of Burgundy to his Imperial Majesty——"

"It should be 'restore,' rather than 'cede,'" interrupted Charles V., "since the duchy was the patrimony of my ancestress, Mary of Burgundy. But proceed."

"Your majesty will cede the duchy of Burgundy," continued the chancellor, "the countship of Charolois, the signories of Noyers and of Château-Chinon, the viscounty of Auxonne, and the jurisdiction of Saint-Laurent."

François uttered an exclamation of impatience, but was restrained by his sister, who grasped his hand.

"A moment's patience, brother," remarked Charles V., "We will speak of Burgundy anon."

"Your majesty shall remove your protection from Henri d'Albret, who was taken prisoner at the battle of Pavia, but who has since escaped, and prevail upon him to renounce the title of King of Navarre."

"Pâques Dieu! I cannot do this," cried François.

"Let the chancellor go on, brother," said the Emperor.

"Your majesty shall likewise remove your protection from the Duke of Gueldres," pursued Gattinara, "the Duke of Wurtemberg, and Robert de la Marck."

"By Saint Louis! I will not thus sacrifice my friends and allies!" cried François.

"Hear him out, brother!—hear him out!" said the Emperor.

Gattinara paused for a moment, and then resumed. Aware of what was coming, Bourbon watched the king narrowly.

"Your majesty shall restore to the Duke de Bourbon all the lands, fiefs, and signories of which he has been deprived, and shall add to them Provence and Dauphiné. These states shall be erected into a kingdom to be possessed by the Duke de Bourbon, without tenure from the crown of France."

"Never!" exclaimed François, rising. "I will remain in thralldom all my days rather than consent to this indignity. I agree to restore Bourbon's possessions, and will indemnify him for all his losses, but I will not dismember France in order to create a kingdom for him. Even if I were disposed to yield, the laws of the State are opposed to any such alienation, and would prevent it."

"I will take my chance of that," remarked Bourbon, sternly. "What has been gained by the sword can be maintained by the sword. The condition must be subscribed."

"The king agrees," said Marguerite, as François, by her persuasion, sat down again.

At a sign from the Emperor, Gattinara went on.

"Your majesty shall re-establish the Seigneur de Pomperant, and all the other partisans of the Duke de Bourbon, in their possessions. And you shall release the Prince of Orange, who has been confined in the castle of Lusignan, and deprived of his possessions for his zeal towards the Emperor."

"To the latter condition I unhesitatingly agree," said François.

"Lastly," said Gattinara, "your majesty shall pay to the King of England five hundred thousand crowns, and

to his Imperial Majesty as a ransom two millions."

"These are onerous conditions, sire," said François, as the chancellor concluded.

"They appear hard now, but you will not think them so when you are at liberty, brother," said the Emperor.

"Neither will you be bound by them," whispered Marguerite. "The violence offered releases you from all engagements."

"His majesty must pledge his royal word to return to prison, if all the conditions of the treaty be not fulfilled within three months," said Lannoy.

"How say you, brother? Will you give that pledge?" demanded Charles V.

"He will—he does!" interposed Marguerite.

"Nay, madame, let the king speak for himself," said the Emperor.

"I give the required pledge," said François, with evident reluctance.

"But your majesty must also give hostages for your good faith," remarked Bourbon.

"Hostages!" exclaimed François.

"Yes, sire, hostages—hostages the most precious to yourself and to your people—your two elder sons. They must take your place, and remain in captivity till all be fulfilled."

"Sire, you do not require this?" cried François.

"If you mean fairly, brother—as I feel sure you do—where is the hardship?" rejoined Charles V., "I must have an exchange of prisoners."

"Assent," whispered Marguerite. "We will soon find means to liberate the princes."

"Well, sire, I must perforce agree," said François.

"One point only remains," said the Emperor. "I would willingly have kept it separate, but circumstances require that it should form part of the treaty. It relates to my sister Leonor, the widowed queen of Portugal."

"Yes, sire, and I now renew the proposal I have made to you respecting the queen," said François. "Do you agree to give me her hand?"

"Sire," interposed Bourbon, haughtily, "you have already promised your sister to me."

"Before giving that promise I ought to have consulted her," said Charles.

"You would have me to understand that she declines the alliance," said Bourbon.

"The queen could scarce hesitate between a proscribed prince and a powerful monarch," said Marguerite, in a tone that stung Bourbon to the quick.

"You mistake, madame," he cried, sharply. "'Tis the prince who is powerful, and the king a prisoner. However, I relinquish my claim. Your Imperial Majesty is free to bestow the queen your sister on whomsoever you list."

"Then, brother, she is yours," said the Emperor to François; "and I may now tell you frankly that your chivalrous qualities have won her admiration, and that she can give you her heart as well as her hand. The alliance, I trust, will form a lasting bond of amity between us. By the terms of the treaty you are bound to cede Burgundy to me. I am willing that you should settle the duchy upon my sister, to revert to me in default of issue by the marriage."

"Sire, I am content," said François.

"Since we are fully agreed, let the treaty be signed," said Charles V.

The document was then laid on the table, and being duly signed and sealed by the two monarchs, was delivered to the custody of the grand-chancellor.

The Emperor then signified his desire to be left alone with the King of France, and the others withdrew.

"I have a few words to say to you, brother," said Charles V., drawing near the king. "You are now free—perfectly free. Up to this moment we have treated together as princes, let us now deal as loyal gentlemen. You are esteemed, and with reason, the model of chivalry. Tell me, with the frankness of a preux chevalier, who has never broken his word that you mean to perform the compact you have made with me."

And he fixed a searching look upon the king as he spoke.

"Sire," replied François, pointing to a crucifix fixed against the wall beside them, "I swear on that cross to deal loyally with you."

"Then if you fail, I may say you have forfeited your word?" said the Emperor, still fastening his keen grey eyes upon him.

"You may, sire. But rest easy. *Foi de gentilhomme!* I shall *not* fail."

Perfectly satisfied by these assurances, Charles V. caused the doors of the castle to be thrown open, and conducted his sometime prisoner to the royal palace, where apartments suitable to his rank were assigned him.

A few days afterwards, François was affianced to Leonor of Portugal, and as soon as he was able to travel, he proceeded with a strong guard, under the charge of Lannoy and Alarcon, towards Fontarabia.

In the centre of the river Bidassoa, which divides France and Spain, a bark was moored, and in this little vessel the exchange between the king and his two sons took place.

François tenderly embraced his sons, and, bidding them farewell, caused himself to be rowed to the opposite bank, exclaiming joyfully, as he leaped ashore, "Once more, I am king."

Mounting a swift charger, he speeded towards Bayonne, where he found the Duchess d'Angoulême and the court awaiting him.

How he violated the conditions of the treaty of Madrid, and how he broke his plighted faith with the Emperor, it is not the purpose of this history to relate.

BOOK VII.—THE SACK OF ROME.

**I. HOW VON FRUNDSBERG ONCE MORE
ENTERED ITALY WITH HIS LANZ-KNECHTS.**

Deeply mortified, Bourbon quitted Madrid immediately after the liberation of François I., and returned to Lombardy.

In order to conciliate him, Charles V. had appointed him to the supreme command of the army of Italy, and he had now no rival to thwart him, Pescara having died during his absence.

Francesco Sforza having joined the Italian league, as previously stated, and openly declared against the Emperor, had shut himself up in the citadel of Milan, where he was besieged by the Imperial generals. Their forces were quartered in the city, and the miserable inhabitants, having been disarmed, were completely at the mercy of the rapacious soldiers, who took what they pleased, forcing their victims by torments to give their property. The shops and magazines were gutted of their stores, and the owners not merely robbed, but ill treated.

To prevent egress from the city, the gates were strictly guarded, and many persons committed suicide by hurling themselves from the walls, in order to escape from the horrible tyranny to which they were subjected. It was while the inhabitants were in this miserable condition that Bourbon arrived at Milan to assume the command of the Imperial army.

As soon as he had taken up his quarters in the ducal palace, he was waited upon by the podesta and the magistrates, who represented to him in the most moving terms the lamentable state of the city, and implored him to encamp the army without the walls. Bourbon appeared touched by what he heard, but he professed his inability to relieve the city from oppression, unless the means of doing so were afforded him.

"I feel your distress, and the distress of your fellow-citizens, most acutely," he said. "But I can only see one remedy for it. All the disorders on the part of the soldiery of which you complain, and which I deeply deplore, are caused by want of pay. The generals have had no money to give them, and have therefore been compelled to tolerate this dreadful licence. I am in the same predicament. Furnish me with thirty thousand ducats, so that I can offer these refractory troops a month's pay, and I will compel them to encamp without the walls of the city, and so liberate you from further persecution."

"Alas! my lord, we are in such a strait that we cannot comply with your suggestion," said the podesta. "We have been plundered of our all."

"Make a final effort, my good friends," said Bourbon. "You must have some secret hoards kept for an extremity like the present. Do not hesitate. Without money I cannot help you."

"We despair of raising the large sum named by your highness," rejoined the podesta, dolefully. "But should we succeed, may we rely upon your promise? Pardon the doubt. We have been so often deceived."

"I, too, have been deluded by false promises, and by a monarch whose word should be sacred," rejoined Bourbon. "Bring the money without fear. If I deceive you, may I perish by the first shot fired by the enemy at the first battle in which I shall be engaged."

"Your oath is recorded in heaven, my lord!" said the podesta, solemnly. And he quitted the palace with his brother magistrates.

Two days afterwards, the money was brought and distributed by Bourbon among the soldiery, but he was unable to make good his word. The insatiable Spaniards refused to quit their quarters, and the wretched citizens, betrayed in their last hope, had no other refuge but death.

After holding out for a few weeks, at the end of which time the garrison was reduced to the last extremities, Sforza capitulated, and was allowed to retire to Como, from which city he subsequently fled to join the army of the Italian League.

Had the Emperor possessed the sinews of war, he might easily have subjugated the whole of Italy at this juncture; but as he was unable to pay his army, and allowed it to subsist by plundering the country, he could neither extend his conquests nor retain what he had won. All the cities of Lombardy were ready to throw off the yoke imposed upon them, and to rise against their oppressors. The Italian States, as we have previously mentioned, had leagued together for the defence of the country, and a powerful army had been raised by the Duke of Urbino, assisted by the renowned Giovanni de' Medici and other leaders, to hold Bourbon in check.

And there was good reason for apprehension. A storm was brewing, which threatened to lay waste the

whole of the fair land of Italy. The restless ambition of Bourbon led him to seek for fresh conquests, and he now turned his thoughts towards the south, designing to plunder Rome and make himself King of Naples.

But the army, though devoted to him, was not sufficiently strong for the execution of his plan. While he was considering how he could increase his troops, he learnt, to his great joy, that his late companion-in-arms, Von Frundsberg, had again collected together a large force in Germany, and he immediately despatched Pomperant to acquaint that leader with his project, and to exhort him to enter Italy with all possible despatch, promising him a far larger booty in the new campaign than he had gained at the battle of Pavia.

Incited by this promise, Von Frundsberg entered Italy at the head of fourteen thousand lanz-knechts, and five hundred reiters contributed by the Archduke Ferdinand, under the command of Captain Zucker.

Debouching by the Val de Sabbia, devastating the country as he marched along, plundering the churches and destroying the images, Von Frundsberg at last reached Borgoforte on the Po, whither he was followed by the Duke of Urbino and Giovanni de' Medici.

A sharp engagement took place, but it was quickly decided in favour of the Germans. During a charge made at the head of his light horse by Medici, that valiant leader was struck by a shot from a falconet, and his leg being grievously shattered, he was carried off the field.

This unlucky event turned the fortune of the day. Discouraged by the fate of their leader, Medici's cavalry were dispersed by Zucker, while the Venetian infantry retired before Von Frundsberg.

The successful issue of this conflict, the first in which they had been engaged since their irruption into Italy, greatly encouraged the marauding army. Continuing their march without further interruption from the Duke of Urbino, they skirted the right bank of the Po, ravaging the whole territory of Modena, Reggio, and Parma, preying like a cloud of locusts on that rich and fertile district, sacking and burning villages, plundering the churches, and finally halted near Piacenza, where Von Frundsberg pitched his camp to await a junction with Bourbon.

Meanwhile, the army of the Italian League had lost its best leader—the only one, indeed, capable of successfully checking the invasion. From the field of Borgoforte the gallant Giovanni de' Medici was transported to Mantua, when it was found that his leg was so grievously injured that it was necessary to amputate the limb. The hardy young warrior held a light for the surgeons, and watched them during their task, without shrinking or even changing countenance. But his life could not be saved by the operation.

Thus died Italy's best champion, and on whom she might have relied at her hour of need.

II. HOW BOURBON COMMENCED HIS MARCH TO HOME.

Long before Von Frundsberg and his barbarous hordes had reached Piacenza, Bourbon would have joined them, but he found it impossible to remove the Imperial army from Milan without giving them a modicum of the arrears of pay due to them. Already he had distributed his money and jewels among them, and had nothing more to give. In vain he endeavoured to extort fresh supplies from the miserable citizens; their resources were utterly exhausted, and the worst torments proved ineffectual.

In this dilemma, a plan of raising money occurred to him, and was at once put in execution.

Girolamo Moroni, Sforza's chancellor and private secretary, had been imprisoned in the Castle of Pavia by Pescara, and still remained a captive. Knowing that Moroni possessed great wealth, and hoping to extort a large sum from him by working on his fears, Bourbon visited him in the castle. The prisoner, who regarded Bourbon as a friend, was well pleased to see him.

"You are come to deliver me?" he said.

"I am come to deliver you from bondage, but not in the way you expect," rejoined Bourbon, sternly. "Prepare for death. You will be beheaded to-morrow morning."

"For what crime?" demanded Moroni, trembling. "What have I done?"

"You have conspired against the Emperor, and have induced Francesco Sforza to join the Italian League," rejoined Bourbon.

"But in putting me to death you will deprive yourself of a most useful agent," said the wily chancellor. "I can aid you effectually against the League."

"I care not for the League," rejoined Bourbon. "But I will save you on one condition. I know you have a large sum of money concealed——"

"I swear to your highness that you are mistaken," interrupted Moroni. "I have been despoiled of all my treasures by Pescara."

"I know better," said Bourbon. "You have a secret hoard. Pay me thirty thousand ducats, and you shall be set free. Otherwise, your head will fall on the block."

"Thirty thousand ducats! Impossible, highness! Where am I to get that sum?"

"That is best known to yourself. I will give you two days to find the money. On the morning of the third day, if it be not forthcoming, you will die."

"I pray your highness to consider that compliance with the demand is impossible."

"I make no demand," said Bourbon. "I offer your life on very easy terms."

And he quitted the cell.

As Moroni remained obstinate, in order to intimidate him still further, Bourbon caused a large scaffold to be reared in the court of the castle, in sight of the windows of his prison-chamber.

These dismal preparations were not without effect. Believing that Bourbon would really execute his threat, Moroni sent for him, and delivered him the money.

"Ha! I felt certain you could procure it," cried Bourbon, as he took the bags of gold. "This money will enable me to march to Rome."

On his return to Milan, Bourbon assembled his army, and after distributing the money among them, he thus harangued them:

"Valiant captains and brave soldiers!—The time has now arrived when I must acquaint you with my secret intentions. Ere long, I hope to enrich you all by the sack of Rome—to deliver to you its nobles, its senators, its prelates, with all their wealth. You shall have the whole consistory of cardinals to deal with as you list—nay, Pope Clement himself who has excommunicated us all, and who so unworthily fills the chair of Saint Peter."

This address was received with enthusiastic acclamations. The captains drew their swords, and the men brandished their halberds, or shook their arquebusses above their heads, and a universal shout arose of "To Rome!—to Rome!"

"I will not deceive you, my brave companions," pursued Bourbon, as soon as the clamour ceased. "I have nothing more to give you. I am a poor knight—poor as yourselves. But as I have told you, we shall all become rich at Rome. Let us march thither at once. The Baron von Frundsberg and his lanz-knechts are waiting for us near Piacenza. Let us join them without delay, or they may go on and reach Rome before us."

"We are ready to march at once," cried a thousand voices. "To Rome!—to Rome! Vive Bourbon!" Bourbon did not allow their enthusiasm to cool, but put them in order of march at once, using so much expedition, that late in the following day he had effected a junction with Von Frundsberg.

When the two armies were combined, Bourbon found himself at the head of twenty-two thousand men—namely, fourteen thousand lanz-knechts brought by Frundsberg, five hundred reiters under Captain Tucker, five thousand Spaniards, two thousand Italians, and a thousand light horse.

"With such an army as this," he said to Von Frundsberg, as they rode together along the lines, "I can conquer all Italy."

III. HOW BOURBON REACHED THE APENNINES.

In the fierce bands of which Bourbon was now the leader, Italy found a scourge such as it had not endured since it was overrun by Alaric. The Spaniards were cruel and rapacious, worse than brigands, and scarcely amenable to discipline. The Germans were equally savage, and even more undisciplined, and, being all Lutherans and inflamed with intense hatred against the Pope and the creed of Rome, believed they were serving the cause of the Reformed religion by plundering and slaughtering its opponents. The Italians, who were commanded by Fabrizio Maramaldo, Sciarra Colonna, and Ludovico Gonzaga, had all the worst qualities of their Spanish and German associates, being bloodthirsty and licentious, and capable of any deed of violence or rapacity. Among the Spanish leaders who still remained with the army was the Marquis del Vasto, but since the death of his redoubted relative, Pescara, and the increased popularity of Bourbon, he exercised little authority over the troops.

Over the whole of this wild host, composed of such heterogeneous materials—Lutherans, Romanists, scoffers at all creeds—no one exercised supreme control but Bourbon. The lanz-knechts were devoted to Von Frundsberg, and the reiters to Zucker, but neither Spaniards nor Italians would have served under such leaders. By a mixture of firmness and indulgence, which he knew so well how to practise, by his frankness and easiness of manner, Bourbon kept the wildest and most ferocious under a certain restraint and discipline, and though he was often compelled to make a severe example of some mutinous ruffian, the army ever recognised the justice of the sentence, and upheld his authority.

That Bourbon should be content to link his fortunes with soldiers whose professed objects were plunder and violence, may appear surprising, but it must be borne in mind that his nobler impulses had been checked, if not destroyed, by the life he had lately led. Ambition still reigned within his breast, the desire of conquest still animated him strongly as ever—even more strongly, perhaps—but he no longer cared by what means, or by what instruments, he attained his end. If he could gain a crown, no matter how it was won.

Meanwhile, he had succeeded in convincing the soldiers that he had become an adventurer like themselves. As we have said, he had stripped himself of all his money and jewels, and retained only his sword and lance, his accoutrements and his steed. Yet never had he been so powerful as now. None dared to disobey him. While idolising him, the men stood in awe of him, and the captains and generals feared him. He had become the master-spirit of the whole host, by whom all its plans and movements were directed. He was now without territory and without money, his home was the camp, his family the army. Of all his followers, the only one who accompanied him on his march to Rome was Pomperant. Like himself, Pomperant was still proscribed.

Proceeding slowly so as not to fatigue his troops, Bourbon marched by San Donino, Parma, Reggio, and Modena towards Bologna.

He did not stop to attack any of these cities, but contented himself with ravaging the surrounding country,

emptying the granaries, and stripping the monasteries and churches of their plate and ornaments. The zealous Lutherans completed the work of destruction by demolishing the shrines and images. Abundance of provisions being brought in each day by the foraging parties, who scoured the country round, the army fared sumptuously, and Von Frundsberg caroused nightly in his tent with Zucker and the German captains.

When within a day's march of Bologna, Bourbon had a conference with Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, who, having been excluded from the Italian League by the Pope, was favourable to the invasion.

Bourbon endeavoured to prevail upon the duke to furnish him with artillery, of which he stood greatly in need. D'Este declined to supply the cannon, but made Bourbon a large subsidy, which enabled him to give two crowns to each of the lanz-knechts, being the first pay they had received since they had started on the expedition.

Having no artillery to attack Bologna, Bourbon continued his march. His position was one of some danger. In his rear was the Duke of Urbino and the Venetian army, while in front were the Pontifical troops, commanded by the Marquis of Saluzzo. The latter, however, retired as the invaders advanced, and the Duke of Urbino, not wishing to risk an engagement, contented himself with harassing their rear.

As he pursued his march, Bourbon's army was daily augmented by hundreds of lawless adventurers, by deserters from the army of the League, and from the Pontifical army, who flocked round his standard, drawn towards it by the hope of plunder. Bourbon welcomed them all, brigands as they were, the bulk of his host being composed of similar material.

He was now approaching the Apennines, and had reached a wild and picturesque spot on the spur of the mountains, where the army, sheltered by some high rocks, had encamped for the night. The soldiers were collected in groups around their fires, carousing, gambling, jesting, quarrelling, or making merry, as was their wont. Some of the Spanish soldiers were chanting a song, composed in their leader's honour, which commenced thus:

Calla, calla, Julio Cesar, Hannibal, Scipion,
Viva la fama de Bourbon!

While Bourbon was making his rounds, he heard the sentinels challenge a horseman who was riding up the hill towards the camp, and sent Pomperant to question him.

IV. THE PRINCE OF ORANGE.

The person stopped by the sentinels was a young man of about five-and-twenty, of martial bearing and aspect. He was tall, well proportioned, and possessed handsome features, characterised by a proud, fierce expression, and Pomperant's first impression on beholding him was, that he was a Venetian officer charged with a message from the Duke of Urbino; but as he drew near, and the stranger's countenance could be more clearly distinguished, Pomperant uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, for he recognised in him one of the bitterest enemies of France, and one of the most devoted friends of the Duke de Bourbon, the Prince of Orange.

Young as he was, Philibert de Chalons, Prince of Orange, was one of the most distinguished captains of the day. He came of an ancient Burgundian house, and inherited all the warlike qualities of his ancestry. Of a remarkably fierce and vindictive temperament, he never forgave an injury. His animosity towards François I. originated in a slight offered him by that monarch. At the ceremonial of the baptism of the Dauphin, the Prince of Orange was one of the invited guests, and appeared at the Louvre with a retinue befitting his rank, but he was very coldly received by the king, and the apartments designed for him in the palace were given to another. Highly incensed by this treatment, he immediately returned to his castle of Nozerol, and subsequently offered his services to the Emperor, who received him with open arms, and compensated him by other lands for the territories of which he was deprived by the King of France.

Philibert's conduct justified the Emperor's sagacity. The young prince greatly distinguished himself at the siege of Fontarabia.

When Bourbon invaded Provence, Philibert sailed from Barcelona to join him, but being taken prisoner, as may be remembered, by Andrea Doria, he was carried to France, and imprisoned in the castle of Lusignan in Poitou, where he was detained in close captivity until after the battle of Pavia.

Imprisonment did not tame his spirit, but rather envenomed his hatred of François I. Regardless of all consequences, he perpetually launched into fierce invectives against that monarch, and covered the walls of his prison with satirical remarks upon him.

In compliance with the treaty of Madrid, the Prince of Orange was set free, but as the convention was only executed in part, his confiscated domains were not restored to him.

Without a single follower, and almost without money, Philibert set forth to join Bourbon, and after many adventures and hindrances on his journey, which it is not necessary to recount, reached him at the foot of the Apennines, as described.

"I have come to join your highness," said the young prince, when brought before Bourbon by Pomperant. "I have nothing to offer you but my sword, but that I devote to your service."

"By Sainte Barbe! you are as welcome, prince, as if you had a thousand lances at your back," rejoined

Bourbon. "You offer me your sword. I accept it with gratitude. At any time, the offer would enchant me—now, it is doubly welcome. Your distinguished name will be of infinite service, and will help to confound my enemies. Before you ask aught from me, noble prince, I will evince my satisfaction by appointing you second in command to myself of the whole army."

"I have done nothing to merit such consideration at your highness's hands," rejoined Philibert.

"But you will do much hereafter, prince," said Bourbon. "I know that in you I have a staunch partisan—a friend on whom I can rely. We have wrongs in common, and are both mortal enemies of the false and perfidious François de Valois."

"His very name rouses my choler," cried Philibert, fiercely. "May all the curses I have daily invoked upon the faithless tyrant during my captivity at Lusignan alight on his devoted head! Had I been in the Emperor's place, I would never have set him free till all the conditions of the treaty had been fulfilled. François de Valois is not to be trusted. He has broken his word with us all, and his name ought to be covered with infamy. But I beg pardon of your highness for my warmth," he added, checking himself. "I thank you for the trust you repose in me. You shall find me a firm friend. And I hope the hour may come when we shall both be fully avenged on our common enemy."

"Be sure the hour will come," said Bourbon, sternly. "But the work of vengeance must be begun at Rome. Look around, prince. What do you behold?"

"An army of brave men—somewhat savage, perhaps, and not like the well-equipped legions of France, but able to conquer a kingdom."

"Of this robber-host François has made me leader," said Bourbon; "and he has compelled you to join it."

"No matter. I serve Bourbon," rejoined Philibert; "and I would rather serve him than any monarch in Europe. I care not of what the army is composed, so that the men can fight."

"They can fight well, prince, and pillage as well as fight, as you will find, when you know them better," said Bourbon, laughing.

"If they serve without pay, as I suppose they do, they must plunder," said Philibert. "Despite their looks and equipments, they seem good soldiers."

"The Pope will think so if they once get within the walls of Rome," remarked Bourbon. "They are all impatience to be there, and I do not mean to balk them."

"Then you do not design to attack Florence?" inquired the Prince of Orange.

"I have no artillery," replied Bourbon, "and I do not wish to waste time in a siege. Florence will be defended by the army of the League and the Pontifical troops. Rome is more important."

While they were thus conversing, Von Frundsberg and Zucker came up, and their new leader was presented to them by Bourbon.

Philibert possessed some of the qualities of Bourbon himself, and could put on, when he pleased, the rough frankness of a soldier. His manner pleased Von Frundsberg, and that hardy veteran was delighted with him when they became better acquainted, and had passed half the night in a carouse.

V. HOW LANNOY VAINLY ATTEMPTED TO ARREST BOURBON'S MARCH.

Next day, from the heights of the Apennines, Bourbon and his bands looked down upon the lovely city of Florence, and on the incomparable valley of the Amo. When the soldiers beheld Florence in all its ravishing beauty lying before them—when from the heights on which they stood they could count all its palaces and churches, their cupidity was so strongly excited that they demanded with frenzied eagerness to be led to the assault.

"Let us sack Florence, noble general!" they shouted.

"No, my brave companions, I cannot grant your request," rejoined Bourbon. "Florence is too well defended. Mark the cannon on the walls and bastions? Mark the army encamped outside the walls, placed there to cover the city? Florence cannot be taken without artillery, and we have none. We must march on to Rome, which can be easily taken, and where ten times the wealth of Florence is collected."

Convinced by these arguments, the men ceased their solicitations, and Bourbon descending to the valley, and avoiding Florence, crossed the Upper Arno, and continued his march without molestation to Viterbo, in the neighbourhood of which city he halted.

It was during this halt that he was informed by his scouts of the approach of Lannoy with a small escort. An hour later the Viceroy of Naples arrived, and was received by Bourbon in his tent. The Prince of Orange, Del Vasto, Von Frundsberg, Zueker, and the other leaders were present at the interview.

"I have come to forbid your highness's further advance," said Lannoy to Bourbon. "I have just concluded, on the part of the Emperor, a truce with the Pope, and have undertaken that the army shall retire."

"Your highness has undertaken more than you can perform," said Bourbon. "I need scarcely inform you that the troops are unpaid."

"Let not that concern you," rejoined Lannoy. "His Holiness has supplied me with sufficient money to pay them. The army must retire, I say. I am the representative of his Imperial Majesty in Italy, and I issue that

order."

"By the beard of my father! I shall not respect it," cried Von Frundsberg. "I do not serve the Emperor!"

"Neither do we," added Zueker, Maramaldo, and the Italian leaders. "We have received no pay from him. We serve the brave Bourbon."

"But the Duke de Bourbon only derives his authority from the Emperor," said Lannoy; "and I offer you payment for your troops."

"That will not suffice," cried Von Frundsberg, fiercely. "We have not crossed the Po, and marched thus far through Italy, to retire because the Emperor at the last moment has thought fit to conclude a truce with the Pope. The truce is not binding upon us. We have nothing to do with it. As to the paltry payment offered by your highness, we scout it. No sum could induce us to turn back, We are the sworn enemies of Antichrist. We will destroy the idolatrous city. We will plunder the Vatican and Saint Peter's of their treasures."

"Is it possible your highness can tolerate this horrible impiety?" said Lannoy to Bourbon.

"At least, the Spanish soldiers will obey me. I shall take them with me to Rome for the defence of the city against this meditated attack. Bid them come with me in the Emperor's name," he added to Del Vasto.

"I fear the attempt will be vain," returned the marquis.

"Try them," said Bourbon. "If they choose to depart, I shall not hinder them."

On this, Del Vasto quitted the tent, but he had not been gone many minutes when a great disturbance was heard outside, and he returned with looks of alarm.

"You have met with ill success, I fear, my lord?" said Lannoy.

"I could scarce have met with worse," rejoined the marquis. "The soldiers utterly refuse to obey me. They will not respect the truce. They will not protect the Pope. They are determined to sack Rome. They say they know no other leader than Bourbon, Your highness must fly. The soldiers are so infuriated against you that I fear they will do you injury."

"How should I fly?" cried Lannoy, trembling. "I put myself under your highness's protection," he added to Bourbon.

"Fear nothing," said Bourbon. "I will be answerable for your safety."

As he spoke, a number of Spanish soldiers burst into the tent, shouting out, "Death to Lannoy! Death to the Pope's general!"

"How dare you force your way thus into my presence?" cried Bourbon, confronting them fiercely, and speaking in a stern authoritative tone. "Hence, mutinous rascals, or you shall be punished."

"Deliver up the Viceroy to us, and we will go at once," said the foremost of the band.

"Ha! dare you parley with me?" cried Bourbon.

"Away, I say, at once, or——"

On this the soldiers retired, but they cast menacing glances at Lannoy as they went, and the tumult outside the tent continued.

"It would have been well if your highness had ascertained the disposition of the army before venturing among them," remarked Von Frundsberg. "They will not be balked of their plunder."

"Your highness has promised me your protection," said Lannoy, appealing to Bourbon.

"Fear nothing," replied the other. "I will see you safely out of the camp. Come with me!"

Bourbon then went forth, closely followed by Lannoy and Del Vasto. As the party appeared, the soldiers assailed the Viceroy with renewed threats, but, overawed by Bourbon's determined manner, they fell back, and allowed the escort to approach. As soon as Lannoy had mounted his steed, and was surrounded by his little band, his courage in some degree returned, and he said to the soldiers, "Before I go, let me make a last appeal to you to return to your duty, and obey your liege lord, the Emperor."

"We have no other leader now but Bourbon," rejoined the men. "Vive Bourbon!"

"Have I no longer any authority over you?" said Del Vasto.

"None," returned the soldiers. "You do not belong to us. You are banished the army."

"Banished!" exclaimed Del Vasto. "Who dares to pronounce my banishment?"

"We do," replied the men. "You would betray our interests. You would sell us to the Pope. Therefore we depose you. You are no longer our general. Go to your new master."

"Have a little patience, my good friends, and listen to reason," said Lannoy. "I speak for your own good. I would save you from a great crime."

"No more! We will hear no more!" cried the soldiers, furiously. "Begone! If you return again, we will massacre you."

"Your highness had better depart at once," said Bourbon. "If you inflame the men further, I may not be able to restrain them. You must go likewise, my lord," he added to Del Vasto. "It will not be safe for you to remain."

The counsel was followed. To prevent mishap, Bourbon conducted them to the outskirts of the camp.

VI. VON FRUNDSBERG'S LAST CAROUSE.

From Viterbo, Bourbon pressed on towards Rome, hoping to take the city by surprise. By this time his army, increased, as we have said, by deserters from the troops of the League and the Pontifical forces, amounted to upwards of forty thousand men.

As the first glimpse of the fated city, destined so soon to fall into their hands, was caught from the hills near Bracciano, the excitement of the whole host, captains and generals included, was prodigious. On that night Von Frundsberg had a grand carouse in his tent. Zucker and all the other German captains were with him, and they continued their revelry till past midnight, when Bourbon, accompanied by the Prince of Orange and Pomperant, entered the tent, hoping by his presence to put a stop to the orgie. Above the surrounding Bacchanals towered the gigantic figure of Von Frundsberg, his visage looking more inflamed than ever. As Bourbon and the others entered the tent, he was addressing his companions, telling them that in two days more Rome would be taken, and the sack begin.

"Then you will be amply rewarded," he said; "then you may strip all those temples of their ornaments and slay their priests. I give you each a cardinal, but I reserve to myself the Sovereign Pontiff. You know what I mean to do with him," added the sacrilegious wretch, producing his golden chain, and laughing loudly.

"Before you hang him, you must make him deliver up all his treasures—the tons of gold he has hidden in the Vatican and elsewhere," said Zucker.

"Fear not that," rejoined Von Frundsberg, with a tremendous roar of laughter. "I know well how to deal with him. But I must fulfil my mission. Have I not been told by Doctor Martin Luther himself that I am destined by Heaven to cast down Antichrist and to wash out the enormities of the polluted and idolatrous city of Rome in blood? For this purpose I have come hither."

At this moment his eye alighted upon Bourbon, and he called out,

"Welcome, noble general! thrice welcome! We are making merry, as you see, in anticipation of our victory. Our next carouse shall be in Rome, and it shall be a rare one—ho! ho!"

"You have sat late enough, and drank enough, baron," said Bourbon, glancing around at the inebriated crew. "We shall march betimes to-morrow, and you will need clear heads."

"One more cup of wine, and we have done," said Von Frundsberg. "Nay, you must join us, general," he added to Bourbon, who shook his head. "We have got some famous Montepulciano, of the Pope's own vintage, and destined to the Pope's own cellar—ho! ho! Taste it, I pray your highness. You will find it delicious," smacking his lips. "Fill for me! fill!" he called to a soldier who served him, holding out an immense gilt chalice stolen from an altar at San Lorenzo-alle-Grotte—"fill to the brim! All must do me reason. It may be the last cup we shall drink together. Who knows?"

"You do not mean to empty that chalice, baron?" said Bourbon, looking in astonishment at the vessel, which held nearly a gallon of wine.

"By my faith! but I do, your highness," rejoined Von Frundsberg, with a tremendous roar of laughter. "I drink to the speedy downfall of Rome."

And, as he spoke, he raised the brimming chalice to his lips, and did not remove it till it was completely drained.

After accomplishing this feat, he gazed at Bourbon, but his triumph was of short duration. With a convulsive attempt at utterance, which shook his whole frame, he fell heavily backwards.

Immediate assistance was rendered him, but it was of no avail. Suffocated by the draught he had swallowed, in a few seconds the infuriated drunkard had ceased to exist.

Bourbon shuddered as he gazed at the inanimate mass, and all the fierce soldiers around were impressed by the catastrophe. Von Frundsberg died with the chain of gold tightly clasped, in his left hand.

Had Von Frundsberg's death occurred earlier, it might have produced some effect upon the lanz-knechts. But he had brought them within sight of Rome, and though they grieved for him, they did not for a moment falter in their purpose, but accepted the Prince of Orange, whom Bourbon appointed as their general. Von Frundsberg found a rude grave at Bracciano, and the chain of gold was buried with him.

VIII. HOW BOURBON AND HIS BANDS ARRIVED BEFORE ROME.

Next morning, as soon as it was light, Bourbon, who had not taken off his armour, and had only snatched a couple of hours of sleep, rode to the summit of a hill, whence he could command a good view of the city he was about to deliver to destruction.

There lay the ancient capital of the world—and now the chief city of Christendom—the burial-place of the holy apostles and martyrs—there it lay, with its seven hills, its heathen temples and Christian fanes, its ruins, its monuments, its palaces hallowed by a thousand historical recollections. There was the mighty Coliseum, there the Forum, there the Palatine, crowned with the palace of the Caesars. There was Mount Aventine—there the Esquiline, with the Baths of Titus—there the Pincian Hill, with its cypresses. Over all, and dominating the ancient temples, rose the Basilica of Saint Peter—then, however, wanting its incomparable dome. Near to this stately fane were the Vatican and the frowning Castle of Saint Angelo, with the yellow Tiber flowing past its walls. Could he gaze on that time-hallowed city, unmoved—knowing he was about to doom it to destruction? Some feelings of compunction did, indeed, cross him, but he quickly crushed them.

At a later hour in the same day—it was the 5th of May, 1527—the sentinels on the walls and gates of Rome, and on the battlements of the Castle of Saint Angelo, descried the mighty host advancing along the wide and desolate Campagna. Presently came numerous messengers, wild with terror, describing the number and savage character of the troops. But the Pope did not appear to be alarmed by the tidings brought him. Though usually timid and irresolute, he did not exhibit any uneasiness now, but declared that ample preparations had been made for the defence of the city. He would not allow the bridges to be cut connecting the Borgo with the city, and prohibited the terrified merchants from removing their goods by the Tiber.

The reason of this apparent confidence was, that he fully believed he should be able to treat with Bourbon, and save the city from assault by payment of a large subsidy—never reflecting that it was not in Bourbon's power to treat with him, and that nothing less than the sack of the city would content the rapacious soldiery.

The defence of the city had been committed by the Pontiff' to Renzo da Ceri, who persuaded himself that he could resist Bourbon as successfully at Rome as he had done at Marseilles. Besides the garrison of the Castle of Saint Angelo, and the Pope's Swiss guard, there were in Rome at the time about two thousand arquebussiers, and a small troop of cavalry. The walls and fortifications were for the most part in good order, and well supplied with ordnance, and as it was known that Bourbon was entirely without artillery, and almost without munitions, it was not deemed likely he could take the city by assault. Renzo's confidence was, therefore, excusable. But he was wrong. Bourbon had now an army with him whom no walls could keep out.

On arriving before Rome, Bourbon placed his army between the Janiculum Hill and the Vatican, and he had no sooner taken up this position than he sent Pomperant with a trumpet to summon the Pope to surrender the city.

Presenting himself at the ancient Porta Flaminia, which was succeeded, some half a century later, by the Porta del Popolo, Pomperant caused the trumpeter to sound his clarion thrice, and in the name of the Constable de Bourbon summoned the Sovereign Pontiff' to surrender the city.

Response was immediately made in haughty terms by Renzo da Ceri, who ordered Pomperant to retire or he would fire upon him, and the latter accordingly withdrew.

Bourbon expected no other answer, but on receiving it he gave immediate orders that the city should be assaulted on the following morning at daybreak.

At eventide, Bourbon, attended by the Prince of Orange and Pomperant, surveyed the city from the Monte Mario. After a careful examination of the walls, which then formed a circuit of more than five leagues, he decided on making the assault at different points of the Aurelian Wall between the Janiculum Hill and the Vatican. This being settled, he rode back towards the camp.

As yet not a single gun had been fired on either side, for the Pope had ordered his general not to precipitate matters by opening fire from the Castle of Saint Angelo upon the enemy. But the cannon were all shotted, and the sentinels with their arquebusses on the shoulder, were pacing to and fro on the ramparts.

When Bourbon returned to the camp, he called together the men, and thus addressed them:

"Captains and brave soldiers! fortune has at last brought us to the city we have so ardently desired to reach. Rome is before you. On the other side of those old walls countless treasures await you. But you must fight hard to win the treasures. The walls must be scaled, since we have no cannon to breach them."

"We will do it, noble general," cried the men. "We need no breach."

"I myself will lead the assault," continued Bourbon, "and will show you how to take the city."

"We will follow, fear not! Vive Bourbon!" shouted the soldiers.

"Listen to me, my friends," he pursued. "The famous astrologer, Cornelius Agrippa, of whom you must have heard, foretold that I should die before the walls of a great city. It may be here—before Rome—that I am destined to perish. If it be so, I care not. The death will be glorious—worthy of a soldier. I shall lead the assault without fear, certain that you, my brave companions, will capture the city, and avenge me."

"'Tis a false prediction!" cried a hundred voices. "We will all guard you. You will not die thus. You are destined to be King of Rome."

"Be my fate what it may," said Bourbon—"whether I share your triumph, or die beforehand, I know that Rome, with all its treasures, with its Pope, its cardinals, its nobles, and its fair women, will be yours. And now return to your tents, and take your rest. You will have enough to do to-morrow. An hour before dawn, make ready for the assault. Your captains have their full directions. You may rest without fear. I will take care that strict watch is kept."

The soldiers then dispersed, singing, "Calla, calla! Viva la fama de Bourbon!"

"You have no faith in that idle prediction?" remarked the Prince of Orange to Bourbon, as he accompanied him to his tent.

"I have scarcely thought of it before to-day, but it came upon me forcibly as I gazed on Rome this evening from the Monte Mario," rejoined Bourbon. "If I should fall, you must take the command of the army."

"No such necessity, I trust, may arise," said Philibert. "But the army shall not want a leader."

"It will have a good one in you," rejoined Bourbon. "And now leave me. Come to me an hour before daybreak."

With this the Prince of Orange departed, and Bourbon was left alone, and passed several hours in deep self-communion.

About midnight he roused himself, and, issuing from his tent, looked around. It was a glorious night, and the old walls that rose before him were bathed in the moonbeams. The camp was hushed, and all was so still at the moment, that the tread of the sentinels could be heard on the ramparts. Having looked around for a short time, he re-entered his tent, trimmed his lamp, and sat down to look at a plan of Rome, which was laid on the table before him. From this occupation he was roused by the noise of some one entering the tent, and, looking up, he perceived Pomperant, accompanied by a nun.

Surprised at the sight, he inquired why he was thus disturbed.

"The holy sister herself will explain her errand," replied Pomperant. "She has ventured forth from the city to see your highness, and I could not refuse to bring her to you."

"You have done wrong," said Bourbon, sternly. "I have no time to waste on women now. Depart, good sister."

"Dismiss me not, I pray your highness, till you have heard what I have to say," rejoined the nun. "Am I so much changed? Does this garb disguise me so greatly, that you fail to recognise Marcelline d'Herment?"

"Marcelline d'Herment!" exclaimed Bourbon, in surprise.

"I am vowed to Heaven, as you see," she rejoined. "I have entered a convent in Rome, and hoped to pass the rest of my days in peace. But I have been sorely troubled since I learnt that your highness was marching to lay waste the city, and determined, at whatever risk, to make an effort to save it. With that view I came forth to-night. I ventured to approach the sentinels, and I desired to be brought before your highness. The men refused, but while they were talking with me the Seigneur Pomperant came up, and at once consented to bring me before you."

"If I have done wrong, I trust your highness will forgive me," said Pomperant, "but I could not refuse the request."

"Nay, there is no harm done," said Bourbon. "But how comes it that you have abandoned the world?" he added to Marcelline. "I thought you had given your heart to Pomperant. Why have you placed this insurmountable bar between yourself and him?"

"Ah! why, indeed?" cried Pomperant, reproachfully.

"I could not do otherwise," she rejoined. "But I have not come hither to tell my own sad story. I have come to entreat your highness, even at the eleventh hour, to abandon your impious purpose. Oh! prince, listen to me, I implore you. Treason and rebellion are great crimes, but they are as naught compared with the act you are about to commit. If you deliver over Rome to pillage and slaughter, your name will be for ever execrated. Turn back, I implore of you!"

"I cannot turn back. Be that my answer," said Bourbon, impatiently.

"But it is in your power to save the city!" cried Marcelline. "You can come to terms with his Holiness, who will enable you to satisfy your men."

"Bah!" exclaimed Bourbon. "Nothing will satisfy them but the plunder of the city."

"Will no consideration move you?" she cried. "Have you no pity for the innocent and the aged? Will you allow the temples of your religion to be destroyed and polluted?"

"My heart is steeled to pity," rejoined Bourbon, sternly. "All your solicitations are in vain."

"Then since you are deaf to all entreaties, tremble!" she cried. "Tremble! for Heaven's vengeance will alight upon you. Grace has been offered you, but you have cast it aside. But you will not enjoy your triumph. You will not enter the city."

"Who shall prevent me?" demanded Bourbon.

"Heaven," she rejoined. "Heaven will prevent you."

"Were you a messenger from Heaven itself, you should not prevent me from being first to scale the walls," said Bourbon. "This interview can lead to nothing, and must not be prolonged," he added to Pomperant, "Conduct the Sister Marcelline through the camp, and place her where she may safely enter the city."

"It shall be done," replied Pomperant,

He then withdrew with Marcelline. On reaching the outskirts of the camp, she said to him, "Are you determined to follow Bourbon?"

"To the last," he rejoined. "If he is shot down, I will take his place."

Marcelline made no reply, but darted from him, and ran towards the Aurelian Wall.

Plunging into the dry fosse which skirted the wall, she hurried along the bottom of the trench for some distance in the direction of the Vatican. All at once she stopped, and clapped her hands. At the signal, a ladder was let down, and, mounting it, she gained the ramparts.

Marcelline fancied her movements were unobserved, but she was mistaken. Curious to ascertain how she could gain access to the city, Pomperant had followed her. On approaching the spot where she had disappeared, he perceived that the old wall, which was built of brick, and of great solidity, was in this part considerably dilapidated—so much so, as almost to form a breach.

After carefully examining the spot, he hastened back to Bourbon's tent to acquaint him with the important discovery he had made. Bourbon had thrown himself on a couch, but without divesting himself of his armour, and he was wrapped in the last slumber he was destined to enjoy, when Pomperant entered his tent, and aroused him.

"I am sure your highness will forgive me for disturbing you," he said, "when I tell you that I have discovered a breach in the walls."

"Ha! that is indeed good news!" cried Bourbon. "But how did you make the discovery?"

"I made it while following Marcelline to see how she entered the city," replied Pomperant.

"Take me to the spot," said Bourbon. "I must be satisfied with my own eyes that you have not been deceived. It is strange that you roused me from a dream of the assault. I thought an angel with a flaming brand stood on the battlements to drive me back, but I went on. Listen to me, Pomperant. When dealing with the miserable Milanese, as you know, I took Heaven to witness that I meant them fairly, wishing I might perish by the first shot at the first battle if I played them false. This is the first battle, and not a shot has yet been fired."

"The first shot will not harm you, my lord," rejoined Pomperant. "You did not wilfully deceive the Milanese. The Spanish soldiers refused to obey your orders."

"True," replied Bourbon; "but I feel that I violated my promise, and if Heaven punishes me, I cannot

complain. But come. Let us examine the wall."

They then quitted the tent, and, enveloped in long russet-coloured cloaks, which completely covered their armour, passed out of the camp, and cautiously approached the Aurelian Wall.

VIII. BENVENUTO CELLINI.

No sooner had Marcelline gained the ramparts, than the ladder she had ascended was drawn up by the sentinels. Before she could move off, a martial personage, accoutred in a steel cap and corslet, and armed with an arquebuss, came up and detained her.

"Ha! where have you been, sister?" he demanded, sternly. "Speak!—give an account of yourself."

"I have been in the enemy's camp," she replied, "and have spoken with the general himself."

"With Bourbon!" exclaimed the soldier. "You are trifling with me."

"On my life I am not," she rejoined, "I have seen him as I see you, but I have failed in my object, which was to dissuade him from the attack."

"I am not surprised at it," said the soldier, contemptuously. "You have gone on a mad errand. Did you for a moment suppose that Bourbon would turn back at your entreaties?"

"Bourbon has a noble heart, and I thought to move him," she rejoined.

"Tut! Rome is not likely to be saved from sack by a woman's prayers and entreaties," said the soldier. "We must keep Bourbon and his bands out of the city, if we can. If they once get in, woe betide us! But how is this?" he cried, noticing the dilapidated state of the ramparts. "This wall ought to have been repaired."

"It will be repaired in the morning, good Messer Benvenuto Cellini," replied the sentinel.

"To-morrow may be too late," remarked Cellini. "I will see our general about it without delay."

"You need not go far to seek him, brave Benvenuto," said Renzo da Ceri, marching towards them. "What have you to say to me?"

"I would pray your lordship to look at the condition of these ramparts," said Cellini. "There is a breach as if made by cannon."

"By Heaven! the wall is very ruinous here!" cried Renzo. "I cannot think how the gap escaped my notice."

"Since it has escaped your lordship's quick eyes, it may escape those of the enemy," said Cellini. "But it may be well to have it speedily repaired."

"It shall be repaired to-morrow morning," said Renzo.

"Provided Bourbon does not enter by it in the mean time," said Cellini.

"Oh! he will not attempt the assault for a month," rejoined Renzo, contemptuously. "He has no artillery. To-morrow, or next day at the latest, we shall have Count Guido Rangone, with five thousand fantassins and a corps of artillery. He is now at Ponte Salaro. We shall also be speedily reinforced by detachments from the armies of the Duke of Urbino and the Marquis of Saluzzo. Rome, therefore, is secure."

"Your lordship must pardon me, but I cannot think Rome secure while Bourbon is encamped before it," remarked Cellini.

"Well, you have abandoned your trade of goldsmith, and have taken up arms for its defence," said Renzo, laughing. "If you win as much renown as a soldier as you have done as a sculptor, Rome may be proud of you."

"I will try," said Cellini.

"Is this the famous Benvenuto Cellini?" inquired Marcelline, approaching them. "I knew him not."

"Yes, this is he, who may vie with the greatest of the ancient sculptors," said Renzo da Ceri.

"For the moment, I am a mere Roman soldier," said Cellini. "I shall resume my profession as an artist when we have got rid of Bourbon. But who is she who inquires my name?"

"One you may be proud to know," said Renzo. "This holy sister is Marcelline d'Herment, one of the Amazons who helped to defend Marseilles."

"I have heard of her," said Cellini. "I hope our Roman dames will follow her example. But hush!" he exclaimed, stepping towards the battlements, "I see two tall figures approaching the walls. They come nearer. Do you not distinguish them?"

"Perfectly," replied Marcelline.

"Be silent, and we can hear what they say," whispered Cellini. And after listening intently for a few moments, he added, "They have discovered the breach. It is here the assault will be made to-morrow morning."

"How know you that?" demanded Renzo da Ceri. "I could hear nothing."

"My ears never deceive me," said Cellini. "Who are they, think you?"

"The tallest of the two is Bourbon," replied Marcelline, in a whisper, "I recognise his voice and figure."

"Bourbon!" exclaimed Cellini. "Then his hour is come."

And kneeling down, he placed his arquebuss on the battlements and took deliberate aim at the duke. But just as he was about to fire, Marcelline caught hold of his hand and stopped him, and ere he could take fresh aim the two personages were gone.

"Maledizione! why did you interfere, sister?" cried Benvenuto, turning angrily upon her. "I should have killed him, and delivered Rome. I never miss my aim."

"I would not have him die now," she rejoined.

"Well, he shall not escape me," said Cellini. "I heard him say he would be first to scale the walls."

"And if he said so he will keep his word," rejoined Marcelline.

"I will be ready for him. What says your excellency now?" he added to Renzo.

"I have little doubt that the assault will be made to-morrow morning, and at this point," replied Renzo. "Since the breach cannot be repaired, I will send a sufficient force to defend it."

"Be mine the privilege to fire the first shot," said

Benvenuto.

"Agreed," replied Renzo. "Not an arquebuss shall be discharged till you have fired."

IX. THE FIRST SHOT FROM THE WALLS.

Dawn was at hand—the dawn of the direst day that ever Rome beheld.

Already the entire host of Bourbon was under arms, and impatient for the assault. The captains were forming their men in masses before the long dark line of walls which they were about to scale.

Grim and menacing did those walls and bastions look now, as they were thronged with armed men, and bristled with cannon. But they inspired no terror on the bands gathered before them. Sullen and stern in the grey light of morning loomed the Castle of Saint Angelo, but the fierce host had no dread of its guns.

As the shades of night disappeared, and daylight revealed to them the fierce bands gathered before the Aurelian Wall, and forming a long line, extending from the Janiculum Hill to the rear of the Basilica of Saint Peter's and the Vatican, those stationed on the ramparts and bastions, though valiant men, were seized with dread, the aspect of the host being truly formidable.

Scarcely had it become light when word was passed along the whole line that the assault was about to be made, and the manifestations of impatience, heretofore exhibited, were increased in a tenfold degree, the men becoming so fiercely excited that they could be scarcely restrained by their captains.

While they were all eagerly awaiting the signal, a movement was made in the centre of the line, and Bourbon appeared, fully accoutred, and wearing his emblazoned surcoat over his armour. He was attended by his standard-bearer, carrying his banner, which was of yellow taffety, embroidered with flaming swords, and bearing the motto, "Espérance, Espérance."

Close behind came Pomperant, while in front ran several Spanish soldiers with a long scaling-ladder, which they reared against the wall at the appointed spot.

All this was accomplished with the utmost rapidity. A charge was then sounded loudly by the trumpeters, and Bourbon, sword in hand, mounted the ladder, shouting in a loud voice, "Follow me, my brave fellows! On! on!"

But he had not ascended many steps when the barrel of an arquebuss was protruded over the ramparts, and the next moment the discharge was heard.

The shot struck the duke below the gorget and traversed his right side. Feeling himself mortally wounded, he made an effort to descend, but, unable to retain his hold of the ladder, he fell to the ground.

As he dropped, Benvenuto Cellini, with his face lighted up by a fierce exulting smile, was seen looking down from above.

"Saints be praised! the first shot has told," cried the sculptor. "I have killed him."

As the words were uttered, a hundred bullets from the infuriated soldiers whistled about his ears, but not one hit its mark.

Pomperant, who was close behind, and had just set foot on the ladder when Bourbon fell, now rushed to his wounded leader's assistance.

"Are you much hurt, my lord?" he inquired, anxiously.

"Mortally," gasped Bourbon. "I have not many minutes of life left. But do not tarry with me, Pomperant. Supply my place. On! on!"

"I cannot leave you thus, my dear lord," said Pomperant, "Perhaps you are not dangerously hurt."

"I tell you I am sped," groaned Bourbon. "My eyes are growing dim. What are the men doing? Are they mounting the ladder?"

"A hundred ladders are placed against the walls, and the men are swarming up them," rejoined Pomperant.

"I cannot see them, but I hear their shouts, mingled with the rattle of arquebusses and the roar of cannon," cried Bourbon. "Have any gained the ramparts?"

"None as yet, my lord," rejoined Pomperant. "The foremost have all been struck down, but others are pressing on."

"Where is the Prince of Orange?" asked Bourbon, anxiously.

"The smoke is so thick that I cannot discern him," replied Pomperant. "The besieged make a desperate resistance. Our men are hurled from the battlements by scores."

"But they do not give way? Others mount—ha?"

"They do, my lord. Ha! the smoke clears off. I see the Prince of Orange now. He is upon the ramparts."

"Bravely done, by Sainte Barbe! Would I were with him!" ejaculated Bourbon. "Do the men know I have fallen?"

"Some few may know the sad truth, my lord," replied Pomperant. "But the mass believe you are on the ramparts. They are shouting your name. Hark!"

As he spoke, loud shouts of "Bourbon!—Bourbon!" could be distinctly heard above the terrible din of the conflict.

"The walls are gained, my lord," said Pomperant, after a brief pause. "Your standard is placed on the battlements. Listen to those shouts of victory, with which your own name is mingled.

"I hear them," cried Bourbon. "On! on! brave Philibert. On! on! to Saint Peter's—to the Vatican! I am with you!" he ejaculated, making a vain effort to rise.

"My lord—my dear lord! turn your thoughts towards Heaven!" cried Pomperant.

"I cannot pray amid this din of battle," said Bourbon. "Oh! that I could have crossed those walls! Oh! that I could have reached Saint Peter's! But it was decreed that I should never enter Rome. Agrippa's prediction has come to pass, and the malediction I invoked has fallen upon me. I am justly punished for my sins."

"Then implore Heaven's forgiveness while there is yet time, my dear lord," cried Pomperant.

"Have mercy on me, Jesu! have mercy!" ejaculated Bourbon, fervently. "I have no hope save in thee."

So marked a change then took place in his noble features, that Pomperant thought all was over. A slight pressure of the hand, however, showed him that the duke was still conscious.

All at once, Bourbon roused himself by a supreme effort, and said,

"Farewell, my friend! To the battle!—away! Cover me—leave me!"

With these words, he expired.

Pomperant gazed for a moment with blinded eyes at the inanimate form of the hero he had loved so well, and served so long and faithfully, and exclaimed, in mournful accents, "Farewell, valiant Bourbon! Farewell, noble prince and gallant knight! Thou hast not left thy peer behind thee! Farewell for ever!"

He then cast a cloak over the body, and, snatching up the duke's sword, which had fallen near him, pushed aside the throng of soldiers who were struggling to mount the ladder, and shouting, "Bourbon!—Bourbon!" gained the ramparts without difficulty.

X. IN SAINT PETER'S.

The broad parapet was ankle-deep in blood, and was covered with dying and dead—Romans, Spaniards, Germans. But the defenders of the breach were all gone. Bourbon's broad banner was floating above the battlements, but his standard-bearer was lying stark beside it.

Taking down the banner, and giving it to one of the Spanish soldiers who had followed him, Pomperant, amid a shower of bullets directed against him from the Pontifical soldiers, who were still masters of a neighbouring bastion, hurried along the ramparts in search of some means of descending to the city.

Strange was it he should escape uninjured, for several of the soldiers with him were struck down, but, after stumbling over heaps of dead bodies, and plashing through pools of blood, he reached a tower, where a few gallant men were gathered to dispute his progress. But these brave fellows could not withstand the furious attack made upon them, and Pomperant and his men, having forcibly entered the tower, dashed down a winding staircase, and issued forth into a street in the Borgo.

Here a terrible conflict still was going on, but though the Romans still disputed the advance of the assailants, they were evidently giving way before them. The ear was deafened with the clash of arms, the shouts of the combatants, the groans of the wounded, the bray of trumpets, the roar of ordnance, and the sharp rattle of musketry. The terrified inhabitants were running in all directions, uttering piercing cries.

Pomperant's object was to reach Saint Peter's, and, after engaging in several conflicts, he made his way in the direction of the Basilica. As he went on, many a frightful scene of massacre met his gaze, which he would have prevented if he had had the power.

The Spanish soldiers, having now learnt that Bourbon had fallen, gave no quarter, but slew all they encountered without pity—priests, old men, women, and children—shouting, "Carne! carne!—sangre! sierra! Bourbon! Bourbon!"

Fearfully was Bourbon avenged, and if his spirit hovered over Rome at that dread hour, it must have bewailed these frightful excesses.

The noble colonnades, which now form so grand an approach to Saint Peter's, were then unbuilt, but there was a large piazza in front of the sacred edifice, and here the last stand was made by the Pontifical troops. But they were charged by the Prince of Orange, and being dispersed and unable to rally, were all cut down.

As Pomperant entered the piazza the Papal troops were flying in all directions, but none of them were allowed to escape. Leaving the Prince of Orange to pursue his victory, Pomperant hurried towards the glorious Basilica, and mounted its wide steps, which were covered with dead and defiled with gore.

While the conflict was going on in the piazza, the Pope had been hearing high mass at the altar, but warned by the shouts of the fugitives, who rushed into the sacred edifice in the vain hope of finding it a sanctuary, he escaped, with several of the cardinals who were with him at the time, by a secret passage to the Vatican, and thence by a covered way to the Castle of Saint Angelo, where, for the time at least, he was secure. He was just hurrying from the altar as Pomperant entered the church, and had he not been protected by his Swiss guard, he must have been captured.

Frightful was the scene that ensued. The brave Swiss were quickly overcome and massacred by the bands of unlicensed soldiers who had burst into the church, and numbers of prelates and priests shared their fate.

The work of pillage then commenced, and the altars were quickly stripped of all their ornaments by the rapacious soldiery.

Great silver crucifixes, the Pope's splendid cross, magnificent censers, golden and silver images, superb altar coverings, and rich priestly vestments, great chalices, cups and plate, were all piled together in an immense heap, to be divided anon among the soldiery.

But while the work of pillage was going on, numbers of the Lutheran soldiers were engaged in demolishing all they regarded as idolatrous and superstitious, and no statue or picture escaped destruction or mutilation by these ferocious zealots. The whole interior of the glorious building presented an indescribable scene of horror and confusion. Instead of resounding with the solemn notes of the organ, and the exquisite voices of the choir, the roof now echoed with the shouts and imprecations of the infuriated soldiery, and with the shrieks of their victims. The pavement was slippery with blood. Hell and its legions seemed let loose in the holy of holies.

Horror-stricken by the scene, Pomperant was hurrying away, when his ear was assailed by the cries of a female in distress. So piercing were these cries that they were distinctly heard above the dreadful hubbub that prevailed. But heartrending as they were, they seemed to excite no attention. All were too busily occupied to heed them.

Looking in the direction whence these cries proceeded, Pomperant perceived a nun struggling with three or four Spanish soldiers, one of whom had seized her in his arms and was carrying her off, despite her cries and resistance. What was Pomperant's horror and distress on discovering that this unfortunate nun was Marcelline. He instantly flew to her assistance, and fiercely commanded the soldier to release her, but as the ruffian refused to relinquish his prize, he unhesitatingly cut him down, and bore her off, hoping to find some safe asylum for her. But there was no place of refuge to be found in Saint Peter's on that terrible day. While he was gazing around in fearful anxiety, trying to soothe her, the Spanish soldier, whom he had wounded, approached them unawares, and plunged his poniard in her breast, exclaiming as he struck the vengeful blow, "If she cannot be mine, she shall not be yours."

Having consummated this atrocious act, the wretch fell on the pavement.

Half maddened, and scarcely knowing what he did, covered with the blood of her for whom he would have shed his own heart's blood, Pomperant hurried with her to a side-chapel, which, having been pillaged and stripped, was now deserted. He saw that the wound she had received was mortal, and that she had not many minutes to live, and sitting down on a marble bench, held her in his arms.

"Marcelline!" he exclaimed, in tones of deepest anguish. "Speak to me—one word!"

She opened her eyes, and gazed tenderly at him.

"Farewell, dear Pomperant," she said. "At this moment I may confess that I have ever loved you; but as we must have been separated on earth, my death need not afflict you."

"Our parting will be brief," said Pomperant. "I shall soon join you in heaven. I shall know no more earthly happiness."

"If we are to meet again in regions of bliss, Pomperant," she said, "you must win Heaven's forgiveness for your share in this dreadful day by years of penitence. Think of my words, Pomperant—neglect them not!"

As he pressed her distractedly to his breast, a tremor passed through her frame, and she was gone.

So acute was his anguish, that he could scarcely refrain from plunging his sword into his own breast, and dying beside her.

We must drop a veil over the horrors of the sack of Rome, which endured without interruption for two months. Never in the history of the world was a city abandoned to such frightful licence—never were such atrocities committed.

Bourbon found a place of sepulture in the chapel of the Castle of Gaeta, where a magnificent monument was reared over him by his soldiers.

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CONSTABLE DE BOURBON ***

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