

esquire's prowess that day had made him a marked man. He was scarcely down when some half-dozen were upon him, hacking and hewing with glaive and battle-ax, like woodmen ribing the trunk and limbs of a tough felled oak.

This was the sight that checked the Free Companion in the act of his backward spring.

The passions of those who, from youth upward, have made fighting their trade, are not easily stirred by mere change of blows, howsoever hard; up to this time—save, perchance, for a brief space during his combat with De Clisson—Ralph had kept himself perfectly calm and cool. But now the blood surged hotly through his veins, and mounted to his eyes. Only once before in all his life had the real Bersekyr fit possessed him, and then, as now, it was at Hacquemont. He gnashed his teeth as he swore that “dead or alive, his old comrade should be with him to the last,” and plunged headlong into the press, striking such blows as made all that he had heretofore dealt seem but boy's play; and shouting the war-cry—disused now for many a day—“Brakespeare! Brakespeare!” Some two or three of the Bretons—brained before they were well aware—fell athwart Lanyon as he lay prone; the others recoiled, fairly appalled, crying out “Sorcery,” or that “the Fiend in man's shape was among them.” Before this panic passed, the Free Companion had lifted his esquire in his arms, and borne him into the tower, the door of which was instantly barred behind him.

Without staggering or faltering, the knight carried his burden up into the presence-chamber, where all