

sir knight, the history of thy evening's adventure, and he rejoices, as I do, in its happy issue. Yet, though we have no right to question thee, thou must not take offence, if we marvel that thou, who seemest a true-hearted Navarrois, and hast this day borne thyself so valorously, should be dwelling at thine ease in thy fair Castle of Bruniquil, when every hand that can poise a lance is bound to lend its aid to the Lord Philip of Navarre, who, with stout Sir Godfrey de Harcourt, are carrying war and rapine into Normandy, in revenge for the unjust captivity of our gracious king."

"And I should well merit suspicion and rebuke, good Master Philip, were I in truth living like a drone in my castle, when every loyal knight should be abroad, fighting for his king. It is but one week since I quitted the English army, which, after the battle of Poitiers, —"

"Wert thou, upon that glorious field, sir knight?" asked Simon de Vaux, eagerly interrupting him.

"Ay, was I, good sir; and though, as a Navarrois, I could not openly display my banner there, I fought under that of Sir Olivier du Guiscard, a brave knight of Gascony, who led five hundred lances to the field. My followers numbered only fifty, but they did the work of a hundred in aiding on the issue of that day—a day of triumph to all who love Charles of Navarre, for it left the realm of his captor without a head, and fattened the soil of Poitiers with the blood of those who had been the strength and sinews of France.

"Now, then, is the time to strike a blow for our king and country," said Philip de Rosay; "to shake off those who oppress us, and break open the bolts and bars which hold our sovereign in captivity."

"And to forward this object, have I now returned to Bruniquil," said the knight; "therefore, I refrained from accompanying the victorious army to Bordeaux, where feasts and tournaments are being held to celebrate its triumph. Those of my followers who were with me at Poitiers have already joined the Lord Philip at Coutantin; and, with great secrecy, which is requisite in the present state of things, I am equipping a larger force, to march thither as soon as the necessary arrangements can be completed. The English Duke of Lancaster, too, is lending his aid to the bold men of Navarre, who have already won some of Normandy's fairest castles; so that I trust, as we gather numbers—and they are fast flocking to our banner—we shall invest the stronghold of Crevecœur with a force that shall compel it to yield its royal prisoner to our demand."

"God and our Lady for Navarre!" ejaculated the merchant, fervently. "A glad day will it be for our subjugated city, that, which sees our noble king marching once more beneath his royal banner, to deal justice to the wronged, and vengeance on his foes. It is whispered, sir knight, that the Provost of Paris is secretly the friend of Charles of Navarre, and that he hath already held communication with Sir Triston du Bois, the governor of Crevecœur, touching his freedom."

"So it hath been rumoured," said Sir Enguerrard; "in truth it is further conjectured, that the provost would willingly open the gates of Paris to King Charles and his friends, provided the time was yet ripe for such an act. But without treason we mean, by God's aid, to achieve our liege lord's freedom; and then, if it please him to knock at the gates of Paris with his battle-axe, we will back him with such a host that none shall dare say nay to his summons."

"And if it be, a host of such brave hearts as thine, sir knight," said Master Philip, "there is not a stronghold in all France, but the banner of Navarre may float in triumph from its battlements, and our sovereign claim in his turn the homage he now renders to King John. I should make but a poor warrior," he added; "but I will give of my substance as I have done—and more, even to my last florin, to achieve freedom and glory for Navarre. Nay, even to see our good city and Castle of Evreux once rid of these usurpers, I would almost be tempted to gird on armour myself, though verily I think that even thus bedight, an ell-wand would serve me better than a lance, as being the weapon most familiar to my hand."

The good merchant laughed heartily at his own conceit; but, in an instant added with a graver air:

"We quiet burghers should lead but indifferent lives in these brawling times, sir knight, if we lost all heart for a jest, though, in good truth, our merriment is often a forced matter, as thou may'st well imagine—lying here as we do, prisoners in our own fair city, with the steps of strangers crossing our thresholds as they list, and the eyes of bold knights peering into the faces of our modest maidens, till their cheeks redden with shame."

"Comfort thee, good Master de Rosay," said Sir Enguerrard; "these evils will ere long be redressed. For I hear these gay soldiers of the King of France are not over vigilant, and rest quite secure in their new possessions; and as I have rode through the streets of Evreux, and noted their heedless disarray, I have often thought it would be no difficult task for a resolute