

less travellers was safer murder than to engage two swords to three; and there was cold comfort in the thought that when they were dead in the kennel the tenth man back would take what they missed! Back they staggered, and for a time we all stood in silence, reckoning chances.

But not for long. The rogues behind lurched forward, driving on the rogues in front, inch by inch, foot by foot, till for very desperation they flung themselves upon us. For a breath the air was ablaze with the white lightning of bare steel. A breath, no more. A thrust, a parry, a rasp of blade on blade, a swift lunge, and with a sob and a groan the two foremost tottered on their heels, grasping at the air, and stumbled sidelong upon the cobbles below.

"God for Navarre!" cried the King, setting afresh his toe-point to his satisfaction. "God for Navarre!" and again with right elbow on hip, upturned knuckles, and sword point level with the eyes, we waited the second attack.

This time the two were Lignac's men, and so trained to arms. Bidding with a curse those behind stand back and give them room, they came on warily. Point to point, and inch by inch, they fenced us, till it was plain their plan was to tire us out and run no risks. To wait was to play their game and give ourselves as sheep to the slaughter. Therefore I drew back, and, taking their cue from me, Marcel in the centre and the King at the extreme left drew back also—not with haste, but inch by inch. Inch by inch they followed us, those behind striking impotently at us