

SIR GALAHAD OF THE ARMY

replied Commynes. "What is their business, Lasalle?"

"They say they come on the part of religion and charity."

"Spies?" the King drawled, mouthing the word. It was partly because of that slowness of speech that men thought Charles dull of intellect, but partly, too, because his face was unemotional. That he was so reckoned Charles knew and at times used both slowness and self-control to hide his purposes; yet at times his words could scorch like fire. "You are always too much of the politician, Monsieur de Commynes."

"Sire, your revered father taught me that my first duty was to suspect—"

"Even his son! Monsieur de Commynes, you forget. The King is dead, long live the King! Thank God, I can trust. How many did you say there were, Lasalle? Two? Then bring the gentlemen here."

"But, sire," intervened Brissonet, "it seems to me that Monsieur de Commynes is right. Surely, not knowing their purpose, it is dangerous—"

"Fie, Cardinal! It is the duty of the Church to have faith, even for those who have none for themselves. For whom did they ask, Lasalle?"

"For you, sire."

Crushed and neglected in boyhood, his every hour clouded by the fear lest the suspicions Commynes had spoken of should take form and strike, Charles was even less given to laughter than the nation he ruled; but now a gleam of humour lit up his heavy eyes an instant.

"Then there must be more religion and charity in the State than in the Church, eh, Cardinal? Bring them here, Lasalle, with every courtesy."

The silence at the surrounding tables remained unbroken. Beyond the King's first words little had been heard, and nothing perfectly understood, but Lasalle's presence was itself a portent. Not for any trivial cause would the officer of the guard have left