

THE CAMP AT SALEGNA

and Monsieur de Guise, and the food furnished to their table was no better than that served at the score or more of others surrounding it. Though slow of speech at times, and dull to the unobservant, the King knew how to bind men to him by those ties of personal affection which grapple closer and hold faster than any devotion of loyalty to a cause. In the camp he was a soldier, bearing the fatigues of a soldier equally with those who served under him and with less complaint. Now he ate sparingly and spoke little, nor could those who watched him curiously have told whether he favoured the churchman, the politician or the soldier.

But if the King ate his bread in silence those about him at the lower tables, or stretched upon the grass, rejected his example without a scruple. There was not much laughter. In spite of popular belief to the contrary the French are not a laughter-loving people. Movement, the nervous excitement of a crowd, the bustle of life, and above all, the sound of their own voices they love, but to give themselves frankly to laughter is rare except in those of the south.

So was it under the trees at Salegna. From every side there rose a babel. None heard greatly what was said nor resented that he himself received no answer; then, as the chattering of sparrows in an ivied wall ceases suddenly, so, none knowing why, their talk ceased and each man looked at his neighbour, momentarily afraid of he knew not what. That was the first instinct, the second was to turn to the King's table. Above it, bare-headed, stooped Lasalle, who was in charge of the outposts, whispering earnestly.

But though he spoke to Commynes it was Charles who answered.

"Envoys? Messengers? What does the name matter, Lasalle, that you stammer over it? For the present, thanks to Monsieur de Commynes, we are at peace with these gentlemen; why should they not enter the camp?"

"The name matters if we call them spies, sire,"